I/ Introduction

Despite their richness, services provided by wetlands have not always been considered at their fair value and in many parts of the Mediterranean Basin, wetlands have been dried and transformed for urban or agricultural purposes. Throughout the world, a constant decline of natural wetlands can be observed: according to available data, about 35 % of natural wetlands may have disappeared between 1970 and 2015, which represents a decline more than three times higher than the rate of forest loss (Ramsar, 2018).

The urgent need to halt wetlands degradation thus resulted in the signature of international Conventions, like Ramsar Convention for example, and gave rise to the implementation of many restoration projects throughout the world.

The current concern for saving wetlands’ functions is reflected by the implementation of wetlands restoration projects throughout the world, with the aim to restore the functionalities of these ecosystems: Invasive species removal, restoration of fishing/
grass-land areas, flood control, water storage, storm protection, biodiversity conservation... All linked with plant conservation directly or not.

In this way, the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER – 2004) defines the restoration as the process supporting the reestablishment of an ecosystem that has been degraded, harmed or destroyed. An ecosystem is restored when it possesses enough biotic and abiotic resources to pursue its development without assistance or subvention. It will be resilient to normal stress and environmental perturbations levels. Ecological restoration helps to increase the natural capital and the production of ecosystem services.

II/ Island Wetlands.

Mediterranean islands represent one of the most important biodiversity hotspot on Earth, and wetlands are in addition great ecological value areas. Therefore, islands wetlands are at the heart of concerns for several important conservation stakes. Wetlands account for a significant part of islands strong and singular biodiversity. Hence, despite their major role for threatened and endemic species, with greater reason on islands, insular wetlands have been poorly identified and were often neglected by environmental policies.

At the same time, islands being closed ecosystems, are suitable areas to implement restoration activities, assessment of their success is therefore being easier. The endemism characteristic of isolated species populations, increase their ecological value, and make them priority areas for their restoration. Small wetlands (< 10 ha) are of great importance, and restoration activities on these areas represent a great tool to maintain connectivity and reduce habitats fragmentation. Within this context, the Ramsar Resolution XII.14 aims for the conservation of Mediterranean Basin islands wetlands, and the MedisWet project is responding directly to this resolution.

MedIsWet is principally financed by MAVA Foundation and contributes to the implementation of a network of nine countries involved in the completion of the inventories of all the Mediterranean islands wetlands, dissemination of knowledge and promotion of certain conservation measures at local, national and Mediterranean scale thanks to a legal-framework study and an advocacy strategy.
III/ Restoration challenges

This side event has as objective to obtain a baseline to draw up a roadmap for wetland restoration on island in the Mediterranean.

Numerous restoration projects are or were implemented in the Mediterranean Basin. If there is a great deal of empirical and technical knowledge, one of the current issue is related to the sharing of knowledge and the establishment of a common base of reflexion and action. The inherent nature of each wetland, the conditions of its degradation... make the realisation of a unique protocol and methods impossible. However, there are many essential and common aspects providing a solid basis to obtain a good outcome.

Therefore, technical information on restoration are often widespread and related to local experiences that are not always replicable in other places. Thus, it is of great importance to promote the diffusion of experiences and exchanges as they could be used in other restoration projects.

During this side event the presentations of concrete restoration cases, throughout the Mediterranean followed by discussions between the speakers will help us to answer to these questions :

- What are the specificities of small wetlands: specific stakes, lacks, opportunities;
- Identify what are the priority typology of restoration actions on wetland small islands;
- Regarding to the ecological continuity, what are the priority areas;
- What are the financial tools needing to be involved;

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