The Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) recently held a training of trainers workshop on community based planning and management of ecotourism and wetlands (26th July – 26th August 2009).

This forms part of an Integrated Management of Critical Ecosystems project (IMCE) to promote economic growth by 2020 involving GEF as well as contributing to the second stage of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between REMA Director General and the Ramsar Convention Secretary General in May 2008. By focusing on the tourism sector, Rwanda is tapping into the rich resources it holds and further diversifying its economy.

The training of trainers workshop involves fourteen members of local Watershed Management Committees undergoing training on techniques that permit sustainable exploitation and management of natural resources in marshlands and other fragile ecosystems centered on community-based ecotourism. This will involve the study of the concept of ecotourism; ecotourism planning and management; marketing; a field visit; and analysis of challenges and opportunities in planning for community ecotourism.

Rwanda has become one of the most active African Contracting Parties in implementing the Ramsar Convention, and we encourage other Contracting Parties in Africa to follow Rwanda’s example in conducting similar activities that will consequently act as further encouragement to local communities to improve their livelihoods through entrepreneurship.

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-- Cynthia Kibata,
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