

## Mediterranean Wetlands Committee: Second meeting in Valencia (Spain)

### *Comité de Humedales Mediterráneos: Segunda reunión en Valencia (España)*

Within the scope of the wide, long-term collaboration in the Mediterranean which started in 1991 (known as the MedWet Initiative), the Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands approved in October 1996 by Decision 19.19 the establishment of a Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com)

The purpose of this Committee was to provide advice and guidance to the Ramsar Bureau and to the MedWet Co-ordination Team on all matters pertaining to the Convention in the particular geographic region of the Mediterranean Basin and to carry out such other functions entrusted to it by the Standing Committee. This guidance would focus on the implementation of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy, endorsed by the Venice Conference of June 1996.

The Mediterranean Wetland Committee promotes the co-ordination of wetland-related activities in the region, and ensures communication and collaboration with other relevant bodies. Its main aim is to build strong synergy in favour of wetland conservation and sustainable use, and to avoid duplication of other existing or projected initiatives.

By the end of 1997, MedWet/Com had among its members 22 Mediterranean states and the Palestinian Authority, the European Commission, the Conventions of Barcelona and of Bern, and six international non-governmental organisations and wetland centres (Recently Libya became also a member). The first session of the Committee was held in Thessaloniki, in March 1998, at the invitation of the Government of implementation of the Strategy were debated and

agreed, while in a technical session the rehabilitation and restoration of wetlands was examined.

Ten months later, at the end of January 1999, the Government of Spain and the Generalitat Valenciana have invited the members of MedWet/Com for a second session in the historic city of Valencia. The meeting will focus on a detailed action plan, prepared by the MedWet Team in accordance with the priorities agreed, and will discuss the practical aspects of implementing this plan, including the sources of necessary funds for specific activities and projects. In addition, a technical session will examine the relation of tourism and wetlands, both in its positive and negative aspects. Finally, World Wetland Day 1999 will be celebrated by an appropriate event.

The MedWet Initiative started by the planning and execution of two important projects between 1993 and 1998, which involved 10 countries and developed and applied methods and tools appropriate for the sustainable use and conservation of the wetlands in the region. Through the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee this significant and novel initiative has been endowed with a wide organ for effective guidance and collaboration.