



MedWet

L'initiative pour les zones humides méditerranéennes
The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
مبادرة المناطق الرطبة المتوسطية

WETLANDS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

A Framework for Action 2016–2030

As adopted by the 12th Meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands
Committee (MedWet/Com)

Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris, France, 7–11 February 2016

February 2016

© Photos/illustrations

P 2: Ellio, WWF-Canon

P 4: A. Vrdoljak, WWF-Canon

P 6: M. Renaudin

P 10: Map @Ramsar, A. Guelmami, 2015

P 20: N. Hamidan, RSCN

Layout: L'IV Com Sàrl, Villars-sous-Yens, Switzerland

English editing: Dwight Peck

Printing: Arles Imprim', Arles, France

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the MedWet Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Summary	5
Part I – Background	7
Wetlands: the richest and the most threatened ecosystem	7
Trends in wetlands	8
Some key figures about Mediterranean wetlands	9
Wetlands and climate change	11
Social and cultural values of wetlands	12
The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	12
The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet)	13
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	14
The 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan, 2016–2024	15
Priority areas of focus for the Ramsar Convention over the next nine years	15
Implementation of a first phase (2016–2020)	16
Main objective	16
The Ramsar Strategic Plan as a contribution to the SDGs in the Mediterranean region	18
Key areas of working during the first phase	19
Part II – Proposed actions	21
Implementation of the MedWet Framework for Action	21
Ramsar Strategic Goal 1: Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation	23
Ramsar Strategic Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Sites network	28
Ramsar Strategic Goal 3: Wisely using all wetlands	33
Ramsar Operational Goal 4: Enhancing Implementation of the Ramsar Convention	40
Wetlands for a sustainable Mediterranean region	48



“Wetlands are essential providers of water and food for the many plant and animal species that they host. They are natural infrastructures that ensure in particular the regulation of the water cycle, the maintenance and improvement of the quality of water, the prevention of floods and the protection of river banks, and they provide support of many activities, such as agriculture, aquaculture and tourism... At the Paris Conference on Climate, the COP21, I underlined the significant role of wetlands in the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. I also underlined that water resources are a major subject for this region of the world... I understand that an important part of the work that you will undertake in the coming days is the adoption of the Framework for Action of the Initiative for the years 2016-2030, a Framework that is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the international conventions on the environment...”

Ségolène Royal

Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy

France

(From the video message kindly sent to the opening of the MedWet/Com 12 meeting on 8 February 2016)




Acknowledgements

The MedWet Secretariat is very grateful to the participants at the brainstorming session held in Arles, France, on 6 February 2015, which represented the initial step in the drafting of this Framework for Action. Subsequently, the majority of participants made contributions to the notes on the session prepared by the Secretariat and then to the first and second drafts of the document:

Francesca Antonelli, Head of WWF Freshwater Programme, Italy; **Nejib Benessaiah**, Senior Advisor, MedWet, Tunisia; **Roubina Bassous-Gattas**, Head of the Biodiversity and Food Security Department- Sustainable Agriculture Program at the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), Palestine; **Laurent Chazée**, Coordinator, Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory, La Tour du Valat, France; **Luis Costa**, Executive Director, Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA/BirdLife), Portugal; **Ghislaine Ferrere**, Chair, MedWet Steering Group, Chargée de mission zones humides et Convention de Ramsar, Bureau des milieux aquatiques, Direction de l'eau et de la biodiversité, Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable et de l'Énergie, France; **Anis Guelmami**, Consultant in Environment and Water Resources Management, remote sensing and GIS, Algeria; **Oumnia Himmi**, Directrice de l'Institut Scientifique, Université Mohammed V de Rabat et Trésorière du Group de Recherche pour la Protection des oiseaux au Maroc; Christian Perennou, Chef de projet, Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory, La Tour du Valat, France; **Maïlis Renaudin**, Communications Officer, MedWet Secretariat; **Pere Tomas Vives**, Expert in wetland conservation and management, Balearic Islands, Spain; and **Sergio Romero de Tejada**, Director, Park Natural del Aiguamolls de l'Ampordà Ramsar Site, Catalonia, Spain.

The MedWet Secretariat is also very grateful to the two consultants, **Luis Costa** (Portugal) and **José Tavares** (Portugal/Turkey), who assisted with completing the list of actions proposed in the Framework for Action to attain each one of the targets included in the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan. MedWet is also very thankful to consultant Jaime García Moreno, from ESiLi, who volunteered very useful comments on the first draft.

The MedWet Secretariat also acknowledge with appreciation the contributions made by the Focal Points in the MedWet countries and MedWet partners during the consultations previous to the MedWet/Com 12 meeting.



“...wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.”

Article 1 of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

It should be noted that while this is the definition of wetlands inscribed in the text of the Convention, most of the 168 Parties to the treaty have adopted their own national definitions of wetlands to suit their particular situations, needs and planning systems.

Summary

This Framework for Action has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet)¹ and is designed as an early contribution to achieving some of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals 2016–2030 (SDGs) through a series of concrete actions for the conservation of wetlands and the sustainable use of their resources in the Mediterranean region.

Since MedWet is a Regional Initiative that operates under the aegis of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)², working with 26 Mediterranean Parties to the Convention and Palestine³, the Framework for Action is intended to achieve its central objective mentioned above through the implementation in the Mediterranean region, during a first phase, of the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024 adopted by the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties held in Uruguay on 1–9 June 2015.

It should be noted that, in approving the 4th Strategic Plan, the Ramsar Conference of the Parties, *inter alia*, “Encourages the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, including the Ramsar Regional Centres, to develop work plans for assisting the Parties in their respective regions to effectively implement the Strategic Plan.”

Part I of this document contains **the background** for the Framework for Action and Part II the **proposed actions**.

The Framework for Action follows the three Strategic Goals and one Implementation Goal contained in the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan. For each Goal, the Framework proposes a series of actions aimed at achieving the 18 targets foreseen in the Ramsar Strategic Plan, plus two additional targets added to respond to specific Mediterranean conditions.

This Framework for Action followed a process of consultations from October 2015 with the MedWet countries and MedWet partners and was formally adopted by the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) at its 12th meeting held on 7–11 February 2016 in Paris, France.

Once formally adopted, the MedWet Secretariat is launching an intensive process of consultations with partners in the region with a view to developing the proposed actions into concrete project proposals to be submitted to donors, including bilateral and multilateral development assistance and environmental protection agencies, non-governmental organizations, foundations and the private sector.

The developed countries in Europe that are part of MedWet are expected to undertake the actions included in the Framework using their own resources or the resources at their disposal through the funding mechanisms of the European Union for EU members and EU accession countries.

It is also expected that most activities will take place simultaneously in MedWet developed and developing countries alike so as to generate an active exchange of experiences and lessons learnt and a reinforced sense of ‘common cause’.

It should be noted that while this constitutes a MedWet initiative, the Framework for Action should be appropriated by all concerned sectors and actors in the Mediterranean region directly or indirectly concerned with wetland issues, starting with the MedWet countries themselves. The MedWet Secretariat would have the role of an animator and, to some extent, coordinator of the implementation of the Framework for Action, but it has no intention of becoming the central actor in the process of implementation.

¹ www.medwet.org

² www.ramsar.org

³ Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, The FYR of Macedonia, Tunisia and Turkey.



Part I – Background

Wetlands: the richest and the most threatened ecosystem

1. The World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP/WCMC) has estimated that wetlands cover approximately 12.8 billion hectares – roughly 6% of the Earth's land surface – of which 570 million hectares are freshwater wetlands.
2. Wetlands are one of the richest and most essential ecosystems in the world. These ecosystems have been constituted due to climatic and geomorphologic particularities of territory, in interdependence with forests, mountainous, plain and other ecosystems. They play essentially the role of 'active reserve' in the hydrological cycle and of biodiversity 'reservoir' by sheltering thousands of animal and plant species.
3. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA, 2005) identifies four classes of ecosystem services¹: supporting, provisioning, regulating, and cultural services. They include ecosystem services such as hosting biodiversity, water supply, water purification, climate regulation, flood regulation, coastal protection, provision of useful fibres, spiritual and cultural inspiration and tourism. These classes have been used for considering ecosystem services within this Framework for Action.
4. Societies benefit – often without being fully aware of it – from those natural functions and services provided by wetlands, satisfying the needs of billions of persons. They use wetlands daily by cultivating their soil, fishing for food, cutting their trees for building, hunting waterfowl, enabling leisure, educational and research activities, implementing ecotourism programs in remarkable sites, using their water for domestic or agricultural needs and for recharging aquifers, or for filtering used waters.
5. Wetlands also play a key role in economic activities linked to transportation, water risk management, and pollution control by providing an *ecological or green infrastructure*.
6. The economic value of these wetland services and functions has been recognized more recently. Developed under concepts from the economy of the environment, this notion includes the various economic values attributed by humans to nature, according to the utility and the profit that they derive from its functions. Most of the water we collect and use comes from wetlands².
7. Wetlands have been too often – and frequently still are – equated with 'wastelands', and there is a lack of sufficient awareness of the vital services that they provide. Nevertheless, the recognition of those values is increasing, though it has been difficult to integrate wetlands' values into the decision-making processes of key sectors of the national economies.

¹ See www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf. A further definition is given to these classes of ecosystem services in the Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES) at www.nottingham.ac.uk/cem.

² Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation, UNICEF, WHO, 2012

Trends in wetlands

8. At a global level, the MA found (in 2005) that inland and coastal wetland ecosystems were being lost at a rate faster than that of any other ecosystem, and the trend towards loss of wetland resources has not been fully reversed since. The primary **indirect drivers** of this degradation and loss are identified as population growth and increasing economic development, whilst the **primary direct drivers** are infrastructure development, land conversion, water withdrawal, eutrophication and pollution, overharvesting, overexploitation of wetland resources, and invasive alien species.
9. A recent study³ of long-term and recent trends in global wetland area, based on a review of 189 reports of change in wetland areas, concluded that the reported long-term loss of natural wetlands averages between 54%-57% but that such loss may have been as high as 87% since AD 1700. There has been a much faster rate (3.7 times) of wetland loss during the 20th and early 21st centuries, with a loss of 64-71% since 1900. The study further notes that conversion of coastal natural wetlands accelerated more than that of inland natural wetlands in the 20th century and that conversion and loss is continuing in all parts of the world, and particularly rapidly in Asia.
10. The costs of the loss of freshwater wetlands worldwide from 1997 to 2011 has been valued at US\$ 2.7 trillion per year; the costs of loss of tidal marshes/mangroves has been estimated at US\$ 7.2 trillion per year; and the loss of coral reefs has been estimated at US\$ 11.9 trillion⁴.
11. The report *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands*⁵ notes that:
 - a) the values of inland and coastal ecosystem services are typically higher than for other ecosystem types;
 - b) the 'nexus' between water, food and energy is one of the most fundamental relationships – and increasing challenges – for societies;
 - c) wetlands provide an ecological infrastructure that can help to reach a range of policy objectives;
 - d) wetland loss can lead to significant loss of human well-being and have negative economic impacts on communities, countries and businesses; and
 - e) wetland-related and water-related ecosystem services need to become an integral part of water management in order to make the transition to a resource-efficient, sustainable economy.
12. The Global Biodiversity Outlook 4⁶ also indicates that the trend of wetland loss and degradation is worsening. In contrast to natural wetlands, however, it notes that the area of human-made wetlands tends to be increasing. Despite the partly good progress, additional action is required to achieve the global Aichi Targets for 2020 adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Achieving the 2050 vision of an end to biodiversity loss in conjunction with the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for climate change, combating desertification and land degradation, requires changes in society, including much more efficient use of land, water, energy and materials, rethinking our consumption habits, and in particular major transformations of food systems.
13. The network of Wetlands of International Importance established under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the effective management of the 208.8 million hectares of these Ramsar Sites, when achieved, and more widely of the world's wetlands as well, could make a major contribution to the work of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including those related to water and/or biodiversity such as the CBD, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

3 N. Davidson, How much wetland has the world lost? Long-term and recent trends in global wetland area, CSIRO Publishing, Marine and Freshwater Research, 2014, 65, 934-42, September 2014

4 R. Costanza et al., Changes in the global value of ecosystem services, *Global Environmental Change* 26 (2014) 152 – 158

5 *The Economics of ecosystems and biodiversity for water and wetlands*, IIEP; Ramsar, 2013

6 Report "Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets: an assessment of biodiversity trends, policy scenarios and key actions" available at <https://www.cbd.int/gbo4advance>

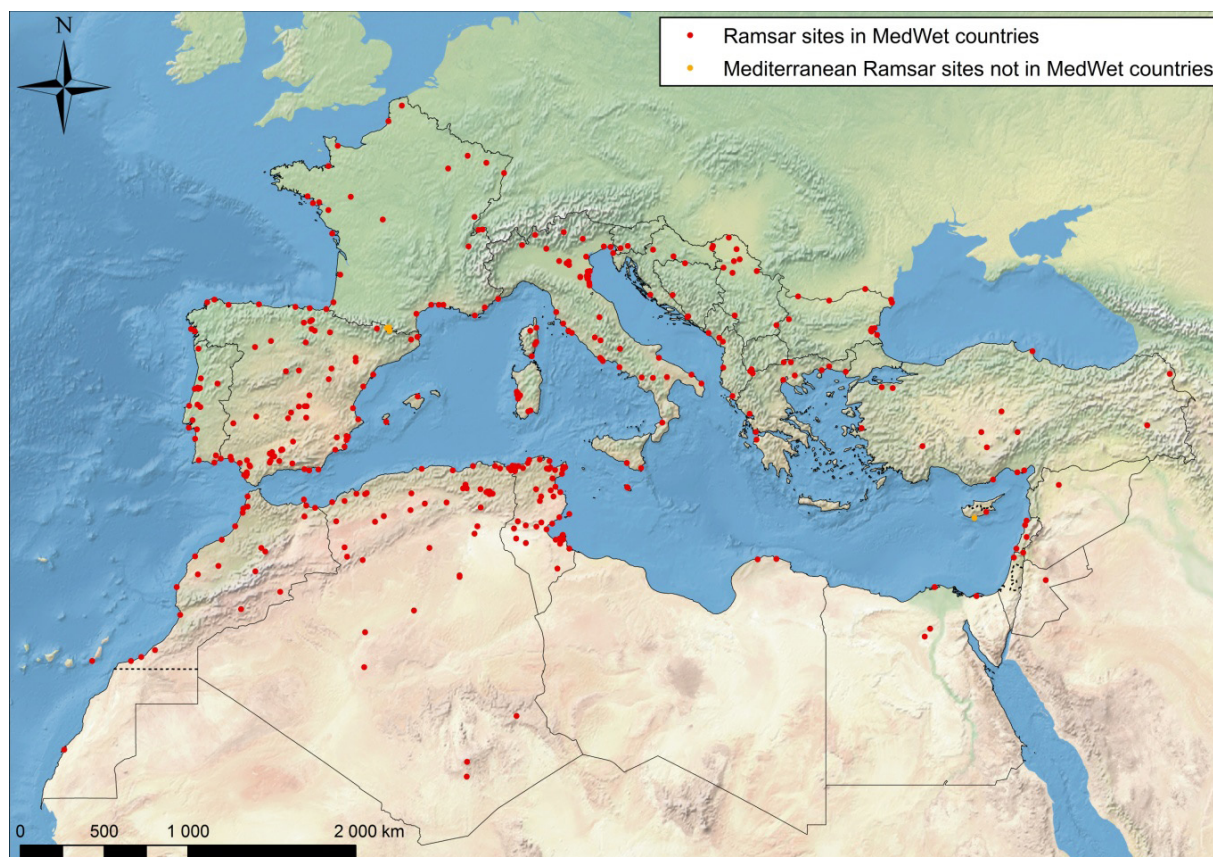
- 14.** Unfortunately, and in spite of important progress made in recent decades – particularly in terms of protection measures – wetlands are often considered at the decision-making level, as stated above, to be ‘lost space’ instead of rich and essential areas for human well-being and survival. However, some success stories demonstrate that it is possible to reverse the trends at the local level. For example, in Camargue (France) thousands of hectares of wetlands have been restored over the past 20 years.

Some key figures about Mediterranean wetlands

- 15.** Thanks to a large extent to the work carried out by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO), established by the Research Centre for the Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands of La Tour du Valat at the request of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com), we have now a better knowledge of the extent and status of Mediterranean wetlands. Importantly, though, more research is still required in this area, in particular in relation to their ecosystem services.
- 16.** The Mediterranean region, due to its climatic specificities, is amazing for the diversity and importance of its wetlands, including the most common ones like temporary marshes, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, deltas and lagoons. In this region, wetlands support high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species, many of which are endemic to the region. Furthermore their ecosystems provide resources directly – and for free! – to millions of people. People benefit not only from the direct resources of wetlands but also the multiple functions and services they offer daily.
- 17.** In the Mediterranean, 386 sites have been designated as Wetlands of International Importance (see section below on the Ramsar Convention) by the 26 countries that are members of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee, covering more than 9 million hectares.
- 18.** The Mediterranean region overall has lost up to 50% of wetlands that existed in 1900, and in some regions this figure is even higher (MWO)⁷:
- in Italy, of the 3 million hectares of wetlands existing at the time of the Romans, only 190,000 hectares remain today;
 - in Tunisia, 28% of the wetlands were lost during the past 100 years; and
 - in Spain, 60% of its natural wetland surface areas have been lost, principally during the past four decades.
- 19.** These losses continue, though the rate has seemingly slowed down in the EU Mediterranean countries.
- 20.** There are many **direct causes** of wetland decline in the Mediterranean, including pollution, over-use of water resources, littering, poor wastewater treatment, hydroelectric infrastructure, urban sprawl and the use of land for farms or tourist resorts. While **agriculture** is the sector that has the greatest impact on wetlands and water, there is growing pressure on them due to **urbanisation**, **public infrastructure**, and **tourism** as well. These human impacts reduce wetland functions and services, making them less able to contribute to sustainable human development (MWO, 2012).

⁷ Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook, 2012, Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

21. The **root causes** of these trends are many and they are interlinked within the predominant development models applied in the region. Population growth and climate change are accentuating these tendencies.



Ramsar Sites across the Mediterranean region as registered in the Ramsar List in March 2015⁸

22. Humans need wetlands and there is an **increasing number of conservation initiatives**. International agreements such as the Ramsar Convention, the CBD, the World Heritage Convention, the Millennium Development Goals, and European Union Directives reinforce each other and encourage countries to better protect their natural capital. The MedWet Initiative, which is the first of its kind in the world, has been bringing together Mediterranean basin stakeholders for more than 20 years to enhance the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
23. The number of sites designated by countries as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) in the Mediterranean region has doubled between 2000 and 2011. Today they cover more than 6 million hectares. In addition, the number of protected wetlands has increased nationally.
24. Environmental outreach and education programmes have had a positive impact on many people and encouraged decision makers to further protect the environment, and environmental considerations are increasingly more integrated into local development planning schemes. Civil society organizations have emerged as key partners in development and conservation issues.
25. Wetland conservation has focused mostly on the conservation of wetland birds, particularly in the European Union, and indeed waterbird communities there have responded positively to the conservation effort, and in general today are on the rise; this is particularly true of generalist waterbird species that have responded positively to the abundant resources provided by the eutrophication of wetlands, the intensification of agriculture/fisheries, and the great increase in artificial wetlands. However, some species particular to seasonal Mediterranean wetlands are continuing to decline.⁹

⁸ Cf. <https://rsis.ramsar.org>.

⁹ Biodiversity – status and trends of species in Mediterranean Wetlands, 2012, Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

- 26.** More worryingly, most other components of Mediterranean wetland biodiversity are also on the decline: the Mediterranean region risks losing 56% of endemic freshwater fish, 36% of freshwater crabs and crayfish, 29% of amphibians, and 19% of dragonflies during the next decades. And 17% of mammals, 13% of reptiles, and 42% of skate and shark species face a high risk of extinction in the Basin¹⁰. Trends in wetland biodiversity are particularly bad in the Eastern Mediterranean (MWO).
- 27.** Similarly, The Living Planet Index, when applied to Mediterranean wetlands, showed a 70% increase for waterbird populations since 1970, and a 40% decline for fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals¹¹.
- 28.** Half a billion humans (7% of the world population) live in the 26 countries of the Mediterranean basin, with 135 million of them living on the coasts. By 2025, 95 million new inhabitants are expected in the Mediterranean Basin – for some countries in the South and the East, populations have doubled between 1970 and 2000. The Mediterranean has the world's highest pressure from tourism: 30% of worldwide tourism happens there, that is, 275 million international tourists/year, estimated to increase to 390 million international tourists in 2025. All this means that 290 km³ of water – half of the exploitable resource – is currently used every year, and this will increase to 330 km³ of freshwater mobilized in the near future¹². This increases the risk of overexploitation and degradation of the Mediterranean wetlands and the decrease of the living standards of human communities around the region. Something like 40% of all the water supplied in the Mediterranean is wasted (MWO).

Wetlands and climate change

- 29.** Climate change is currently at work in the Mediterranean as elsewhere. It is not yet a root or primary cause of change for wetlands, but it may soon become a root cause if current trends persist. For instance, temperatures in South Western Europe have risen by ca. 2°C during the 20th century, and some regions in the South have seen their rainfall decline by up to 20%. The predictions of recent models suggest that in the 21st century, the climate may overall become hotter by 2.2°C to 5.1°C, with the increase being more marked in winter in the North and during summer in the South. The most affected region will likely be the Middle East: the number of very hot days will rise, and the number of rainy days will likely decrease, whilst precipitation will overall become more erratic and, possibly, redistributed over the years.
- 30.** The current models predict that the Mediterranean will be especially affected by climate change:
- a) greater warming than the global average;
 - b) greater variability in rainfall and temperature;
 - c) heat peaks in summer;
 - d) a higher frequency of extreme events such as droughts, floods, as can already be seen in the more frequent storm surges that affect the coastline in Mediterranean deltas and lagoons through increased erosion; and
 - e) many Mediterranean wetlands will run dry, or become temporary.
- 31.** The quantity of water available for the environment and wetlands is decreasing. Stream flows have been significantly affected by the water drawn from rivers and the dams built on them. The overexploitation of surface water and ground water also represents a serious danger. With 92% of its renewable water currently being used, North Africa has already greatly exceeded its water sustainability threshold.
- 32.** While water quality in terms of nutrients and heavy metals has generally improved since the 1980s in Europe, not enough knowledge is available concerning the rest of the region and other potential pollutants to draw accurate conclusions.

¹⁰ Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

¹¹ WWF. (2014). Living Planet Report 2014: species and spaces, people and places. Gland, Switzerland.

¹² Source: Plan Bleu, Regional Activity Centre, Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP).

- 33.** River flows in the Mediterranean region are declining overall as well, except for the Rhône and the Po, due largely to water abstraction and dams built along their courses, and to a lesser extent to climate change. While water quality has been improving markedly in Europe, particularly in relation to nutrients, the situation in North Africa and the Middle East is probably different – although there are too few data to arrive at any conclusions.
- 34.** On the other hand, understanding the critical importance of wetlands for mitigating the effects of climate change and adaptation to it is crucial, in particular for its impacts on areas such as the Mediterranean region.
- 35.** Swamps could be 50 times more effective in battling climate change than rainforests, according to new modelling by Deakin University scientists, who also found that swamps, or freshwater wetlands, could bank up to a third of the carbon found in terrestrial soils, despite only making up 4% of the world's surface.¹³

Social and cultural values of wetlands

- 36.** Wetlands have traditionally been looked upon with distrust and fear in many societies. They were considered as areas full of illnesses, mosquitoes, devils and witches. A long time ago, these beliefs and fears, transmitted through traditional healers and elders, may have participated somehow in their protection through forbidden access, seasonal restriction of the use of resources, and spiritual events.
- 37.** Over the past two millennia, especially since the Roman influence, the drainage of wetlands was viewed as a major undertaking for human health and livelihood. This, combined with the need to expand agricultural land, led to wide-scale drainage and consequently soil desertification. The trend has intensified during the past two centuries with industrialization and urbanization, especially in the North Western part of Europe.
- 38.** In some areas, however, local societies were well aware of the benefits that wetlands provided them (fish, game, reeds, and so on). Consequently, they resisted pressures by state authorities to drain them, as for example around the Languedoc Lagoons in southern France.
- 39.** In other cases, livelihoods and production systems were adapted to wetland conditions. Their survival was ensured through the benefit of the management of provisioning and cultural services which was progressively adapted to the socio-economic context. Many cases of these developments have been documented in the Mediterranean Basin.
- 40.** Since 2012, the MWO has launched a series of wetland site studies to test and elaborate a wetland cultural value indicator on recreation and educational services. In 2015, based on a survey of nine sites in four countries, a first synthesis is being prepared to provide a baseline regional reference. At the same time, MedWet is establishing a network related to culture and wetlands in order to better understand and promote these cultural values.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- 41.** The Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, 168 countries, almost 90% of UN member states, have become Contracting Parties to the Convention.

¹³ <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/wetlands-better-than-rainforests-at-storing-carbon-say-deakin-university-scientists-20150214-13euul.html>

42. A key tool of the Convention is the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List). So far, the Parties have inscribed in the List 2,217 Ramsar Sites, covering 214,101,757 hectares, thus committing themselves to maintain ‘the ecological character’ of these sites. The Convention has established criteria for the inscription of the sites and procedures to ensure that the Parties respect their commitments once the sites have been designated.
43. Another key concept pioneered by the Convention in 1971 is that of ‘wise use’ (the equivalent of what is today called ‘sustainable use’). Article 3.1 of the Convention establishes that the Parties ‘shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote ... as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory’. The wise use of wetlands has become the key concept orienting the work of the Ramsar Convention, and it is defined as ‘the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development’. Wise use therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of people and nature.
44. While the treaty was originally conceived as a means to conserve and restore wetlands as the habitat of waterbirds, over the years, through the Resolutions, guidelines and other tools adopted by the Conference of the Parties, the Convention has become an instrument for the effective management of wetland resources within the wider framework of integrated water resources management for conservation and sustainable development.
45. The Convention maintains active working relations with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and is a member of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Convention Secretariat is administered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the supervision of a Standing Committee integrated by Parties from five different regions elected by the Conference of the Parties.

The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet)

46. Established in 1992, MedWet is the first and oldest of the Regional Initiatives formally recognized by the Ramsar Convention (so far, 15 regional initiatives have been recognized).
47. The MedWet mission is to ensure and support the effective conservation of wetlands and the wise use of their resources, values and services, through local, national, regional and international collaborations. MedWet has four main objectives:
 - to promote and participate in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention’s objectives and initiatives in the Mediterranean region;
 - to develop and reinforce the capacity of governments and civil society for the sustainable management of wetlands, especially those designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention;
 - to act as a catalyst for the exchange of knowledge and expertise between key conservation and sustainable use actors in order to reinforce Mediterranean wetland management; and
 - to collaborate with other international initiatives in the region and globally.
48. MedWet exists under the authority of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) integrated by 26 Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean Ramsar Parties¹⁴ and the Palestinian Authority. Other members of the MedWet/Com include a number of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations and wetland centres (see the complete list of MedWet/Com members at: <http://medwet.org/2014/09/medwetcom-members/>).

¹⁴ Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, The FYR of Macedonia, Tunisia and Turkey.

- 49.** Between meetings of the MedWet/Com, the activities of the MedWet Secretariat are supervised by the MedWet Steering Group¹⁵.
- 50.** The MedWet Secretariat was located in Athens, Greece, from 2002 to 2013, supported by a generous grant of the Greek Government. In 2014 the Secretariat was moved to France and is presently located within the premises of the La Tour du Valat Research Institute on the Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands, in the Camargue.
- 51.** The MedWet Secretariat is financed with contributions from the 26 Ramsar Parties that form the MedWet/Com and, during the current triennium, with a bridge grant provided by the MAVA Foundation and a grant from the French Water Agency Alpes-Méditerranée-Corse.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- 52.** The UN General Assembly has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) « Transforming Our World – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development » at the end of September 2015.
- 53.** All wetlands, including the Ramsar Site network, will have a direct relevance to the achievement of all SDGs which are related to poverty eradication, food and nutrition, healthy living, gender equality, water quality and supply, water security, energy supply, reduction of natural disasters, innovation and the development of appropriate infrastructure, sustainable human settlements adaptation to climate change, oceans, seas and marine resources, biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystems.
- 54.** There are four SDGs of special interest to MedWet:
- SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
 - SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
 - SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources; and
 - SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- 55.** The relevant targets for these SDGs are listed in paragraph 62 below.
- 56.** In the report *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet – Synthesis report* of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda¹⁶, the UN Secretary General affirms that ‘the following six essential elements would help frame and reinforce the universal, integrated and transformative nature of a sustainable development agenda and ensure that the ambition expressed by Member States in the report of the Open Working Group translates, communicates and is delivered at the country level:
- **Dignity:** to end poverty and fight inequalities
 - **People:** to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children
 - **Prosperity:** to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy
 - **Planet:** to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children
 - **Justice:** to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions
 - **Partnership:** to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development.’

¹⁵ Current members of the MedWet Steering Group are: Algeria, France (host of the MedWet Secretariat) Morocco (alternate), Jordan (alternate) Lebanon, Slovenia (Chair), Turkey (alternate), IUCN, WWF (alternate), Research Institute of La Tour de Valat, the Ramsar Secretariat and Mr Thymio Papayannis (Honorary Member).

¹⁶ See: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&Lang=E

The 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan, 2016–2024

- 57.** The 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024 was adopted by the 12th Meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP12) held in Uruguay on 1–9 June 2015.
- 58.** The vision for the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan is: ‘Wetlands are conserved, wisely used, restored and their benefits are recognized and valued by all.’

Priority areas of focus for the Ramsar Convention over the next nine years

- 59.** This summary of priority concerns of the Ramsar Contracting Parties for the implementation of the Convention in the 2016–2024 period is drawn from National Reports to COP11, from the questionnaire on the 4th Strategic Plan completed by many Contracting Parties and partners in 2014, and from regional consultations held during the pre-COP regional meetings in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe in October and November 2014. MedWet participated actively in these consultations.
- a) **Preventing, stopping and reversing the loss and degradation of wetlands:** The largest changes in loss of wetlands continue to be from unsustainable agriculture, forestry and extractive industries, especially oil, gas and mining, the impacts of population growth (including migration and urbanisation) and changes in land use that over-ride environmental considerations. Addressing and engaging the drivers behind these pressures on wetlands is a condition for limiting, adapting to, and mitigating their impacts. Realization of this fact and its consideration in planning and decision-making requires that wetland resources and wetland ecosystem benefits are measured, valued and understood widely within societies.
 - b) **Science based advice and guidance:** Enhancing the generation and delivery of science based advice and guidance to practitioners and policy makers through the STRP and CEPA processes.
 - c) **Climate change and wetlands:** Understanding the critical importance of wetlands for mitigating the effects of climate change and adaptation to climate change, in particular for its impacts on areas such as the Mediterranean region and small island states.
 - d) **Information about ecosystem functions and the ecosystem services they provide to people and nature:** The services, benefits, values, functions, goods and products that wetlands provide have not yet been integrated in national development plans. The lack of recognition of the role of wetlands for the full exercise to the human right to water and poverty reduction, is an important factor in its reduction as well as in the modesty of the efforts invested in restoring wetlands. The integral values and benefits, both material or non-material for people and nature, in a non-consumptive approach include spiritual, existential and future-oriented values.
 - e) **Communicating ecosystem functions and the ecosystem services they provide to people and nature:** Mainstreaming wetland values and enhancing the visibility of the Convention through reaching out with effective communications to decision makers and the wider public. This should contribute to an enhanced understanding of the contribution of wetland values to people’s livelihoods and health, economic development and biodiversity, soil and water.
 - f) **Enhancing cooperation:** Coordinating / participating in cooperation platforms¹⁴ (site level, city, river, lake and groundwater basins, national, regional and global levels), to promote mainstreaming of wetland values within water, soil and biodiversity management and public and private investments bringing together site and other managers, key private and public stakeholders.
 - g) **Implementing the Convention:** Improving compliance with Ramsar provisions concerning Ramsar Site updates, inventories of all wetlands and Wetlands of International Importance, maintenance of ecological character and management of sites, improving the ecological character where not good enough, especially on the Montreux Record, the preparation of management planning processes for all Ramsar Sites, and

implementation of such management planning on the ground through the presence of staff, appropriate infrastructure and other resources.

- h) **Identifying and designating wetlands as Ramsar Sites and transboundary Ramsar Sites**, based on national inventories to ensure their protection for the future and the inclusion of under-represented wetland types in the Ramsar Site network.
- i) **Wise use of wetlands:** Wetlands that are providing local, basin-level, national, regional and global benefits, are well and actively managed to ensure that the ecological functions are maintained.
- j) **Invasive alien species:** Acting to limit and eradicate invasive species in wetlands.
- k) **Strengthen and support the full and effective participation** and the collective actions of stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities for the existence of sustainable, comprehensive and wise use of wetlands.
- l) **Synergies I5:** Enhancing efforts to streamline procedures and processes including reporting and to facilitate data sharing amongst parties responsible for – or cooperating in – the implementation of this and other MEAs and related agreements. Through cooperation, aim to increase the identification of synergies with collaborating MEAs and other international processes at national and global levels.
- m) **Financing:** Financing is needed to manage wetlands. The cost for non-action may be severe. Adequate financing is a particular challenge in many countries, especially developing countries.
- n) **Basin perspective:** Analysing and expressing wetland functions and the ecosystem services they provide to people and nature at river, lake and groundwater basin level, engaging with the stakeholders is necessary to recognise wetlands as part of a wider water cycle.

Implementation of a first phase (2016–2020) of the MedWet Framework for Action

- 60.** While the MedWet Framework for Action covers the period of the Sustainable Development Goals (2016–2030), its first phase coincides with the first five years of 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024.
- 61.** It is envisaged that the Framework for Action will be evaluated, revised and updated, as appropriate, by the MedWet/Com in consultation with partners and donors in 2018 and again in mid-2020, when a second phase of the Framework for Plan should be adopted for the period 2022–2030, with a mid-term evaluation and updating in 2025.

Main objective

- 62.** The main objective of the **MedWet Framework for Action** is to contribute to achieving in the Mediterranean region some of the targets of the SDGs, through actions in the field of wetland conservation and sustainable use, in particular:

SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



- 6.1** By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all [Note: Well-managed wetlands are providers of clean water.]
- 6.3** By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and sustainably increasing recycling and safe reuse globally [Note: Well-managed wetlands can serve as primary treatment of some used waters, acting as green infrastructures.]

- 6.5 By 2030 SDG bullet [Note: National wetland strategies make a sound contribution to water resources management, and cooperation ensures the wise use of international resources.]
- 6.6 By 2020 protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes [Note: A specific target for wetland.]

SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.



- 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities. [Note: Well-managed and/or restored, wetlands provide significant benefits related to the mitigation of climate change and extreme weather events.]

SDG 14. Conserve and promote sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



- 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. [Note: Well managed coastal wetlands provide significant benefits related to fisheries.]
- 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans. [Note: Coastal wetlands constitute an integral and significant part of this target.]
- 14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting, and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics. [Note: Well-managed coastal wetlands play a key role as fish nurseries in restoring fish stocks.]
- 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information. [Note: Coastal marine wetlands could make an important contribution to this target through their designation and management as Ramsar Sites.]

SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.



- 15.1 By 2020, ensure conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. [Note: This constitutes a specific target for wetland and the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention.]
- 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally. [Note: The effective management of forested wetlands could make an important contribution to this target.]
- 15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world. [Note: The loss and degradation of wetlands contribute to desertification and increase the impact of droughts and floods.]
- 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development. [Note: Conservation and management work in mountain wetlands can make an important contribution to this target.]

- 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity, and by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species. [Note: Maintaining wetlands and their values and functions would represent an important contribution to this target.]
- 15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products. [The conservation of wetland species would represent a contribution to this target.]
- 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems, and control or eradicate the priority species. [The control and eradication of invasive species in wetlands constitute a significant challenge for the wetlands community.]
- 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystems and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts. [Note: The effective implementation of National Wetland Strategies and the effective functioning of National Wetland Committees can make significant contributions to this target.]
- 15.a Mobilize significant resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems. [Note: This is a key challenge for the wetlands community and a fundamental objective of this Action Plan.]
- 15.c Enhance global support to efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities. [Note: This represents a key challenge in wetland ecosystems and a key component of this Action Plan.]

The Ramsar Strategic Plan as a contribution to the SDGs in the Mediterranean region

- 63. During its first phase, the MedWet Framework for Action will make its contribution to the achievement of the above-mentioned SDG targets through the implementation in the Mediterranean region of the 4th Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention 2016–2024.
- 64. The 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan calls for actions to be undertaken by the Contracting Parties, supported by the Ramsar Secretariat, the Ramsar Regional Initiatives such as MedWet, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Ramsar network for communications, education and public awareness (CEPA), and in collaboration with the Convention's International Organization Partners¹⁷ and partner intergovernmental organizations and MEAs.
- 65. Contracting Parties should proceed to the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan at national and regional levels by creating and operating inter-sector National Wetland Committees and developing National Wetland Policies, strategies, action plans, projects and programmes or other appropriate ways to mobilise action and support for wetlands.
- 66. It is understood that the Contracting Parties differ substantially, including in the Mediterranean region, in their situations and in their ability to implement the Ramsar Strategic Plan. The MedWet Framework for Action intends to provide support to all the Parties in the region according to their needs and abilities.
- 67. The MedWet Framework for Action should also encourage and assist the Parties to synergize their efforts related to wetland conservation and wise use with the national level implementation of the CBD, UNFCCC, the UNCCD, and regional treaties, such as the Barcelona and Bern Conventions.

¹⁷ BirdLife International; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); Wetlands International; the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and The Wildfowl and Wildlife Trust.

Key areas of work during the first phase

- 68.** During its first five years (2016–2020) the MedWet Framework for Action will focus primarily on the following six areas:
- a. National wetland inventories, with the aim of establishing the basis of a Pan-Mediterranean inventory;
 - b. Effective management of all Ramsar Sites and other protected wetlands;
 - c. Integration of wetlands in basin-wide integrated water resources management;
 - d. Description and evaluation of wetland ecosystem services, including those that contribute to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;
 - e. Communicating effectively the values of wetlands to decision makers and the general public; and
 - f. Incorporating wetlands into national and local development and land-use planning.
- 69.** The Framework for Action seeks to identify and attend to the most urgent needs and key strategic issues in these areas.
- 70.** It should be implemented through national alliances between the Ramsar and MedWet Focal Points in each country with the key actors in other sectors, including the private sector; by establishing National Wetlands Observatories with the prerequisite of the existence of effective National Wetlands Committees and a sound National Wetland Strategy formally adopted at the adequate level of government and through appropriate legal instruments.



Part II – Proposed actions

Implementation of the MedWet Framework for Action

- A.** With the formal approval of the Framework for Action by the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) at its 12th meeting, held in Paris, France, on 7–11 February 2016, the MedWet Secretariat will initiate discussions with potential partners for developing concrete project proposals for the different components of the Framework.
- B.** Potential partners should include, in the first instance, the European Commission.
- C.** The International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, formally recognized as such by the Conference of the Parties – BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) – would also have an important role to play.
- D.** In addition, the wetland centres such as the Greek Biotope Wetland Centre (EKBY), Greece, and Tour du Valat - Research Institute for the Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands, France, and its Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory will constitute natural allies for guidance about the Framework for Action and its implementation.
- E.** Other potential partners are the Regional Activity Centres of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), in particular the RAC/SPA and RAC/PAP, and other regional networks such as the Water Footprint Network, the Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME), the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water Sector (EMWIS), the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), the Global Water Partnership (GWP-Med), and the Mediterranean Marine Protected Area Managers' Network (MedPAN).
- F.** The Union for the Mediterranean will also be approached for a possible 'labelling' of the MedWet Framework for Action or some of its components.
- G.** The MedWet Secretariat, together with potential partners, should identify possible sources of funding as soon as possible.
- H.** Concerning the general administration of the Framework for Action, once it has become operational, discussions should be maintained with the member countries and partners in order to find the most efficient *modus operandi*. MedWet shall propose practical solutions in due course to ensure effective implementation of the Framework for Action by all the partners, effective coordination and enhancement of activities, and timely presentation of reports to donors and other interested parties.
- I.** The MedWet/Com will identify mechanisms to receive detailed evaluations of the implementation of the Framework for Action at its meetings every 18 months and make recommendations for the ensuing period, including updating the Framework for Action as required.

- J. In order to support the effective implementation of the MedWet Framework for Action, it is envisaged:
- i. to recreate the Mediterranean wetlands centres network, which was once fully operational, and to add new members to the network, in particular from developing countries, as an integral part of a solid MedWet Scientific and Technical Network (MedWet STN);
 - ii. to establish formal agreements with the Ramsar IOPs and wetland centres;
 - iii. to establish synergies and, if required, formal agreements with other Mediterranean-level processes and plans;
 - iv. to include a significant communications component in all projects and activities, such as campaigns and contests involving awareness about Mediterranean wetlands' values and functions, and on the role of the Ramsar Convention;
 - v. to pay special attention to capacity building in order to help understand wetland functions and values and to incorporate them in the appropriate planning and strategic processes, in particular for the integrated management of water resources, and to improve management efficiency in coordination with protected areas management bodies;
 - vi. to identify in each case those who are the key actors at the national level and to involve them, in particular those responsible for the planning processes and budget allocations;
 - vii. to involve in the Framework for Action the key decision makers whilst at the same time ensuring that people on the ground will be reached as well;
 - viii. to facilitate and actively promote alliances between the Ramsar/MedWet Focal Points and other key sectors at the national level; and
 - ix. to ensure that the approaches are guided more by 'what you can do' rather than by 'what you should not do'.

The Ramsar strategic goals and targets translated into the MedWet framework for action¹

Key:

(P) = Priority action

(P₂) = Second priority action

Ramsar Strategic Goal I: Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation

A study by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (2014) examined 214 sites in the Mediterranean Basin, including a range of wetland types, and found that natural wetland habitat had decreased by 10% from 1975 to 2005. Since only wetland sites still existing were analysed, the figure is clearly an underestimate of total regional wetland losses, because a meaningful figure should also encompass wetland sites that had disappeared altogether by 2005. Of the 214 sites, 6% of the total area was lost during 1975–1990, while 4% was lost during 1990–2005. Losses were due primarily to conversion into agricultural land, but the ultimate responsible factor is urbanization which in turn consumes agricultural areas. Agriculture is then pushed onto natural habitats (including wetlands) in order to maintain its surface area. Weak policy, poor law enforcement, inappropriate governance, and limited consideration of wetlands in national and local land use planning and development agendas were identified as the main regional drivers of wetland degradation².

Addressing and influencing the drivers of wetland degradation and loss is a condition for limiting, adapting to, and mitigating their impacts. The integration of wetland values into planning and decision making requires that wetland resources and ecosystem benefits be measured, valued and understood widely within societies. Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat, Regional Initiatives and IOPs will enhance their engagement with relevant stakeholders in order to diminish threats, influence trends, restore wetlands and communicate good practices.

¹ It should be noted that the Goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan have been correlated with those of the Aichi Targets. In this sense, the MedWet Framework for Action also represents a contribution to the achievement of those targets under the Convention of Biological Diversity.

² Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (2012). Biodiversity: Status and trends of species in Mediterranean wetlands (Thematic collection, Special Issue #1). Tour du Valat, France. Retrieved from <http://medwet.org/2012/12/first-thematic-report-biodiversity-status-and-trends-of-species-in-mediterranean-wetlands/>

TARGET I

WETLAND BENEFITS ARE FEATURED IN NATIONAL/LOCAL POLICY STRATEGIES AND PLANS AND PLANS RELATING TO KEY SECTORS SUCH AS WATER, ENERGY, MINING, AGRICULTURE, TOURISM, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, INDUSTRY, FORESTRY, AQUACULTURE FISHERIES, PROTECTED AREAS AND INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM) AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL.

People greatly benefit from the major productive and regulating roles of functional wetlands, such as the provision of food, water and the attenuation of floods and droughts. In particular, a large part of Mediterranean agriculture, an important economic and employment sector in several countries, relies on water resources that can only be sustained with wise wetland management.

Yet the ecosystem services provided by wetlands are still not well understood outside of specialised circles and are not taken into account in the planning of public and private investments and initiatives that impact on the ecological character of wetlands. The failure to recognize the values of wetlands – for poverty alleviation as well as in the provision of ecosystem services – is a major factor in both their decline and in the insufficient progress in wetland restoration efforts. The mainstreaming of the benefits and ecosystem services provided by wetlands should be one of the priorities of Ramsar and MedWet.

According to the 2014 National Reports from 20 MedWet countries on the implementation of the Ramsar Convention during the last triennium, only five countries have carried out assessments of the ecosystems services of Ramsar Sites. On the other hand, a number of these MedWet countries (approximately 30%) have developed National Wetland Strategies, but it is not clear if these are only good-will documents with little legal and planning implementation, or if they have been institutionalised across sectors and have a positive leveraging effect. MedWet and partners should evaluate and promote best practices in mainstreaming these National Wetland Strategies into ‘real-life’ legal changes and practical implementation plans.

ACTION 1.1

Develop and implement a training programme on evaluation of wetland ecosystem services and organize training sessions for national and local government officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in North Africa, Middle East-Turkey, the Balkans, and MedWet EU and EU accession countries.

ACTION 1.2

(P) Develop and implement pilot ecosystem services evaluation projects in at least 10 major wetlands across the region, including at least one in North Africa, Middle East-Turkey, the Balkans, and MedWet EU and EU accession countries.

ACTION 1.3

Review a) the content of National Wetland Strategies (and/or other similar documents such as National Biodiversity Strategies) to incorporate, when so required, the evaluation and sustainable use of ecosystem services; and b) the implementation of these strategies across the MedWet region and their **(P)** translation into national legislation and their mainstreaming and leveraging across other policy strategies and plans.

ACTION 1.4

(P) Develop guidelines on how to incorporate issues related to ecosystem services in the preparation of new National Wetland Strategies that, beyond the conservation, protection and wise use of wetlands, favour the sustainable development of local communities by creating jobs and increasing economic benefits.

WATER USE RESPECTS WETLAND ECOSYSTEM NEEDS FOR THEM TO FULFIL THEIR FUNCTIONS AND PROVIDE SERVICES AT THE APPROPRIATE SCALE, INTER ALIA AT BASIN LEVEL OR ALONG A COASTAL ZONE, AND THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS IS STRENGTHENED.

While in the European Union several EU Directives and other instruments (inter alia the Water Framework Directive, Birds and Habitats Directives, Floods Directive, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) include sustainable water management and ecosystem requirements, increasingly at a basin level, in most other countries national legislation does not include sustainable water management objectives and/or basin ecosystems needs. It would be wise to promote the best practices coming from the EU legislation in other countries with an interest in making use of this best practice, with the necessary adaptation to local conditions.

**TARGET 2
AND
TARGET 9
(COMBINED)**

ACTION 2.1

Promote an evaluation in MedWet EU countries of the impacts on wetland conservation and wise use of the EU Directives that are having the most significant influence on the management of these ecosystems.

ACTION 2.2

(P) Develop a specific wetland-related methodology tool kit to extrapolate basin-wide integrated management plans, including water use and ecological water requirements, from the EU context to non-EU countries, as appropriate, and with the full involvement of the interested countries.

ACTION 2.3

(P) Develop and implement a training programme on basin-wide integrated management plans for national and local government officials and NGOs in North Africa, the Middle East-Turkey, & the Balkans.

ACTION 2.4

(P) Develop at least one basin-wide integrated management plan that fully incorporates wetland conservation and wise use in different subregions.

ACTION 2.5

(P) Assess overall pressures on water and wetlands in the Mediterranean through the water footprint (WF) indicators, a set of promising, ecosystem-relevant indicators (e.g., Blue water scarcity; Water Pollution Level; Grey Water Footprint) that has so far been used mostly at global scale, as a tool to track improvements in water management at river basin level in MedWet countries. (See also Target 7)

ACTION 2.6

Disseminate the results and lessons learned from the GlobWetlands-Africa project of the European Space Agency (ESA) on mapping river basins, including hydrology, water cycle regime and water quality monitoring indicators.

TARGET 3

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS HAVE INCREASED THEIR EFFORTS TO APPLY GUIDELINES AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR WISE USE OF WATER AND WETLANDS.

It would be important to take into account that the predominant policies and approaches for the use of water in the Mediterranean region are supply driven. As a result, there is considerable waste of water. The adoption of commercial farming or land use practices requiring great quantities of water in arid countries is also having a significant impact in the water-deficient countries. The end result is water scarcity and water shortages for people and other users, including the environment.

This topic is vast and cross-cutting, and therefore this Framework for Action would attempt to make a modest contribution to this vast area of concern.

ACTION 3.1

(P) Develop a number of pilot projects on wetlands and agriculture using low-cost and water saving techniques, especially in arid and semi-arid areas (including date palm oases) and disseminate the results obtained.

ACTION 3.2

(P2) Promote pilot bilateral agreements and good practice manuals between wetland conservation and other sectors: agriculture, tourism, hunting, urbanism, water management.

ACTION 3.3

(P) Promote the incorporation of good practices for water management and wetland conservation into the national land use plans and policies in order to avoid damages to wetland functions and values.

ACTION 3.4

(P) Use and value, when they exist, schemes in each of the MedWet regions where either voluntary or mandatory payments for ecosystem services from either public or public sectors contribute to the conservation/restoration of wetlands.

ACTION 3.5

(P) Undertake efforts to engage at least one private company in each of the MedWet regions to become a 'water steward' by decreasing its water risk and footprint and taking collective action at a basin level.

ACTION 3.6

(P) Reinforce the social dimension of wetlands conservation by continuing developing awareness campaigns in order to arise local community appreciation attitudes and behaviours.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (IAS) AND PATHWAYS OF INTRODUCTION AND EXPANSION ARE IDENTIFIED AND PRIORITIZED, PRIORITY IASS ARE CONTROLLED OR ERADICATED, AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSES ARE PREPARED AND IMPLEMENTED TO PREVENT THEIR INTRODUCTION AND ESTABLISHMENT.

TARGET 4

IASs represent a major threat to wetlands and their native plants and animals, causing damage worth billions of Euros every year. On the 1st January 2015 a regulation (1143/2014) entered into force in the EU seeking to address the problem of IASs in a comprehensive manner so as to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as to minimize and mitigate the human health or economic impacts that IASs can have. The regulation foresees three types of interventions: prevention; early detection and rapid eradication; and management. A list of IASs of concern within the EU has been drawn up using risk assessments and scientific evidence. The implementation of the regulation is supported by a committee made up of representatives of all Member States. This Action Plan should seek to promote the adaptation of this approach to the rest of the MedWet countries so as to generate a Mediterranean-wide approach in dealing with IASs.

ACTION 2.1

(P₂) Develop regional strategies to deal with IASs in the region to be translated into national action plans, with special focus on North Africa, the Middle East & Turkey, and the Balkans, including capacity building to implement those strategies at national and local levels.

ACTION 2.2

(P) Develop and implement pilot projects on removing IASs in different subregions, in cooperation with EU countries that have applied or are applying the EU Regulation.

ACTION 2.3

(P₂) Ensure the publication and wide dissemination of the results of IASs control in pilot sites in order to replicate the work in other sites.

Ramsar Strategic Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Sites network

The network of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) constitutes the largest network of officially recognized internationally important areas in the world (more than 2,200 Sites, covering more than 214 million hectares). This network makes up the backbone of a larger network of wetlands providing life-sustaining services to people and nature. Ramsar Parties must recommit themselves to efforts to protect and effectively manage the existing Ramsar Sites, as well as to expand the reach of the Convention by continuously working to add more sites and areas of wetlands responding to Ramsar criteria for listing.

The Mediterranean region holds a significant number of diverse and important Ramsar Sites. In the 26 countries in this region, 386 Ramsar Sites are registered and represent 17.6% of the total Ramsar Sites of the world in 168 countries. Despite its large representation in number, most sites are relatively small and with a bit more than 9 million hectares constitute only about 4% of the total area of Ramsar Sites. This represents a challenging task of conserving and managing properly a large number of complex and diverse sites that vary from marine and coastal habitats to desert sebkhas, and from mountain springs to coastal lagoons.

A Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory study (2014) found ‘no significant difference’ in the rate of loss of natural wetland habitats from 1990 to 2005 between the 35 sites already on the Ramsar List in 1990 and the 132 wetlands that were not on the List in either 1990 or 2005. The study suggested ‘that merely placing a site on the Ramsar List does not ensure the conservation of the natural wetland habitats within it.’ In contrast, Kleijn et al. (2014) analyzed 21 years of waterbird survey data for more than 200 wetlands in Morocco. They determined that ‘waterbird species richness and abundance increased more rapidly’ in Ramsar Sites (post-designation) when compared to non-Ramsar Sites. They were careful to note, however, that it was unclear ‘whether these differences were caused by conservation management or were already present prior to conservation designation.’¹

Under this Strategic Goal the network of Ramsar Sites in the region is meant to be a complete, significant, representative and well known network to be effectively managed and conserved for the benefit of people and nature. This implies a commitment of all Parties to identify and assess the priority wetlands to be included in the Ramsar List, thus strengthening the network, ensuring its effective management and enabling actions to reverse the threats that may be affecting those sites.

¹ Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (2014). Land cover: Spatial dynamics in Mediterranean coastal wetlands from 1975 to 2005 (Thematic collection, Special Issue #2). Tour du Valat, France. Retrieved from <http://medwet.org/2014/10/second-thematic-report-land-cover-spatial-dynamics-in-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/> and Kleijn, D., Cherkaoui, I., Goedhart, P. W., van der Hout, J., & Lammertsma, D. (2014). Waterbirds increase more rapidly in Ramsar-designated wetlands than in unprotected wetlands. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 51(2), 289–298.

THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF RAMSAR SITES IS MAINTAINED OR RESTORED, THROUGH EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT.

Ramsar Sites designation is also the expression of the willingness of the countries to protect their wetlands through adequate and effective management. However, most of the Ramsar Sites currently have no management planning in course: out of 378 Ramsar sites in 19 countries assessed through the National Reports, only 200 (52%) have a management plan; of these only 140 such plans are being implemented (37%); and only 110 sites (29%) have in place a cross-sectoral management committee.

Designation of Ramsar Sites implies acceptance by the countries of the commitment to manage those wetlands effectively, and MedWet aims to assist countries, if necessary, to put in place the necessary tools for that management. The elaboration and implementation of management plans must be a standard and a common practice in all Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean through participatory management planning and their effective implementation.

TARGET 5

ACTION 5.1

(P) Update the Ramsar Information Sheets of all Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean region, if necessary with the support of external partners, in order to have proper and up-to-date information about the conservation status and the level of effective management of the sites. When necessary, assist MedWet countries in obtaining technical and financial support to undertake this action.

ACTION 5.2

Promote a socio-economic and cultural inventory of Mediterranean Ramsar Sites in order to have a better knowledge of the ecosystem services and the cultural values of the sites and to insert that information into the management planning of Ramsar Sites in the region. The communication component of this action should ensure that the results of this inventory are transmitted to decision-makers.

ACTION 5.3

(P) In line with Ramsar Resolution XII.15 on *Evaluation of the management and conservation effectiveness of Ramsar Sites*, promote and support the development of national practical guidelines for wetland management planning and test their implementation in at least two Ramsar Sites in each country, with a view to extending their application to all Ramsar Sites. Along the same lines, a training programme should be organised on management plans and to involve stakeholders into participatory processes. This should be particularly relevant for transboundary sites, in order to make consistent management plans across shared wetlands.

ACTION 5.5

(P) Establish a MedWet Network of Mediterranean Ramsar Sites Managers (MeRSiM-Net) with the following objectives:

- a) to promote the feeling and experience of belonging to the Mediterranean Ramsar Sites 'ethos';
- b) to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and experiences concerning the situation of and management practices in Mediterranean Ramsar Sites;
- c) to facilitate mutual support in terms of technical advice and assistance in problem solving; and
- d) to encourage the twinning of Mediterranean Ramsar Sites. This network should be based on a Web platform and a regular newsletter; a database with the management plans; a directory of managers' contacts; and a forum/annual workshop for exchanging ideas and experiences. The MeRSiM-Net should also contemplate some common projects and joint fundraising.

TARGET 6

(P) THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN AREA, NUMBERS AND ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN RAMSAR SITES NETWORK, IN PARTICULAR BY ADDING TO THE RAMSAR LIST UNDERREPRESENTED WETLAND TYPES AND TRANSBOUNDARY SITES.

MedWet encourages the countries to designate as many Ramsar Sites as possible, with a particular focus on the transboundary sites – representing a higher commitment to protect and manage jointly the same site – and the underrepresented wetland types, notably smaller and seasonal wetlands typical of the Mediterranean. It is therefore important to have a better understanding of the distribution and characteristics of the wetlands in each country and to designate as many Ramsar Sites as necessary and possible. The Mediterranean Wetland Observatory and the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network should play an important role in identifying priorities to recommend to the Parties.

It is also important that Ramsar Sites add value to protection efforts through further designations, e.g., sites included in the national networks of Protected Areas, or as Natura 2000 sites in the case of EU and EU accession countries. This could help in formally recognizing and reinforcing the value of wetlands in the laws of each country. The identification and designation of a more complete and consistent list of Ramsar Sites is envisaged under this target of the Framework for Action.

ACTION 6.1

Promote the use of the Ramsar criteria to complete the List of Ramsar Sites in each country and support national authorities, national observatories and civil society organizations with the holding of national/regional workshops to identify the complete list of potential Ramsar Sites in each country. This should include transboundary sites and the underrepresented wetland types on the Ramsar List in the Mediterranean, including the designation of some sites as SPAMI (Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance).

ACTION 6.2

(P) Promote and support in particular the designation as Ramsar Sites of wetlands in the arid areas (plain/mountain oases and sebkhas/chotts), with a focus on endemic and sensitive ecosystems (Saharan rivers and lakes, Graras, coastal lagoons and bays).

ACTION 6.3

(P) Promote and support the inclusion of all Ramsar Sites in the national systems of protected areas using as a reference as much as possible the IUCN categories.

RAMSAR SITES THAT ARE AT RISK OF LOSS OF THEIR GOOD CONSERVATION STATUS HAVE THEIR THREATS ADDRESSED.

TARGET 7

In spite of important progress made in recent decades and the implementation of the Ramsar Convention, at times wetlands are still considered by decision makers and the general public as ‘lost spaces’ or ‘unhealthy places’, instead of rich and essential areas for human survival. Wetlands continue to be among the world’s most threatened ecosystems, owing mainly to human activities. According to IUCN data reproduced in the *Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2012*, the region risks losing 56% of its endemic freshwater fish; 36% of freshwater crabs and crayfish; 29% of amphibians; and 19% of dragonflies during the next decades. In addition, 17% of mammals, 13% of reptiles, 42% of skate and shark species face a high risk of extinction in the Mediterranean Basin.

The threats leading to this unfavourable conservation status of wetlands in the region are significant and diverse.

ACTION 7.1

(P) Assess the main threats to wetlands and their magnitude by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory and the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network and national wetland observatories, and formulate and actively promote recommendations for improving conservation and management for addressing those threats.

ACTION 7.2

Promote fora to discuss common threats among Mediterranean authorities and site managers, especially in close cooperation with the different stakeholders and sectors (e.g., agriculture, tourism, water resources, etc.).

ACTION 7.3

(P) Develop a regional strategy for the conservation of springs and mountain streams as highly sensitive ecosystems, supporting large numbers of animal endemic species.

ACTION 7.5

Develop a region-wide project, in cooperation with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS Resolution 11–15), to seek the total ban of lead shot cartridges in all Mediterranean wetlands to prevent saturnism in waterfowl and contamination of the aquifers with lead, and support sustainable harvest of wildlife and hunting practices all together.

ACTION 7.6

Support competent authorities in addressing and resolving the problems caused in relation to article 3.2 of the Ramsar Convention and wetlands under the Montreux Record of Ramsar Sites at risk.

TARGET 7 BIS

MEDITERRANEAN URBAN AND RURAL SETTLEMENTS THAT SATISFY THE CRITERIA FOR THE WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION APPLY AND OBTAIN THE LABEL.

As pointed out by Ramsar Resolution XII.10 on Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention, considering the growing impact of urbanization on wetlands, the importance of urban and peri-urban wetlands for biodiversity as well as for the quality of urban life becomes even more significant. These urban areas have a huge potential in terms of education and public awareness related to wetland conservation, so that it appears very convenient that the Mediterranean region should implement this new label, in addition to the Ramsar Site label, for its settlements that are linked to wetlands.

ACTION 7bis.1

To promote the implementation of Ramsar Resolution XII.10 and encourage Mediterranean countries to use the Ramsar City Accreditation label.

ACTION 7bis.3

To promote exchanges on the process of and methodologies for such accreditation.

ACTION 7bis.3

To promote sisterhips and exchanges of experiences among cities that have obtained the Ramsar label.

Ramsar Strategic Goal 3: Wisely using all wetlands

While most global biodiversity reports support the conclusion that wetlands are in serious decline (e.g., Leadley et al. 2014), they also acknowledge the limitations on providing definite statements on wetland extent and losses, emphasizing that ‘there is currently no agreed global map of these wetland ecosystems’. Indeed, there is a growing need for ‘accurate spatial representation of terrestrial surface water’ (Fluet-Chouinard et al. 2015) to support the management and conservation of their biodiversity, as well as their ecosystem services. The wise use of all wetlands requires that Parties to the Ramsar Convention ensure that they are addressing wetlands beyond those currently included in the Ramsar Site network. This work will necessarily occur at the national, subnational, regional, and transboundary levels, including at basin level. Mainstreaming recognition of ecosystem services and benefits into a wide range of sectors and with a broad array of actors will help ensure the success of this effort.

Since its inception, MedWet has done a considerable amount of work on wetland inventory and has even developed a MedWet methodology for this, though that has not been kept up to date with new technologies such as remote sensing. The absence of a Mediterranean-wide wetland inventory is a glaring gap for the MedWet plans and objectives. Thus, the MedWet Secretariat has prioritized this issue above others, and has established a Working Group on National Wetland Inventories with experts from different countries. Also, the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory and the Specialist Group on Inventories of the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network should have competences and expertise in this area.

TARGET 8

(P) NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORIES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED OR UPDATED, DISSEMINATED AND USED FOR PROMOTING THE CONSERVATION AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF ALL WETLANDS.

Considering the 2014 National Reports covering the most recent triennium, submitted by 20 Mediterranean countries to the Ramsar Convention in preparation for the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, 14 countries have indicated that they have a national wetland inventory, four countries indicated that the inventory is in progress, and one country indicated that it does not have one. However, there is a consensus that most if not all of these national inventories are incomplete and based on listing a limited number of sites instead of inventorying the total surface of wetlands in each country and responding to the question of how many wetlands exist and the total area they cover.

ACTION 8.1

MedWet will produce a region-wide report on **national wetland inventories**, including a proposal to arrive at having a GIS-based inventory of all Mediterranean wetlands, using existing and easily obtained spatial data. This will include gathering information and data and building a harmonised dataset.

ACTION 8.2

Produce a **methodological guide for wetland inventorying** based on new technologies and remote sensing, adaptable to different situations that could serve future national efforts to update and revise national wetland inventories.

ACTION 8.3

Work with each national administration responsible for wetland issues to **elaborate a project to complete the national inventory** and seek to obtain, when required, the necessary financial and technical resources. Liaise with projects such as the GlobWetland Africa (European Space Agency) and the Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) on river basins to complete the national and regional wetland inventory assessments.

ACTION 8.4

Promote and support the participation of **civil society organizations and citizens in citizen-based science schemes** to complete and update the information contained in wetland inventories.

ACTION 8.5

Promote and support the **development and implementation of national information systems on wetlands**, mainly focused on national inventories and related topics.

ACTION 8.6

In line with Ramsar Resolution XII.14 on *Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands*, develop an initiative for the **effective implementation of this Resolution with the contribution of interested partners**.

ACTION 8.7

Apply the **Wetland Extent Index in the Mediterranean**, as developed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) with support from the Ramsar Secretariat for other regions.

THE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND PRACTICES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES RELEVANT FOR THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS AND THEIR CUSTOMARY USE OF WETLAND RESOURCES ARE DOCUMENTED, RESPECTED, SUBJECT TO NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS, AND FULLY INTEGRATED AND REFLECTED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION, WITH A FULL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AT ALL RELEVANT LEVELS.

TARGET 10

Local communities in the Mediterranean region have a long tradition of wisely using wetland resources. At a time of rapid changes in technologies, values and practices, it will be important to document local practices and to actively consider their use in effective wetland management.

ACTION 10.1

(P) As part of the work carried out under the MedWet Culture Network, undertake a survey, including by visual means, of local communities' practices that are ensuring the effective wise use of wetland resources.

ACTION 10.2

Publish a handbook on how to incorporate traditional practices into wetland management.

ACTION 10.3

Produce a documentary film on traditional practices in the field of wetland management and make arrangements for its screening on television channels in different countries.

TARGET II

WETLAND FUNCTIONS, SERVICES AND BENEFITS ARE WIDELY DEMONSTRATED, DOCUMENTED AND DISSEMINATED

Note: The demonstration aspect of wetland services has already been covered under Target I. Under this Target the emphasis is on documentation of wetland services.

The mainstreaming of wetland values also requires reaching out to target publics with effective communications. Here the objective should be an enhanced understanding of the contribution of wetland values and functions to people's livelihoods and health, economic development and biodiversity and water.

ACTION 11.1

(P) Gather and synthesize information related to wetlands' values, services and benefits and disseminate them through the website and other appropriate means.

ACTION 11.2

MedWet to promote the **production of a high quality, high impact film**, using already existing materials and leading actors and national personalities in the region, to illustrate the economic and social benefits of the Mediterranean wetlands. This could be produced in screen-cinema or documentary format. Ensure production in the 13 Mediterranean national languages and work with major TV groups to ensure that the film is shown at prime times.

ACTION 11.3

Disseminate the existing general methodologies on inventories and on the characterization of the totality of ecosystem services provided by Mediterranean wetlands, and develop summary approaches (cartography and indicators about those services) in the whole region.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE THAT WETLANDS ARE PLAYING IN CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION IS FULLY RECOGNIZED.

The Mediterranean Sea level has risen 22cm during the 20th century, leading to changes in coastal areas (MWO). The current climate change models also predict that the Mediterranean will see a high frequency of extreme events such as droughts, floods, and storm surges.

TARGET 11 BIS

ACTION 11.bis.1

Disseminate already available **general methodologies for the management of flood risk** in Mediterranean wetlands, and promote them widely across the region, particularly in the North Africa, Middle East-Turkey, & the Balkans subregions.

ACTION 11.bis.2

(P) Implement **pilot climate change and mitigation projects in key wetlands** across the region.

ACTION 11.bis.3

Promote and support **pilot studies on the role of wetlands in flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and coastal protection** (green infrastructures) by calculating savings deriving from adopting green infrastructures versus grey ones.

ACTION 11.bis.4

Support the development of **models illustrating the role played by wetlands in combating droughts in arid countries**, based on studies of 1–2 sites with significant roles.

ACTION 11.bis.5

Promote and support a number of pilot studies that demonstrate the **role of wetlands in creating micro climates that benefit people and nature**.

ACTION 11.bis.6

Improve the understanding and promote the use of wetlands as nature-based solutions to mitigate extreme events.

TARGET 12

RESTORATION IS IN PROGRESS IN DEGRADED WETLANDS, WITH PRIORITY GIVEN TO WETLANDS THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, LIVELIHOODS AND/OR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION.

According to the 2014 National Reports on Ramsar implementation in 20 Mediterranean countries, eight countries have carried out some limited restoration in priority wetlands. Considering the significant wetland loss that has occurred in the region in recent decades, and the significant threats affecting Mediterranean wetlands, this level of wetland restoration is almost insignificant. This must be addressed and changed: more degraded wetlands, and even lost wetlands, must be restored using the most advanced restoration methods.

ACTION 12.1

MedWet to promote the development and implementation of **pilot restoration projects in degraded wetlands** in each of the following subregions: North Africa, the Middle East-Turkey, the Balkans, the Iberian Peninsula and at least one more EU and/or EU accession country.

ACTION 12.2

Work with national authorities in all MedWet countries to **establish clear priorities for wetland restoration**, identifying key limitations and actively seeking internal and external support for developing and carrying out wetland restoration projects.

ACTION 12.3

Ensure publication and **communication of the results of the restoration initiatives au fur et à mesure that projects are progressing, including site visits**, in pilot sites in order to replicate the work in other sites across the region.

ENHANCED SUSTAINABILITY OF KEY SECTORS SUCH AS WATER, ENERGY, MINING, AGRICULTURE, TOURISM, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, INDUSTRY, FORESTRY, AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES, WHEN THEY AFFECT WETLANDS, CONTRIBUTING TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND HUMAN LIVELIHOODS.

TARGET 13

Fisheries, agriculture, urbanization and tourism are among the main direct pressures for losing and degrading extensive areas of wetlands in the Mediterranean, as well as for the reduction of their ecosystem value. While these sectors are among the key areas challenging the wise use of wetlands, the work needed to promote sustainable fisheries, agriculture and urbanization and ecotourism within Mediterranean wetlands is too vast and cross-cutting to be easily achieved. Thus, it is important to be selective, and prioritize, having in mind potential impacts, sustainability and achievable positive results.

An element of this work is already included in the incorporation of sustainable use and best practices from these sectors into the management plans in all Ramsar Sites (see Target 5), but the Framework for Action should also include additional activities that may have a positive impact.

The focus should be on the development of a specific strategy for the inland and coastal artisanal fisheries, including fisheries in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), subsistence and organic agriculture in and around wetlands, and community-based tourism in and around wetlands.

ACTION 13.1

Identify relevant artisanal fisheries and aquaculture sector in Ramsar Sites, coastal zones and MPAs in North Africa, Middle East & Turkey, the Balkans, and EU and EU accession countries, and assess their ecological impact and economic viability with a view to preparing concrete projects to support them, including working on co-management practices with fishermen.

ACTION 13.2

Evaluate fishery certification mechanisms and produce recommendations for artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, in particular mariculture in coastal lagoons, to promote implementation of best practices and create economic added value for the sector.

ACTION 13.3

Identify best practices of subsistence and organic agriculture in and around Ramsar Sites and in other Mediterranean wetlands and **implement at least one pilot small scale income generating initiative in each MedWet region**. Assess their economic viability and benefit to local communities as well as their ecological impact and their possible replicability in other parts of the region.

ACTION 13.4

Implement at least one pilot small scale income generating initiative in each MedWet region, based on organic agriculture in and around Ramsar Sites.

ACTION 13.5

Identify lessons learned and best practices of sustainable tourism in and around Ramsar Sites and other Mediterranean wetlands, and assess their economic viability and benefit to local communities as well as their ecological impact and possible replicability in other parts of the region. Ensure linking with the Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) in protected areas.

ACTION 13.6

Develop a region-wide project, in cooperation with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS Resolution 11–15) seeking the total ban of lead shot cartridges in all Mediterranean wetlands to prevent saturnism in waterfowl and contamination of the aquifers with lead.

ACTION 13.7

Identify and encourage private landowners to support the wise use of wetlands through donations or other types of support.

Ramsar Operational Goal 4: Enhancing Implementation of the Ramsar Convention

It will be vital for the survival of wetlands and the success of the Ramsar Convention for Parties to enhance and speed up the implementation of the treaty. Various approaches will help strengthen the implementation of the three Strategic Goals listed above, and ultimately of the Convention itself. They involve critical actions to be undertaken by Contracting Parties themselves and in partnership with other Parties and other entities, in particular with regard to scientific and technical advice and guidance, resource mobilization, public awareness, visibility and capacity building. MedWet will also play a significant role in raising awareness and visibility for the Convention, as well as in mobilizing resources to support enhanced implementation.

MedWet is the very first Regional Initiative within the Ramsar structure. The existence of the MedWet Secretariat is crucial for the implementation of the Ramsar Resolutions and commitments in the 26 countries of the region, especially given the specificities of Mediterranean wetlands. There are also very important structures that are committed and able to assist the Parties to implement this Framework for Action, especially the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory and technical research centres, e.g., La Tour du Valat Research Institute, the Greek Wetland/Biotope Centre, the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), Palestine, the Doñana Biological Station in Spain, and the Focal Points of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in each MedWet country.

There is a need to bring technical capacity to all stakeholders, from the national and regional authorities to the civil society and wetland managers. Under this Strategic Goal the network of Ramsar stakeholders in the region is meant to have sufficient skills, technical capacity, resources and funds for implementing all the tasks in this Framework for Action.

Enhancing implementation related to wetlands that are not Ramsar Sites and are outside protected areas requires different approaches, by working with the development sectors, platforms, and networks impacting wetlands. It could also be important to support local civil society organizations to provide wetland expertise in implementation of development initiatives.

(P) THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL WILL AND COMMITMENT IN RELATION TO WETLAND ISSUES IS REINFORCED IN ALL MEDWET COUNTRIES.

In most national governments (and regional governments with responsibilities for wetland matters, such as in Spain), including those with the highest GNP in the Mediterranean, wetlands are the responsibility of one government official, in most cases at a low, or at best, middle level of the hierarchy; and in the majority of cases they belong to ministries of environment with limited influence in the general decision-making on national priorities and actions. The perceptions of high-level decision makers in relation to wetland values and functions have to change in order to obtain more financial and human resources devoted to wetlands in the national budgets. It is also essential to involve in wetland management issues those sectors that impact most on the conservation of wetlands and/or could benefit greatly from an effective use of wetlands as green infrastructures.

MedWet and this Framework for Action must be part of a strong and committed alliance and partnership of the States of the Mediterranean for the wise use and management of their wetlands. In order to fully implement the actions, all Parties should be engaged at the highest possible level and sharing their efforts and experiences, in coordination with the MedWet Secretariat and the Ramsar Convention, thus becoming more efficient and making it possible to achieve the goals and targets of this Framework.

**TARGET 13
BIS**

ACTION 13.bis.1

Define strategies and concrete actions to ensure that all Parties are represented in MedWet-related matters at the appropriate high decision-making level and support effectively the conservation, the management, and the wise use of the wetlands in every country.

ACTION 13.bis.2

Promote the adoption of this Framework at the highest possible level in the national administrations in order to secure a strong commitment to engaging the available resources in its implementation and the effective commitment of the several sectors impacting wetlands (mainly water, agriculture, urbanization, industry, and tourism).

ACTION 13.bis.3

Ensure the discussion and implementation of the Framework for Action through the National Ramsar Committees.

ACTION 13.bis.4

Promote and support **concrete collaborative plans for the application of Ramsar Resolutions** on key sites involving national authorities and non-governmental organizations.

TARGET 14

SCIENTIFIC GUIDANCE AND TECHNICAL METHODOLOGIES AT THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS ARE DEVELOPED ON RELEVANT TOPICS AND ARE AVAILABLE TO POLICY MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN APPROPRIATE FORMATS AND LANGUAGES.

In addition to the important role and outputs of the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory, a number of technical and scientific inputs of wetland centres in the region have been important in the MedWet Initiative. It is critical that decisions are taken with solid knowledge and technical guidance, both for decision makers and for wetland managers and practitioners. The Ramsar Convention provides technical and scientific guidance through its Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), which however should be complemented for the specific requirements of the Mediterranean.

Under this target of the Framework for Action, the necessary steps are planned to provide all the stakeholders with solid and up-to-date information for the good management and conservation of wetlands.

ACTION 14.1

(P) Re-establish a **MedWet Scientific and Technical Network (MedWet STN)** for developing technical guidance to MedWet; this body should meet side-by-side with and report to the MedWet Committee.

ACTION 14.2

The **Mediterranean Wetland Observatory** to publish regularly the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands based on reliable indicators and both to make recommendations and to raise issues to be discussed by the MedWet STN.

ACTION 14.3

Make available the **publication in paper and online formats of sound technical information** for practitioners and decision makers, and invite experts in key areas (agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, climate change, and water management) to identify and publish best practices manuals and to demonstrate the role of wetlands.

ACTION 14.4

Launch *The Mediterranean Wetlands Research Journal* (MedWet R) to be published online twice a year.

ACTION 14.5

Promote the establishment of a network of national research institutes of higher education working on wetland-related issues.

(P) RAMSAR REGIONAL INITIATIVES WITH THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE PARTIES IN EACH REGION ARE REINFORCED AND DEVELOPED INTO EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO ASSIST IN THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION.

TARGET 15

In 1991, MedWet was the first Ramsar Regional Initiative to be created within the Convention. Others presently exist for different parts of the globe, inspired by the MedWet model and prompting MedWet to seek new and innovative ways to go forward. It is important that good lessons and best practices are learnt and serve the effectiveness of the Initiative. Also internally it is crucial to have good networks of managers (see Target 5) and civil society representatives to help in implementing this Framework for Action.

ACTION 15.1

Promote the **exchange of ideas and experiences with other Regional Initiatives**, which should be ensured through meetings during the Conferences of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention and through mutual visits and exchange of strategies and outputs.

ACTION 15.2

Reinforce the **network of non-governmental organizations** at national and regional level to enable them to be part of the MedWet Framework for Action; the Ramsar International Organization Partners should play an important role for this to happen.

TARGET 16

WETLAND VALUES ARE MAINSTREAMED THROUGH COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS.

Communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) must be used effectively at all levels of the Ramsar Convention to promote the value of wetlands at global levels. To achieve a public of citizens who are motivated and supportive of the need to use their wetlands wisely, it is necessary to develop support and tools to be provided to all stakeholders for the effective implementation of CEPA.

CEPA activities should target different audiences, with particular focus on the communities living and depending upon the wetlands and their users, especially the tourists visiting them. CEPA activities should therefore be part of the management plan of every Ramsar Site, and the materials to be developed by MedWet should be used to promote awareness and consequently public support for the wise use of wetlands.

ACTION 16.1

Within the framework of the Ramsar CEPA Strategy adopted by Ramsar COP12, establish a **Mediterranean CEPA Committee** specifically to work for the Mediterranean region and promote the best tools for communication, education, participation and awareness for use by all relevant stakeholders across the region. This body should develop a regional **CEPA Strategy** in line with the global strategy as adapted to the Mediterranean specificities.

ACTION 16.2

(P) Produce graphic and **communication materials about Mediterranean wetlands** to be used in all countries and languages in the region, with special emphases on their values and importance and on their cultural and social importance. Videos and educational books about wetlands are especially useful in this activity.

ACTION 16.3

Actively promote a region-wide and concerted annual celebration of six symbolic dates: **World Wetlands Day** (2 February), **World Water Day** (22 March), **World Biodiversity Day** (22 May), **World Environment Day** (5 June), **International Mountains Day** (11 December) and **the World Migratory Birds Day** (variable dates in Spring) with innovative and sound public awareness activities that may link people and communities across the most important wetlands in the region.

ACTION 16.4

Promote sustainable tourism and **information to visitors** about the value and importance of the wetlands they visit, promoting animations and programmes of visits that generate 'memorable emotional experiences'. The promotion would then be based on visitor purpose and concept of visit, perceptions, expectations in terms of nature attractiveness and services offered.

ACTION 16.5

(P) Develop and publish **educational materials** that can raise the awareness of students and teachers in the communities around Mediterranean wetlands.

ACTION 16.6

(P) Maintain the **MedWet website** as an important tool for communicating the value of the Mediterranean wetlands, the success stories about wetland conservation and the achievement of this Framework for Action, as well as the monitoring of results and analysis by the MWO.

ACTION 16.7

Continue to develop an active **MedWet presence in social media** (Facebook and Twitter).

ACTION 16.8

Create a **MedWet Award** for recognizing excellence in wetlands that best demonstrate the concept of wise use, thereby encouraging their managers and local communities and promoting a sustainable tourism for the site.

ACTION 16.9

Identify public figures who could be invited to serve as '**Mediterranean Wetlands Ambassadors**'.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTING THE 4TH RAMSAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2024 FROM ALL SOURCES ARE MADE AVAILABLE.

Under this target, financial sustainability should be encouraged in the first instance by the allocation of additional resources devoted to wetlands in the national budgets. Continuing to seek only external funding may even be counter-productive and not sustainable.

Nevertheless, there is also a need to seek significant supplementary funds in an innovative manner and through diverse and multiple funding sources: private and institutional donors, grants, governmental supplementary support, lotteries, crowd funding, etc.

Under this Target a significant fundraising effort should be designed and executed to make sure that funds are secured to implement the actions foreseen in this Framework for Action.

TARGET 17

ACTION 17.1

Develop, in cooperation with regional and national partners, a **fundraising plan** for ensuring the complete implementation of this Framework for Action.

ACTION 17.2

Develop a **guide to assist planners** and those responsible for designing and approving the national budgets in learning how to incorporate issues related to wetlands and how to resource this area of work, including, where appropriate, innovative schemes such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES).

ACTION 17.3

Develop a **guiding document and tool**, regularly updated in the MedWet website, on how to secure more funding for wetland management through innovative financial mechanisms associated with wetland ecosystem services or associated with visitors' contributions in Ramsar Sites.

ACTION 17.4

(P) Organize roundtables of donors and partners with an interest, actual or potential, in participating in the implementation of this Framework for Action.

ACTION 17.5

Consider setting up a fund of multiple donors dedicated to supporting civil society organizations' initiatives to address urgent threats to wetlands.

TARGET 18

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS STRENGTHENED AT ALL LEVELS.

All MedWet approaches are focused upon international cooperation for the common goal of the wise use of the Mediterranean wetlands. Most activities dealing with international cooperation are already referred to in the previous targets of the Framework for Action (e.g., networks of site managers, of Mediterranean civil society organizations, of research institutes), but two of them deserve special mention within this target as they promote international cooperation and standard outputs to be used by all the Parties of the Initiative, i.e., the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory and the International Waterfowl Census. Both compile data at regional level and produce outputs that are to be used by all organizations and decision makers.

ACTION 18.1

(P) Promote the establishment of national wetlands observatories, including through technical and financial support, with possible common key indicators and standardized monitoring methods with the MWO to ease Mediterranean wetland monitoring and comparison of results, with the possibility of a MedWet/ MWO Label.

ACTION 18.2

(P) Reinforce the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory's capacity to compile all relevant data about wetlands in the region, the trends of their values and status from valid indicators, and recommend actions to ensure the wise use of all Mediterranean wetlands.

ACTION 18.3

Promote the organization of the **International Waterfowl Census in the Mediterranean** region as an efficient data collection, capacity building and public awareness event, and ensure the dissemination of the results and population trends for waterbirds for the application of the 1% criterion of bird populations for the designation of Ramsar Sites.

ACTION 18.4

(P) Maintain and reinforce synergies with other relevant MEAs (e.g., AEWA, Barcelona Convention) through exchange of positions in steering committee groups and annual meetings.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND THE 4TH RAMSAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2024 IS ENHANCED.

It is crucial to have well-informed partners with the full capacity to implement this Framework for Action and achieve a much improved status of Mediterranean wetlands. In addition to the modus operandi previewed under Target 13 bis, it is important to provide partners, at local, national and regional levels, with adequate capacity for implementing the Framework for Action. It is also recognized that some States are clearly more advanced at technical, financial and scientific levels than others, which makes the exchange of experiences and training an especially important task.

TARGET 19

ACTION 19.1

(P) Develop a capacity building, awareness and lessons learned programme addressed to planners in the key sectors involving other conventions, such as CBD and the Barcelona Convention.

ACTION 19.2

Provide **training programmes on organizational management and strategic planning** for local and national non-governmental organizations that are willing to be involved.

ACTION 19.3

Organize **thematic fora for discussing technical and priority issues** within this Framework for Action, e.g., climate change and the role of wetlands in mitigating its effects; ecosystem services assessment; participatory engagement for conservation; etc.

ACTION 19.4

Organize **exchange visits** between managers and scientists of different countries for learning and building on others' experiences.

See also Actions 1.1, 5.3 and 5.5 above.

Wetlands for a sustainable Mediterranean region

DESCRIPTOR

MedWet is a regional intergovernmental network operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention and involving also other key actors, dedicated to promote and support multi-stakeholders policies and actions on the ground for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands.

POSITIONING

MedWet encourages and supports governments to adopt policies and implement actions on the ground in favour of the conservation and the sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands. To do this MedWet creates synergies with a wide range of intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

VISION

Mediterranean wetlands' resources and functions are conserved in the long term, and restored when necessary, for the benefit of nature, nations and people.

MISSION

The MedWet Mission is to ensure and support the effective conservation of the functions and values of Mediterranean wetlands and the sustainable use of their resources and services.

PRIMARY GOAL

To contribute to the achievement of key targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* 2016–2030 in the Mediterranean region through the effective implementation of the strategic plans of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

**Most relevant SDGs for MedWet are 6, 13, 14 and 15.*

OPERATIONAL GOALS 2016–2020

In order to reach this primary goal, MedWet pursue the following four operational goals, in line with the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024:

1. Addressing the drivers of Mediterranean wetlands loss and degradation;
2. Contributing effectively to the conservation and management of Mediterranean Ramsar Sites;
3. Encouraging the wise use of all Mediterranean wetlands; and
4. Enhancing the implementation of the Ramsar Convention across the Mediterranean region.

VALUES

- Respect for the diversity of nature and cultures
- Science-based action
- Solidarity through mutual support and respect
- Priority given to participatory approaches
- Integrity, efficient use of resources and seeking replicable, long term solutions
- Promoting human well-being and security and respect of essential human rights



MedWet is a Ramsar Regional Initiative

MedWet Secretariat
La Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc
13200 Arles, France

T +33 4 90 97 06 78
Fax +33 4 90 97 20 19
info@medwet.org

medwet.org



MedWet

L'initiative pour les zones humides méditerranéennes
The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
مبادرة المناطق الرطبة المتوسطية

ISBN 978-2-9554-6210-2



9 782955 462102