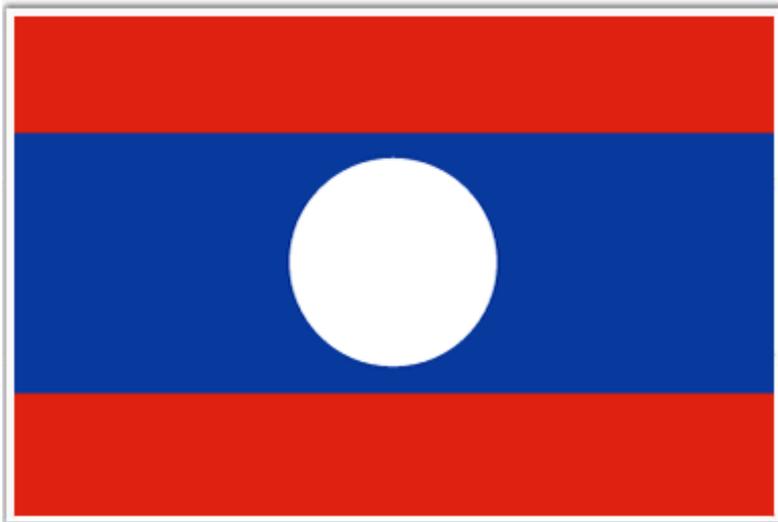




# Lao People's Democratic Republic becomes the 160th Contracting Party of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

14 June 2010

Lao People's Democratic Republic



The Secretariat is delighted to announce that Lao PDR

has completed the accession formalities with UNESCO and has joined the Ramsar Convention, as amended by the Protocol of 1982, as its 160th Contracting Party. The Convention will enter into force for Lao PDR on 28 September 2010.

As part of the accession process Lao PDR has designated their first two Wetlands of International Importance and the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for these two sites are currently being reviewed by the Secretariat. These are the 'Xe Champhone Wetlands' (12,400 ha; Savannakhet Province) and the 'Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands' (6,000 ha; Champasak Province).

The Xe Champhone Wetland is a large floodplain containing perennial rivers and a number of scattered lakes and ponds of different size. It is an outstanding example of a river with many meanders and oxbows, and also supports rice paddies and reservoirs, as well as swamp forests and freshwater marshes. Of the many lakes and ponds, some form habitat for the critically endangered Siamese crocodiles *Crocodylus siamensis*, and are home to several species of turtles. Historically, the deep pools are traditionally conserved because they usually have crocodiles and or have other spiritual purposes. The wetland provides important food, resources and livelihood for the approximately 20,000 people who live in and around the site. Thousands of cattle also use the area and the wetland becomes ever critical to both people and livestock during the dry season.

The Beung Kiat Ngong wetland is located in a large floodplain and is made up of two parts. The first supports a large freshwater marsh situated in a low depression and a peatland, which is the only one found in the Lao PDR. The second part support seasonal wetlands with a small number of scattered permanent ponds and paddy fields. The whole site becomes connected with neighbouring rivers and streams during the wet season.

The site is especially important for fish, which rely on the permanent wetlands for survival during the critical low water dry season. It is also important for fish spawning which takes place both inside the wetland, and during the wet season when some of the fishes migrate to upstream tributaries to spawn. Fish species identified from the site include walking catfish (*Clarias* spp.), snakeheads (*Channa striata*) and swamp eels (*Monopterus albus*), that can be harvested from throughout the site during the wet season. The wetland supports some 11,534 villagers who live in the site and who

are primarily reliant for their income on wild-capture fisheries subsistence agriculture, and non-timber forest products.

This brings the total number of Contracting Parties to 160 member states who have committed themselves to implementing the “three pillars” of the Convention:

1. to designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management;
2. to work towards the wise use of all their wetlands through national land-use planning, appropriate policies and legislation, management actions, and public education; and
3. to cooperate internationally concerning transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.

The office of IUCN Lao provided valuable assistance in the listing of these sites.

Source URL:

<https://www.ramsar.org/news/lao-peoples-democratic-republic-becomes-the-160th-contracting-party-of-the-ramsar-convention-on#comment-0>