

**“Wetlands: water, life, and culture”
8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002**

Resolution VIII.42

Small Island Developing States in the Oceania Region

1. RECALLING Recommendation 6.18 relating to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific Islands region, and in particular its reference to the need for increased assistance for countries within this region;
2. ALSO RECALLING Recommendation 7.2, in which the Contracting Parties requested the Ramsar Bureau to “investigate and develop, as appropriate, Memoranda of Cooperation and joint plans of actions with the established programmes and organizations that are facilitating integrated environment management in the Small Island Developing States” and strongly urged Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners, and the Ramsar Bureau to strengthen their efforts to establish and maintain regional Ramsar liaison officers;
3. FURTHER RECALLING Recommendation 7.2, in which the Parties instructed the Ramsar Bureau to continue to promote the harmonised implementation of international environment conventions in order to assist in addressing resource constraints faced by Small Island Developing States;
4. APPLAUDING the establishment of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) between the Ramsar Bureau and the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) in May 2002 as a basis for continuing support by SPREP and increased support from the Bureau to the countries and territories in the region, and also the development of a Joint Work Plan to give early and practical effect to the MOC;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING the progress made since the first Ramsar Oceania Regional Meeting (1998) in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in the region and, in particular, APPLAUDING the appointment of a Regional Wetlands Management Officer in SPREP; the appointment of a Ramsar Support Officer in the Department of Environment and Conservation in Papua New Guinea; and the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers Training Programme by Australia;
6. NOTING General Objective 1 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, which states that “a special effort will be made to encourage Small Island Developing States to join [the Convention] in recognition of their special needs and significant wetlands, including coral reefs, sea-grass beds and mangroves”, and AWARE of the particular importance of these wetland types in the Oceania Region;
7. ALSO AWARE that within Oceania there are currently three Contracting Parties to the Convention (Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea); two countries that are in

the process of depositing their instruments of accession (Republic of Palau and the Independent State of Samoa); six dependent territories of Contracting Parties from other Ramsar regions; and 19 non-Contracting Parties; and ALSO AWARE that a number of non-Parties in the region are actively preparing for accession to the Convention;

8. CONGRATULATING the Government of Australia, Wetlands International-Oceania, and WWF International for their efforts in mobilising donor support to promote accession to the Ramsar Convention and in providing technical and training support to Small Island Developing States of Oceania;
9. CONSCIOUS of the interdependence of people, their cultures and their livelihoods with the wetlands in the region, and RECOGNIZING the importance of customary and other relevant land tenure systems affecting wetlands and their resources in the region;
10. ACKNOWLEDGING the continuing support and assistance provided to the Small Island Developing States in the region by bilateral and multilateral donors for integrated environmental management, and the important role which regional organizations such as SPREP play in facilitating these activities; and
11. THANKING the Government of the Independent State of Samoa and SPREP for hosting the second Ramsar Oceania Regional Meeting in May 2002, the Government of Australia for financing the meeting, and the Government of the United States of America for assisting delegates from its territories to attend the meeting;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

12. CALLS UPON the Ramsar Bureau, Contracting Parties, and International Organization Partners to note the key challenges and priority issues particular to the countries and territories of the Oceania region as expressed in the *Report of the Second Oceania Regional Meeting of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*, May 2002, which include:
 - degradation, loss and rehabilitation of particular wetland types such as mangroves, coral reefs, and coastal systems generally;
 - sustainable use of wetlands to meet the needs and aspirations of the Pacific island countries and territories;
 - the impacts of climate change and invasive species;
 - human pressures, especially those driven by the significant economic and social transformations occurring across the region, including pollution and development pressure;
 - the need for efforts at all levels of governments in the region to improve the attitude of people towards wetlands; and
 - threats to endangered species caused by wetlands habitat loss;
13. ENCOURAGES the Ramsar Bureau to take these issues into consideration in its dealings with the countries and territories of the Oceania region;
14. REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau to be mindful of the small size and limited human and financial resources available to Pacific island countries and territories, to seeks ways of simplifying and harmonising the activities and requirements of the Ramsar Convention,

and to continue actively to seek to harmonise the requirements of the Convention with all other environment-related international instruments;

15. URGES the Ramsar Bureau as a matter of priority, and as resources allow, to continue to work cooperatively with SPREP to implement the actions identified in their Joint Work Plan developed under their Memorandum of Cooperation;
16. STRONGLY URGES the Ramsar Bureau to recognize the need for a Regional Coordinator to be assigned to the Oceania Region and to review its working arrangements in order to formally assign this role to an officer of the Bureau by the time of the COP9, and, as an interim arrangement, to identify the resources to support a position of intern for the Oceania Region;
17. REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau to publish and disseminate the recently prepared accession kit to assist countries in the Oceania region (and Small Island Developing States more generally) through their accession process;
18. CALLS UPON the bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies to continue their support, and, as appropriate, to increase this support, for wetland-related projects in the Oceania region and to extend it to include capacity building activities; and
19. URGES the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, in cooperation with the Governments of France and the United States of America, to give careful consideration to supporting capacity building activities in the Oceania region, and in particular to working with the Ramsar Bureau, SPREP and other interested parties to develop a co-financing strategy to establish a regionally-based Coordinator post to provide support and help mobilise development assistance funds for developing states and dependent territories of Oceania to implement the Joint Work Program of the Ramsar Bureau and SPREP.