



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

The Ramsar Convention appoints Dr Christopher Briggs as new Secretary General

The Ramsar Convention Standing Committee is pleased to announce that Dr Christopher Briggs has been appointed to, and has accepted, the position of Secretary General. He will be the fifth Secretary General to the Convention and will succeed Mr Tiéga Anada who has served the Convention for the past six years. Dr Briggs' appointment was approved by the Ramsar Standing Committee during its 46th meeting held in Gland, Switzerland from 8-12 April 2013.

Christopher Briggs' interest and involvement in wetlands began while working for county wildlife trusts in England after completing his doctorate in sub-tidal ecology of scallops and starfish in the Isle of Man under the University of Liverpool. After advising the trusts on volunteering and income generation on behalf of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, he moved to work on developmental issues under the British Council in 1987. He worked as a Science Officer in the Former Yugoslavia, Mexico and Tanzania until 1997 and after that became leader of a UK-sponsored project on the Litoral Norte in Bahia, Brazil, collaborating with government agencies and municipalities to manage a 100 km protected area of coastline, in the face of large scale tourism.

Dr Briggs joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1999 as Coordinator of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Environment team. Here he managed GEF projects in Biodiversity and International Waters and supported the practical development of the Conventions for the Caspian Sea, Black Sea and Danube River, as well as new projects on the Rivers Dneiper, Kura, Tisza and Volga.

In 2001 he began work on a science-based convention and joined the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to help build capacity in developing countries on Genetically Modified Organisms under the Cartagena Protocol. There he led the UNEP-Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) Biosafety Unit for six years providing support to over 130 developing countries and increasing the reach and greater understanding of the Cartagena Protocol, with funding from the GEF.

After working with the GEF for over eight years it was almost logical to move to the GEF Secretariat in Washington, where he spent three years, from 2007 to 2010, running the operations of the Secretariat with its nearly billion dollar annual project budget. He was also responsible for

managing relations with ten GEF Agencies, helping to create better project information systems, results-based management and successful collaboration with the private sector.

Most recently, Dr Briggs was appointed as regional team leader for UNDP for the Latin American and Caribbean region based in Panama, with an almost half a billion dollar portfolio of projects across all aspects of climate change, land use, biodiversity and chemical management. The portfolio includes wetland projects (many of which are in Ramsar Sites) and covers all aspects of land management, including coastal and inland wetlands, focusing particular attention on how to achieve long term financial support for the continuous supply of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the region.

Dr Briggs is excited at the prospect of working for wetlands under the Ramsar Convention and the opportunity to return to where he started his life as a naturalist with boots and net, in streams and ponds, across Britain and Ireland. Responding to his appointment he said: "There is so much to do to make sure that wetlands matter to decision makers and so much more interest today in managing wetlands for the future so we all continue to benefit from their multiple services".

The Ramsar Convention Standing Committee Chair, Mr Mihail Faca, would like to wish Dr Briggs every success in this very important and challenging role. The Ramsar Convention welcomes its new Secretary General and looks forward to working closely with him during this triennium.

Gland, Switzerland, April 2013