Culture in Ramsar COP10

1 December 2008

During the Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Convention on Wetlands, held in Changwon on 28 October to 4 November 2008, the South Korean Authorities made great efforts to promote the cultural values of the country and of its wetlands. This was effectively achieved through exhibitions and performances that presented a broad variety of Korean traditional and contemporary arts.

Of particular significance was the inauguration by the Mayor of the city and the Ramsar Secretary General of the Changwon Ramsar Culture Centre at the Junam wetland, devoted to the cultural aspects of wetlands in Korea and internationally.

On 3 November, Wetlands International - Japan brought together in a workshop experts from the region who presented case studies of culture in Asian wetlands from Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and South Korea.

The next day, the Ramsar Culture Working Group organised a meeting on ‘Culture and wetlands: Progress and Guidance’. During the meeting, Ramsar Award winner Sansanee Choowaew presented the work done in this field in Asia, while Thymio Papayannis did the same for the Mediterranean, with reference to the recent publication Action for culture in Mediterranean wetlands. Dave Pritchard, also a Ramsar award winner, introduced the CD-ROM publication ‘Culture and wetlands: A Ramsar guidance document’, produced by the Ramsar Culture Working Group, after a broad consultation. Finally Professor Koichi Sasagawa referred to the conclusions of the Asian workshop. This was followed by a substantive discussion.

Among the interesting contributions was the clarification made by Ecuador’s Sergio Lasso on the difference between the cultural aspects of wetlands and their cultural values, which concern only those aspects that are compatible with the wise use of wetlands.
According to a decision of the Standing Committee, the Ramsar Culture Working Group – with renewed membership – will continue during 2009-2012 to facilitate the incorporation of cultural values in the work of the Convention.

-- Thymio Papayannis

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