

"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.2¹

The Report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) and its relevance to the Ramsar Convention

1. RECALLING that through Resolution VII.18 Contracting Parties have recognized the importance of the management of rivers and their water resources at the basin scale for the maintenance of the ecological character of wetlands, and that many wetlands provide vital goods and services in the management and provision of water supplies; and that this meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties has adopted *Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands* (Resolution VIII.1);
2. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution VII.18 also requested the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to report to COP8 concerning the findings of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) and their implications for the future;
3. NOTING that the work of the WCD, convened by the World Bank and IUCN – The World Conservation Union, has been completed in 2000, and that the final report of the WCD (*Dams and Development. A New Framework for Decision-Making*) has been published; and FURTHER NOTING that an Information Paper on this has been prepared by the STRP (COP8 DOC. 10);
4. RECOGNIZING that large dams have made significant contributions to development and remain an option in meeting energy and water resources requirements at local and national levels; and that they may also create artificial water bodies that provide some wetland values and functions, partially compensating for those of dam-impacted wetlands;
5. ALSO RECOGNIZING that large dams around the world affect wetland hydrology, influencing both water quality and quantity; that a significant proportion of globally threatened and non-threatened species are freshwater species of fish, amphibians and other biota, which are highly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of dams; and that diversions of water may be a source of conflicts between users of wetland goods and services, urban and agricultural communities;
6. NOTING that the wise use of water resources requires a wide consultation among interested and affected stakeholder groups as well as extensive evaluation of social and environmental impacts on complex riverine, coastal and marine ecosystems, and establishment of a forum for interaction and conflict resolution; and RECALLING that

¹ Turkey entered a reservation to the adoption by consensus of this Resolution. The text of the reservation appears in paragraph 83 of the COP8 Conference Report.

Contracting Parties have adopted *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands* (Resolution VII.8);

7. FURTHER NOTING that the WCD recognized that within today's diverse world, a "one size fits all" approach is unrealistic, and thus the Commission's guidelines are "advisory tools to support decision making" and will require to be adapted to local and national contexts; and
8. THANKING the STRP, IUCN, the WCD Secretariat, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity for their work in preparing an Information Paper for this meeting (COP8 DOC. 10) on the findings of the WCD and its relevance to the Ramsar Convention;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. RECOGNIZES that the World Commission on Dams was a non-governmental process and therefore non-binding on governments;
10. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties faced with managing or assessing the impact of dams on sensitive riverine and wetland ecosystems, to use, where appropriate, all available information, including information provided by the WCD, in association with the relevant guidance adopted by the Ramsar Convention to inform and guide local and national processes for allocation of water resources and decision-making, in order to ensure that wetlands and their values and functions are fully taken into account in decision-making on large dams;
11. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to engage fully in national and basin level processes to assess options for, alternatives to, and improvements in, the development and operation of dam infrastructure, utilising Resolution VII.18 on *Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management* and the CBD-Ramsar River Basin Initiative;
12. URGES Contracting Parties to implement, where appropriate, Resolution VII.8 on *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands* with respect to the planning and operation phases of dams, and FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to extend this principle of participation to wider issues related to water resources management at basin level, utilising Resolution VII.18 on *Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management* and Resolution VIII.14 on *New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands*;
13. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to undertake the systematic implementation of environmental flow assessments, where appropriate, to mitigate socio-economic and ecological impacts of large dams on wetlands, and to encourage the development of appropriate centres of expertise on environmental flow assessment and implementation, and in doing so to apply the *Guidelines on water allocation and management for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands* (Resolution VIII.1);
14. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, wherever possible and appropriate, to take the necessary steps in order to maintain the migration access for indigenous fish and other species past dams;

15. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to participate in the UNEP Dams and Development Project in order to promote dialogue on improving decision making, planning and management of dams;
16. REQUESTS IUCN and other appropriate technical institutions to contribute their ongoing work on environmental flow methodologies to further work requested of the STRP on water allocation and management, so as to ensure that they are made available to Contracting Parties to assist in their management of dam-related impacts, and requests the STRP to report on these methodologies to COP9;
17. REQUESTS the STRP, if the Standing Committee regards this as a priority for the STRP's work in 2003-2005, to review Resolutions VIII.1 and VIII.2 and to prepare further guidance, if it is required, for consideration at COP9;
18. ALSO REQUESTS the STRP, if indicated by the Standing Committee as a priority, to review the ecological roles played by reservoirs and other human-made wetlands, including their use by aquatic and other water-dependent biota, and to prepare guidance for Contracting Parties concerning the identification and designation of such wetlands for the Ramsar List, taking into account the experience gained by Parties that have already done so; and
19. URGES Contracting Parties to inform the Bureau of dams that have changed, are changing, or are likely to change the ecological character of Ramsar sites, in line with Article 3.2 of the Convention, and to report on the impacts of dams on wetlands in their territory in their National Reports to COP9.