



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

**World
Wetlands Day**
2 February 2016

**Wetlands
for our Future**
Sustainable Livelihoods



Message from Dr. Ania Grobicki Acting Secretary-General

Gland, 2 February 2016

Every year on 2 February people in many countries come together to celebrate wetlands and their vital importance for the future of our planet.

Wetlands ensure our supply of fresh, drinkable water. They grow a significant portion of the world's food supply with fish and rice. Inland, wetlands act as sponges to slow down river flooding and they form coastal barriers against storm surges. And just one single type of wetland – peatland – stores twice as much carbon as all of the forests in the world.

For World Wetlands Day 2016, there are over 800 events planned at various wetlands around the world to celebrate another benefit of wetlands: Sustainable Livelihoods.

More than a billion people around the world make their living directly from wetlands, doing jobs such as fishing, rice farming or handicrafts. Other sectors such as travel and eco-tourism, water transport and aquaculture all depend on healthy wetlands.

Yet some 64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900; many of them converted to agricultural use or urban development.

This alarming loss means it is urgent to help people understand that preserving wetlands does *not* have to mean restricting economic growth or depriving people of livelihoods. Quite the opposite!

2016 marks the dawn of a new era. The UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted last September map out the route from the vicious circle of environmental degradation towards a virtuous cycle where we preserve, restore and wisely use ecosystems precisely *because* they are vital for our prosperity.

The new Ramsar Strategy 2016-2024 calls for wetland benefits to be featured in strategies and plans relating to key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, urban development, infrastructure, industry, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries at the national and local level.

It also calls for wetland functions, services and benefits to be widely demonstrated and documented.

This is why, for World Wetlands Day 2016, the Ramsar Secretariat has assembled a range of inspiring stories that demonstrate how wetlands can and do provide sustainable livelihoods. You can read these stories at <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/stories>

As always, these support materials are made available with the support of the Danone-Evian Fund for Water, which has sponsored World Wetlands Day since 1997.

We invite you to visit a wetland, get to know the local communities and how they wisely use this ecosystem. Parties to the Ramsar Convention have designated over 2200 Ramsar Sites of International Importance, protected for the benefits they provide to the country and the world.

To encourage the participation of young people, we are running a photo competition from 2 February to 2 March open to anyone aged 15 to 24 years. You are invited to capture an image showing how “wetlands are essential for sustainable livelihoods,” and upload as many as 3 photos to the World Wetlands Day website. The winner of the photo contest will enjoy a free flight to visit a wetland anywhere in the world, courtesy of Star Alliance.

Happy World Wetlands Day! Let's help everyone understand just how vital wetlands are!