

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is "working towards the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

www.ramsar.org

Welcome to
South Sudan -
Africa's 50th
Contracting Party to
the Ramsar Convention
The Convention now
counts 168 Contracting
Parties around the
world.

Inside this issue:

Editorial	1
Analysis of the implementation of the Convention in Africa	2
Post COP11 - Ramsar Africa Team	3
Countries take action	4
Interviews	5
Ramsar news and publications	6
Open Forum for African wetland practitioners	6

Editorial



Ramsar Secretary General, Anada Tiéga

This is the first issue of the "African Wetlands Watch", which will be released twice a year. As a discussion and communication tool, it is intended to inform its readers, in a fairly concentrated 6-page format, about the activities of the Africa team of the Convention: Focus on Ramsar Sites, short articles, meeting proceedings, missions, interview, etc. As its title suggests, this newsletter is a tool to monitor the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa.

For this first issue, we have chosen to present an overview of the various activities undertaken by the Africa team since the eleventh session of the Conference of Parties (COP11) held in Bucharest from 6 to 13 July 2012.

This issue also presents interviews with African Ramsar Focal Points and other resource persons working on wetlands in Africa and elsewhere. The African Wetlands Watch (A2W) is fairly complementary with respect to the information you can find on the Ramsar Convention website www.ramsar.org in the "News" pages.

We have chosen to add two specific elements to that classic information dissemination tool. The first is a short interview with four National Focal Points, addressing issues on the implementation of the Convention at national level. In this first issue, questions are asked to the Focal Points of Botswana, Namibia, Senegal and Togo.

Issue No. 001/July 2013



The second is a short text presenting a situation analysis of the daily governance of Ramsar Sites in Africa, with the objective of engaging practical discussions on this issue. It aims at drawing the attention of Ramsar Site managers to the importance of integrating Ramsar Sites into local and national planning in order to ensure the valorisation of wetland resources.

This first issue of the African Wetlands Watch begins with a short analysis of the implementation of the Convention in Africa. This seemed quite appropriate to us, as A2W aims eventually at publishing indicators and parameters of the implementation of the Convention in Africa, stimulating and encouraging views on the relevance of actions taken, acknowledging successes and challenges, and helping to disseminate knowledge and lessons.

We encourage readers to reflect upon the matters discussed in this and future issues, and by all means to let us have your valuable feedback.

Anada Tiéga

Secretary General

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

2013 Ramsar Site designations in Africa

- * **3 new sites in Burundi** - Parc National de la Ruvubu, Paysage Aquatique Protégé du Nord and Réserve Naturelle de la Malagarazi.
- * **1 new site in South Africa** - uMgeni Vlei Nature Reserve
- * **3 new sites in Mali** - Lac Magui, Lac Wegnia and Plaine Inondable du Sourou.
- * **3 new sites in Swaziland** - Hawane Nature Reserve and Dam, Sand River and Van Eck.
- * **3 new sites in Tunisia** - Complexe Lac de Tunis, Complexe des zones humides de Sebket Dum Ez-Zessar et Sebket El Grine, and Complexe des zones humides de Barrage Ghdir El Goulla et Barrage El Mornaguia (Al Mornaguia).
- * **7 new sites in Zimbabwe** - Cleveland Dam, Chinhoyi Caves, Driefontein Grasslands, Lake Chivero and Manyame, Mana Pools, Monavale Wetland, and Victoria Falls National Park.

The Ramsar Convention today counts 50 African countries as Contracting Parties. In total, four countries – Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia – are expected to join the Convention soon.

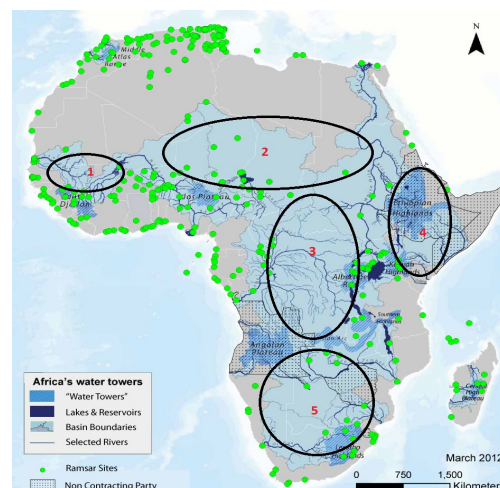
Main focus of the Africa Team for the current triennium

During this 2013-2015 triennium, the Africa team of the Ramsar Secretariat intends to focus on the following issues: (i) Ramsar Site designations, (ii) National Wetland Inventories and the development of management plans for already designated and soon-to-be-designated sites, and (iii) awareness and capacity building programmes: training of trainers, capacity building workshops, assisting countries to develop projects/programmes, etc.

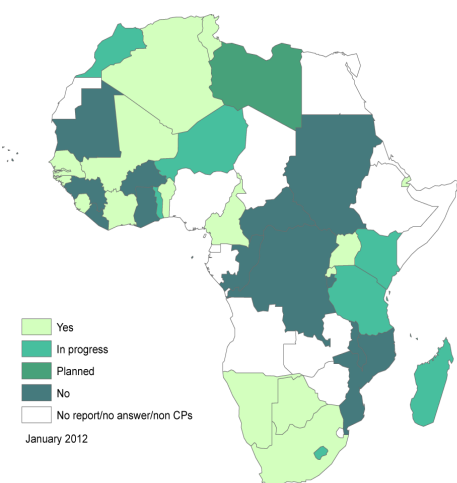
Designation and management of African Ramsar Sites

Though the number of designated Ramsar Sites in Africa has been increasing over the past years, the development and implementation of management plans for these sites remains a challenge. The superposition of the spatial distribution of Ramsar Sites and “water towers” of Africa shows an urgent need to define a strategy to designate and plan the management of new sites in the region.

The water towers, lakes and reservoirs already harbour some Ramsar Sites, but more could be designated alongside the establishment of management plans. In order to achieve this goal, five priority areas have been defined (see adjacent figure).



National wetland inventories and assessment



The Convention recognises wetland inventory as the basis for supporting the development of strategies, policies and management plans for wetlands. By 2008, only nine Parties had carried out national wetland inventories. However, by 2012 this number increased to 15 countries (66.7% increase). Many countries are still to accomplish this objective. One plausible explanation is that few countries know that it is possible to make a low-cost inventory with reliable results. In addition, the Contracting Parties do not have sufficient capacity to collect and process free satellite data. It is therefore imperative that the Secretariat, together with the International Organisation Partners

(IOPs) and other groups, provides support to the Parties so that they are able to make progress in this important area.

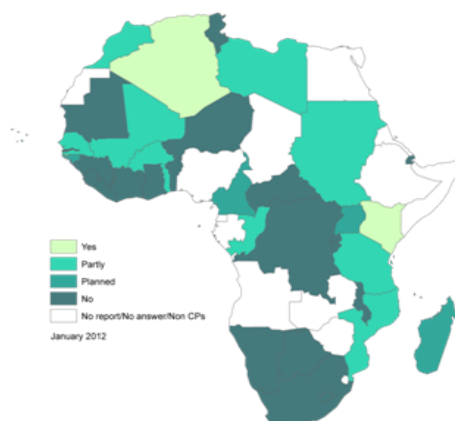
An ongoing development project, Globewetland III (<http://www.congrexprojects.com/13m50/>), aims at facilitating the integration of remote sensing into the conservation and management of wetlands in Africa. The European Space Agency (ESA) and the Africa Team are working towards assisting the African Contracting Parties to carry out wetland inventory and follow up the land use and land cover change, water cycle regime, status and trends of wetlands, and their impact on wetlands biodiversity.

Capacity development for wetlands

Capacity development for wetlands is still needed in Africa, as was requested by the African Contracting Parties at COP11 in 2012. Goal 4 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 reads: Institutional capacity and effectiveness: “To progress towards fulfillment of the Convention’s mission by ensuring that it has the required mechanisms, resources, and capacity to do so”.

The analysis of National Reports highlights that the Contracting Parties consistently mentioned the lack of ability

and training as a major obstacle to the implementation of the Convention in Africa. Only two Contracting Parties have targeted and assessed their needs for training and capacity building – all other Parties indicated needs at all levels from site management to policy development. Thus the identification of training needs of institutions and individuals, particularly in Africa, and the provision of appropriate responses, remain key to capacity building for wetland conservation and the wise use of resources.



Contracting Parties using Ramsar guidance

From January 2012 to June 2013, the Africa team at the Ramsar Secretariat has carried out several activities to implement its 2012-2013 Work Plan. During this year, the team looks forward to renewing and enabling cooperation with appropriate partners and starting the implementation of two main projects: 'Wetlands and Urbanisation in West Africa' & the 'Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use' programme framework.

An important expected result was the accession of at least three new African countries to the Convention, and this has been achieved with the recent accessions of Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Sudan.



African delegates at Ramsar COP11, Bucharest, 6-13 July 2012

Local workshops in partnership with UN-Habitat and STPH-Institute were recently held in:

- Aneho, Togo (17-18 June 2013)
- Ga Municipality, Ghana (21-22 June 2013) and
- Somone, Senegal (24-25 June 2013)

within the framework of the Wetlands and Urbanisation project in West Africa. These workshops reviewed existing spatial plans, planning processes, published planning guidance, and organisational structures to understand existing processes and identify potential limitations and/or examples of best practices in the identified pilot cities for this West Africa - focused project.

Major achievements

- The development of a project document on Wetlands and Urbanisation in West Africa is on-going. The planning workshop was held in Dakar from 16 to 20 November 2012 and attended by nine countries.
- An Integrated Critical Mangroves Conservation and Sustainable Use programme framework was prepared and submitted to potential donors.
- The final version of the guidelines for inland wetlands development has been submitted for editing and translated into French.
- 25 wetlands have been designated as Ramsar Sites in Africa since COP11 and 5 cases identified under Article 3.2 of the Convention.
- SGF 2006 Kenya: CEPA Project (Developing Awareness and Educational Materials on Ramsar Sites in Kenya). Awareness materials and final reports are available and project finalisation is in progress.
- SGF 2009 Mali: Sauvons le Delta Intérieur du Fleuve Niger. All reports have been received.
- SGF 2010 Guinea-Bissau: Protection and development of wetlands of Lagoa de Cufada Ramsar Site in Guinea-Bissau. The progress report has been received and finalisation is in progress.
- SGF 2012: 2 projects have been funded in Africa from the 2011 portfolio - Ghana and Uganda.
- SGA 2012 funding: Funding was secured for 5 countries from 9 project proposals received: Sudan - National Wetlands Inventory; South Sudan - Accession and National Wetlands Inventory; Mauritania - National Wetlands Policy; Burundi - Cartography and Atlas on Burundi Ramsar Sites; and Senegal - Wetland

Sustainable Management and Site Designation (Tocc Tocc wetland).

- NigerWet and WacoWet signed the 2012 Regional Initiative contracts, implemented planned activities, and sent reports to the Secretariat.
- Collaborative projects with Senghor University: 12 students, technically supervised by the Senior Advisor for Africa at the Ramsar Secretariat, graduated from the masters 2 programme in Protected Areas Management.
- The Africa Regional Team assisted with the Project "Enhancement of Local Environmental Governance" in Burkina Faso to plan wetlands-related activities.

Planned workshops

Kigali, 8-12 July 2013 Wetlands Forum: 'Wise Use, Smart Plans', organised by the Rwanda Environmental Management Authority and the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, The Netherlands, with participation of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Wageningen University and Research Centre, the Nile Basin Capacity Building Network, UNEP and FAO.

Frascati, Italy, 16-18 July 2013-GlobWetland III user consultation workshop, jointly organised by the European Space Agency and the Ramsar Secretariat. The objective of the workshop is to bring together remote sensing experts, wetland practitioners at all levels, water basin authorities, international conservation and funding agencies to review together the scope of the GlobWetland III project and jointly define its objectives and requirements.

*Paul Ouédraogo
Senior Advisor for Africa*

Integrating Ramsar principles in the community legislation of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)



Capt. Abdou Salam Kane,
National Focal Point, Senegal

In signing the Additional Act No 01/2008/CCEG/UEMOA of 17 January 2008 relating to the Common Fisheries Policy to Improve the Environment (PSCP), the WAEMU countries have given strong reversal of trends of degradation and depletion of natural resources, environment and quality of life and the maintenance of biodiversity commitment. A project has been developed by Senegal to support the WAEMU countries to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands in urban and suburban areas, by encouraging WAEMU countries to integrate wetlands into planning priorities at all levels and the use of wetlands as natural and/or artificial infrastructure, substantially contributing to the supply of good quality water, food and water security, sustainable tourism, human health, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, energy supply, climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as economic and social development.

Abdou Salam Kane
Ramsar NFP Senegal

Celebration of World Wetlands Day - WWD 2013 in Africa - ([click here for all country reports](#))

Zimbabwe

Just after its accession to the Ramsar Convention on 3 January 2013, with the designation of 7 Ramsar Sites, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention Mr. Anada Tiega, participated in the WWD celebration in Zimbabwe which brought together several wetland stakeholders to discuss the future implementation of the Convention in the country. Zimbabwe has already established a National Ramsar Committee. More information [here](#).



Sensitisation materials at
Monavale Vlei © COSMO

Guinea-Bissau

On 31 January 2013, during the WWD celebration in Guinea-Bissau, the Secretary of State for the Environment and Tourism for Guinea-Bissau, H.E. Dr. Agostinho da Costa, signed an inter-ministerial decree creating a National Ramsar Committee. He remarked that this step is only one of the many actions that the country has launched in order to ensure environmental sustainability after the fight against plastic bags. [Read full news item.](#)



Ako Charlotte Eyong
Assistant Advisor for Africa

Burundi



WWD celebration-Burundi, field visit to Lake Tanganyika © Rufuguta

On the occasion of WWD, the government of Burundi organised a sensitisation workshop on

1st of January 2013, to raise popular awareness of the interdependence between water and wetlands. Attended by the representative of the Minister of Water, Environment, Land development and Urbanization and the Senior Advisor for Africa at the Ramsar Secretariat, it was an opportunity to discuss many Convention implementation issues in Burundi. This led to the development of an action plan for the implementation of the Convention in that country. [More here.](#)

Cameroon



WWD celebration - Cameroon
© EPDA Cameroon

The Environmental Protection and Development

Association (EPDA Cameroon) celebrated WWD in two primary and two secondary schools with over 720 students, teachers and volunteers who came to learn about and identify the wetlands and Ramsar Sites in Cameroon; the bio-species found in wetlands, especially those of Cameroon, including lessons on wetland values. View the complete report and photos [here](#).

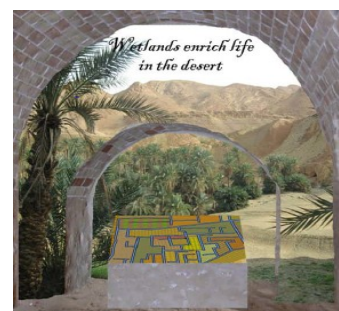
Tunisia focuses on wetlands sensitisation and Ramsar Site management plans

After designating its 40th Ramsar Site on 2 February 2013 and establishing a National Wetlands committee, Tunisia recently inaugurated the Ghar El Mehl Wetland Centre. Through this centre, Tunisia hopes to improve sensitisation and education about the importance of wet-

land conservation and wise use. During a workshop to assess its implementation of the Convention on 21 September 2012, the country stated that its main priority after designating 40 Ramsar Sites would be to ensure the elaboration and implementation of man-

agement plans for all its Ramsar Sites. To this current national priority, and after several restoration processes, the country has added the removal of Ichkeul, Tunisia's first Ramsar Site, from the Montreux record.

Ako Charlotte Eyong
Assistant Advisor for Africa



Ghar El Mehl Wetland Centre ©
WWF Tunisia

Management plan for the Lower Okavango River



Mr. Holger Kolberg, STRP Focal Point of Namibia

Senior Advisor for Africa: Please describe the situation of the management plan in preparation for the lower Okavango River Ramsar Site in Namibia.

Mr. Holger Kolberg: The management plan for the lower Okavango River Ramsar Site is compiled by a consortium of consultants with funding provided by SAREP (Southern Africa Regional Environmental Pro-

gramme). The consultants have expertise in the fields of environmental management and conservation, community based natural resource management, and economics. A series of consultative meetings at local and regional level are used to provide input into and draft the management plan.

Senior Advisor for Africa: How will climate change issues be tackled within this management plan?

Mr. Kolberg: The Ramsar Site forms only a very small portion of the entire Okavango River Basin, so the management plan will only address climate change issues at a very localised scale. The impact of climate change on the Okavango River is being addressed by the Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM).

Wetlands and urbanisation in Togo

Senior Advisor for Africa: The Ramsar Administrative Authority of Togo organised a workshop in Aného from 17 to 18 June 2013. What was the purpose of this meeting?

Ms. Abamy: The Ramsar Secretariat Africa team in collaboration with the STRP, UN-Habitat and the Contracting Parties have been working on the development of the project "Wetlands and Urbanisation in West Africa" since COP11. This project is driven by the need to ensure that wetland health-related and living conditions services are fully available to the urban areas in West Africa. The

Dakar workshop of November 2012 led to progress in the project planning and a recommendation to hold local workshops in the pilot cities. It is in this context that Togo welcomed a mission of the Ramsar Secretariat and UN-Habitat to identify and analyse the processes, as well as existing barriers and obstacles to the integration of ecosystem services in the urban planning process of the Aného municipality.

Senior Advisor for Africa: Apart from issues related to wetlands and urbanisation, what are the major challenges in the management of wetland ecosystems in Togo?

Ms. Abamy: In Togo, human

activities are the main causes of wetland degradation. Urbanisation and infrastructure development unfortunately result in the degradation of natural resources and especially wetlands. Thus, the government aims at conserving and promoting wise use of a network of wetlands to ensure their regulatory role in a changing climate. The Togolese government works towards promoting the value of ecosystem services of wetlands, for the benefit of local populations. All these measures are enhanced through the gradual integration of wetland issues in national planning (policy, strategy, sustainable funding plan, action plan, site management, and legal framework).



Ms. Abamy Kossiawavi Ogoua Ramsar Focal Point, Togo

Thanks to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and all other technical and financial partners for their support and advice, in the management of Togo's wetlands.

Botswana plans new Ramsar Site designations



Mr. Sekgowa Motsumi, Botswana's Ramsar National Focal Point

Senior Advisor for Africa: Botswana is hosting only one Ramsar Site since its accession to the Convention in 1997. Is there any plan to increase this number?

Mr. Motsumi: Botswana made a commitment during COP10 in South Korea to list additional sites. This process has stalled, however more investments into wetland management by the country continue to be made. This is demonstrated by the completion of an Integrated Management

Plan for the Makgadikgadi palustrine wetland complex which is currently being implemented.

Senior Advisor for Africa: You are preparing to attend the Kigali Forum on "Wetlands: Wise Use, Smart Plans", from 8-12 July 2013. How is this useful to your country?

Mr. Motsumi: The implementation of the Okavango Delta Ramsar Site integrated management plan (ODMP) has been ongoing since February

2008. Its review, linked to the national planning processes such as the District Development and National Development Plans, captured emerging issues, application of additional tools such as the Strategic Environment Assessment and the lessons learnt. It is our intention as a country to use the Wetlands Forum as an opportunity to share our experiences and challenges in wetlands management, planning and policy. This is what I intend to share with colleagues at the forum.

New publication

Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of Inland Wetlands Management in Africa

Guidelines for the sustainable development of inland wetlands management in Africa were developed early this year by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Regional Office for Africa, in partnership with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat's Africa Team, and with a financial contribution from IFAD. This publication is meant to facilitate increasing agriculture investments in these sensitive natural systems.

For more information, contact:

- Ruhiza Boroto, FAO (Ruhiza.Boroto@fao.org)
- Paul Ouédraogo, Ramsar (ouedraogo@ramsar.org)

Open Forum for African Wetlands Practitioners Zimbabwe: the importance of Monavale Vlei



Steve Davies, Chairman,
COSMO Trust

Monavale Vlei is an intact and hugely biodiverse remnant of the once extensive wetland found through Harare. These vleis are the only water source, other than runoffs, supplying the streams, rivers and dams downstream, as well as groundwater recharge. Its biodiversity and hydrological functions have been threatened by development, informal agriculture, and pollution. Intervention by COSMO Trust over the past 13 years, supported by national and local authorities and other environmental organisations, has led to the restoration of its biodiversity to its original pristine state. A model for wetland management and awareness

has been created which could be replicated in any other urban community in Zimbabwe.



Dorothy Wakeling, Monavale Vlei Project Manager

This is important because the population of Harare and environs is now some 7 million people, and their source of water is rapidly disappearing along with each wetland destroyed.

The greatest challenge to its management has been a lack of awareness of its biodiversity importance, hydrological functioning, and urban wetland values. COSMO continues management, restoration, and wetland awareness activities.

Steve Davies & Dorothy Wakeling

Update on Recent Meetings

Training sessions



Participants at Kaya, Burkina

The Ramsar Senior Advisor for Africa, Dr. Paul Ouédraogo, took part in the training of Ramsar Site managers in Burkina Faso (8-10 May 2013) and Togo (11-12 June 2013). The overall objective of the training was to further strengthen their technical and operational skills to provide ongoing and closer coaching to local communities for the wise use of wetlands and responding to wetland issues related to human activities exacerbated by climate change. At the end of the training, the Ramsar Site managers committed themselves to conducting wetland inventories within their intervention areas and to developing action plans to manage wetlands in collaboration with local, regional and national stakeholders.



Participants at Lomé, Togo

New



Video guide for updating Ramsar Information Sheets in [English](#) and [French](#). Click on your preferred language to watch.

- Vacancy at the Ramsar Secretariat for the position of Intern/Assistant to the Senior Advisor for Africa. [Details here](#).
- Record and share your CEPA story until July 15th for the next round. Please [follow this link](#) and scroll down the web page.

Contact us: Ramsar Africa Team

Dr. Paul Ouédraogo - ouedraogo@ramsar.org

Ms. Ako Charlotte Eyong - africa@ramsar.org



To send us your feedback or contribute to the next edition, please send your story to africa@ramsar.org.

Top cover page, photo credit © IBAP