

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
1st Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Cagliari, Italy
24-29 November 1980

Recommendation 1.1: [Expanding the Convention's membership]

The Conference

RECALLING that the Preamble to the Ramsar Convention points out the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes; their status as a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value; the desirability of stemming encroachment on wetlands; the need to regard waterfowl as an international resource; and the possibility of conserving wetlands by combining far-sighted national policies with coordinated international action;

RECALLING ALSO that Recommendation 99.1.b of the Action Plan for the Human Environment adopted at Stockholm in June 1972 recommends that Governments should, whenever appropriate, sign the Ramsar Convention;

CONVINCED after reviewing the achievements of the Convention that ratification of, or accession to, the Ramsar Convention constitutes a specially effective step for the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna, notably waterfowl;

NOTING that the 28 Contracting Parties to the Convention are mainly situated in the western Palearctic region, particularly in Europe, and that there are as yet very few Contracting Parties in the region covered by the Western Hemisphere Convention and in tropical regions;

RECOMMENDS that efforts should be made so that States which have not yet become Contracting Parties should do so as soon as possible, in particular in the Western Hemisphere and the tropics and those which would complete the network of Contracting Parties in the western Palearctic;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that Contracting Parties use their good offices with other States, in particular in international including regional forums and meetings, with a view to obtaining their ratification of, or accession to the Convention.

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Recommendation 1.2: [Developing countries in the Convention]

The Conference

RECOGNIZING that many wetlands in developing countries are in a relatively untransformed condition;

WELCOMING the positive contribution to the Convention's operation made by developing countries which are Contracting Parties and to the present Conference by these Contracting Parties and by observers from such countries;

RECALLING that the Final Act of the Conference to conclude a Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals included a Resolution which requested financial, technical and training assistance in support of conservation efforts made by developing countries, and urged international and national organizations to give priority to their aid programmes relating to management and conservation of migratory species and their habitats in developing countries;

NOTING FURTHER that the Technical Meeting on Wetlands in West Africa organized by IWRB at the invitation of the Republic of Senegal insisted on the need to organize practical field courses on wetland conservation and waterfowl management in West Africa and to provide facilities for advanced study on this subject in establishments of higher education;

CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention and competent international organizations to do what they can to enable developing countries to contribute to the Convention and its activities, for example, through aid programmes, through provision of travel funds enabling representatives of developing countries to participate in Conferences of the Parties, and through support for appropriate training programmes;

CALLS UPON developing countries to pay more attention to conservation measures in any request for and programming of assistance, and upon developed countries and international organizations to pay due attention to these requests in their development aid policies.

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Recommendation 1.3: [Designating more sites for the Ramsar List]

The Conference

AWARE that the Ramsar Convention requires Contracting Parties to designate at least one wetland to be included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;

NOTING with satisfaction that the 28 Contracting Parties have so far designated 216 wetlands covering over six million hectares, that many Parties have exceeded the minimum requirement, and that in some a representative network of sites exists;

CONVINCED that in order to achieve the aims of the Convention, Contracting Parties should designate as many as possible of their wetlands of international importance for the List;

NOTING that, of the 216 wetlands so far designated for the List, 193 are situated in the western Palearctic region, and that among western Palearctic sites, wetland types which are poorly represented include tundra, peatlands, wet meadows, tidal estuaries and southern wintering areas for waterfowl;

CALLS ON Contracting Parties to increase the number of wetlands in their territories to be included in the List particularly as regards sites outside the western Palearctic and wetland types poorly represented in the western Palearctic.

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Recommendation 1.4: [Criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance]

The Conference

RECOGNIZING that the use made by Contracting Parties of the Heiligenhafen criteria in identifying wetlands has ensured the designation of wetlands of major significance for the List;

NOTING that a revision of the Heiligenhafen criteria has been made at the present conference;

RECOMMENDS to Contracting Parties that the criteria as revised at Cagliari be used for identification of wetland suitable for designation for the List;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that to monitor progress in completing the network of wetlands of international importance, a “shadow” list (such as the Directory of Western Palearctic Wetlands or the IWRB Preliminary Inventory) of wetlands qualifying under the criteria be maintained by appropriate international organizations, both for Contracting Parties and for States which are not yet Contracting Parties;

CALLS ON the appropriate international organizations to develop guidelines on selection of sites for designation from among those identified by the criteria as revised at Cagliari, and on the management of sites once designated;

RECOMMENDS that appropriate international organizations keep the criteria under review, in particular as regards northern breeding sites, vital for production of waterfowl which are widely dispersed when breeding.

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Recommendation 1.5: [National Wetland Inventories]

The Conference

AWARE that Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention undertake to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the wise use of wetlands in their territory;

EMPHASIZING that, as mentioned in the World Conservation Strategy, wise use of wetlands involves maintenance of their ecological character, as a basis not only for nature conservation, but for sustainable development;

CONVINCED that establishment of comprehensive national policies would benefit the wise use of wetlands, and that such policies should be based on a nationwide inventory of wetlands and of their resources;

NOTING that some Contracting Parties have made such an inventory and drawn up such policies;

CALLS ON Contracting Parties and on Governments which might be interested to prepare inventories of wetlands and of their resources as soon as possible as an aid to the formulation and implementation of national wetland policies.

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Recommendation 1.6: [Assessment of wetland values]

The Conference

INFORMED by the Contracting Parties that many listed Ramsar sites and other wetlands of international importance are under threat because of certain human activities;

NOTING that, globally, many wetlands are being eliminated by, *inter alia*, filling, drainage, reclamation, intensive agriculture and aquaculture, and industrial activities or are seriously endangered by pollution and eutrophication;

RECALLING that wetlands may, directly or indirectly, have a potential value exceeding that obtained from transforming them into other types of land;

RECOMMENDS that, in case of any projected large-scale wetland transformation, the decision is not taken until an assessment of all the values involved has been made, and that ecologists be included in the planning process;

RECOMMENDS further that international funding agencies and bilateral and multilateral development aid should also finance such assessments.

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Recommendation 1.7: [A protocol on amendment procedures]

The Conference

CONSIDERING that it is indispensable for the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention to increase the number of Contracting Parties;

AWARE that the addition of authentic or official language versions would facilitate the adherence of certain states to the Convention;

CONSIDERING furthermore that the text of the Convention does not provide for an amendment procedure, which makes it difficult to amend the text as may be considered necessary;

RECOMMENDS that priority be given to the elaboration of a protocol with the following elements:

1. The addition of authentic or official language versions of the Convention based upon the United Nations practice (and without prejudice to the provisions relating to the working languages to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties);
2. An amendment procedure based upon that under Article X of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species;
3. A procedure for the entry into force of the protocol between the Contracting Parties to the Convention; and a procedure relating to the effects of this protocol towards new Parties;

WELCOMES the offer of the United Kingdom Government to

- prepare a draft protocol to that effect;
- send it to the Contracting Parties for comments;
- undertake any necessary adjustments to the draft in the light of comments; and
- explore in consultation with the Contracting Parties and the Depositary the most expedient procedures for adopting the protocol;

REQUESTS IUCN in the performance of its continuing bureau function to assist as far as possible the Government of the United Kingdom in this task and in the consultations to be undertaken;

CONSIDERS moreover that the protocol, whatever the method of adoption, should be adopted unanimously or by consensus of the Contracting Parties taking part in that adoption; and

RECOMMENDS that the protocol should enter into force when a relatively large number of States (two thirds of the Contracting Parties) have adopted it according to their internal legal procedures.

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Recommendation 1.8: [Proposed amendments to the Convention]

The Conference

RECOGNIZING that the provisions of the Ramsar Convention are realistic as far as the land-use policies of the Contracting Parties are concerned;

CONSIDERING, however, that a number of amendments to the Ramsar Convention would facilitate the realization of its fundamental aims;

AWARE of its Recommendation 1.7, which aims to make it easier for the Parties to adopt such amendments;

RECOMMENDS that the adoption of the protocol referred to in Recommendation 1.7 should be followed as soon as possible by the consideration of the adoption of a further protocol to amend the Convention with a view to extending its effectiveness. The points identified by the Cagliari Conference as highly desirable to achieve this aim are provisions for:

1. periodic ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Parties as well as extraordinary meetings of the Conference as the necessity arises;
2. the adoption of rules of procedure by the Conference of the Parties and the attendance of observers, especially from international non-governmental organizations, at meetings of the Conference, along the lines of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species;
3. the authority of the Conference of the Parties to adopt financial provisions to provide resources for the organization of meetings, the operation of the secretariat or for any other purpose;
4. the inclusion of an Appendix to the Convention containing the criteria for the selection of wetlands of international importance, and of a procedure for the amendment of this Appendix;
5. the authority of the Conference of the Parties to create subsidiary bodies, in particular a scientific committee; to utilize the outstanding expertise of IWRB; to adopt criteria, procedures and standards; and to decide on any additional measures that should be taken to implement the objectives of the Convention;
6. the establishment of a permanent secretariat;
7. additional functions of the secretariat, to be performed under the authority of the Conference of the Parties and in particular:

- a) to promote and coordinate scientific and technical studies;
 - b) to make recommendations for the implementation of the aims and provisions of the Convention as well as to draw the attention of the Contracting Parties to any matter pertaining to this subject;
 - c) to maintain and promote liaison with the Parties and competent international organizations, as well as to maintain contact with non-Party States;
 - d) to prepare the work of the Conference of the Parties taking as a base in particular the reports of the Parties;
 - e) to produce technical guidelines and promote exchange of information in particular in the field of training and management.
8. the right of the Contracting Parties to make use of their faculty to adopt stricter domestic measures for the conservation of wetlands than those provided for in the Convention;
9. a procedure for the settlement of disputes;

CONSIDERS furthermore that initial preparation of this negotiation should be undertaken in parallel with the implementation of Recommendation 1.7 and invites its continuing Bureau, in consultation with the Contracting Parties, to undertake the necessary work to that effect;

INVITES Contracting Parties and those States which become Parties in the near future to make suggestion as to the Diplomatic Conference required to adopt these amendments.

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Recommendation 1.9: [Meetings of the Conference of the Parties]

The Conference

CONSIDERING the importance of reviewing the implementation of the Convention;

CONSIDERING furthermore the importance of reviewing tasks which need to be undertaken;

RECOMMENDS that the Conference of the Parties should meet again as soon as possible after the entry into force of the protocol proposed under Recommendation 1.7.

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Recommendation 1.10: [A permanent secretariat]

The Conference

ACKNOWLEDGING with appreciation the work done by IUCN to perform the continuing bureau functions according to Article 8 of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, and the important work of IWRB in the implementation of the Convention;

RECOGNIZING that the more effective promotion and implementation of the Convention requires the provision of an adequately funded, full-time small permanent secretariat, as envisaged in the World Conservation Strategy;

AWARE that Article 8.1 states that IUCN shall perform the continuing bureau functions until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two thirds of all Contracting Parties;

NOTING that under the Conventions on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn), the Secretariat is provided by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who may be assisted by suitable and technically qualified intergovernmental and non-governmental international or national agencies and bodies;

RECOMMENDS that

- a) the Executive Director of UNEP be invited to indicate whether he is prepared to provide the permanent secretariat for the Ramsar Convention, if the Contracting Parties should decide to amend the Convention to make provision for such a secretariat, with related financial provisions to ensure total funding through mandatory contributions from the Contracting Parties;
- b) IUCN in cooperation with IWRB draw up a proposal with an indication of the minimum amount necessary for the interim period (including necessary scientific support from IWRB), pending the establishment of a permanent secretariat, and forward this proposal to all Contracting Parties by 31 December 1980; this proposal to contain the activities as set out in Article 8.2 of the Convention;
- c) the Contracting Parties should give sympathetic consideration to making voluntary contributions towards the costs of such interim arrangements, and reply on this point, and the proposed activities and draft budget, to IUCN not later than 1 March 1981;

- d) IUCN, on the basis of any comments received from Contracting Parties to the proposal under (b) above, should prepare a revised proposal and transmit it to
- the Contracting Parties, with a request that they make such voluntary contributions as they have agreed to as soon as possible; and to
 - the Executive Director of UNEP with a request that he invite the Governing Council at its ninth session in May 1981 to consider providing any additional support which might be required for the interim arrangements from the fund of UNEP.

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Recommendation 1.11: [Thanks to the Italian hosts]

The Conference

RECOGNIZING the importance of the present Conference for the Ramsar Convention;

EXTREMELY GRATEFUL to the Government of Italy for its invitation to hold the Conference in Italy, and to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional Assessorat for the Environment for their effective execution of the many tasks associated with the Conference in Sardinia;

EXPRESSES its warmest thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and to the Regional Assessorat for the Environment, as well as to the Mayor of Cagliari, for their welcome and hospitality;

NOTING FURTHER the effective operation of the Ramsar Convention in Italy and in particular the designation for the List of two new Sardinian sites, Sale Porcus and Mistras, to be visited during the post-Conference tour;

DEEPLY IMPRESSED by the exceptional importance of Sardinian wetlands and especially the two lagoons east and west of Cagliari designated for the Ramsar List and visited by participants during the Conference;

RECOMMENDS that research and action be considered at all appropriate levels to maintain the ecological character of all these sites.