



## The Venice Declaration on Mediterranean Wetlands

### 1. RECOGNIZING

- (i) that the wetlands of the Mediterranean are an essential component of the region's natural systems, and that their hydrological and ecological functions - including flood storage, aquifer recharge, water supply and alleviation of pollution - contribute greatly to the maintenance of biological diversity, provide significant benefits to human populations and can constitute the basis for long-term sustainable development action;
- (ii) that there has been significant loss and degradation of natural Mediterranean wetlands in the 20th century - with more than 50% of wetland area destroyed by human intervention in many countries of the region - and that degradation continues, with consequent loss of functions, biodiversity and potential for sustainable development;
- (iii) that wetlands have a critical importance for Mediterranean cultural and natural heritage, and that local communities therefore have a key role to play in their wise use and conservation;

### 2. RECALLING

- (i) that the 1991 Grado Conference on Managing Mediterranean Wetlands adopted a Declaration urgently recommending all Mediterranean States, concerned organizations and individuals to adopt the following goal: **TO STOP AND REVERSE THE LOSS AND DEGRADATION OF MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS**
- (ii) that the MedWet initiative was launched to achieve this goal;
- (iii) that the MedWet initiative has been implemented since 1993, with significant funding from the European Commission, to develop methodologies and to draft a strategy for the conservation and wise use of Mediterranean wetlands;

**3. FURTHER RECALLING** that most Mediterranean states are Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona 1975) and its Protocols, and to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971);

**4. NOTING** that "Priority fields of activities for the environment and development in the Mediterranean Basin, 1996-2005" of the Mediterranean Action Plan, agreed in Barcelona in June 1995, included enhancing of conservation and rational management of Mediterranean wetlands;

### 5. FURTHER NOTING

- (i) that the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention adopted a Strategic Plan at their Conference in Brisbane, Australia, in March 1996 to guide implementation of the Convention for the period 1997-2002;
- (ii) that the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, at its meetings in Kushiro, Japan, in 1993 and Brisbane, Australia, in 1996 adopted recommendations welcoming MedWet as a regional wetland initiative and calling for it to be extended to all countries of the Mediterranean region;
- (iii) that the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy, annexed to this Declaration, closely follows the goals, objectives and actions of the Ramsar Strategic Plan and adapts them to the needs of the Mediterranean region;



## The Venice Declaration on Mediterranean Wetlands

### THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS CONFERENCE

CONVENED IN VENICE FROM 5-9 JUNE 1996 BY THE ITALIAN MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT DURING THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, WITH 250 PARTICIPANTS FROM 21 MEDITERRANEAN STATES AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUAL WETLAND EXPERTS;

**6. RECOMMEND** that the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy, which has been endorsed during the Venice Conference be implemented by all Mediterranean States, and by international and national, governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the Mediterranean region, using appropriate existing instruments and mechanisms;

**7. REQUEST** funding agencies - whether multilateral, bilateral, national, regional or local - to provide financial resources for the implementation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy;

**8. FURTHER REQUEST** that Mediterranean States and non-governmental organizations concerned with Mediterranean wetlands consider formal adoption of the Strategy;

**9. PROPOSE** that the implementation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy should build on the experience of MedWet and continue to undertake actions in the priority fields of training to meet national needs, public awareness, inventory and monitoring, applied research, economic evaluation of wetland benefits and functions, and promote wise use of wetland resources;

**10. COMMEND** to Mediterranean States, and to governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with Mediterranean wetlands, the MedWet tools and methodologies, and call for their further development in the Mediterranean region;

**11. CALL ON** Mediterranean States to prepare and adopt National Wetland Plans within the next two years, drawing on the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy;

**12. THANK** the MedWet Steering Committee, successively chaired by the European Commission and the Ramsar Bureau, for coordinating the MedWet initiative and emphasize the need for regular international conferences in the region to review progress in implementing the Strategy.

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## Mediterranean Wetland Strategy 1996-2006

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### Introduction

1. For thousands of years, the wetlands around the Mediterranean basin have provided essential services to the people of the region - water, food, materials, transport - and have acted as a backdrop to their social and cultural activities. For example, the great civilisations of the Nile Delta were based on control and sharing of the annual flood.

2. In recent history, and especially in the first part of the twentieth century, Mediterranean wetlands have been destroyed and degraded - to prevent water-borne diseases, to expand agriculture and to create room for construction of housing, industrial and tourist facilities for increasing human populations. Thus, 73% of the marshes in northern Greece have been drained since 1930; 86% of the 78 most important wetlands in France were degraded by official public policies in the thirty years to 1994; Spain has lost an estimated 60% of its original wetland area; while 15% of the area of lakes and marshes in northern and central Tunisia (but 84% of the wetlands in the Tunisian sector of the catchment of the River Medjerdah, the major river flowing from Algeria into northern Tunisia) were lost between 1881 and 1987.

3. The last years of the twentieth century have seen a realisation that this loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands has brought about a loss of the functions and values originally provided free of charge by wetlands, including: sediment and erosion control; maintenance of water quality and abatement of pollution; maintenance of surface and underground water supply; support for fisheries; grazing and agriculture; outdoor recreation and education for human society; and provision of habitats for flora and fauna.

4. This realisation was first clearly expressed at the "MAR" Conference held in the Camargue, France, in 1962, which eventually led to the adoption of the global Convention on Wetlands at Ramsar, in Iran in 1971. In 1975 the Barcelona Convention was established, initially to combat marine pollution in the Mediterranean, whilst the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species were concluded in 1979.

5. In recent years, as concern at the loss of wetlands has become more widespread, the pace of remedial action has been stepped up. The Grado Symposium in 1991 adopted as its goal:

### ***"To stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands"***

From the Grado Symposium grew MedWet, a partnership of an original kind between the European Commission, the Ramsar Bureau, the governments of France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and several Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) - Wetlands International, WWF International, the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat and the Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre. The first MedWet project (1993-1996) produced and tested a number of tools of relevance to conservation and wise use of wetlands throughout the Mediterranean.

6. In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted in Rio de Janeiro, and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development was established in New York. In 1995, the Barcelona Convention adopted new protocols which gave much greater attention to Mediterranean wetlands and coastal areas. In 1996, the European Union Council of Ministers adopted the European Commission's "Communication on the wise use and conservation of wetlands", which gives greater attention to wetlands outside the Natura 2000 network, established under the European Directives on Wild Birds and Habitats. The sixth Ramsar Conference in Brisbane, Australia, adopted a global Strategic Plan for implementation of the Convention on Wetlands from 1997-2002.

7. As the culmination of the first phase of MedWet, the MedWet partners drew up a draft of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy. The Strategy aims to take account of the results of the first phase of MedWet and of the essential elements of the other initiatives mentioned above, and to act as a regional application of the Ramsar Strategic Plan, whose structure it follows. It aims to be of relevance to the whole Mediterranean.

8. The Strategy was drawn up in the conviction of the need to integrate the conservation of wetland biodiversity with sustainable development. Throughout the text, "wise use" is considered as synonymous with "sustainable development". The Strategy takes into account broader Mediterranean factors that determine the future of wetlands and in particular:

- poverty and economic inequality;

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- pressure from population growth, immigration and mass tourism; and
- social and cultural conflicts.

The Strategy aims to contribute to the resolution of these problems, notably through integration of conservation and wise use of wetlands into land-use planning, and wise use of scarce water resources, an issue of special concern in all Mediterranean countries.

**9.** The Strategy, which was endorsed by the participants in the Mediterranean Wetlands Conference held in Venice from 5-9 June 1996, constitutes a challenge to Mediterranean governments at national, regional and local level; to supranational and inter-governmental institutions; to international and national non-governmental Organisations; and to the wider constituency involved in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Its objectives will be achieved more readily if significant additional resources are obtained. More specifically, the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy is intended:

- to promote the implementation of policies for the wise use of wetlands in the Mediterranean;
- to provide a framework for the development of National Wetland Policies;
- to promote conservation of the biological diversity of Mediterranean wetlands, through sustainable management, restoration and rehabilitation;
- to increase awareness of the ecological, cultural, recreational, scientific and social values of Mediterranean wetlands among decision-makers, local communities and visitors;
- to increase the capacity of Mediterranean institutions to respond to the challenge of conserving and making wise use of wetlands;
- to make effective use of the MedWet tools and methodologies;
- to guide the effective use of funding for Mediterranean wetlands; and
- to establish a mechanism for consultation and cooperation between institutions concerned with conservation and wise use of Mediterranean wetlands.

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## Goal

***The Goal of the Strategy is to stop and reverse the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands as a contribution to the conservation of biodiversity and to sustainable development in the region.***

## General Objectives

A number of General Objectives, forming part of an integrated framework, make up the scope of the Strategy; they are to be achieved through specific actions at international, national, regional and local levels. [Throughout the present Strategy, the term "national" includes regional or autonomous governmental structures, where they exist and have the appropriate competence.]

1. To endeavour to obtain the widest possible acceptance and commitment to implementation of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy.
2. To achieve the wise use of Mediterranean wetlands, including restoration or rehabilitation of lost and degraded wetlands.
3. To increase knowledge and raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the Mediterranean.
4. To reinforce the capacity of institutions and Organisations in the Mediterranean to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.
5. To ensure that all wetlands in the Mediterranean are effectively managed, particularly those under legal protection.
6. To confer legal protection on the major Mediterranean wetlands and strengthen relevant legal frameworks. 7. To strengthen international co-operation and mobilize international technical and financial assistance for wetlands in the Mediterranean.

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8. To strengthen collaboration among governmental and non-governmental Organisations at all levels, as well as the private sector, for wetland conservation and wise use in the Mediterranean.

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## General Objective 1

**To endeavour to obtain the widest possible acceptance and commitment to implementation of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy.**

Rationale: The extent of the destruction and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands, and the magnitude and complexity of the task for reversing this trend, make it necessary to establish a common Strategy, widely accepted and adopted by all who have an impact on these important habitats. Membership of international conventions and Organisations is an important demonstration of international and national commitment.

### Operational Objective 1.1

**To endeavour to ensure that all Mediterranean states become Contracting Parties to relevant international Conventions, and members of appropriate international Organisations.**

**International actions:1.1.1** Recruit new Contracting Parties, especially among states with significant and/or transboundary wetland resources (including shared species).

**1.1.2** Endeavour to ensure active membership or participation in the Mediterranean in international NGOs (such as BirdLife International, IUCN - The World Conservation Union, Wetlands International, WWF).

### Operational Objective 1.2

**To ensure that Mediterranean governmental agencies at all levels, relevant inter-governmental bodies, and international and national non-governmental Organisations in the Mediterranean, become committed to the implementation of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy.**

**International actions:1.2.1** Inform officially all governments of the Mediterranean about the Strategy, and seek their adoption of the Strategy and commitment to its implementation.

**1.2.2** Ensure that regional authorities are fully informed of and involved in the implementation of the Strategy.

**1.2.3** Make the Strategy widely known among international Organisations, so that they may consider incorporating relevant actions into their programmes for the Mediterranean, and adopt its operational objectives.

**1.2.4** Devise a system for evaluating the implementation and success of the Strategy at Mediterranean, national, regional and local level.

**National actions:1.2.5** Promote awareness of the Strategy throughout the Mediterranean to encourage consensus and to sensitize and mobilize public services at national, regional and local level, and to mobilize the NGOs for assisting in its implementation.

### Operational Objective 1.3

**To achieve knowledge and acceptance of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy by the wider public, and especially by communities living in, or close to, wetlands.**

**Local actions: 1.3.1** Inform local populations, and all those having local interests, about the potential benefits of the Strategy for them, through well targeted public awareness and information campaigns.

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## General Objective 2

**To achieve the wise use of Mediterranean wetlands, including restoration or rehabilitation of lost and degraded wetlands.**

Rationale: Wise use of wetlands, which is the sustainable use of their resources, requires concerted action among Mediterranean governmental and non-governmental partners. At the national level, such collaboration should be centred on the adoption of national policies and plans for wetland

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conservation. The incorporation of wetland conservation and wise use as a key concern in sectoral processes is of utmost importance, especially in land use planning, water resource allocation (such as urban supply, and irrigation schemes), coastal zone management, and urban and regional development.

On a complementary basis, effective work for conservation and management is also needed at the local level, where actions have a visible impact, and where the participation of local populations is most direct and decisive. The private sector should also become involved in view of the need for the sustainable management of all economic activities directly related to wetlands or affecting them.

In most of the Mediterranean, a majority of the original wetland resource has already been lost (e.g. through drainage) or seriously degraded (e.g. by pollution). In order to reestablish the values and benefits derived from wetland functions, the implementation of concerted restoration and rehabilitation programmes is required.

## **Operational Objective 2.1**

**To incorporate wetland conservation and wise use as a key element in all national and regional sectoral policies, processes and programmes which influence natural resource use, and land use and water use planning.**

**International actions: 2.1.1** Distribute basic documentation on wise use throughout the Mediterranean in appropriate formats and languages.

**2.1.2** Encourage the adoption of integrated catchment and coastal zone management through catchment management plans (CMP) and coastal zone management plans (CZMP).

**2.1.3** Promote the adoption of the proposed Directive on Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) in the European Union.

**National actions: 2.1.4** Establish national wetland policies and action plans, as required by the Ramsar Convention, coordinated with water and land use policies, and, where appropriate, with National Environment Action Plans and National Biodiversity Strategies.

**2.1.5** Initiate or enhance integrated spatial management, especially in the sensitive coastal areas, taking wetlands seriously into account, and providing for appropriate zonation of land use, including the concept of ecological corridors/networks to avoid habitat fragmentation.

**2.1.6** Manage water resources in an integrated and sustainable way, on the basis of hydrological basins, ensuring that wetlands are provided with water of the quality and quantity required to maintain their natural functions and values. Special attention should also be given to maintaining adequate sediment supply for coastal wetlands, especially deltas.

**2.1.7** Coordinate work for conservation and wise use of wetlands with the Mediterranean Water Charter, and ensure that the latter takes account of environmental issues affecting water.

**2.1.8** Establish or enhance mechanisms for effective consultation between governments and NGOs in developing and implementing national wetland plans.

**2.1.9** Initiate or enhance Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for all developments likely to affect the ecological character of wetland sites. Consider development of guidelines for EIAs in Mediterranean wetlands.

**2.1.10** Apply ecological engineering techniques (such as the maintenance and restoration of saltmarsh in place of artificial coastal protection structures) as a contribution to sustainable wetland management.

## **Operational Objective 2.2**

**To encourage active and informed participation of local communities in the wise use and management of wetlands.**

**Local actions: 2.2.1** Ensure active and substantial participation in wetland conservation of local governmental agencies and community groups, also through representation on wetland management bodies. Ensure that local communities benefit from economic, social, cultural and recreational returns of the use of their wetland resources.

**2.2.2** Ensure active and informed participation by local communities in the wetland management committees established under Action 5.1.2 of the present Strategy.

**2.2.3** Promote and reinforce the specific cultural aspects of wetlands in each locality, by encouraging relevant historical research and involving local educational and cultural institutions.

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## Operational Objective 2.3

**To ensure that economic activities directly or indirectly affecting wetlands are carried out in a sustainable manner.**

**International actions: 2.3.1** Prepare guidelines on the funding of development policies, programmes and projects in the Mediterranean, similar to those prepared by OECD for tropical and sub-tropical wetlands.

**National and local actions: 2.3.2** Assess economic activities related to wetlands (especially agriculture, grazing, fisheries, hunting, salt extraction, tourism and use of reeds), and draw up guidelines for their sustainable management. Carry out Environmental Impact Assessments on new projects related to wetlands, especially intensive aquaculture units.

**2.3.3** Ensure the sustainable management of fresh water resources, on the basis of integrated plans for each hydrological basin, mainly by encouraging economy in water use and recycling, and giving priority to certain uses, through suitable pricing mechanisms.

## Operational Objective 2.4

**To promote the restoration of lost wetlands and the rehabilitation of the functions of degraded wetlands throughout the Mediterranean.**

**International actions: 2.4.1** Encourage research on wetland restoration for specific wetland types.

**2.4.2** Use appropriate networks for the sharing of knowledge and expertise among the sites.

**National actions: 2.4.3** Identify those lost wetlands whose restoration or rehabilitation (a) is economically and technically feasible, (b) will most increase Mediterranean biodiversity, (c) will provide most benefit to local people, and (d) has strong public support.

**Local actions: 2.4.4** Carry out pilot projects for wetland restoration and rehabilitation, with strong local involvement.

## Operational Objective 2.5

**To ensure that pollution from substances which are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate, is eliminated and that all other pollutants, including nutrients, are kept under control.**

**International actions: 2.5.1** Ensure that EU legislation relevant to freshwater quality is effectively implemented by EU member states.

**2.5.2** Ensure that the Land Based Sources of Pollution (LBS) Protocol under the Barcelona Convention is ratified, adopted into national legislation and implemented throughout the Mediterranean.

**National actions: 2.5.3** In cooperation with industry and local communities, carry out cost-effective reduction and elimination of pollution.

**2.5.4** Through public awareness and consumer campaigns, promote the adoption of clean production technologies and priority toxic elimination programmes.

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## General Objective 3

**To increase knowledge and raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the Mediterranean.**

Rationale: Wetland values and their many functions must be brought to the attention of the wider public and of decision-makers, so that policies and activities that degrade wetlands can be replaced by positive ones. A first step towards the achievement of this objective is the gathering of information on the location, functions and values of Mediterranean wetlands.

A review of the available wetland inventories of all Mediterranean countries has indicated that the level of knowledge of wetland resources varies much from one country to another, that available data are mainly inadequate, not compatible and thus not comparable. MedWet has developed specific tools to enable Mediterranean wetland managers and scientists to collect high quality information in a standardized way, compatible with both the Natura 2000 and Ramsar Convention requirements.

## Operational Objective 3.1

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**To harmonize the information available, and fill national and local gaps in the knowledge of Mediterranean wetlands.**

**International actions: 3.1.1** Establish focal points for wetland information compilation and dissemination, and ultimately for all natural ecosystems (such as those existing in EU member states) throughout the Mediterranean, and encourage the use of standard methodologies for wetland inventories.

**3.1.2** Produce an overview of all wetlands in the Mediterranean linked to a meta database.

**National actions: 3.1.3** Apply the inventory tools developed under MedWet to provide a comprehensive and comparable basis for defining priorities at national, regional and local levels. This action entails:

- review and planning of national inventories,
- application of the technical tools available,
- standardization of information,
- establishment of periodic review procedures for the national inventories.

**3.1.4** Disseminate widely, in non-technical, attractive formats, the results of wetland inventory projects to site managers, decision-makers and general public.

**3.1.5** Use objective and complete information as a basis for monitoring ecological change in wetlands.

## **Operational Objective 3.2**

**To identify the functions and values of Mediterranean wetland sites.**

**International actions: 3.2.1** Collaborate with organizations and institutions experienced in the fields of identification, quantification and assessment of the economic values of wetland functions and benefits, with a view to adapting and applying existing techniques at Mediterranean wetlands.

**3.2.2** Encourage further assessment of the likely impact of climatic change and sea-level rise on Mediterranean wetlands.

**National and local actions: 3.2.3** Take into account the information and experience gained internationally when devising site-specific management plans.

## **Operational Objective 3.3**

**To raise awareness and understanding by the general public of wetland functions and values.**

**International actions: 3.3.1** Organize a long-term Pan-Mediterranean programme for promoting recognition of the importance of wetlands, using all appropriate tools (e.g. TV programmes, videos, print media, networks of journalists).

**National actions: 3.3.2** Organize national public awareness activities on wetlands, their values and functions.

**Local actions: 3.3.3** Organize awareness-raising activities to promote local appreciation of the values of wetlands.

**3.3.4** Entrust this continuous sensitization of local populations as much as possible to appropriate NGOs, with the assistance of wetland management bodies and specialized wetland centres.

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## **General Objective 4**

**To reinforce the capacity of institutions and organizations in the Mediterranean to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

Rationale: The capacity of institutions dealing with wetland conservation and wise use in the Mediterranean region is often seriously limited in terms of financial and technical resources and in terms of the legal framework within which they operate. Concerted action is needed in these areas to reinforce the capacity of such institutions.

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## Operational Objective 4.1

**To improve public administration structures and legal frameworks concerning wetlands.**

**International actions: 4.1.1** Review existing national and regional institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and identify areas of possible improvement.

**National actions: 4.1.2** Provide the responsible services with the necessary financial, material and human resources to carry out their tasks effectively.

## Operation Objective 4.2

**To improve the capacity of institutions and organizations to manage wetlands in an integrated and sustainable way through proper training of staff and decision-makers.**

**International actions: 4.2.1** Organize international exchanges dealing with objectives and implementation of training programmes.

**National actions: 4.2.2** Support National Wetland Policies through a programme of training for decision-makers, and relevant scientific, technical and administrative staff.

**4.2.3** Develop a system for exchange, throughout the Mediterranean, of experience in defining and implementing national training programmes, ensuring that training institutions make the necessary arrangements to realize the operational objectives of the present Strategy .

**4.2.4** Reinforce the ability of existing national training institutions to address wetland issues.

**Local actions: 4.2.5** Encourage local training initiatives, as required to assist specific management projects 4.2.6 Consider application of existing tools and experience, such as those arising from the first phase of the MedWet programme.

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## General Objective 5

**To ensure that all wetlands in the Mediterranean are effectively managed, particularly those under legal protection.**

Rationale: Mediterranean wetlands require active and integrated management. Integrated management includes a wide range of activities, that concern not only the scientific and technical sectors, but also social and cultural aspects, as well as the regulation of economic activities within the scope of sustainability. Efficient management also depends on thorough scientific knowledge of wetland functions. Much is already known, but information is often not available, or not in a form that permits its easy use.

In some parts of the Mediterranean, there is already an extensive network of wetlands under legal protection. In these areas, priority should be given to effective management of protected sites to complement the wise use of all wetlands under General Objective 2. Nevertheless, legal protection is still lacking for many important wetlands, so that the present General Objective must be pursued in parallel with General Objective 6 (conferring legal protection).

In all cases, special attention should be paid to the conservation management of wetland plant and animal species, particularly those of special concern (e.g. threatened or endemic species).

## Operational Objective 5.1

**To ensure the integrated management of wetland sites of international and national importance.**

**International actions: 5.1.1** Disseminate widely, in the appropriate languages and at reasonable cost, the wetland management material developed under the first MedWet phase, and the experience gained during the application of management tools and methodologies at the test sites.

**National actions: 5.1.2** Establish at all major wetlands (or groups of wetlands reasonably close to one another) a wetland management committee - with the necessary scientific expertise, legal framework, social sensitivity and participation of local communities - to deal with all aspects of sustainable and multiple use of resources. These committees should have a decisive voice on matters that may affect wetlands in their whole hydrological basin.

**Local actions: 5.1.3** Provide the site management authorities with the necessary inventory tools to collect, store and manage detailed information about their site in an efficient way.

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**5.1.4** Develop and implement management plans for each site, based on the Ramsar "Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands" and the corresponding work done under MedWet. Review the implementation of management plans in order to identify possible gaps and difficulties.

**5.1.5** On the basis of the baseline information resulting from detailed site inventories, provide wetland managers with the capacity to monitor ecological change in the wetlands :

- to determine the need for further management activities, and
- to evaluate their results and institute corrective measures whenever required.

## **Operational Objective 5.2**

**To promote applied research on wetland issues and make the results widely available, especially to the managers of wetlands and water resources.**

**International actions: 5.2.1** Collect, edit, translate into key Mediterranean languages and distribute existing scientific knowledge on wetlands, so that it reaches wetland managers in the field.

**5.2.2** Encourage scientific institutions in the Mediterranean to develop comprehensive wetland programmes, and to improve their capacity to transfer knowledge from research to wetland management.

**National and local actions: 5.2.3** Encourage research throughout the Mediterranean to address problems specific to national and local ecological conditions.

## **Operational Objective 5.3**

**To increase efforts for the conservation of species dependent on wetlands.**

**International actions: 5.3.1** Plan major conservation campaigns for threatened wetland-dependent species in the Mediterranean, based on specific action plans at Mediterranean, national (adoption) and local (implementation) levels. Ensure the active participation of international NGOs, such as BirdLife International, IUCN - The World Conservation Union, Wetlands International and WWF, as well as appropriate national and local NGOs.

**5.3.2** Encourage concerted efforts to conserve globally threatened Mediterranean species, especially endemic ones, in conjunction with the Bern Convention (Species Action Plans), Bonn Convention (especially the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds), BirdLife International (Species of European Conservation Concern), and IUCN (Red Data Books).

**5.3.3** Prohibit the introduction of alien wetland species and promote control measures for alien species already introduced.

**National actions: 5.3.4** Ensure that hunting practices are sustainable, inter alia by phasing out the use of lead shot in Mediterranean wetlands.

**5.3.5** Ensure that harvesting of wetland flora and fauna species (such as fish, birds, crustaceans, reeds) by local communities for economic reasons is also carried out on a sustainable basis.

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## **General Objective 6**

**To confer legal protection on the major Mediterranean wetlands and strengthen relevant legal frameworks.**

Rationale: Integrated management of wetlands is facilitated by establishment of an effective legal protection framework. The conservation and sustainable use of wetlands also requires a legal mechanism to control activities which, though exercised outside their immediate area, may affect their ecological character. The general protection of wetlands in any given country requires specifically designed land use and water legislation for control of activities that may affect their ecological character.

### **Operational Objective 6.1**

**To ensure that all Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention confer legal protection on their wetlands which satisfy the Ramsar "Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance", and that member states of the European Union include in the Natura 2000 network all wetlands that satisfy the criteria for classification set out in Article 4 of the**

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## **Directive on conservation of wild birds and in Article 6 of the Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.**

**International actions: 6.1.1** Inform non-EU states in the Mediterranean about the EU Habitats Directive, and promote the extension of the Natura 2000 concept to Mediterranean countries associated with the European Union.

**National actions: 6.1.2** Identify wetlands that satisfy the Ramsar Criteria and take the necessary steps for their inclusion in the List of wetlands of international importance.

**6.1.3** Include in the Natura 2000 network all wetlands within the European Union that meet the criteria for classification set out in Article 4 of the Birds Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

**6.1.4** Provide appropriate legal protection for all other wetlands, based on national specificities and legal frameworks.

**Local actions: 6.1.5** Implement and enforce legal protection status through appropriate management measures. **6.1.6** Monitor infringement of legal protection, and inform appropriate local, national and international agencies.

### **Operational Objective 6.2**

#### **To ensure that suitable legal mechanisms exist for the conservation and wise use of Mediterranean wetlands.**

**International actions: 6.2.1** Make available throughout the Mediterranean region the knowledge and experience acquired in resolving management problems through the use of legal instruments for wetland conservation, including fiscal and land tenure instruments.

**National actions: 6.2.2** Review existing legislation and institutions with a view to ascertaining their capacity to maintain or develop sustainable multiple use of wetlands. Identify strengths and weaknesses and reasons for successes or failures.

**6.2.3** Identify major legal obstacles, in particular jurisdictional obstacles, which hamper development or effective implementation of these laws and institutions, and develop proposals for improving the present situation, including strengthening of enforcement mechanisms.

**6.2.4** Develop legal instruments which effectively control outside activities affecting the ecological character of wetlands.

**6.2.5** Develop land use and water legislation with a view to ensuring the general protection of all wetlands, whether or not they have been given legal protection.

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### **General Objective 7**

#### **To strengthen international co-operation and mobilize international technical and financial assistance for wetlands in the Mediterranean.**

Rationale: Stopping the loss and degradation of Mediterranean wetlands, through the implementation of the Strategy, will require the concerted efforts of supranational and international authorities, governments, regional and local authorities, scientific institutions, environmental NGOs, corporations and individuals. Special efforts will be required to ensure the availability of the necessary funds for international, national and local actions.

### **Operational Objective 7.1**

#### **To intensify international support for wetland conservation in the Mediterranean.**

**International actions: 7.1.1** Encourage the international conventions of pertinence to Mediterranean wetlands: - to coordinate effectively their efforts concerning wetlands, and - to assist in the implementation of the Strategy.

**7.1.2** Incorporate specific wetland conservation actions that are part of the present Strategy into regional development policies, such as the EU programme for a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

**7.1.3** Work with large donors (such as the Global Environmental Facility, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the European Commission) and encourage them :

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- to provide financial support necessary for the implementation of the Strategy,
- to refuse to support development projects that may degrade or destroy wetlands, directly or indirectly, and
- to ensure that individual wetland projects they fund are in harmony with this Strategy, particularly by carrying out feasibility studies which take full account of the economic values of wetlands.

**7.1.4** Encourage the European Commission to intensify its efforts in the Mediterranean and increase its internal coordination, in accordance with its recent Communication on the wise use and conservation of wetlands, in order to promote programmes and projects that are positive and not destructive to wetlands.

**7.1.5** Present the Strategy to the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and secure the Commission's support for its implementation.

**National actions: 7.1.6** Participate actively in relevant conventions for wetland conservation and wise use.

**7.1.7** Promote publicly the positive role of these conventions and their potential benefits at the national and local levels.

## **Operational Objective 7.2**

**To develop collaboration on transboundary wetland sites in the Mediterranean.**

**International actions: 7.2.1** Identify transboundary wetlands of international importance (and in particular transboundary hydrological basins), and discuss through inter-governmental cooperation the feasibility of a concerted approach in management.

**7.2.2** Encourage twinning of transboundary wetlands, and of other wetlands with similar characteristics, and use successful cases to illustrate the benefits of international cooperation.

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## **General Objective 8**

**To strengthen collaboration among governmental and non-governmental organizations at all levels, as well as the private sector, for wetland conservation and wise use in the Mediterranean.**

Rationale: Collaboration between governments, NGOs, scientific bodies and the private sector, to implement the Strategy and achieve its Goal, is necessary throughout the Mediterranean, because Mediterranean wetlands face similar problems and are ecologically interrelated.

### **Operational Objective 8.1**

**To support a collaboration structure for wetlands in the Mediterranean, under the aegis of the Ramsar Convention, with the required institutional mechanisms and resources to achieve the preceding objectives.**

**International actions: 8.1.1** Request the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to play an active central role in the implementation of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy, establishing for this purpose a coordination group of governmental and non-governmental experts.

**8.1.2** Expand the current system of collaboration on wetlands (the MedWet Initiative, under the Ramsar Convention) to cover the whole Mediterranean, to provide for :

- the exchange of information, by drawing rapidly from existing wetland expertise throughout the Mediterranean, and the rest of the world,
- the channelling of technical and financial assistance,
- attention to migratory species and to transboundary wetland systems,
- the discussion and resolution of wetland-related problems.

**8.1.3** Obtain for the system the support of both the public and the private sectors, and the active participation of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

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**8.1.4** Encourage international conventions and organizations with an interest in the Mediterranean (both governmental and non-governmental) to work closely with the Ramsar Bureau and to play a key role in this collaboration and assist in its development.

**8.1.5** Ensure that the collaboration system :

- remains flexible and non-exclusive,
- operates with minimal costs, using as much as possible existing and established national and international facilities.