



Mexico committed to the Ramsar Convention

2 December 2016

Mexico



Ramsar Convention Secretary General, Martha Rojas-Urrego, visting Sian Ka'an Ramsar Site

- The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Martha Rojas-Urrego, toured the region's Wetlands of International Importance.
- During the field visit, details were released regarding some of the work that Mexico is carrying out to ensure the conservation and wise use of the Ramsar Sites in the region.
- Martha Rojas-Urrego reiterated the support that the Ramsar Convention Secretariat offers the Contracting Parties, and highlighted Mexico's outstanding commitment to the Convention.

The National Commission for Protected Natural Areas (CONANP), the Ministry of Ecology and the Environment of the State of Quintana Roo, and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat have strengthened communication and coordination links in order to comply with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty, which acts as a framework for national action and international cooperation in favour of the conservation and the rational use of wetlands and their resources. Negotiations were held between countries and civil society organisations (CSOs) concerned about the growing loss and degradation of the wetland habitats for migratory waterbirds. It is the only legal international tool to focus on a single type of ecosystem and it forms close links between wetlands as one of the most productive environments in the world and the ecosystem services they provide.

The Convention entered into force in Mexico in 1986, and the country currently has **142 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance**.

The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Martha Rojas-Urrego, visited Mexico within the context of the thirteenth meeting of the **Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 13)**, and, taking advantage of her trip to this country, took a tour of the region's Wetlands of International Importance.

The tour consisted of a field visit to two Ramsar Sites



Sian Ka'an lies on a large karstic plain along a 120km-long barrier reef. Two large, shallow bays

surrounded by mangroves, as well as numerous sinkholes or cenotes, are main landmarks in a landscape of tropical deciduous forests.

representative of the peninsula: the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve and the Playa Tortuguera X'cacel-X'cacelito.

During the visit, she travelled around each site and met relevant local stakeholders, which gave Ms. Rojas-Urrego an overall perspective of the ecological and socioeconomic characteristics of the sites, and allowed for joint reflection on the challenges and opportunities provided by the effective management of these wetlands.

The **Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve (Ramsar Site 1329)** is a federal Protected Natural Area (PNA) that has three international designations: Ramsar Site, UNESCO World Heritage Site and MAB Reserve. It is a wetland of regional importance due to the fact that it has 9 different ecosystems, including lowland tropical forests, forested islands (petenes) and coral reefs.

The **Playa Tortuguera X'cacel-X'cacelito (Ramsar Site 1351)** was designated in 2004. It is the beach on which the largest numbers of green sea turtle and loggerhead turtle nests have been reported in the whole of Mexico.



Accompanying Ms. Rojas-Urrego on the visit, on behalf of the Ministry of Ecology and the Environment of the State of Quintana Roo, was the biologist Wady Hadad, Advisor to the Secretary; and, representing CONANP, the biologist Andrew Rhodes, Director General of Institutional Development and Promotion of CONANP, the biologist Omar Ortíz, Director of the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, and Laura Martínez, Coordinator for Wetlands and Coastal Marine Zones.

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The Secretary General reiterated the support that the Ramsar Convention Secretariat offers the Contracting Parties, and highlighted Mexico's outstanding commitment to the Ramsar Convention, since it is the country with the second highest number of Ramsar Sites, and a benchmark country for several issues such as the restoration of mangroves, water reserves for the environment, and the effectiveness of the management of PNAs.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rhodes reiterated that Mexico is committed to strengthening the capacities that guarantee the conservation and rational use of wetlands in Mexico, and he acknowledged the great value of the commitment to the Ramsar Convention, since it offers international recognition, promotes the effective management of Ramsar Sites, and favours the creation of synergies with State governments, civil society organisation and academic institutions, in order to look after each of the country's Ramsar Sites.