

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971)
Culture Working Group



Culture and wetlands a Ramsar guidance document

Gland, September 2008

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Table of contents

Preface	3
by Anada Tiéga, Ramsar Secretary General	
0. Introduction	6
0.1 Ramsar Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21	7
0.2 The Ramsar Culture Working Group	8
0.3 Recent guidance from the Ramsar Standing Committee	9
1. General considerations	10
1.1 The global context	10
1.2 Culture in the multilateral environmental agreements	12
1.3 Cultural landscapes and wetlands	17
1.4 Human survival and wetlands	18
1.5 Rationale for concern for cultural aspects	21
2. The main policy guidance for Ramsar Contracting Parties, and proposed strategic actions	25
2.1 General, conservation and management objectives	25
2.2 Guidance on the general objectives	26
2.3 Guidance on the conservation and management objectives	29
2.4 Proposed actions at strategic level	32
3. Practical activities for wetlands and related cultural values	35
3.1 A possible typology of activities and values	35
3.2 Cultural aspects of wetland-related activities	38
4. Technical guidance on objectives related to the practical activities	43
4.1 Habitation	43
4.2 Primary use of wetland resources	46
4.3 Secondary use of wetland resources	49
4.4 Knowledge, belief systems and social practices	52
5. Concerns about Ramsar and culture	59
5.1 Some key points made by consultees	60
5.2 One broader contribution	60

Bibliography

63

Appendices

I:	Ramsar COP8 Resolution VIII.19	66
II:	Ramsar COP9 Resolution IX.21	72
III:	Ramsar Cultural Values Matrix	75

Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPs	Contracting Parties
CWG	Ramsar Culture Working Group
DRIP	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ICAHM	International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICRW	International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling
IOPs	International Organisation Partners
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Programme, UNESCO
Med-INA	Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos
MedWet	Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
RIS	Ramsar Information Sheet
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEHUMED	<i>Sede para el estudio de los humedales mediterráneos</i> , Valencia, Spain
STRP	Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UNCCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WARP	Wetlands Archaeological Research Project
WHC	World Heritage Convention
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Preface

In the spirit of its Preamble, the Ramsar Convention has for almost ten years been addressing the issue of the cultural aspects of wetlands and their incorporation in the work of the Convention and of its Contracting Parties. For many among us it has become more than evident that the fate of wetlands depends on human attitudes and activities, and that incorporating cultural values in our work can be beneficial for conservation and wise use efforts.

Some others have expressed worries and reservations, maintaining for example that cultural considerations are the remit of specialised multilateral agreements, such as UNESCO and its World Heritage Convention. Perhaps they underestimate the significance of integration of nature and culture in the management of wetlands, which cannot be achieved if the two realities are not handled through an appropriate approach which finds the optimal balance for maximising societal wellbeing. A few worry that there may be conflicts with the obligations of Contracting Parties under other international agreements, especially concerning trade; and there is no doubt that these must be fully respected. Still others argue that not all cultural aspects related to wetlands constitute values. Certainly clear judgment is necessary.

During the past two meetings of the Conference of Ramsar Contracting Parties in Valencia and Kampala, Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21 on incorporating cultural aspects in the management of wetlands have been approved unanimously; but only after lengthy debate and some controversy.

No further Resolution on culture is being presented at COP10 (2008); and the Standing Committee wishes to let the positive efforts being carried out by many in the Convention mature.

Thus, achievements in this field from Contracting Parties were presented during the European Ramsar Meeting in Stockholm in early May 2008¹. Case studies from 21 wetland sites were included in the recently published book *Action for culture in Mediterranean wetlands*². Similar work is being carried out in many parts of the world, and this needs to be recognised.

In addition, the Ramsar Culture Working Group has finalised the present Guidance document on cultural aspects, based on the initial Information Document of 2002. In this context, I would like to express our gratitude to Thymio Papayannis, Co-ordinator of the Culture Working Group, and to Dave Pritchard, Ramsar Laureate for 2008, who have both worked hard in achieving this task.

We are confident that the Contracting Parties understand where human and environmental processes meet, and that they will use this Guidance document in a positive manner in areas where they feel its need. We invite their views and criticism, so that it can be further improved in future editions. We would also highly appreciate receiving reports on activities related to the incorporation of cultural aspects in wetland management, so that these may be shared with all other Contracting Parties.

Anada Tiéga
Ramsar Secretary General
Gland, July 2008

¹ From Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia and Sweden.

² Papayannis, T., 2008. *Action for culture in Mediterranean wetlands*, Med-INA, Athens, Greece.

Navigation note

To facilitate the use of the Guidance document, some notes are provided here as to the contents of its chapters.

In the *Introduction*, the document provides the reader with an overview of the concept of incorporating cultural aspects in the work of the Ramsar Convention, and in particular in the management of wetlands, through the approval of Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21 and the work of the Culture Working Group towards the development of guidance.

The incorporation of cultural aspects in the management strategies for wetlands is not an isolated initiative. Besides Ramsar, several other bodies worldwide have officially recognised the links between biological and cultural diversity. Thus, in *Chapter 1*, the work done on the interface of nature and culture by the main multilateral environmental agreements is presented briefly and commented upon, along with certain broader issues related to culture and wetlands.

In *Chapter 2*, general, management and conservation responsibilities for the Ramsar Contracting Parties are presented, derived from Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21; and they are complemented by actions suggested for their implementation.

Chapter 3 proposes an outline of the main wetland-related human activities, focusing mainly on habitation, the primary and secondary use of resources and the development of social and spiritual events and beliefs. These activities are then correlated with their most characteristic cultural aspects, in an attempt to provide a much deeper understanding of their role in relation to each site and their possible impact on biodiversity. For many of these activities, objectives are suggested for achieving an integrated approach to both the natural and cultural heritage.

For a number of the objectives suggested, *Chapter 4* provides more detailed guidance including proposed actions for their implementation. This is viewed as 'work-in-progress' to be further developed and completed through the experience gained in implementation, the contribution of the CPs and the further work of the Ramsar CWG.

It is indeed hoped that this document will become the basis for future discourse on the development of the best management practices for the environmentally and culturally sensitive areas that we know most of our wetlands to be.

Acknowledgements

This Guidance document has been based on the related preparatory work for COP8 by Thymio Papayannis. It has been further developed by the Ramsar Culture Working Group, with important contributions by Peter Bridgewater, Sansanee Choowaew, Sergio Lasso, Maman-Sani Issa, Thymio Papayannis, Dave Pritchard and Anada Tiéga. The matrix included in Appendix III was proposed by Med-INA.

Comments voiced during the Ramsar regional meetings and Standing Committee meetings in 2007-2008 were also taken into account.

Final editing of the document was carried out in mid 2008 by Thymio Papayannis and Dave Pritchard, with the assistance of Aphrodite Sorotou and proof reading by Irini Lyratzaki (Med-INA). The French translation was carried out by Chantal Heurteaux, while the Spanish one was carried out by Delmar Blasco-Bernaus.

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For information or comments, please contact the Ramsar Culture Working Group at thymiop@med-ina.org.



0. Introduction

The Convention on Wetlands was signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, as a multi-lateral agreement focusing on wetland ecosystems and especially the waterbirds associated with them. However, the inspired individuals who catalysed its establishment included in the Preamble of the Convention text a clear reference to broader aspects of wetlands and in particular to their cultural values. The text states:

“...Being convinced that wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, **cultural**, scientific and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable.....”

During the more than three decades that followed, aspects of wetlands discussed within the Convention have broadened considerably (for example including the role of other species groups and aspects such as water management, human health and other ecosystem services). At the beginning of the current decade, a movement appeared mainly within the Mediterranean region for a stronger consideration of the cultural aspects of wetlands. This was decisively supported by the MedWet Initiative (and particularly by Spain), as well as some of the Convention’s International Organisation Partners, or IOPs (see also Section 1.2). The movement was recognised by the Ramsar Secretariat, which launched in 2001 the preparatory work that led to an official elaboration of the cultural values recognised in the Convention, by both COP8 and COP9 in 2002 and 2005 respectively.

0.1 Ramsar Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21

Two COP Resolutions were approved on the incorporation of cultural values in the management of wetlands. Both contain some common elements, such as:

- the rationale for incorporating cultural values;
- the need for a broad effort of collaboration with organisations and sectors specialising in the conservation and management of the cultural heritage;
- the recognition of the position of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The two Resolutions also included a number of action points. The main ones are:

- encouraging the Contracting Parties to identify and analyse case studies of successful incorporation of cultural values in the management of their wetlands and to make known the results;
- developing further and disseminating the guidance presented during COP8 on the objectives annexed to Resolution VIII.19.

In addition, Resolution IX.21 included a specific decision on the establishment of a Working Group on culture under the leadership of the Secretary General. In addition, a clarification was added that the approval of Resolution IX.21 was to be understood as respecting all other commitments of the CPs under other international agreements.

In both Resolutions, the idea which had been advanced by some regarding a criterion on culture for the designation of sites was dealt with in a general manner, by advising Contracting Parties to consider cultural values as well as ecological values in the process of site designation. It was clear from the discussions during COP8 and COP9 that the large majority of the CPs was not in favour of a stand-alone cultural criterion, which might lead to the designation of sites solely on the basis of their cultural aspects.

It should be noted here that, although the two Resolutions were approved unanimously, lengthy discussions were required to reach agreement among the CPs. The main areas of contention can be summarised as follows:

- remaining doubts as to whether culture is in the remit of the Convention;
- strong disagreement on using a cultural criterion as a stand-alone factor in site designation;
- fears that cultural considerations might be used to protect economic activities in ways which might frustrate free trade objectives.

It is clear that these views must be taken into account in building consensus within the Convention on cultural aspects. (See also Section 0.3 below).

0.2 The Ramsar Culture Working Group

Resolution IX.21 defined in its paragraph 17 the following action for the Secretariat:

“[The Conference of the Contracting Parties] REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above.”

Such a working group (named the ‘Ramsar Culture Working Group’ or CWG) was convened by the Secretary General in mid 2006. It consisted of the following members:

- *Convenor:* Peter Bridgewater, Ramsar Secretary General
- *Secretary:* Thymio Papayannis
- *Africa:* Maman-Sani Issa, Benin
- *Mediterranean:* Ammar Boumezbeur, Algeria (*now resigned*)
- *Europe:* María-José Viñals, Spain (*now resigned*)
- *Asia:* Sansanee Choowaew, Thailand
- *Oceania:* Pati Liu, Samoa (*now resigned*)
- *Neotropics:* Sergio Lasso, Ecuador
- *North America:* Ernesto Enkerlin, Mexico
- *Ramsar IOPs:* Dave Pritchard, BirdLife International (also resource person for the Group)
- *UNESCO – International Hydrological Programme:*
Khin Ni Ni Thein and Alexander Otte, Working Group on Water and Culture

In mid 2007, the Convenor of the Working Group became Anada Tiéga, the new Ramsar Secretary General, while Thymio Papayannis was named Co-ordinator. Dave Pritchard is no longer with BirdLife, but continues to participate in the Working Group on an individual basis. The three members who have resigned will be replaced at COP10.

0.3 Recent guidance from the Ramsar Standing Committee

Under the supervision of the Standing Committee, the Ramsar Culture Working Group has been developing detailed guidance on cultural aspects of wetlands, following on from COP Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21.

The Standing Committee at its 36th meeting in February 2008 (SC36) considered the draft Guidance text as it then stood, and took the following decision:

“Decision SC36-3: The Standing Committee decided that there should be no draft Resolution bringing the cultural guidelines forward to the COP. The SC invited all Parties with concerns about the current draft to provide specific advice and suggested text to the Cultural Working Group by 31 March 2008, and it requested the STRP to review the revised document and determine how best to make it available. The Committee confirmed that the work of the Culture Working Group should continue in future, after COP10, in order to help inform the operations of the Parties in implementing the Convention and in helping the STRP to focus on issues that require a cultural perspective and understanding.”

The discussion on this item can be viewed in the minutes of SC36 (paragraphs 70-76) at:
http://www.ramsar.org/sc/36/key_sc36_report.htm

Following the Standing Committee meeting in February only two comments from Parties were received by the 31 March deadline. They relate to caveats on consistency with other international obligations, and compatibility of ‘cultural uses’ of wetlands with the principles of wise use. The document was presented and further discussed at the European Regional Meeting in early May 2008. In that light it was decided, rather than consulting STRP on a ‘revised’ document, simply to invite comments on the same version that was tabled at Standing Committee 36, and then to consolidate all post-February inputs in a single revision.

As the decision above notes, it is not proposed that this material be adopted by a COP Resolution. Rather, it is to be made available as a technical resource to Parties and others, via the Ramsar website and by other means. The SC decision also asks for STRP’s views on how best to make it available, and this invitation continues to remain open.



1. General considerations

1.1 The global context

The planet is a cultural and biological kaleidoscope: In the last twenty years significant advances have been made in the management of global biodiversity, but while environmental problems have become globalised, their potential management solutions have become more localised.

A growing body of evidence supports the recognition of links between biological and cultural diversity and continued exploration of the interface between these and other forms of diversity. The role of indigenous peoples, both as custodians of biodiversity and proponents of cultural diversity, is crucial in understanding the interconnectedness of these issues. Conservation of nature is at the heart of the cultures and values of many indigenous peoples. For more than 300 million indigenous people, the Earth offers not only life, but also the basis of their cultural and spiritual identities. Because their world-view holds that the Earth and its resources are inherited from the ancestors, the Earth and its resources are a sacred heritage.

Global environmental Conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) and even the World Heritage Convention (WHC), among others, have tended to create a 'lowest common denominator' approach to resource management, which often ignores –or even militates against– aspects of cultural diversity. This is an attitude, however, that has gradually been changing in more recent times.

In many of the current discussions about environmental issues at national and international level, people are not often treated or regarded as part of the biosphere or as part of 'biodiversity'. Not surprisingly, conservation biologists and wildlife managers tend to focus on biological issues when addressing conservation of 'natural areas', but the achievement of conservation outcomes requires an understanding of people and their aspirations and an awareness of the political and social climate³.

Scale and diversity

One of the significant challenges in any discussion of ecosystem management and conservation is to maintain awareness of scale, and of the coexistence of several scales. Scale issues interact with diversity issues, especially the three basic and interactive elements of diversity: cultural, biological and spatial. The importance of all three elements should not be underestimated, nor should one be allowed to dominate. Prevailing values derived from the current beliefs of society can be influenced and shaped over time by information that is scientifically gathered, but at any given moment those values and beliefs may be more important in the shaping of public policy than the results of the latest scientific research. Cultural heritage also includes religious heritage, and spirituality can have effects beyond simply appreciating nature, through, *inter alia*, custodianship of sacred forests and sacred groves⁴.

UN approaches – UNEP and UNESCO

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 2002), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and the UN Environment Programme (respectively, UNESCO and UNEP) convened a high-level round table on *Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development*. At the round table, topics including 'diversity and sustainable development', 'diversity in nature and culture' and 'towards a culture of sustainable diversity' were discussed.

The degree of uncertainty surrounding the relationship between biological and cultural diversity, and the level of interest by participants in the round table, convinced UNESCO and UNEP to pursue joint work in this area. A 2003 UNEP Governing Council Resolution⁵ on environment and cultural diversity referred to the importance of further examining this issue in cooperation with UNESCO, with particular attention to the implications for human well-being. Relevant bodies within UNESCO also decided on further work, including cooperation with UNEP, in this topic area⁶.

Within UNESCO's normative work, the interplay between cultural diversity and nature is well reflected in many of its Conventions, while the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity specifically mentions the relationship with biological diversity⁷.

³ See Bennett (2003).

⁴ See Posey (1999), and more recently Deil et al (2005).

⁵ Governing Council Resolution 22/16, <http://www.unep.org/gc/gc22/>

⁶ UNESCO and the question of cultural diversity: review and strategies. 1946-2007: a study based on a selection of official documents; and World Culture Report: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and pluralism (2000).

⁷ http://www.eblida.org/topics/wto/unesco_cultdiv.pdf

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP)⁸, are most significant in exploring the interface between cultural and biological diversity. DRIP provides an insight into issues of relevance to indigenous peoples concerning cultural and biological diversity. Also, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was the first legal instrument the international community adopted to raise cultural diversity to the rank of ‘common heritage of humankind’ in an analogous way to the CBD’s recognition of biological diversity as a ‘common concern of humankind’.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration⁹ refers to the diversity of nature and the diversity of humans as important values and principles that are essential in international relations in the twenty-first century, from the perspective of achieving development in the new Millennium. Hence, in support of the Millennium Declaration, UNESCO has positioned itself as a key player in this new area, which is likely to bring important insights to the development agenda and also to other peaceful dialogues between governments.

Physical expressions of cultural and biological diversity include sites recognised as Biosphere Reserves or World Heritage Sites through UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme¹⁰ and World Heritage Convention (1972)¹¹.

1.2 Culture in the multilateral environmental agreements

Approaches taken by multilateral environmental agreements to linking cultural and biological diversity are as different as the agreements themselves, and the following are some brief illustrations of this.

World Heritage Convention

In 1992, the World Heritage Convention opened its list of sites to encompass ‘cultural landscapes’ in addition to ‘cultural sites’ and ‘natural sites’. In the case of certain sites, the cultural aspects of their uniqueness are to the fore, where landscapes have inspired and shaped specific cultural expression of unique value/nature; in others, it is the way cultures have shaped the physical environment that has satisfied the criteria for inscribing those sites on the World Heritage list.

The cultural values that are relevant include intangible aspects such as the sense of local identity associated with a particular distinctive landscape. While at first sight it may seem a paradox that local identity can also constitute ‘universal value’ as required by the WH criteria, this effectively signals a globally shared valuing of human cultural diversity, in an analogous way to the valuing of biological and geophysical diversity.

One important issue to consider, however, is that of the limitations associated with the ‘outstanding universal value’ approach adopted and applied in the context of the World Heritage Convention. In fact, experiences have demonstrated that sites that are culturally

⁸ Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 24 June 2007.

⁹ <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>.

¹⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/mab/mabProg.shtml>.

¹¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/>.

less deserving than others (because they are less aesthetically beautiful or less 'indigenous') nonetheless provide ecological benefits that are crucial to the populations inhabiting them. Conversely, sites that are ecologically simplified due to human agency may nonetheless hold values that are higher than would be judged according to World Heritage criteria¹².

What is certain is that the introduction of these 'mixed sites' and the related guidelines (*WHC Management Guidelines for Cultural Landscapes*)¹³ represents a welcome evolution of the World Heritage concept/approach and one that helps overcome the artificial barrier between culture and nature introduced by the conventional categories for World Heritage sites (i.e. 'natural' and 'cultural').

¹² See Hobbs et al (2006).

¹³ In the Operational Guidelines at <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide05-en.pdf>.

UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)

MAB, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme, launched in 1971, was the first international programme to espouse the concept that people and nature are inextricably linked; a concept which was later adopted by several multilateral environmental agreements. It operated as a research platform at the interface between people and nature.

Theoretical work has been complemented by place-based action. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves today has 531 sites in 105 countries. These sites are entire pieces of landscapes or seascapes, with their set of issues, problems and opportunities both in ecological and in socio-cultural terms. These sites offer ideal potential to serve as learning and research laboratories.

After 37 years of existence, MAB has developed a relatively complex bureaucratic process, typical of large institutions made up of national committees, programmes, advisory bodies, expert committees, etc. Its main message has been mainstreamed into the global development agenda, but with some recent exceptions, the Programme's scientific capacity to elucidate further the relationship between culture and nature appears to have waned.

CBD

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹⁴ is one of the major intergovernmental processes on the environment, which recognises both the dependency of humankind on biological diversity, and the special role of indigenous and local communities in conserving life on Earth. This recognition is enshrined both in the preamble of the Convention text and in its substantive provisions.

The conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of the benefits that nature provides –the three objectives of the CBD– are usually also the cornerstones of indigenous societies. The CBD, the Convention on Cultural Expressions and its preceding Declaration on Cultural Diversity (see section 1.1 above) share a similar value basis and theoretical foundation, on which a deeper understanding of cultural and biological diversity rests, and which should be further strengthened.

The work of the CBD and its partners on *inter alia* protected areas and sacred sites, and on indicators towards achieving the 2010 biodiversity target (specifically the indicator concerning the status and trends of linguistic diversity and numbers of speakers of indigenous languages) offers a clear indication of the co-dependence of these different forms of diversity¹⁵.

Indeed, in a similar way to the extinction crisis of the planet's species and genetic variety, the world's cultural diversity, principally the variety and wealth of languages and associated cultural traits, is exhibiting accelerated extinctions. Beyond their intrinsic value, plants, animals and ecosystems, in their variety and distinctiveness, contribute specific emotional and physical benefits to our lives and play an integral part in culture. Their loss, which equates to the loss of diversity within and among human civilisations, impoverishes us beyond repair. The promotion and protection jointly of biological and of cultural diversity is thus a vital area of opportunity for cooperation.

¹⁴ <http://www.biodiv.org/default.shtml>.

¹⁵ <http://www.biodiv.org/2010-target/default.shtml>; and <http://www.twentyten.net>.

CITES

CITES, while a Convention rooted in conservation of biodiversity, is also one dealing extensively with trade issues, but has not been a significant focus for debates on the specific issue of culture¹⁶. Decision-making in the Convention has usually focused on scientific and conservation concerns, based on advice from strong science-based committees. On the other hand, the process of trade itself is one which has cultural origins and cultural implications, so these issues might be expected to have some resonance in discussions in the Convention.

The decision at CITES COP13 (Bangkok, Thailand, October 2004) to allow non-commercial trade in individually marked and certified *ekipas*¹⁷ incorporated in finished jewellery for non-commercial purposes from Namibia is a characteristic example where cultural considerations have played a significant role. Much of Namibia's cultural heritage has been lost through the export of such pieces, and it is evident that the supply of antique *ekipas* has become severely limited. *Ekipas* are unique cultural objects found only in northern Namibia and southern Angola, and have become highly sought-after because of their aesthetic quality and cultural-historic value, and as elements in modern jewellery. Many *ekipas* have been exported as pre-Convention specimens. The COP, in agreeing to allow this trade, essentially allowed the Convention to operate exceptionally in the pursuit of cultural objectives.

International Whaling Commission

Among the many legal regimes that deal in various ways with whaling, the most significant is the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW)¹⁸, for which the governing body is the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The ICRW is at some variance with current norms of ecological concern and knowledge, and now stands in an uneasy relationship to the diverse cultural contexts within which whaling –as a tradition to be preserved, an abomination to be outlawed, or an environmental challenge to be managed– is set.

In addition to the legal regimes that are needed to ensure adequate and appropriate conservation and management of whales, there is a matrix of cultural values forming people's world-views¹⁹ about whales and their relationship with people. The close links between the question of sustainable use of wildlife, the rights of indigenous peoples and the issue of genetic resources have long been the subject of discussion in the literature²⁰. Whaling is a classic example of an issue that brings into play scales from the most local to the global.

The IWC moratorium on whaling from 1986 onwards has always accommodated aboriginal whaling operations, which –whatever their cultural and economic significance may be– use hunting techniques similar to those of 'commercial' whaling. At the heart of debates on international regulation of whaling therefore lies a clash of cultural views concerning the responsible use of the resource.

¹⁶ Pers. comm. Stephen Nash, CITES Secretariat.

¹⁷ Ivory trinkets or traditional ivory amulets.

¹⁸ <http://www.iwcoffice.org/commission/convention.htm>.

¹⁹ See Bridgewater and Bridgewater (2004).

²⁰ Lyngé (1993).

UN Convention to Combat Desertification

The UNCCD has acknowledged the important role of cultural values and cultural diversity in combating desertification. It has embraced traditional knowledge, as part of the complex of cultural diversity, as a way of assisting local communities to respond to the problem of desertification and land degradation.

A tenet of the UNCCD is that ‘desertification is a global problem with local solutions’²¹. From its inception, the UNCCD’s strategy was to build upon traditional technology, know-how and cultural practices with the aim of increasing the ability of both governments and stakeholders to control agricultural and other risks by improving techniques and restoring degraded lands. Each cultural practice is not an isolated solution for a single problem, but is part of a sophisticated and often multi-purpose system and an integral approach (society, culture and economy) linked to the careful management of local resources.

Ramsar

The original Parties negotiating the Ramsar Convention in 1971 recognised culture as one of the imperatives to be taken into account, but it received scant attention until the standard datasheet for Ramsar sites was developed in 1990, and a box was included in the datasheet for information on social and cultural values. The next occasion on which serious attention was given to the issue was at the seventh Conference of the Parties in 1999, which had the theme *People and Wetlands: The Vital Link*.

The 26th meeting of the Standing Committee in 2001 discussed a range of issues concerning the role of cultural and socio-economic issues in the Convention, and ways of enhancing that role (including the question of a potential site selection criterion), and requested the preparation of a discussion document to facilitate debate on these matters at COP8 in 2002.

“**Decision SC26-14:** The Standing Committee determined to have a broad-ranging discussion on the role of cultural and socio-economic issues in the Convention, and on how to enhance that role, and requested the preparation of a discussion document to facilitate talks at COP8. Uganda was invited to work with the Bureau, the Chair of STRP and any other Party and IOP interested to contribute, in the preparation of the discussion paper.”

It should also be noted that a paper prepared by the CBD and Ramsar Secretariats concerning their approaches to criteria and classification of inland water ecosystems was considered by CBD COP6 (April 2002). This paper noted that the CBD’s indicative list of the components of biodiversity includes some components (notably concerning wild relatives of domesticated species; species, communities, or genes of social, scientific, or cultural importance; and importance for research) that were not covered by Ramsar’s site selection criteria.

This formed part of the context for the eighth Ramsar COP, which had the theme: *Wetlands: water, life, and culture*. The COP saw the launch of a book on culture and wetlands

²¹ <http://www.unccd.int>.

(Viñals 2002), as well as an exhibition. Resolution VIII.19²² on ‘Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands’ was adopted, and in its operative part the COP “TAKES NOTE WITH INTEREST of the list of *Guiding Principles* included in the Annex to this Resolution”. Twenty seven such principles were identified.

The ninth COP in 2005 had the theme *Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods*. One clear perspective emerging from the discussions was continuing discomfort with the idea of using culture as a primary reason for *identification* of wetlands of international importance. However Parties agreed to a new Resolution, IX.21, which *inter alia* established a Working Group on cultural issues, and this Group has been instrumental in developing the present Guidance.

1.3 Cultural landscapes and wetlands

Defining cultural landscapes is important for illustrating the potential of interactions between biodiversity and cultural diversity to support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the resilience of cultures and societies. In principle there is a strong nexus here with the thinking developed under the World Heritage Convention; however there is an important difference between UNESCO’s interpretation of a ‘cultural landscape’ concept and that defined by others. One example is the Council of Europe’s European Landscape Convention (2000), which reflects a principle that landscapes are always cultural. The scope of this (the entire surface of Europe rather than individual sites) may however dilute the usefulness of the concept, given the impossibility of reconciling everywhere major economic forces with landscape protection, management and planning.

Humanity’s relationship to the natural environment has so far been seen predominantly in biophysical terms; but there is now a growing recognition that societies themselves have created elaborate processes for protecting and managing their resources. Most landscapes are, or have been, subject to cultural influences, and as such, maintenance of ecosystem services and conservation of biological diversity are achievable only when cultural diversity is maintained. Humankind’s management of biodiversity thus becomes a cultural expression, and, in turn, biodiversity shapes human culture²³.

Accordingly, the intimate link between science, culture, socio-economic concerns and sustainable development must be strengthened²⁴. A strong scientific basis is essential for all of today’s major development and resource-related concerns, because science not only provides an explanation of how environmental processes work, but also its application may offer solutions to some of the critical problems. For wetland issues, identification of their cultural elements, or the cultural elements of the landscape in which they are found, is an important step in ensuring that agreed policies under the Ramsar Convention can be implemented effectively and efficiently.

²² http://www.ramsar.org/res/key_res_viii_19_e.htm.

²³ See de Cuéllar (1995).

²⁴ See Posey (1999), Bérard et al (2005).

1.4 Human survival and wetlands

Wetlands have provided valuable resources and sanctuaries for human populations and many other life forms since the very beginning of life on Earth. Major civilisations have been established in association with them and in dependence on their resources, especially the resource of water. Settlements²⁵, including major cities such as Amsterdam, Bangkok, Tunis, Guayaquil (with more than two million people) and Venice, have been built in or in the immediate vicinity of wetlands.

Box 1: The Nile in Ancient Egypt

Nowhere is the intricate relationship between water, wetlands and human survival better illustrated than in the case of the Nile River and ancient Egypt. The cyclical ebb and flow of the river waters determined the fortunes and fate of the powerful civilisation that grew in the area and left its weighty marks.

During *Akhet*, the season of inundation, the Nile flooded *kmt*, 'the black land', which included most of the flat plains along its banks. This allowed planting of wheat and barley in September, during the season of *Peret*, and these were harvested in March or April. *Shemu*, the summer season of drought followed, and the life-sustaining cycle was repeated. During the Old Kingdom, in the 3rd millennium BC, it was the kings who were supposed to maintain *Ma'at*, the cosmic order, and guarantee the continuity of the Nile cycle.

Climatic oscillations, however, led to the dramatic decrease of the Nile flow at certain periods (Fagan 1999). As a result, only small parts of cultivated lands were flooded and the impact was dramatic, with large-scale famine unavoidable. This eroded the power of the kings and led to massive political unrest. Thus, the Old Kingdom collapsed after 2160 BC against a background of extended hunger and political turmoil in Southern Egypt. This phenomenon has often been repeated in Egyptian history in more recent times.

Malaria in many parts of the world has historically been a negative factor driving human populations away from wetlands. It has also been one of the main reasons for the drainage of wetlands, not completely halted even when the discovery of quinine in South America provided an effective remedy to the onslaught of *Anopheles anopheles*, the vector for the disease. The conquest of the plains with their many wetlands and their use for agriculture entailed a heavy health cost for the people concerned.

A wide range of other diseases and/or their vectors are supported or transmitted by water and wetland ecosystems. Yet, often the impact of these diseases is accentuated by poor management at the human scale, and it is overly simplistic to see them as simply an inherently negative factor of wetland systems.

Human activities of some sort and to some degree of intensity have existed in the majority of the wetlands of the world. The abandonment of traditional activities of the primary re-

²⁵ An interesting report on such a settlement in NW Greece is found in Hourmouziades G.H. (1996), The Prehistoric Lakeside Settlement of Dispilio (Kastoria), Codex, Thessaloniki, Greece, 64 pp.

source use sector in many countries during much of the 20th century reduced the perceived importance of some wetlands as a direct resource base for human survival. On the other hand, many of their other values to people have begun to be better understood and appreciated. These include a regulatory role in the water cycle, flood abatement, aquifer recharge, processing of nutrients and pollutants, shore protection, food provision, and educational and recreational opportunities.

Box 2: Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia

During the rainy season, Tonle Sap, or Great Lake, fed by the overflowing waters of the Mekong River, grows to six times its normal size, to more than 16,000 square kilometres, thus absorbing floods and releasing the water gradually. One of the largest freshwater bodies in Southeast Asia, Tonle Sap has been the home of a fisher population living in traditional wooden houses on stilts (as in the village of Chhnok Trou), with extensive use of reeds and very characteristic fishing and transport boats and artefacts.

In recent times, however, the situation has been changing rapidly and radically. Internal migration and explosive population growth have increased the pressures on the lake, and have almost completely destroyed local architecture. Pollution of the lake is increasing, both from domestic sources and from cultivation; forest logging is increasing the inflow of silt, while shallow areas, necessary for fish spawning, are being drained. In addition, dam construction has decreased freshwater flow into the lake. Overfishing and illegal fishing practices are quite common. The result is a dramatic reduction in fish catches, which used to supply more than 60% of the protein consumption in Cambodia. In parallel, the rich local culture of the fisher communities is rapidly eroding.

The Cambodian government has started a new initiative to face effectively the problems at Tonle Sap, but strong and sustained efforts will be necessary to reverse the current negative trends.

From the very beginning, water –along with air and food– has been understood as an absolute necessity for survival. After the gradual shift from hunter/gatherer clans to agricultural societies, water became an essential prerequisite for food production. Places where it was abundantly available became the seats of great civilisations, as in the case of the Nile for the Egyptians, the Euphrates and Tigris for the Mesopotamians and the Mekong for the Khmer Empire. Its scarcity in periods of drought brought down the same powerful societies. It is only natural, therefore, that water has been venerated in many religions and the ‘blessing of the waters’ has been a common ritual. Wetlands in turn, as a major source of water, have been similarly respected in these traditions. Thus, the values of the wetlands, and especially their cultural values, have been inextricably linked with human survival. In a contemporary framework, water is often associated with an idea of flow, while wetlands are associated with an idea of static water. However, this distinction is simplistic, as water in aquifers can remain static, while coastal lagoons can experience a very dynamic water regime during different times of the year. In any case, rivers and other flowing waters are included in the Ramsar definition of wetlands, and floodplains experience dynamic water movement in times of floods.

Yet, in spite of all conservation and ‘wise use’ efforts, wetland destruction has continued in many parts of the world, in developed and developing countries alike. At the same time, the appreciation of wetland values has led to significant projects for the restoration of lost or heavily degraded wetlands, usually at much greater cost than their initial conservation would have entailed. The experience from these projects has shown how very difficult it is to restore to any degree the values and ecological functions of destroyed or degraded wetlands. It has also demonstrated that it is practically impossible to restore, once lost, their previous cultural and historical values. These values are often associated with inanimate objects, such as buildings and other structures, as well as sacred species of fauna²⁶. However, a large part of them are borne by local societies, woven into their social fabric, constituting an integral part of their identity, and hence they are lost in a few generations after wetlands are destroyed. It should be stressed therefore that the loss of wetlands does not only remove important resources, but also causes profound social damage to human communities.

Wetlands and culture coexist. Wetland-related cultures and their diversity can support sustainable livelihoods and the well-being of human societies. Experience in many countries (e.g. in the Mekong River Basin) indicates that lack of awareness, weaknesses and gaps in identifying, valuing and preserving the cultural values of wetlands, as well as insufficient attention to the wetland ecosystems themselves, has caused loss or diminishment of various traditional cultures during the past century. Loss of wetland-related culture is a threatening sign of wetland loss, and loss of wetlands often results in unsustainable livelihoods.

Box 3: The case of Lake Carla in Greece

In the centre of Greece, the fertile region of Thessaly depended for water until the beginning of the 20th century on seven lakes; none of which exist today. Lake Carla, the last and largest, a major Mediterranean wetland known for its fisheries and the large populations of migratory birds it hosted, was drained in the early 1960s to provide agricultural land. As a result, the local society that depended on lake fisheries was destroyed, taking with it the traditions associated with this important activity. Many inhabitants moved to the cities, while some attempted to cultivate the land that resulted from the drainage.

The results soon proved disastrous. For irrigation, water from the lake was replaced by intense pumping from underground sources. This caused a dramatic drop in the level of aquifers (today lowered as far as 300 meters below the surface in certain places) and the beginning of intrusion of salt water, although the sea was several kilometres away. The fields soon became salinated and as a result cultivation became more and more difficult and less productive, while large parts of the former lake bottom area were abandoned. Pollution from agricultural and industrial run-off, initially filtered by the wetland, was fed untreated into the Pagasitikos Bay, causing severe algal blooms and other eutrophication problems.

At present, a large government project is under way with financial support from the European Union, which is expected to restore a considerable part of the lake by 2011. It is hoped that, if successful, it will re-establish some of the lake’s functions and values. The rich cultural heritage of the Carla fisheries, however, cannot be recreated, but perhaps some of its remnants (boats and tools) will be preserved in a local museum which is to be established.

²⁶ Such as crocodiles, fish, manatees in Benin, and other species that are sacred for certain African cultures.

1.5 Rationale for concern for cultural aspects

The Ramsar Secretariat has been developing links with the European Archaeological Council and other groups concerning the key importance of wetlands for archaeological and cultural landscape heritage conservation.

Box 4: A positive concern for the cultural values of wetlands

The Ramsar Contracting Parties from Central and Western Asia, gathering at a regional meeting hosted in Tehran by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 3-5 February 2002, issued the *Tehran Communiqué*, which included the following statement:

“Recognising the vital role of wetland ecosystems for biodiversity conservation and for the well-being of human communities; and welcoming the theme for World Wetlands Day 2002 and the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP8), on ‘Wetlands: Water, Life, and Culture’ which explores the cultural values of wetlands as a tool for their conservation, and emphasises the importance of people’s engagement in conservation efforts, we undertake to explore cultural issues in our national and local contexts and seek to make our public more aware of the cultural, as well as the natural, values of wetlands.”

At the Asian Wetland Symposium 2005, 6-9 February 2005 in Bhubaneswar, India, 400 participants from 32 countries met and called for action to ensure: “...that innovative ecosystem-based approaches be adopted to promote wetland conservation and management to support sustainable livelihoods with emphasis on documentation and sharing of cultural heritage and values to provide a platform for conservation and management” (*The Chilika Statement*).

The theme of this 3rd Asian Wetland Symposium was ‘Innovative Approaches to Sustainable Livelihood’ and its Technical Session III was on ‘Cultural Values of Wetlands as Engine for Sustainable Livelihood’. See Asian Wetland Symposium (2005).

Since through the ages many human settlements have been located in or close to wetlands, significant archaeological remains are found today within them or in their vicinity. Beyond isolated structures, these may include entire ancient cities, such as Nicopolis, in the Amvrakikos Gulf of Western Greece, and some which are inhabited even today, as in the case of Empúrias, in Catalonia, Spain. Another example is the Ancient hospital of Neak Pean in Cambodia.

A particular interest of wetlands from the archaeological point of view is that they preserve records of human activities through the ages, which are not so well preserved in other environments. Peatlands especially, due to their anoxic and waterlogged conditions, preserve organic matter well, such as wood, leather and textiles, and in addition pollen, insects, plants and other materials that in drier conditions degrade rapidly. Recent archaeological excavations in wetlands, in the United Kingdom in particular, have unearthed a treasury of objects that permit much better understanding of their historical period. Similar work in the Hutovo Blato wetland in Bosnia and Herzegovina has discovered remains from three Etruscan boats²⁷.

²⁷ As reported by J. Vego during the Sixth Ramsar European Meeting (Stockholm, May 2008).

Wooden remains from prehistoric settlements have been found preserved in the muddy bottom of the Black Sea, informing us of the structure of those settlements. Well-preserved ships have been discovered in Venice and in Marseille. Ancient buildings have been found underwater in Titicaca Lake. Thus wetlands, even if degraded or reduced, can retain a high degree of archaeological importance.

Box 5: Sunken ships in the Venice Lagoon, Italy

In mid 2001, a 1-hectare area of the Venice lagoon was temporarily drained at the site of a lost island, which included the 11th century Augustinian monastery of San Marco in Boccalama. The monastery was abandoned in 1347, the island was turned into a cemetery for plague victims, and it disappeared into the water in the 16th century, due to land subsidence.

The ensuing archaeological research not only found the traces of the monastery, but also discovered in good condition two large ships, a galley (38 m. long by 5 m wide) and a transport vessel (24 m by 6 m), which had sunk to the bottom and been covered with sand. It is presumed that they were on the verge of being decommissioned and had been sent to act as barricades for the protection of the vulnerable island. Both were dated to the early years of the 14th century and their remains provide invaluable information on the construction of boats of that period.

Archaeological authorities have detailed information about 300 such cultural areas of interest in the bottom of the Venice Lagoon, whose locations are kept secret until excavation becomes feasible.

It should not be forgotten, however, that cultural values are not only associated with the past (either remote or recent), but also with the present, as culture evolves and is being created, in one form or another, on a continuous basis. Use of the word ‘heritage’ in some language translations can be misleading in this respect, and in English it should be understood as including ‘living heritage’ and the legacy or inheritance for future generations, as well as historical heritage.

From a broader perspective, a large percentage of Ramsar sites have major cultural significance, as demonstrated by their corresponding Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS)²⁸.

More widely than Ramsar sites, a preliminary analysis of a significant number of wetlands of national and local importance in some countries in Asia (i.e. 109 sites in Thailand, 30 sites in Lao PDR, 101 sites in Myanmar, plus visits and observations to many sites in Cambodia and Vietnam), for which descriptive information is presented in the respective national wetland inventory books, indicates that a large percentage of wetland sites (55% of those in Thailand, 27% of those in Lao PDR and 20% of those in Myanmar) are recorded as having associated cultural values. (It should be noted here that most existing national wetland inventories still lack information on cultural aspects.)

²⁸ From a study carried out in 2002 by Dave Pritchard.

Box 7: Armagnac, France - A new type of Ramsar site in the making

Armagnac is an area well known for its brandy and at the same time for its gentle slopes with varied cultures in a rural area of south-western France. It is also known for its culinary traditions. The agricultural landscape and the waterscapes of Armagnac, embedded in a web of heaths, woodlots and fish ponds are key to the sustainable development of this area.

The Armagnac Ponds retain freshwater for irrigation and for watering stock such as cattle. Ponds absorb excessive floods and capture sediment and nutrient flows. They also provide abundant fish resources and the regional biodiversity hotspots are linked to the ponds, especially where surrounded by shallow riparian zones, flood prone meadows and wet forests.

These characteristics were presented to the Ramsar Secretariat during a site visit in 2008 for Ramsar designation of the area, hosted by the professional organisation supporting the adaptation of agricultural structures in Gers province.

These sensitive wetland ecosystems are characterised by a rich biodiversity combined with significant cultural values. Numerous fish ponds in the area, for example, have important cultural implications as many of them date back to the original dikes built by medieval monks, while simultaneously hosting an important ecosystem valuable for fish production. The ponds also provide a population stronghold for the European pond terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*), which is a vulnerable species listed by the European Union Flora Fauna and Habitats Directive and the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

Restored fishponds, their historic heritage (e.g. water mills) and the associated natural habitats with their rich biodiversity rapidly become a tourist attraction. One local wine producer is already using the pond terrapin in his valley pond as a marketing device. Being able to use the Ramsar logo on his bottles, as an environmental quality label for his family farm, is seen as a potential business asset.

The Ramsar Convention offers a highly appropriate context for the Pays d'Armagnac's integrated management of water, wetlands, agriculture, cultural heritage and socio-economic development. The regional office of the French Ministry of Ecology (DIREN Midi-Pyrénées) has undertaken to look favourably into the proposed Ramsar Site designation and to confirm its compatibility with the French and EU regulations. Furthermore, at the time of writing it is expected that all 104 of the local mayors will vote to support the designation during their general assembly in September 2008.

Thus, the importance of the cultural values of wetlands may broaden their appeal to significant sectors of society. These include not only specialists in the various forms of culture, from archaeology to music, but also the wider public at large.

Based on efforts to combine cultural values with natural environment values in wetlands, an integrated tourism interpretation approach can be promoted. Financial benefits and employment that could be generated through this could be a great asset for local communities, and could enhance their appreciation of the value of wetland resources. This in turn will enhance the economic valuation of wetlands, contributing to their conservation and wise use. Such an approach can be valid in many wetlands with significant cultural values, where

visitors can be attracted by virtue of both their cultural and natural heritage. A particular case is the sites that already have a strong visitor interest in their monuments, but little yet for their natural values. In all cases, care must be taken that such activities do not add new pressures in sensitive wetlands.

It is not only financial considerations that concern local and indigenous communities. The significance and sometimes uniqueness of the cultural values of certain wetlands contributes to these communities' self-esteem, solidarity, strength, spiritual traditions and moral codes. This can be expected to enhance their readiness to safeguard such sites, often including Ramsar sites.

That said, it must be clearly understood that not all cultural aspects of wetland-related activities are necessarily to be viewed as positive in a Ramsar context simply because they exist. Objectives and actions based on cultural values must always be considered in a context of compatibility with the wise use principle of the Convention.



2. The main policy guidance for Ramsar Contracting Parties, and proposed strategic actions

In accordance with Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.20, certain general objectives can be proposed to the Contracting Parties for the incorporation of cultural aspects in the management of wetlands. These are supplemented in Chapter 4 with more specific objectives associated with major wetland-related activities.

It should be pointed out here that the guidance provided is only indicative. Culture is society-specific and each Contracting Party will have to decide on its own approach and priorities. On the other hand, disseminating knowledge on the experience gained in each country can be a very useful process in improving understanding of the options, methods and tools available.

2.1 General, and conservation and management objectives

Below are proposed general and specific objectives that Parties are encouraged to implement now where appropriate, and which could be included eventually in a Ramsar strategy for the incorporation of cultural aspects in the management and wise use of wetlands. These objectives encompass many of the guiding principles initially included in the Appendix of Resolution VIII.19.

2.1.1 General objectives

- GO.1 – To bridge the differences of approach between natural and social sciences (*from guiding principle 8*).
- GO.2 – To identify relevant associated partners and to encourage cross-sectoral and international cooperation (*replaces guiding principles 9 and 27*).
- GO.3 – To link the cultural aspects of wetlands with those of water (*from guiding principle 2*).

2.1.2 Conservation and management objectives

- C+MO.1 – To use the proposed Ramsar Matrix²⁹ in order to present in summary form the cultural aspects of individual wetlands (*replaces guiding principle 1*).
- C+MO.2 – To incorporate information about cultural aspects, where available, in the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for the description of Wetlands of International Importance, whilst ensuring the protection of traditional rights and interests (*replaces guiding principle 20*).
- C+MO.3 – To incorporate the cultural aspects of wetlands in management planning (*from guiding principle 21*).
- C+MO.4 – To include cultural values in wetland monitoring processes (*from guiding principle 22*).
- C+MO.5 – To consider the use of institutional and legal instruments for the conservation and protection of cultural values in wetlands (*from guiding principle 23*).
- C+MO.6 – To integrate fully cultural and social considerations into environmental impact assessments (*replaces guiding principle 24*).

2.2 Guidance on the general objectives

The differences of approach between culture specialists and wetland managers should be bridged, as both parties have interests that do not need to be in conflict. In recent times, culture specialists have become more involved with the impact of environmental issues on the cultural heritage. From their side, wetland managers, normally trained in the natural sciences, have become increasingly sensitive to aesthetic considerations in planning visitor facilities and exhibitions, to the importance of the remnants of older civilisations in or close to the sites under their responsibility, and to other cultural aspects. Thus a propitious climate has been developing, which should facilitate collaboration and eventual synergy between the natural and cultural disciplines.

²⁹ See Section 2.3 below, as well as Appendix III.

G0.1 – To bridge the differences of approach between natural and social sciences

(from guiding principle 8)

In order to bring together the different approaches that may exist between specialists coming from different backgrounds in the natural and social sciences, the following actions are indicated:

- a) make efforts to find a common language between the two disciplines and define carefully some key concepts such as ‘cultural values’ and ‘management of cultural values’, and if necessary choose a more easily accepted concept such as ‘cultural aspects’;
- b) promote the understanding of each others’ objectives and attempt to agree upon certain common ones;
- c) include culture specialists in wetland management project teams, from the initial project development phases;
- d) incorporate cultural aspects in the interpretation at visitor centres in natural protected areas; and
- e) develop a joint methodology for managing cultural values in wetlands, benefiting from the scientific background and the experience of both sides. This can best be done through pilot cases, where collaboration can be nurtured in a controlled environment and the results evaluated and then adapted for wider use.

At the international level, collaboration between the Ramsar Convention and organisations concerned with cultural issues and with the interface between culture and biodiversity, and culture and development, should be established and strengthened, as appropriate. In a first phase, such collaboration should focus on the following (non-exhaustive) list of organisations:

- Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), with an emphasis on those World Heritage Sites which overlap with Ramsar Sites;
- International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM);
- International Council of Museums (ICOM), with a focus on the appropriate methods of presenting cultural elements in wetland sites;
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), mainly in developing guidelines for the protection of historic buildings and structures related to wetlands or in their immediate vicinity;
- UNESCO, including the World Heritage Centre and the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB);
- Wetlands Archaeological Research Project (WARP), a network with 300 members worldwide;
- World Bank, co-ordinating donor interest and support; and
- European Archaeological Council, in view of its initiatives in wetland archaeology.

At the national level, in numerous countries, horizontal co-operation on wetlands and water—even at the government level, and between clearly related sectors—tends to be weak or absent. Thus, operational relations between government sectors dealing with wetlands and water and those dealing with culture should be established or strengthened.

G0.2 – To identify relevant associated partners and to encourage cross-sectoral co-operation at the international and the national levels

(replaces guiding principles 9 and 27)

At the international/regional level, the following actions are indicated, in order to re-inforce the capacity of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and wetland managers to incorporate fully the cultural aspects of wetlands into their management planning:

- a) identify the international and regional institutions that have expertise on these matters or that may be interested in developing it; and
- b) enlist their support in international, regional, national and local activities aimed at incorporating or reinforcing the inclusion of cultural aspects in the management of wetlands.

At the national level, suggested implementation actions include:

- c) initiate dialogue between the sectors dealing with wetlands/water and the sectors dealing with cultural issues;
- d) as a first step, invite culture sector representatives to participate as full members in National Ramsar/Wetland Committees;
- e) undertake joint policy reviews aimed at the conservation of both the natural and cultural heritage in wetlands; and
- f) in all cases, ensure the active participation of indigenous and local communities and stakeholders in such collaborative processes (see Ramsar Handbook 5, 3rd edition [2007]).

At the cultural level, wetlands and water should be treated in an integrated manner, as their inextricable anthropic linkages have existed since early civilisations and are still pertinent today. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider wetlands and water as one domain when assessing or promoting relevant cultural aspects.

**G0.3 – To link the cultural aspects of wetlands with those of water
(from guiding principle 2)**

In order to establish a close linkage between the cultural aspects of wetlands and water in general, the following implementation actions are indicated:

- a) promote understanding by decision-makers and the wider public of the role of wetlands in the water cycle;
- b) identify such linkages in oral traditions, religion and mythology and the arts and make them widely known through CEPA activities;
- c) place particular emphasis on traditional methods of water management related to wetlands, and draw from them useful lessons and public awareness material;
- d) identify opportunities provided by religious/cultural events and festivals focusing on water to advance the notions of wetland conservation and wise use; and
- e) continue to present water as a key issue in wetland management and in the application of the Convention on Wetlands.

2.3 Guidance on the conservation and management objectives

The Ramsar Working Group on Culture has developed a Matrix for the rapid and simplified recording and assessment of the cultural aspects of specific wetland sites (see Appendix III). Its use may facilitate the incorporation of cultural aspects in management activities.

**C+M0.1 – To use the proposed Ramsar Matrix in order to present in summary form
the cultural aspects of individual wetlands
(replaces guiding principle 1)**

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) apply the proposed Ramsar Matrix to selected wetland sites; and
- b) communicate the results and proposals for improvement in the Matrix to the Ramsar Secretariat.

The cultural aspects of wetlands should be fully incorporated in wetland inventory systems. Cultural aspects should also be recorded with as much detail as possible in the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for the description of Wetlands of International Importance, so as to take them into account *inter alia* when preparing management plans for these sites.

C+M0.2 – To incorporate information about cultural aspects, where available, in wetland inventories and in Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), whilst ensuring the protection of traditional rights and interests (replaces guiding principle 20)

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) ensure that cultural aspects are fully incorporated in all wetland inventory systems and datasets, with the co-operation of experts on identification and recording of cultural elements; and
- b) ensure that when filling out the RIS for new designations of Wetlands of International Importance, as well as when preparing updates of the RIS of Ramsar sites designated in the past, any cultural aspects of the sites in question are fully researched and reflected in the RIS.

The cultural aspects of wetlands should be fully incorporated in the management planning of sites, involving relevant indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

C+M0.3 – To incorporate the cultural aspects of wetlands in management planning (from guiding principle 21)

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) carry out research and undertake inventories of all relevant cultural aspects relating to the site in question and select those that will be subject of defined management objectives, with the active participation of relevant communities, groups, institutions and individuals, taking into account the guidance provided in the present document; and
- b) incorporate in the management plan specific activities addressing the cultural aspects of the site.

Mechanisms for monitoring wetland ecological character should include indicators related to cultural aspects. In general, indicators are a measurable means for identifying and documenting changes and trends, both positive and negative. They are also invaluable for communicating these trends in a convincing way to decision-makers and the public. Usually, within the wetland monitoring context, indicators are set for ecological and sometimes socioeconomic parameters, but not often yet for cultural ones.

**C+MO.4 – To include cultural values in wetland monitoring processes
(from guiding principle 22)**

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) develop and incorporate indicators for cultural parameters in the monitoring of the status of ecological character of wetlands and its change or possible change, on the basis of scientific work on the development and testing of such indicators; and
- b) train practitioners in the gathering of culture-related data and in its interpretation.

Protection and enhancement of wetland-related cultural values should be incorporated in legal and institutional frameworks. Where possible, nature and cultural protection measures should be integrated, coordinated, harmonised and streamlined. In this context, it should be realised that policies and measures addressing wetland conservation are often implemented with a degree of laxity, while legislation for the protection of archaeological heritage is often stricter. Harmonising the two should ensure a higher degree of implementation (and if necessary enforcement) of both, and care should be taken to avoid the alternative ‘lowest common denominator’ effect.

**C+MO.5 – To consider the use of institutional and legal instruments for the
conservation and protection of cultural values in wetlands
(from guiding principle 23)**

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) review the existing legal and institutional framework concerning wetlands and water, on the one hand, and cultural values on the other, and identify weaknesses/conflicts (see Ramsar Handbook 3, 3rd edition (2007));
- b) incorporate culture-related issues in national wetland policies or equivalent instruments; and
- c) enact, or when necessary strengthen, legislation for the conservation of wetland cultural landscapes and their values.

Environmental impact assessments (EIAs), when adequately applied, have proven useful in optimising spatial planning decisions and mitigating negative impacts from development activities on wetlands. They should now be extended to ensure the integration of cultural values as well, as a means for the conservation and enhancement of such values. Within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD COP6 has adopted Decision VI/10 containing Recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities.

**C+MO.6 – To integrate fully cultural and social considerations into environmental impact assessments
(replaces guiding principle 24)**

Suggested implementation actions:

- a) propose and encourage, when required, modifications/additions in the existing national legislation governing the application of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to incorporate proper consideration of the cultural aspects of wetlands;
- b) include the cultural aspects of wetlands where relevant in all EIAs of wetland and water development and management projects, as well as of any other projects or programmes that may affect wetlands;
- c) promote the incorporation of similar considerations in the process for the adoption and implementation of systems for strategic environmental assessment (SEA);
- d) apply the recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities, adopted under Decision VI/10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2.4 Proposed actions at strategic level

The Convention on Wetlands, including the Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat and its Regional Initiatives (such as MedWet, the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative and WacoWet, the West African Coastal Zones Wetlands Network), as well as its International Organisation Partners, should play a key role in the implementation of the main objectives mentioned above and in catalysing the launch of the proposed actions. In this process, partners from the cultural sector should be sought and the necessary activities should be decentralised as much as possible, retaining a strategic facilitation role for the Ramsar Secretariat and the Convention's Working Group on Culture.

In a first phase, these efforts could perhaps be incorporated into the work plan of the Ramsar Secretariat. In the medium term, however, once the programme starts expanding, it will require more substantial human (and, therefore, financial) inputs to carry out the tasks agreed, which must be secured through appropriate fundraising, beyond the core budget of the Ramsar Convention.

Thus, maintaining and enhancing the cultural values of wetlands will require long-term efforts by a wide variety of actors and stakeholders throughout the world. The following suggestions concerning specific actions should be considered by the Convention and its partners for implementation when the required resources are identified or become available.

Wider actions

- i) A short- and medium-term strategy for the identification, safeguard and use of the cultural aspects of wetlands should be developed, defining measurable and realistic objectives, a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities, activities to be carried out with priorities assigned, the resources required, and appropriate indicators to allow the monitoring of progress made. The Convention Secretariat should co-ordinate this task through the Ramsar Culture Working Group, but wide participation of all the relevant organisations interested in this matter should be encouraged. The Strategy should include both a general approach and regional components.
- ii) As part of the Strategy, an initial inventory of cultural aspects based on the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) should be organised and maintained and its results widely disseminated, taking also into account the Ramsar Matrix proposed (Appendix III). Compatible methods and tools for inventories of the cultural aspects of wetlands should be developed, tested and widely discussed, so that the information collected is both verifiable and comparable. The National Wetland Inventory of each country should be revised and amended where required to include adequate detailed information on cultural aspects.
- iii) Universities and other research and learning institutions should be encouraged to undertake more applied research on cultural aspects related to wetlands and the results disseminated in a form useful to wetland managers and policy-makers. In addition, existing research knowledge on cultural aspects should be found through bibliographic research and should be repackaged and disseminated so that it can become accessible to those responsible for wetlands.
- iv) Examples of good practice in the area of identification, safeguarding and use of the cultural aspects of wetlands should be identified and made widely known. This work could be organised on a regional basis. The Mediterranean Wetland Initiative (MedWet) could initiate a first pilot exercise and identify such examples in the Mediterranean Basin, based on the work already carried out by SEHUMED and Med-INA, as well as WacoWet in West Africa. Ramsar Contracting Parties and/or International Organisation Partners could undertake similar work for other regions. In a first phase, the pilot cases selected could be posted on the Ramsar Web site, and their publication and dissemination in other appropriate forms should also be envisaged.
- v) Practical tools, mechanisms and other concrete guidance should be provided to those responsible for wetland management, complemented by training and transfer of know-how. As first steps, a practical manual and a training module should be produced. This should constitute one of the first projects to be developed and launched, once executive(s) and potential funders are identified.
- vi) A wide programme of public awareness activities concerning the cultural aspects of wetlands should be organised through web sites, publications, exhibitions, events (such as World Wetlands Day celebrations) and other appropriate means. One very effective mechanism could be the reconnection of existing traditional festivals to wetlands and efforts to re-establish those festivals that have become abandoned. A typical example would be the El Rocío procession through the Doñana National Park (Ramsar site) in Andalucía, Spain. These festivals attract large sections of the local populations (as well as visitors) and encourage an active participation by those attending, in contrast to other, more passive means of communication. A global inventory of such traditional festivals related to wetlands and water should be carried out.

Specific initiatives

A travelling exhibition on culture and wetlands prepared by the Ramsar Secretariat and other interested organisations and circulating globally (physically and through the Web) may be a cost-effective means for increasing public awareness and support. Already the European Archaeological Council has proposed participating in such an endeavour.

A manual on the conservation and enhancement of cultural values related to wetlands and water is a necessary tool at an early stage. Although there is little practical experience available in the management of many types of wetland-related cultural resources and the enhancement of their values, sufficient material has been gathered to provide an initial basis for such a manual. It would certainly not be exhaustive, but it would act as a powerful tool for the sensitisation of those responsible for wetlands and for bringing them into contact with culture-oriented institutions and individuals.

An intense effort should be made to include social and cultural values in all ongoing wetland management projects and to incorporate such values in new project proposals. Already this has started in certain cases, for example:

- In MedWetCoast, a GEF/FFEM, USD 15.5 million, 5-year project (already completed) concerning 15 sites in 6 countries, an inventory of cultural elements has been included as part of the characterisation of each site. In addition, two case studies for managing cultural heritage have been carried out in greater detail in two sites, in Egypt and Tunisia;
- In a GEF project taking place at the time of writing in Benin for 'Community-Based Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Management (CBCMBM)', a social impact assessment that includes cultural aspects has been completed as part of preparatory studies;
- The development of Xi-Xi Wetland Park, Hang Zhou, China, is based upon using the accumulated cultural management expertise over the last 1500 years. The park is a series of 3,000 fish ponds, and is being developed in three stages, with a new interpretative centre being planned to showcase the links between cultural understanding of the wetlands management and the present biological diversity;
- In the Moulting Lagoons Wetland of International Importance in Tasmania, Australia, a limited collection of wild bird eggs by Aboriginal people has been reinstated, to allow them to continue to practise cultural activities, including dietary practices, in a way consistent with long term conservation of the site and its biodiversity;
- Med-INA, the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, is carrying out a three-year project on the cultural values of Mediterranean wetlands (2007-2010), co-funded by the MAVA Foundation.

Particular attention should be given to launching integrated management projects for sites that are designated both under the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on World Heritage and/or are Biosphere Reserves under the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and are found to have important cultural components.



3. Practical activities for wetlands and related cultural values

3.1 A possible typology of activities and values

To systematise the cultural values related to wetlands, a typology of wetland-related activities has been considered necessary. A suggestion for this is presented in Table 01 below, which draws on a matrix proposed by Med-INA³⁰ in 2006 (the matrix is reproduced in Annex III). The activities included are not exhaustive, but are intended to include the most significant ones. In a future phase, the table will be completed with additional activities indicated by experts throughout the world.

In principle, all human activities produce culture. Wetland sites are repositories of cultural aspects, both tangible and intangible, that have been left by past civilisations and their activities, many of which have been discontinued. Moreover, contemporary activities related to wetlands are creating contemporary cultural values. It is not the purpose of this guidance to attempt an assessment of such activities and their cultural values, but only to examine their pertinence to wetland management and wise use. Naturally, sustainable wetland-related activities should be promoted, while unsustainable exploitation of resources –even though it may incorporate cultural values– should be discouraged.

³⁰ Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, Athens, Greece.

Table 01: Typology of wetland-related activities

1. Habitation

- 1.1 Cultural landscapes
- 1.2 Cultural heritage sites
- 1.3 Settlements and structures
 - 1.3.1 Ancient sites and structures (up to 1599)
 - 1.3.2 Traditional and modern settlements and structures
- 1.4 Wetland archaeology
- 1.5 Infrastructure
 - 1.5.1 Terrestrial transportation networks
 - 1.5.2 Water management facilities and networks

2. Primary uses of wetland resources

- 2.1 Agriculture
 - [2.1.1. Rice cultivation]*
 - 2.1.2 Other wetland related agriculture
- 2.2 Stock-breeding
- 2.3 Fishing and aquaculture
 - 2.3.1 Artisanal fisheries
 - 2.3.2 Commercial fisheries
 - 2.3.3 Extensive aquaculture practice
 - [2.3.4 Intensive aquaculture facilities]
 - 2.3.5 Sports fishing
- 2.4 Management of forest wetland types
 - 2.4.1 Wood products
 - 2.4.2 Non-wood forest products
- 2.5 Hunting
 - 2.5.1 Subsistence hunting
 - 2.5.2 Sports hunting
- 2.6 Salt extraction
 - 2.6.1 Artisanal/traditional salinas
 - 2.6.2 Industrial facilities
- [2.7 Mining and quarrying]
 - [2.7.1 Sand and gravel extraction]
 - [2.7.2 Gold mining]
 - [2.7.3 Other mineral extraction]
- 2.8 Water use
 - 2.8.1 Irrigation
 - 2.8.2 Domestic use
 - 2.8.3 Water transfer infrastructure
 - 2.8.4 Industrial use (energy production)
 - 2.8.5 Other water uses (water mills, saw mills etc)
- 2.9 Use of other wetland natural resources
 - 2.9.1 Biomass extraction
 - 2.9.2 Sustainable use of medicinal plants

3. Secondary use of wetland resources

- 3.1 Food processing
 - 3.1.1 Traditional methods of food preservation
 - 3.1.2 Culinary heritage
- 3.2 Craftsmanship
 - 3.2.1 Artefacts
 - 3.2.1.a Artefacts of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.1.b Traditional and modern artefacts
 - 3.2.2 Handicrafts and tools
 - 3.2.2.a Handicrafts and tools of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.2.b Traditional and modern handicrafts and tools
 - 3.2.3 Transportation means (boats etc)
 - 3.2.3.a Ancient transportation means (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.3.b Traditional and modern transportation means
- 3.3 Traditional building construction
 - 3.3.1 Dwellings
 - 3.3.2 Utilitarian buildings
 - 3.3.3 Public buildings
- 3.4 Wetland-based traditional marketing
- 3.5 Tourism – eco-tourism and cultural tourism
- 3.6 Leisure and sports
 - 3.6.1 Nature appreciation
 - 3.6.2 Hiking and mountain climbing
 - 3.6.3 Rafting and kayaking
 - 3.6.4 Sailing and boating
 - 3.6.5 Diving
 - 3.6.6 Speleology
- 3.7 Social practices and methods
- 3.8 Festivals, celebrations and events

4. Knowledge, belief systems and social practices

- 4.1 Scientific research and education
- 4.2 Traditional knowledge
 - 4.2.1 Oral traditions and expressions
 - 4.2.2 Languages, dialects and special terms
 - 4.2.3 Gender, age and social class-related roles
 - 4.2.4 Practice of traditional medicine
- 4.3 Spirituality and belief systems
- 4.4 Artistic expression

* The inclusion of the items in square-brackets has been questioned by a small number of consultees - see discussion in Chapter 5.

3.2 Cultural aspects of wetland-related activities

In this first phase of guidance, objectives have been assigned to most of the wetland-related activities identified in the previous section, and these objectives are shown in Table 02 below. They concern all of the ‘guiding principles’ included in the Annex to Resolution VIII.19 of 2002 (with some being merged without losing their content), converted into objectives, with additional ones proposed in the present Guidance document (and marked ‘new’). These are not intended to be exhaustive, but are only indicative and will certainly be modified in future phases of work concerning the incorporation of cultural aspects in the management of wetlands.

Guidance is presented in this document for the implementation of many of these objectives, while it is expected that for the remaining ones similar guidance will be provided in a future phase of work. It is expected that further objectives will also be developed as knowledge and experience in this area advances.

It should be noted here that all these objectives should be viewed **in a context of compatibility with the wise use principle in Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention**, which, in the case of any conflict, supersedes all other considerations.

Table 02: Cultural objectives for key wetland-related activities

1. Habitation
 - 1.1 Cultural landscapes
 - O.1.1 – To safeguard wetland-related cultural landscapes (*from guiding principle 3*).
 - 1.2 Cultural heritage sites
 - O.1.2 – To support the recognition, study and promotion of new significant cultural heritage sites (*new*).
 - 1.3 Settlements and structures
 - O.1.3 – To improve the sustainability of human settlements in relation to wetlands by increasing environmental and cultural awareness and reinforcing traditional links between humans and nature (*new*).
 - 1.3.1 Ancient sites and structures (up to 1599)
 - O.1.3.1 – To take carefully into account and protect ancient sites and structures in or closely associated with wetlands (*new*).
 - 1.3.2 Traditional and modern settlements and structures
 - O.1.3.2 – To protect characteristic / distinctive traditional and modern structures of cultural importance in or closely associated with wetlands (*replaces guiding principle 12*).
 - 1.4 Wetland archaeology
 - O.1.4.1 – To take all necessary measures for the protection of underwater cultural heritage (*new*).
 - O.1.4.2 – To take all necessary measures for the protection of wetland heritage found in peatlands (*new*).
 - 1.5 Infrastructure
 - 1.5.1 Terrestrial transportation networks
 - O.1.5.1 – To conserve or re-establish traditional footpaths and other traditional ways (*new*).
 - 1.5.2 Water management facilities and networks

- O.1.5.2 – To promote the conservation (preferably in use) of historical and traditional infrastructure works related to water management and use and to wetlands (*new*).
- 2. Primary use of wetland resources
 - O.2 – To consider the possibility of using certification labelling of sustainable traditional wetland products, in a voluntary and non-discriminatory manner (*replaces guiding principle 26*).
- 2.1 Agriculture
 - 2.1.1. Rice cultivation
 - O.2.1.1 – To conserve –preferably in use– the characteristic landscapes created through rice cultivation (*new*).
 - 2.1.2 Other wetland related agriculture
- 2.2 Stock-breeding
 - O.2.2 – To safeguard and promote traditional sustainable methods of stock-breeding relevant to wetlands (*new*).
- 2.3 Fishing and aquaculture
 - 2.3.1 Artisanal fisheries
 - O.2.3.1 – To record and maintain sustainable traditional fishing methods in wetlands (*new*).
 - 2.3.2 Commercial fisheries
 - 2.3.3 Extensive aquaculture practice
 - 2.3.4 Intensive aquaculture facilities
 - 2.3.5 Sports fishing
- 2.4 Management of forest wetland types³¹
 - 2.4.1 Wood products
 - O.2.4.1 – To encourage sustainable use of wood resources by indigenous peoples and local communities and give recognition to the symbolic aspects of this activity (*new*).
 - 2.4.2 Non-wood forest products
- 2.5 Hunting
 - 2.5.1 Subsistence hunting
 - O.2.5.1 – To maintain sustainable subsistence hunting by indigenous peoples and local communities associated with their cultural values (*new*).
 - 2.5.2 Sports hunting
 - O.2.5.2 – To preserve the traditional social and cultural aspects of sustainable sports hunting (*new*).
- 2.6 Salt extraction
 - 2.6.1 Artisanal/traditional salinas
 - O.2.6.1 – To encourage the conservation of the cultural heritage of sustainable traditional salinas (*new*).
 - 2.6.2 Industrial facilities
- 2.7 Mining and quarrying
 - 2.7.1 Sand and gravel extraction
 - 2.7.2 Gold mining
 - 2.7.3 Other mineral extraction

³¹ Refer to the Ramsar Classification of Wetland Type - http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris.htm#type.

- 2.8 Water use
 - O.2.8 – To preserve collective water and land use management systems associated with wetlands (*from guiding principle 14*).
 - 2.8.1 Irrigation
 - 2.8.2 Domestic use
 - 2.8.3 Water transfer infrastructure
 - O.2.8.3 – To support the documenting and preservation of knowledge related to traditional water transfer infrastructure (*new*).
 - 2.8.4 Industrial use (energy production)
 - 2.8.5 Other water uses (water mills, saw mills etc)
- 2.9 Use of other wetland natural resources
 - 2.9.1 Biomass extraction
 - 2.9.2 Exploitation of medicinal plants
- 3. Secondary use of wetland resources
 - 3.1 Food processing
 - 3.1.1 Traditional methods of food preservation
 - 3.1.2 Culinary heritage
 - O.3.1.2 – To record traditional sustainable culinary practices related to wetland products, and encourage their use in tourism and ecotourism activities (*new*).
 - 3.2 Craftsmanship
 - 3.2.1 Artefacts
 - 3.2.1.a Artefacts of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.1.b Traditional and modern artefacts
 - O.3.2.1b – To protect and preserve wetland-related artefacts (mobile material heritage) (*from guiding principle 13*).
 - 3.2.2 Handicrafts and tools
 - 3.2.2.a Handicrafts and tools of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.2.b Traditional and modern handicrafts and tools
 - O.3.2.2b – To exhibit handicrafts and tools related to wetland activities in visitor centres and/or other appropriate facilities (*new*).
 - 3.2.3 Transportation means (boats etc)
 - 3.2.3.a Ancient transportation means (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.3.b Traditional and modern transportation means
 - O.3.2.3b – To encourage the use of traditional sustainable means of water transport (*new*).
 - 3.3 Traditional building construction
 - O.3.3 – To promote the sustainable use of wetland materials (such as reeds) in building construction and in heating (*new*).
 - 3.3.1 Dwellings
 - 3.3.2 Utilitarian buildings
 - 3.3.3 Public buildings
 - 3.4 Wetland-based traditional marketing
 - 3.5 Tourism – ecotourism
 - O.3.5 – To introduce and safeguard the cultural aspects of wetland sites in tourism and ecotourism activities (*new*).

- 3.6 Leisure and sports
 - O.3.6 – To encourage the incorporation in leisure and sport activities of traditional cultural practices (*new*).
 - 3.6.1 Nature appreciation
 - 3.6.2 Hiking and mountain climbing
 - 3.6.3 Rafting and kayaking
 - 3.6.4 Sailing and boating
 - 3.6.5 Diving
 - 3.6.6 Speleology
- 3.7 Social practices and methods
 - O.3.7.1 – To maintain traditional sustainable communal management practices and promote the products resulting from these practices (*from guiding principles 5 and 15*).
 - O.3.7.2 – To safeguard sustainable wetland-related traditional production systems (*from guiding principle 11*).
- 3.8 Festivals, celebrations and events
 - O.3.8 – To restore stronger links to wetlands/water in social events that take place in the proximity of wetland sites (*new*).
- 4. Knowledge, belief systems and social practices
 - 4.1 Scientific research and education
 - O.4.1.1 – To incorporate cultural aspects in educational and interpretative activities in wetlands (*from guiding principle 6*).
 - O.4.1.2 – To encourage research on palaeoenvironmental, palaeontological, anthropological and archaeological aspects of wetlands (*from guiding principle 10*).
 - O.4.1.3 – To improve wetland-related communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) in relation to the cultural aspects of wetlands (*replaces guiding principle 25*).
 - 4.2 Traditional knowledge
 - O.4.2 – To record traditional knowledge, keep it alive and learn from it (*replaces guiding principles 4 and 17*).
 - 4.2.1 Oral traditions and expressions
 - O.4.2.1 – To safeguard wetland-related oral traditions (*from guiding principle 16*).
 - 4.2.2 Languages, dialects and special terms
 - O.4.2.2 – To encourage research and documentation of the language aspects, terms and symbolisms related to water and wetlands, especially of indigenous peoples and local communities (*new*).
 - 4.2.3. Gender, age and social class-related roles
 - O.4.2.3 – To take into account culturally appropriate treatment of gender, age and social role issues (*from guiding principle 7*).
 - 4.2.4 Practice of traditional medicine
 - 4.3 Spirituality and belief systems
 - O.4.3.1 – To encourage co-operation between wetland managers and the custodians of sacred natural sites (*new*).
 - O.4.3.2 – To raise awareness of nature conservation aspects in religious/spiritual activities (*new*).

- O.4.3.3 – To take into account wetland-related spiritual belief systems and mythologies in efforts to conserve wetlands (*replaces guiding principle 18*).
- 4.4 Artistic expression
- O.4.4.1 – To work with the arts to promote wetland conservation and interpretation (*replaces guiding principle 19*).
 - O.4.4.2 – To cultivate the perception of wetlands and water as inspiration for artistic expression (*new*).

* For the implementation of objectives highlighted in grey, suggestions are provided in Chapter 4. For the remaining objectives –as already stated– guidance will be developed in a future phase.



4. Technical guidance on objectives related to the practical activities

For a limited number of objectives, as indicated in the previous Chapter 3, either those related to the Guiding Principles from Resolution VIII.19 or new objectives proposed by the Ramsar CWG, guidance is provided in this chapter in the form of specific suggested actions. Naturally, these actions are meant for consideration within the context of the specificities of each country or local context and would be supplemented by additional actions considered appropriate by the Contracting Parties. In all cases of implementation of such actions, data should be recorded carefully and communicated to the Ramsar Secretariat, so that the experience gained can be evaluated and disseminated for broader consideration.

4.1 Habitation

The protection of wetland-related cultural landscapes, which have resulted from traditional human activities, should be an important component of policy and management objectives. Traditional activities often created landscapes of considerable biodiversity and of a unique beauty, in ways which are compatible with conservation and sustainable use of the natural environment. Examples include many of the sculpted rice fields in parts of Asia, the canals of the Neretva Delta in Croatia, and the land terracing in most Mediterranean islands. In numerous parts of the world, the traditional activities that have moulded the landscape for millennia are regressing or disappearing. As a result, the landscapes dependent on them are starting to erode and may also disappear with time, leading to the loss of their cultural (and natural) values.

**0.1.1 – To safeguard wetland-related cultural landscapes
(from guiding principle 3)**

In order to achieve the long term conservation of wetland-related cultural landscapes:

- a) proceed to identify and compile inventories of cultural landscapes, including information on their conservation status and the trends affecting them;
- b) encourage official recognition at the national and international level of wetland-related cultural landscapes as part of the national and, where appropriate, international heritage, with a view to according them effective protection status;
- c) promote the protection of such landscapes in policies that concern them directly or may affect them indirectly;
- d) ensure that such landscapes are taken into account in territorial planning and in the determination and control of land and water uses;
- e) in the case of wetland-related cultural landscapes that still maintain some of the traditional activities that have formed them, as in the case of salinas (see also Objective O.2.6.1), promote economic and regulatory measures for stimulating those activities and ensuring their sustainability. Where this proves impossible, search for other means to maintain the beauty and functioning of these landscapes;
- f) where environmentally appropriate and useful, promote the inclusion of wetland-related cultural landscapes in tourism promotion activities; and
- g) for exceptionally significant sites, examine the feasibility of their nomination as World Heritage Cultural Landscapes.

Many human settlements of various scales, from metropolitan cities to small villages, are associated directly with wetlands, mainly rivers and lakes. Often, the interface between the urban environment and the natural sites is not managed properly, to the detriment of both. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the sensitivities of these areas.

**0.1.3 – To improve the sustainability of human settlements in relation to wetlands by increasing environmental and cultural awareness and reinforcing the traditional link between humans and nature
(new)**

The actions suggested for implementing this objective are the following:

- a) identify ‘interface areas’ between urban areas and wetlands;
- b) determine the use of these interface areas for the benefit of local inhabitants and for the maintenance of the ecological character and of the ecological integrity of the wetlands;
- c) provide, wherever appropriate, buffer zones between built areas and wetlands, for example by creation of urban parks; and
- d) co-ordinate wetland management plans together with city planning tools and measures that affect surrounding areas.

As human beings have lived in the proximity of wetlands for thousands of years, they have left remnants of their habitation in the form of isolated structures or of entire settlements (such as the Ancient Greek and Roman towns of Empúries in Catalonia, Spain). These remnants are highly valuable for understanding the diachronic relationships between humans and wetlands, and they can provide useful insights through archaeological research.

0.1.3.1 – To take carefully into account and protect ancient sites and structures (archaeological heritage) in, or closely associated with, wetlands (new)

Six actions are suggested for achieving the above objective:

- a) recognise ancient sites in the proximity of wetlands and collect information on their history, extent and significance from bibliographic sources and from responsible services and experts;
- b) incorporate these sites in the management plans of the neighbouring wetlands;
- c) ascertain whether the ancient sites can be incorporated in wetland visitor programmes;
- d) identify ancient structures in or in the proximity of wetlands, especially those that were used for wetland-related activities;
- e) promote archaeological research on these structures; and
- f) include information on ancient structures and sites in wetland visitor centres and in related publicity materials.

Historical structures (buildings and settlements, hydraulic works, transport systems, etc) are often located in wetlands or closely related to them. Considerable knowledge already exists on the conservation and restoration of such structures; yet they are in danger of disappearing in many places.

0.1.3.2 – To protect characteristic / distinctive traditional and modern structures of cultural importance in or closely associated with wetlands (replaces guiding principle 12)

The following actions may be required:

- a) identify historical structures such as buildings and settlements, hydraulic works, transport systems, etc., located in wetlands or closely related to them, and compile inventories of them through description, photography and drawing, including recording their conservation status;
- b) study the historical, architectural and technical characteristics of such structures, encouraging, where appropriate, schools of architecture to include work of this kind in their programmes;
- c) consider assigning to these structures an appropriate protection status (such as 'listing'), and thus preserving them from demolition;
- d) develop projects and/or programmes for the long-term conservation of such structures, including their restoration, maintenance and purchase if necessary; and
- e) if these structures cannot be restored to their initial use, consider converting them, where appropriate, into environmentally sustainable visitor centres, eco-museums, conference centres and/or hotels, with the aim of ensuring their maintenance, taking into account the sharing of benefits with local communities and other stakeholders.

4.2 Primary use of wetland resources

As primary use of wetland resources involves activities closely related to economic and trade issues, such as agriculture production, it is necessary to ensure that measures to be adopted on this subject are consistent with the Parties' rights and obligations under other international agreements.

The encouragement of traditional activities related to wetland resources is a powerful means of maintaining the cultural landscapes that have been beneficially influenced by these activities. One way to do this, without prejudicing free trade agreements, is to promote certified wetland products.

0.2 – To consider the possibility of using certification labelling of sustainable traditional wetland products in a voluntary and non-discriminatory manner (replaces guiding principle 26)

The following actions may be required:

- a) identify appropriate partners from the private and public sectors for promoting wetland-related products that are consistent with the maintenance of the ecological character of sites;
- b) promote the quality, origin and sustainability certification labelling of wetland products as a means to increase their attractiveness and demand;
- c) encourage advertising campaigns of wetland products under the responsibility of appropriate national and local authorities, as well as of interested communities and the private sector; and
- d) ensure that the economic benefits of these undertakings reach the local communities, thus assisting in the maintenance of traditional production activities.

In many parts of the world, and particularly in parts of Asia, traditional rice cultivation has resulted in unique cultural landscapes that merit conservation.

0.2.1.1 – To conserve –preferably in use– the characteristic landscapes created through rice cultivation (new)

Possible ways to achieve this objective are:

- a) document traditional rice production practices;
- b) use quality labelling for rice produced traditionally in wetlands to encourage continued cultivation;
- c) investigate the possibilities of developing ecotourism in relation to traditional rice cultivation; and
- d) in cases where rice production ceases to be feasible, investigate other uses for rice paddies that are compatible with their landscapes.

Traditional fishing methods were historically developed in very many of the world's wetlands, but are being increasingly abandoned with the development of mechanised fishing methods and gear, and of unsustainable intensive aquaculture. Unfortunately, these new systems often result in unsustainable practices that lead to the collapse of the fisheries themselves.

0.2.3.1 – To record and maintain sustainable traditional fishing methods in wetlands (new)

To avoid the loss of traditional fishing practices, the following actions are suggested:

- a) record and document traditional fishing practices, including boats and gear, and make the resulting information available to the public through publications, films and exhibitions;
- b) where fishing is an integral feature of protected wetland sites, favour traditional sustainable fishing methods, rather than intensive mechanised methods;
- c) encourage the consumption of wetland fish caught through traditional methods by incorporating them in culinary products related to eco-tourism; and
- d) explore the potential for sustainable sport fishing activities in wetlands, through local initiatives using traditional methods.

Traditional salinas have been highly valuable for the maintenance of biodiversity, as they have provided refuge for important species, while conserving notable cultural values. Such salinas are, however, rapidly disappearing due to competition from large industrial salt-producing industries, and they are being transformed to other uses (mainly resort housing and mass tourism facilities). Efforts for their maintenance have been noted in various parts of the world, as in the Sečoveljske soline in Slovenia, but these efforts are unfortunately still too few and insufficiently systematic.

0.2.6.1 – To encourage the conservation of the cultural heritage of sustainable traditional salinas (new)

Within the constraints of free trade agreements and of economic feasibility, certain actions are proposed that may lead to the conservation of traditional salinas, as follows:

- a) compile inventories, record and document traditional salinas, whether in use or abandoned;
- b) evaluate the viability of operating individual traditional salinas;
- c) encourage certification labelling of salt from traditional sustainable sources;
- d) relate tourism/ecotourism programmes to traditional salt production;
- e) support or initiate the establishment of salt museums or salt information centres;
- f) assess the feasibility of restoring to use individual abandoned salinas; and
- g) investigate other uses for abandoned salinas, which would maintain their natural and cultural values.

Past and present collective water and land use management systems (such as irrigation, water distribution and drainage associations, and traditional dispute settlement practices) are also of value. Insufficient attention has been given to social organisation structures such as these, which, for a given period of time, have been a sophisticated and effective response to specific problems, most of them focusing on the critical resource of water and on its equitable allocation. They have nonetheless been integral parts of the traditional culture of many societies, and may offer valuable lessons for the present and the future. In addition, some locations and structures associated with them merit protection.

**0.2.8 – To preserve collective water and land use management systems associated with wetlands
(from guiding principle 14)**

Among the actions required are the following:

- a) identify, analyse and record collective water and land use management systems;
- b) assess the possibility of the maintenance of such systems or, if this is not possible, their partial integration in contemporary management systems;
- c) preserve and enhance the tangible elements associated with these systems;
- d) incorporate the results of these actions in educational and public information activities; and
- e) work with local government structures and civil societies to enlist their participation in the maintenance of these systems.

4.3 Secondary use of wetland resources

Wetland-related artefacts (transport equipment and tools) may provide useful knowledge about the traditional practices associated with wetland sites.

**0.3.2.1b – To protect and preserve wetland-related artefacts (mobile material heritage)
(from guiding principle 13)**

The following actions may be required:

- a) identify and compile inventories of wetland-related artefacts and tools of heritage significance used in wetland sites;
- b) consider ways and means to maintain such artefacts and tools in use, if at all feasible, especially in the case of traditional boats;
- c) develop projects to ensure that the know-how to produce and use such artefacts and tools is suitably recorded and maintained;
- d) identify and apply appropriate incentives for the maintenance, use and production of such artefacts and tools;
- e) collect ancient artefacts, restore and conserve them, and mount exhibitions in local museums or in wetland visitor centres; and
- f) organise thematic museums, preferably close to wetland sites, if rich material of this kind is available.

Various wetland plants have been used as building materials through the ages, as well as for the construction of boats and various artefacts, while it can be used as an energy source. The most well-known examples relate to the Iraqi Marshes and Lake Titicaca. Even today, reeds are still exploited for thatching roofs. The habitat management that supports their continued use often contributes to wetland conservation.

0.3.3 – To promote the sustainable use of wetland materials (such as reeds) in building construction and in heating (new)

Important actions in this context are:

- a) to compile inventories and to document the use of wetland materials in construction;
- b) to investigate the possibility of sustainable use of wetland materials in contemporary buildings, either in their traditional context or in innovative ways; and
- c) to study the technical and financial aspects of sustainably using wetland biomass as a fuel for heating or for the production of energy.

Traditional self-management practices that have demonstrated their value over time should be strengthened, as they led to the empowerment of local societies, and constitute in themselves an invaluable part of the socio-cultural assets of an area. For this reason, contemporary governance approaches should be introduced in a balanced and sensitive manner, taking these factors into account. The role of ‘elders’ or socially recognised community leaders in allocating resources equitably, for example, which has been widely respected in many countries, has had a stabilising influence, and it would be lost if they were replaced by government services or the private sector. Special care, therefore, should be taken when applying modern governance systems, to ensure that traditional ones are not discarded, but are instead complemented and can benefit from appropriate contemporary technological and management developments.

Traditional techniques for exploiting wetland resources (salt, rice, fish, reeds, etc.) and their associated products and structures should be encouraged. In a rapidly changing world, it is not usually possible to maintain traditional production methods and products artificially, but given their social and cultural significance and the growing interest in at least some countries in more naturally-produced food, efforts should be made to maintain traditional techniques.

0.3.7.1 – To maintain traditional sustainable communal management practices and promote the products resulting from these practices (replaces guiding principles 5 and 15)

To achieve this objective, and in conjunction with objective O.4.2 below, the following additional steps are suggested:

- a) analyse the social characteristics of traditional self-management practices and extract lessons that may be useful for the present and the future;
- b) in case of practices which have already been abandoned, assess the reasons for their abandonment and determine whether they could be re-established, wholly or in part;
- c) for each new resource management proposal, evaluate the cultural and social impact that it might have (see also objective O.4.1c below on cultural impact assessment);
- d) ensure the active participation in wetland management of local societies and indigenous people, using the Ramsar guidelines contained in Ramsar Handbooks 5 and 16 (3rd edition, 2007);
- e) encourage the sensitive study of the economic aspects of traditional production systems in wetlands and/or around them, and of the resulting products;
- f) devise imaginative methods for promoting and marketing traditional sustainable products, including extensive use of the Internet; and
- g) associate local techniques and products with education and awareness campaigns on the cultural aspects of wetlands.

Wetland-related cultural landscapes are the result of traditional production and agro-ecosystems (ricefields, salinas, exploited estuaries etc.). In many cases both the landscapes and the systems are under threat due to technological innovations and changes in socio-economic conditions. There is a need to take a proactive approach to the conservation of these systems/areas and, when required, their revitalisation.

**0.3.7.2 – To safeguard wetland-related traditional production systems and the resulting landscapes
(replaces guiding principle 11)**

The required actions may include the following:

- a) conduct a detailed inventory of the cultural landscapes in each country, including the identification of traditional production activities that have created them, recording also their conservation status and the prospects for their long-term viability;
- b) promote in-depth studies of the sustainability of the activities that originally formed the cultural landscapes and those activities that are currently being practised;
- c) identify complementary activities that can reinforce the economic viability of such activities (such as education, ecotourism and sports); and
- d) work with governments and, where appropriate, aid agencies and international donors, to develop programmes aimed at the long-term conservation of wetland-related cultural landscapes.

4.4 Knowledge, belief systems and social practices

The cultural aspects of wetlands have the potential to become a strong element of interest and attraction for a considerable percentage of visitors, bringing benefits to local populations and demonstrating the importance of wetlands; but this will not occur automatically. Educational and interpretative activities in wetlands (ecotourism and cultural routes, eco-museums, etc.) should be promoted in an organised and consistent manner, taking into account the sensitivities and carrying capacity of each site.

**0.4.1.1 – To incorporate cultural aspects in educational and interpretative activities in wetlands
(from guiding principle 6)**

In order to incorporate cultural aspects in educational and interpretative activities at wetland sites, the following actions are suggested:

- a) take into account all appropriate cultural aspects in management planning, and treat them distinctly in all its phases, from preliminary inventories and analysis to final management measures;
- b) provide appropriate infrastructure, facilities and services for visitors, by including these in spatial planning instruments for wetland sites and their surrounding areas;
- c) institute visitor management and monitoring tools and mechanisms to minimise the damage that visitors may cause to fragile habitats and other sensitive elements of the natural and cultural heritage;
- d) give special attention to the control of mechanised traffic, which should be restricted to prescribed areas only, while alternative means of transport should be provided; and
- e) incorporate the cultural aspects of wetlands in eco-museums, visitor centres and other similar facilities, and consider the production of publications on this issue.

Valuable paleontological and archaeological records can be found in wetland sediments and especially in peat. In some cases, the first requirement on this matter could be the promotion of applied research. This is necessary because a large part of the cultural heritage of wetlands is still hidden and its discovery, conservation and enhancement present scientific and practical problems. As funds for such research are often limited and the time necessary for it is long, rapid survey methods may provide a cost- and time-effective approach. The results of such research could improve vastly the existing knowledge of wetland cultural heritage, and could also help in raising public awareness of the cultural richness existing in them, thus augmenting substantially their values and attraction both to local inhabitants and visitors. The second requirement is to encourage an interest in cultural values among specialist groups such as the International Peat Society, the International Mire Conservation Group, the Society of Wetland Scientists and others.

0.4.1.2 – To encourage research on palaeoenvironmental, palaeontological, anthropological and archaeological aspects of wetlands (from guiding principle 10)

The following actions may be required:

- a) promote thematic applied research, as well as archaeological fieldwork on specific sites, through systematic programmes of survey and excavation, on issues that may include:
 - historic models of wetland resource use, providing also useful lessons for future sustainable use;
 - effects of re-wetting on organic archaeological and palaeo-environmental evidence, including issues of water quality;
 - history of the hydrology of cultural heritage sites;
 - development of new methods for rapid assessment of potential cultural content in cases of imminent threat;
 - preservation of archaeological remains *in situ*, to analyse the changing burial environment of wetland sites; and
 - balancing educational and recreational access to wetlands with the need to protect their archaeological heritage;
- b) develop rapid survey methods to assess wetland sites with high scientific potential in which efforts should be concentrated in a first phase;
- c) use the results of such research for education and public awareness purposes, to enhance knowledge and appreciation of wetland values; and
- d) encourage specialist wetland groups to include cultural values in their programmes.

Wetland-related communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) actions concerning the cultural aspects of wetlands should be instituted and strengthened, as they are highly weak at present. The reasons for this deficiency may be limited understanding and appreciation of the issues, as well as lack of appropriate material and of trained personnel.

0.4.1.3 – To improve wetland-related communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) in relation to the cultural aspects of wetlands (replaces guiding principle 25)

Actions required may include the following:

- a) sensitise teachers at the various levels of education, starting with schools in the vicinity of major wetland sites, about the cultural aspects of these sites;
- b) develop educational and public awareness materials and training modules;
- c) encourage the production and dissemination of videos and films on the cultural aspects of wetlands;
- d) design and launch public awareness campaigns, addressed to local inhabitants, wetland visitors and wider publics, on the values and significance of the cultural aspects of wetlands and their potential recovery where they are being lost or abandoned;
- e) incorporate the promotion of the cultural aspects of wetlands in national and local tourism campaigns, taking into account the particular sensitivities and the carrying capacity of each wetland in relation to the potential tourism activities; and
- f) use the mass media and wetland-related traditional festivals to disseminate information and foster appreciation of wetland cultural values.

Invaluable lessons can be learned from traditional approaches to water and wetland resources management (especially in practising sustainable use, and facing the impacts of floods, recurrent drought and salinisation), which can be useful in developing contemporary approaches to the same issues. These approaches are still practised in many parts of the world, such as the Saharan oases, with highly effective and sustainable results.

Concerning wetland-related traditional knowledge, the Convention on Biological Diversity is considering this issue through the Ad-Hoc Open-ended Inter Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions. The Ad-Hoc Group defines traditional knowledge as ‘the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment, traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It tends to be collectively owned and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds. Traditional knowledge is mainly of a practical nature, particularly in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, forestry and environmental management in general.’. In addition, especially in medicine, there is a resurgence of the systematic practising of traditional methods, including the use of medicinal plants, hot springs, mud baths, etc.

**0.4.2 – To record traditional knowledge, keep it alive and learn from it
(replaces guiding principles 4 and 17)**

Before promoting and trying to incorporate new water management technologies and approaches:

- a) make an inventory of the traditional approaches to water resources management, both those still being practised and, if possible, those that have been abandoned;
- b) undertake a careful analysis and assessment of their advantages and weaknesses;
- c) study the possibilities of improving these approaches through the careful use of cost-effective contemporary and innovative methods. The goal should be to meld the old with the new, not necessarily to replace the traditional practices;
- d) test the resulting composite approaches in selected pilot cases; and
- e) make the lessons learnt widely known, in developing and developed countries alike.

Additional actions required may include the following:

- f) search for linkages between traditional knowledge and wetlands, and in particular with wetland flora;
- g) establish systematic cooperation with the organisations interested in this matter, such as the Society for Economic Botany, the International Society for Ethnobiology, the Centre for International Ethnomedicinal Education and Research, the Society for Medical Anthropology, and others;
- h) urge that the Ad-Hoc Open-ended Inter-Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity incorporates fully all wetland-related issues in its work and that the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and the Ramsar Secretariat contribute to the preparation of the CBD's composite report on the status and trends regarding the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and
- i) disseminate information about traditional medicines related to wetlands as part of public awareness activities, and encourage the trend towards using again traditional medicines in societies that had, to a large extent, abandoned them, in relation to wetlands and water resources aspects.

Wetland-related oral traditions are still maintained and transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation in many societies, and in particular among indigenous people, as a means of transmitting knowledge and social values. In many societies, though, as the means of communication and of information storage and dissemination have become more sophisticated, starting with printing and expanding with electronic and digital means, some of these traditions have not been considered important enough to be recorded. They are thus in great danger of being forgotten and lost.

**0.4.2.1 – To safeguard wetland-related oral traditions
(from guiding principle 16)**

The following actions may be required:

- a) record in a systematic manner wetland-related oral traditions;
- b) promote the appreciation of the value of these traditions as part of the cultural heritage and encourage local groups to maintain them;
- c) consider establishing an archive of oral traditions in digital form; and
- d) disseminate by all appropriate means the information collected.

Gender, age and social role issues should be explicitly taken into account to identify the roles played in relation to cultural aspects by women and men and by members of a given social group at different stages of their life cycles. Women, in many cases, are the custodians of traditional management practices and social patterns (such as modes of preparing food), are in charge of natural resources use, in particular water, and are the ones who transmit cultural values to new generations. Men, in turn, may be the custodians and implementers of particular cultural practices, such as hunting, an activity with significant cultural components, both in traditional and modern societies.

Members of the group may have particular roles according to their age, for example as members of the group that have all had their initiation into adulthood at the same time, youth groups (both of men and women), and elders. In addition, there are social roles that have strong and significant cultural components, including those of the traditional or elected local authority, local land owners and business leaders, teachers, medical doctors, religious figures, artists, traditional healers, shamans, and fortune-tellers. Thus gender, age and social role issues should be taken into account in the entire process, starting from the planning and inventory phases.

**0.4.2.3 – To take into account culturally appropriate treatment of gender, age and social role issues
(from guiding principle 7)**

In order to ensure an adequate and equitable treatment of gender, age and social role issues in relation to the cultural aspects of wetlands, the following actions are suggested:

- a) invite representatives of local women's and men's groups, different age groups and members of the community with recognised and valued social roles to participate in the initial inventory of wetland cultural aspects and in the characterisation of their significance;
- b) evaluate ways and means to involve these groups and individuals in an appropriate manner in wetland management;
- c) ensure an active role for such groups and individuals in education and public awareness campaigns directed at appreciating the cultural aspects of wetlands, as a tool to ensure their effective management; and
- d) promote the participation of community groups in the development of tourist and other income-earning activities related to cultural aspects, ensuring that there is no discrimination due to gender and/or age in the access to the benefits.

A number of wetlands include sacred sites regarded as such by indigenous people or by people of mainstream faiths. This has often led to misunderstanding and conflicts between wetland managers and the custodians of the sacred sites, as has happened for example with the famous yearly pilgrimage through the Doñana National Park to El Rocío in Spain. It is advisable, therefore, to cultivate collaboration between the two sides, which can lead to synergy and mutual benefit.

**0.4.3.1 – To encourage co-operation between wetland managers and the custodians of sacred natural sites
(new)**

To achieve co-operation, the following actions are proposed:

- a) recognise officially the sacred character of specific natural elements and the inherent rights associated with them;
- b) invite the custodians of sacred natural sites to participate in the preparation, approval and implementation of management plans for relevant protected areas;
- c) invite these custodians to participate in an equitable manner in the management bodies of these protected areas; and
- d) establish consultation mechanisms among the different sides in order to resolve amicably emerging issues of conflicting land uses and practices.

Wetland-related religious aspects, beliefs and mythology: Religion in its broader interpretation, most often solidly based on a long historical development, can be an important medium for reaching and mobilising large numbers of people in many parts of the world. Tra-

ditional religious links with water can be strengthened to convey an additional powerful ecological message. Beliefs and mythology, in particular creation myths, may also have a strong significance for the conservation of wetlands, in particular those in, or related to, sacred sites.

**0.4.3.3 – To take into account wetland-related spiritual belief systems and mythologies in efforts to conserve wetlands
(replaces guiding principle 18)**

The following actions may be required:

- a) study in detail for each religion, belief and mythological system its links with nature, water and wetland resources, drawing on the active participation of religious institutions and leaders, and the custodians and practitioners of the belief and mythological systems in indigenous and local communities;
- b) use this knowledge to present the conservation and sustainable use message in appropriate forms; and
- c) work with churches and/or religious leaders and appropriate members of indigenous and local communities so as to encourage them to convey these messages and to participate actively in the efforts for environmental conservation as an integral part of respectful management of the Creation.

The arts can provide a very significant vehicle for approaching and sensitising the wider public to wetland-related values and wetland issues. In all societies, the arts play an important role, with many of them embedded in the structure of the culture. The ‘arts’ include all forms of popular art, as well as the professional expressions in the fields of music, singing, dance, painting, literature and film.

**0.4.4.1 – To work with the arts to promote wetland conservation and interpretation
(replaces guiding principle 19)**

The following actions may be required:

- a) identify art forms and specific works that have been inspired by or based upon wetlands and water, in cooperation with artists and art-related institutions at the local and national level;
- b) use and promote artistic expressions as means to advance the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- c) cultivate the interest of the art community in the full range of wetland values, and in wetland and water management issues;
- d) incorporate appropriate art in visitor facilities and interpretation, and especially in eco-museums; and
- e) sensitise wetland managers, and all those involved with wetlands and water, to culture and to the art forms that express it.



5. Concerns about Ramsar and culture

As already noted, the discussions that led to the unanimous approval of Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21 were preceded by intensive debates within both the Contact Groups on Culture³² and in Plenary. The main concerns expressed about the adoption of texts on cultural matters can be summarised in a simplified form as follows:

- Ramsar does not need to be concerned with cultural aspects, as these are the focus of other international organisations.
- Such engagement with cultural aspects might contradict important obligations of the CPs under other international agreements (such as the World Trade Organisation).
- Favouring cultural aspects may constitute disguised subsidies for certain agricultural activities.
- For these reasons and also the ‘ecological’ basis of Article 2.2 of the Convention, sites should not be designated for the Ramsar List solely on cultural criteria.

Another argument –that was never fully voiced– was a worry that the agreement to incorporate cultural values in the work of the Ramsar Convention might be construed as encouraging property or other legal rights claims by indigenous peoples.

³² At COP8 (Valencia, Spain, 2002) the Contact Group on Culture was chaired by Spain, while at COP9 (Kampala, Uganda, 2005) by Norway.

5.1 Some key points made by consultees

In the round of discussions related to the current Guidance document on culture, there were various suggestions for modifications, most of which have been taken fully into account. A few concerned some of the activity types included in the list in Chapter 3, the argument being that they are not beneficial for wetlands or in harmony with their wise use, and should be deleted. These activity types (placed in square brackets in the typology presented in that chapter) concern mainly the following:

- 2.1.1 Intensive rice cultivation using polluting chemicals.
- 2.3.4 Intensive aquaculture.
- 2.7 Mining and quarrying.

The purpose of the list, however, is to identify all wetland-related activities that have an important cultural dimension, without necessarily endorsing them. Hunting, for example, is an activity with cultural aspects, but in situations where it may be unsustainable, it should be strictly regulated or in some cases totally forbidden. Intensive aquaculture creates its own contemporary cultural aspects, although it may be highly harmful to wetlands (especially mangrove ecosystems) and thus should be discouraged in certain cases.

A major clarification was proposed in relation to primary production activities and their cultural values. As many of these refer to agricultural production, it needed to be stated unequivocally that any measures proposed and implemented may not contradict the rights and obligations of states under other international agreements. This has accordingly been incorporated at the beginning of Section 4.2 of the present text.

Another very important clarification requested was that not all cultural aspects of wetland-related activities constitute cultural values. This point has also been incorporated, at the end of Section 1.5.

5.2 One broader contribution

Besides the specific comments noted above, one more general submission was made to the Ramsar Secretariat by an individual Contracting Party. This submission (from Brazil, in 2008) has not been incorporated into the text of the present Guidance, but is reproduced in full below (*verbatim* English version as provided by Brazil).

“During its 36th Meeting, the Standing Committee decided to invite all Parties with concerns about the current draft on cultural guidelines to provide specific advice and suggested text to Cultural Working Group (Decision SC 36-5). The current draft on cultural guidelines resulted from Resolutions IX.21 (COP-9, 2005) and VIII.19 (COP-8, 2002), which states:

Res. IX.21:

16. The Conference of the Contracting Parties INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to complete, through a board participatory process, the work prescribed in paragraph 17 of Resolution VIII.19 concerning the guidance to be provided on cultural values.
17. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above;

Res. VIII.19:

17. The Conference of the Contracting Parties REQUESTS that the Ramsar Bureau seek inputs from Contracting Parties, experts and practitioners, and local communities and indigenous people from around the world to enhance the information paper on cultural aspects of wetlands (COP8 DOC. 15) and the detailed guidance prepared for consideration by this meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with a view to publishing it as a background document, and to inform COP9 of the progress made.

As it can be seen, the main object of the Working Group was to coordinate the enhancement of the information paper on cultural aspects of wetlands (COP8 DOC. 15) and the detailed guidance prepared for consideration by the meeting of COP-8. The current draft Report expands the texts of the information paper and of the guidance.

First of all, the Brazilian Government expresses its appreciation for the work already done by the Culture Working Group in the consideration of such a complex issue. Brazil is concerned, however, with the fact that the current document maintains several issues that have already been objected by Contracting Parties. The Report still mentions, for instance, a typology of activities and values related to wetlands, which includes almost all kinds of activities, such as modern settlements and structures, agriculture, gold mining and aquaculture.

The format adopted in the information paper should guide and limit the following work on cultural aspects of wetland protection. In other words, the Report of the Culture Working Group should focus on cultural aspects as instruments for the protection of the ecosystems, and not as an end in itself. For that, it is fundamental to restrict the content of the document to the presentation of examples and good practices, thus avoiding the establishment of typologies and cultural objectives for wetland activities.

The aim of the Ramsar Convention is the conservation and wise use of wetlands, promoting natural areas based on their ecological, biological or hydrological importance. The protection of cultural aspects, as it can be seen, is not an independent objective of the Convention. Indeed, the word 'culture' is mentioned in the text of the Convention only in a broader context that encompasses also economic, scientific and recreational aspects of wetlands. Hence, by a literal and teleological interpretation of the Convention, it is possible to affirm that cultural aspects should be balanced with economic, scientific and recreational concerns, being all of them means to achieve the main objectives of the Convention on wetlands.

Also, it is important that the Convention focus on its scope, in order to avoid losing sight of its objectives. Brazil understands that it is very important to respect and protect cultural values. However, the proper forum for that is not the Convention on Wetlands, but other Conventions or Organizations. So, while Ramsar Convention is the proper forum for discussing wetlands conservation, UNESCO is the proper forum for discussing definition of culture, typology of cultural activities, cultural objectives to be achieved and protection of culture in general.

The objective 1.5.2 ('to promote the conservation (preferably in use) of historical and traditional infrastructure works related to water management and use and to wetlands new'), for instance, shows how the Convention on Wetlands would be promoting the conservation of cultural values. Although these should be protected, the proper forum for that is not the

Ramsar Convention, but other multilateral conventions that have the conservation of culture as their main objectives, such as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO).

In cases of cross-cutting issues, it is fundamental that each Convention or Organization focuses on the topics of its mandate, profiting from the discussion and the work already done in the proper forum, thus avoiding the duplication of efforts. Most important, each Convention or Organization shall respect the other's mandate and rules, in such a way that no text is produced that may impair the rules and rights already agreed by the parties in more specific fora.

Consequently, the Working Group Report must be in accordance to and not contradict, for instance, specific rules of international trade, as the ones of the World Trade Organization. The use of labelling of sustainable traditional wetland products to encourage traditional activities related to wetland resources as a means of maintaining the cultural landscapes, one of the guidelines proposed, could amount to a non-tariff barrier to international commerce and, therefore, is not acceptable. The same could be said in regard to the suggestion to use quality labelling for rice produced traditionally in wetlands to encourage continued cultivation: it could configure a non-tariff barrier to international trade, and would not necessarily help the conservation of natural resources.

Given the aforementioned reasons, Brazil suggests that only the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 be maintained. Brazil understands that Chapters 3 and 4 fall outside the scope and objectives of the Convention on Wetlands and, therefore, should be eliminated from the text.”

[End of submission from Brazil]

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Appendix I: Ramsar COP8 Resolution VIII.19

"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.19

Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites

1. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the ancient and intimate links of traditional societies to wetlands and water have given rise to important cultural values relevant to wetland conservation and wise use, which have been recognized in the diverse cosmologies of different civilizations and cultures throughout history;
2. **FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING** that the specific physical features of wetlands have contributed to particular ways of managing traditional activities through structures, procedures, techniques and specially designed artefacts which are of great cultural significance;

3. RECOGNIZING that peoples' relations with wetlands have given rise to aspects of non-material culture, through folklore, music, mythology, oral traditions, customs, traditional knowledge and popular wisdom, and that their reflection can be found in social practices and the traditional forms of social organization for managing wetland resources, and especially water;
4. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that sustainable traditional uses of wetland resources have frequently created cultural landscapes of significant value to wetland conservation and wise use;
5. AWARE that the cultural values of wetlands have been and still are of great importance to societies living in wetlands and their surroundings, and constitute part of their identity; thus their loss may not only contribute to their alienation from wetlands, but also cause significant negative social and ecological impacts;
6. RECOGNIZING that cultural knowledge of wetlands constitutes a collective legacy for today's societies;
7. AWARE that most of the knowledge about practices, and practices themselves, of traditional wetland management in the diverse cultures have contributed to wetland conservation and wise use over millennia, and continue to contribute to it;
8. FURTHER AWARE that in addition to their spiritual dimension of this knowledge and other aspects of past wetland management, such values can be of considerable socio-economic importance, since they can be used as a resource for sustainable tourism and recreational activities and, through them, contribute to an increase of income and quality of life for the inhabitants;
9. CONSCIOUS of the fact that the adequate recognition of and support for cultural heritage, both material and non-material, is an indispensable component in any process for the sustainable use of wetland resources;
10. RECOGNIZING that there are important weaknesses and gaps in the procedures and methods for identifying, valuing and protecting the cultural heritage of wetlands, as well as in defining and implementing policies related to them;
11. NOTING that the profound and rapid social and economic transformations that have taken place during recent decades have increasingly threatened the adequate preservation of the cultural heritage that is typical of wetlands in many parts of the world;
12. RECOGNIZING that there are various multilateral agreements and organizations that work to recognize and protect cultural values and relationships with ecosystems including wetlands;
13. ACKNOWLEDGING that the Ramsar Convention needs to work in cooperation with multilateral and regional agreements and other bodies addressing the need for resolute action to preserve the cultural heritage, including among others:
 - the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972);
 - the Call of Granada (1975) of the Council of Europe on Rural architecture and its landscape;
 - Recommendation 881 (1979) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Rural architecture heritage;

- UNESCO's activities in the promotion of the conservation of cultural heritage;
 - the general principles for conservation proposed by the Vernacular Built Heritage Charter (Jerusalem, 1996), ratified by the XI General Assembly of the International Council of Monuments and Historical Sites (ICOMOS);
 - the various recommendations of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for the protection, conservation, legal status, economic exploitation, and international protection of folklore;
 - the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular concerning its Decision VI/10 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the *Outline of the composite report on the status and trends regarding the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*, and the plan and timetable for its preparation; and on *Recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessment regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities*;
 - the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000);
 - the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (International Labour Organisation No. 169, 5 September 1991); and
 - the Permanent Forum of Indigenous People.
14. RECALLING that *inter alia* the text of the Ramsar Convention already recognizes, in the third paragraph of its preamble, "that wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable" and FURTHER RECALLING that COP7 adopted *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in the management of wetlands* (Resolution VII.8); and
15. NOTING the background documentation and examples on the cultural aspects of wetlands from around the world presented during Technical Session 5 of this meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

16. TAKES NOTE WITH INTEREST of the list of *Guiding Principles* included in the Annex to this Resolution;
17. REQUESTS that the Ramsar Bureau seek inputs from Contracting Parties, experts and practitioners, and local communities and indigenous peoples from around the world to enhance the information paper on cultural aspects of wetlands (COP8 DOC. 15) and the detailed guidance prepared for consideration by this meeting of the Conference of the Parties, with a view to publishing it as a background document, and to inform COP9 of the progress made;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider using the list of *Guiding principles* included in the Annex to this Resolution, but only in relation the conservation and enhancement of the cultural values of wetlands;
19. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, within their national and legal frameworks and available resources and capacity:

- a) to consider the compilation and assessment of both material and non-material cultural elements related to wetlands and water, in particular when preparing the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the designation of new Wetlands of International Importance or when updating the RIS of existing Ramsar sites, taking into account, as appropriate, intellectual property rights, customary law, and the principle of prior informed consent, in accordance with CBD and WIPO rules;
 - b) to promote the appreciation and revitalization, of these cultural values among populations close to wetlands, and in general among the wider public;
 - c) to include relevant aspects of cultural heritage in both the design and implementation of wetland management plans;
 - d) to make efforts to integrate cultural and social impact criteria into environmental assessments, which could include, *inter alia*, issues of particular cultural concern, such as beliefs and religions, customary practices, forms of social organization, systems of natural resources use, including patterns of land use, places of cultural significance, sacred sites and ritual ceremonies, languages, customary lore/law systems, political structures, roles and customs;
 - e) to carry out such efforts with the active participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and other stakeholders, and to consider using the cultural values of wetlands as a tool to strengthen this involvement, particularly in wetland planning and management;
20. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to recognize cultural and heritage values relating to wetlands in their existing heritage protection, legal framework and policies;
 21. INVITES Contracting Parties to consider conducting appropriate joint educational and training activities with regard to the cultural values of wetlands, as well as to consider developing pilot projects for testing on a local, regional and national scale with a view to further improving the application and/or integration of the *Guiding Principles* in wetland conservation and wise use;
 22. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to establish appropriate consultation mechanisms at regional or national levels, in order to consider how the *Guiding Principles* might be applied in developing and promoting the cultural values of wetlands; and
 23. URGES Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Bureau to develop synergies and to avoid duplication of efforts with the relevant multilateral agreements, such as those mentioned in paragraph 13 above.

Annex

Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites

General principles

1. This document proposes a number of general principles for identifying, preserving and reinforcing the cultural values of wetlands, which could be supplemented with additional ones at future meetings of the Conference of the Parties as more knowledge and experience are obtained. Some of them may overlap, but this is only natural as cultural values are often related and require an integrative approach.
2. There is a strong link between wetland conservation and benefits to people. In addition, a positive correlation between conservation and the sustainable use of wetlands has been repeatedly demonstrated. Therefore, conservation requires the involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities and cultural values offer excellent opportunities for this.

Guiding principle 1 To identify the cultural values and relevant associated partners.

Guiding principle 2 To link the cultural aspects of wetlands with those of water.

Guiding principle 3 To safeguard the wetland-related cultural landscapes.

Guiding principle 4 To learn from traditional approaches.

Guiding principle 5 To maintain traditional sustainable self-management practices.

Guiding principle 6 To incorporate cultural aspects in educational and interpretive activities in wetlands.

Guiding principle 7 To take into account culturally appropriate treatment of gender, age and social role issues.

Guiding principle 8 To bridge the differences of approach between natural and social sciences.

Guiding principle 9 To mobilise international cooperation in matter of culture issues related to wetlands.

Guiding principle 10 To encourage research on palaeoenvironmental, palaeontological, anthropological and archaeological aspects of wetlands.

Guiding principle 11 To safeguard wetland-related traditional production systems.

Guiding principle 12 To protect historical structures in wetlands or closely associated with them.

- Guiding principle 13** To protect and preserve wetland-related artefacts (mobile material heritage).
- Guiding principle 14** To preserve collective water and land use management systems associated with wetlands.
- Guiding principle 15** To maintain traditional sustainable practices used in and around wetlands, and value the products resulting from these practices.
- Guiding principle 16** To safeguard wetland-related oral traditions.
- Guiding principle 17** To keep traditional knowledge alive.
- Guiding principle 18** To respect wetland-related religious and spiritual beliefs and mythological aspects in the efforts to conserve wetlands.
- Guiding principle 19** To use the arts to promote wetland conservation and interpretation.
- Guiding principle 20** To incorporate cultural aspects, where available, in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the description of Wetlands of International Importance, whilst ensuring the protection of traditional rights and interests.
- Guiding principle 21** To incorporate the cultural aspects of wetlands in management planning.
- Guiding principle 22** To include cultural values in wetland monitoring processes.
- Guiding principle 23** To consider the use of institutional and legal instruments for conservation and protection of cultural values in wetlands.
- Guiding principle 24** To integrate cultural and social criteria into environmental impact assessments.
- Guiding principle 25** To improve wetland-related communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) in the matter of the cultural aspects of wetlands.
- Guiding principle 26** To consider the possibility of using quality labelling of sustainable traditional wetland products in a voluntary and non-discriminatory manner.
- Guiding principle 27** To encourage cross-sectoral cooperation.



9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods”

Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005

Resolution IX.21

Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands

1. AWARE that wetlands and water resources in all parts of the world have been focal points for people and societies, providing vital services and being places where local communities and indigenous peoples have developed strong cultural connections and sustainable use practices;
2. ALSO AWARE that wetlands are especially important to local communities and indigenous peoples and that these groups must have a decisive voice in matters concerning their cultural heritage;
3. FURTHER AWARE that a great number of Ramsar wetlands hold significant cultural values linked to the ecological functioning of these wetlands.
4. RECALLING that the Ramsar Convention from its beginning has recognized the cultural values of wetlands in its Preamble, as well as recognizing that cultural actions may be determined by ecological processes and *vice versa*;
5. APPRECIATING that the wise use of wetlands, the foundation of the Ramsar Convention, requires taking seriously into account these cultural values as they may assist in strengthening or re-establishing the links between people and wetlands, and giving cultural values greater recognition within the Convention;
6. NOTING Resolution VIII.19 *Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites*, adopted by COP8, and the need for its implementation;

7. 'TAKING ALSO INTO ACCOUNT' a) Resolution VII.8 *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in the management of wetlands*, adopted by COP7, and b) paragraph 30 of Resolution VIII.10 on "additional criteria and guidelines for the identification and designation of Ramsar sites concerning socio-economic and cultural values and functions that are relevant to biological diversity ... which would be applied on each occasion in conjunction with one or more existing criteria for the identification and designation of Ramsar sites";
8. AWARE of the work undertaken by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel during the 2003-2005 triennium concerning the inclusion of the cultural importance of wetlands in Ramsar site designation processes;
9. MINDFUL that the Ramsar Convention needs to work in cooperation with multilateral and regional agreements and other international bodies, within their respective mandates, addressing cultural heritage issues as they relate to wetlands, and NOTING the role of the World Heritage Convention in the protection of cultural heritage; and
10. NOTING the presentations and discussions during the COP9 Technical Session 2 on 'Culture and knowledge in wetland management';

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties to identify and analyze further case studies of wetlands with significant cultural values and make them widely known, thus increasing the knowledge and understanding of the relationship between cultural processes and wetland conservation and wise use;
12. AGREES that in the application of the existing criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, a wetland may also be considered of international importance when, in addition to relevant ecological values, it holds examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning;
13. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to incorporate cultural values in wetland policies and strategies, as well as in wetland management plans, and to communicate the results, thus contributing to the development of comprehensive and integrated approaches;
14. EMPHASIZES that measures taken with respect to this Resolution in accordance with the Ramsar Convention are consistent with Parties' rights and obligations under other international agreements;
15. IDENTIFIES the following cultural characteristics as relevant in the designation of Ramsar sites:
 - i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland;
 - ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland;
 - iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples;

- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland;
- 16. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to complete, through a broad participatory process, the work prescribed in paragraph 17 of Resolution VIII.19 concerning the guidance to be provided on cultural values;
- 17. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above; and
- 18. FURTHER REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to analyse the activities carried out to incorporate cultural values in the work of the Convention during the triennium 2006-2008 and the experience gained, and to report to the Standing Committee and to the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10).

Appendix III: Ramsar cultural aspects Matrix

Step 1: Cultural heritage and human activities in wetlands

[Fill in using 1, 2, 3, indicating cultural values of 1. high, 2 .medium, 3. low importance or leave **blank** if non applicable]

[illegible]

Step 2: Description of the cultural importance of human activities

	Human activities	Description
2. Primary use of wetland resources	1. Habitation	
	2.1. Agriculture	
	2.1.1. <i>Rice cultivation</i>	
	2.2. Stock-breeding	
	2.3. Fishing and aquaculture	
	2.4. Forestry	
	2.5. Hunting	
	2.6. Salt extraction	
	2.7. Mining and quarrying	
	2.8. Water use	
	2.9. Other natural resource uses	
3. Secondary use of wet-land resources	3.1. Food processing	
	3.2. Making of handicrafts and tools	
	3.3. Traditional building construction	
	3.4. Infrastructural construction	
	3.4.1 <i>Transportation</i>	
	3.5. Traditional craftsmanship	
	3.6. Practice of traditional medicine	
4. Use of wetland services	4.1. Tourism – ecotourism	
	4.2. Leisure and sports	
	4.3. Scientific research and education	
5. Social activities	5.1. Festivals and celebrations	
	5.2 Religious events and activities	
	6. Artistic expression	
	7. Conservation and management activities	