Central African Republic’s Sangha River Ramsar site

16 November 2009

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has benefited from a Ramsar Swiss Grant for Africa project, “Establishment of a network of Ramsar sites along the Congo Rivers,” to complete the process of designating its second Wetland of International Importance. (Cameroon has already designated “Partie camerounaise du fleuve Sangha” last year as part of the same project.)

As summarized by Ramsar’s Cynthia Kibata, Rivière Sangha située en République Centrafricaine. (275,000 hectares, 02°40’N 016°15’E), a National Park and Nature Reserve, is noted for the presence of large areas of dense periodically flooded forests with rivers, marshes and lakes found within. It is recognized for the role it plays in the maintenance of biological diversity through the support of various flora such as raphia, also used in the local production of raphia wine, and fauna such as elephants, chimpanzees, hyenas, freshwater crabs and turtles amongst many others.

It is also responsible for flood control and prevention in the area; these are important hydrological values that ensure that the income generating activities that the local communities are dependent upon are minimally affected during the rainy season. These include fishing, hunting, safari tourism, forestry, subsistence agriculture, diamond mining and scientific research. As a result of the mining activities occurring upstream of the site, a major concern is the siltation of the river, leading to a decrease of areas available for fish to take refuge during the dry season.

The site is included in a cross-border project with Cameroon and Congo, which involves carrying out joint patrols for poachers in the ‘Dzanga Sangha Special Reserve’.

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