



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



Convention on
Biological Diversity

Embargoed until 12:00 GMT, Friday 1 February 2013

PRESS RELEASE

Urgent need to focus on wetlands as natural solutions to global water crisis

A report on the Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands urges a major shift in our attitudes to wetlands, to recognise their value in delivering water, raw materials and food, essential for life, and crucial for maintaining people's livelihoods and the sustainability of the world's economies.

Geneva, Switzerland | 1 February 2013. The report, *The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands*, was launched today on the occasion of World Wetlands Day by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the Geneva Environment Network (GEN) secretariat.

The report presents insights on critical water-related ecosystem services in order to encourage additional policy momentum, business commitment, and investment in the conservation, restoration, and wise use of wetlands. It shows how recognizing, demonstrating, and capturing the values of ecosystem services related to water and wetlands can lead to better informed, more efficient, and fairer decision-making.

For example, improved water management practices allowed the restoration of Lake Ichkeul in Tunisia, resulting in the doubling of the number of tourists since 2005. The promotion of the lake as a tourist destination helped raise awareness of the value of the lake ecosystems and the importance of the wise use of wetlands. It also generated new sources of income for the Park management and conservation and allowed establishment of basic training and credit schemes to increase the involvement of local communities in tourism activities. *"It is poor people who suffer the most when biodiversity is lost, because their survival depends on the wealth of nature. When we destroy wetlands, we disrupt nature's water cycle and its ability to provide water for households and farms, so inadvertently we add to the suffering of the poor. This report reinforces the message that restoration and protection of wetlands is vital to address today's most pressing challenges of water and food security, climate change, and poverty. "TEEB Water and Wetlands" calls on development policy-makers to recognize these ecosystem values and put in place policy responses that promote the conservation and restoration of wetlands"* says TEEB Study Leader and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador Pavan Sukhdev, currently Chair of the TEEB Advisory Board.

The TEEB report reinforces this year's World Wetlands Day message that, despite the evidence that wetlands provide huge benefits to people - such as clean drinking water, facilitating irrigation for agriculture, enabling flood regulation, as well as supporting biodiversity and industries such as fisheries and tourism- their value is still underestimated and wetlands continue to be degraded or destroyed at an alarming pace. An estimated 50 per cent of wetlands were lost during the 20th century due to factors such as intensive agricultural production, water extraction for domestic and industrial use, urbanization, infrastructure and industrial development and pollution.

"Everyone in the world depends on water for our life, livelihoods and business, and coastal and inland wetlands are the natural infrastructure that manage and provide our water for us" says **Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention**. *"This report confirms just how hugely valuable our remaining wetlands are to all of us, yet we continue to damage and destroy them at our increasing peril."*

"The TEEB report makes it clear that investing in the natural infrastructure of wetlands is a vital part of the future development agenda for water. Solutions for water security work best when we combine sustainable human ingenuity with the services provided by healthy ecosystems," says **Mark Smith, Director IUCN Global Water Programme**. The report provides specific practical recommendations for actors at all levels such as policy and decision-makers in the public and private sectors, on how to integrate the values of wetlands in decision-making.

"The wise use and restoration of wetlands will support the fundamental objectives of water security, food security, help address climate change, save money for public and private budgets, and support livelihoods" says **Patrick ten Brink, Senior Fellow, Head of Brussels office & Environmental Economics Programme (IEEP)**. To cite another example, in the Philippines, the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Marine Park, a Ramsar and World Heritage Site, was created in 1988 and established no-take zones for fishing, as destructive fishing was increasingly threatening the function of the reef as a nursery ground for the Sulu Sea. Despite the ban, fishers were not convinced of the benefits of a no-take zone and claimed their rights to extract resources in the park. In 1999 a workshop was held involving all interest groups – preservationists as well as fishers. They agreed that tourists pay a conservation fee, which is used to manage the protected area, compensate fishermen and fund livelihood initiatives in communities in the region. As a result, the no-take zone has been respected and fish biomass has increased both within the park and outside the park boundaries.

An increased appreciation of the societal values of water-related ecosystem services from nature and the wider range of wetland ecosystem services will be essential to catalyse appropriate policy and business responses. *"Degradation and loss of wetlands has been due in a large part to limited awareness of their value and ineffective policy and management. It is clear we have already suffered significant socio-economic losses from this, in addition to the loss of biodiversity associated with these high value systems. The good news is that the report convincingly shows the value of sustaining and in particular restoring these ecosystems"* says **Braulio F. de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**.

World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated worldwide every year to deliver the message that healthy wetlands, and the ecosystem services they are providing, are vital for life and its diversity. For WWD 2013, and as a contribution to the UN International Year for Water Cooperation, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat focuses this year's campaign on wetlands and water management to show the interdependence between water and wetlands and the key role wetlands play. Its key objective is to highlight the importance of conserving and enhancing the ecosystem services provided by water and wetlands.

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

TEEB Communications: Sharon Oseku-Frainier on +41 22 917 8255, Email: sharon.oseku-frainier@unep.org

Oana Barsin, Ramsar Secretariat Communications Officer on +41 22 999 0331, Email: barsin@ramsar.org

Notes to Editors

TEEB Water and Wetlands and its executive summary can be downloaded from www.teebweb.org.

The report was initiated by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, with financial support from the Norwegian, Swiss and Finnish Governments and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It was produced by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, in collaboration with The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) TEEB Office, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Wetlands International, the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It benefited from contributions of case studies from around the globe, an extensive review process and discussion at the Rio+20 Conference, the Ramsar COP 11 in Bucharest, and the CBD COP11 in Hyderabad.

Paper citation: Full Report: Russi D., ten Brink P., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013). *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands*. IEEP, London and Brussels.

Executive Summary: ten Brink P., Russi D., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013) *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands*. Executive Summary.

World Wetlands Day activities in Geneva and surroundings:

- Thursday 31 January 2013, La Rade de Genève (contact DIME at +41 (0)22 546 76 00)
- Saturday 2 February, Grande Caricaie, <http://www.grande-caricaie.ch/spip/spip.php?rubrique322>
- Sunday 3 February, events organised by Pro Natura Geneva, 10.00 – 16.00 at the [Réserve de la Pointe-à-la-Bise](#) and 13.00- 18.00 in [Parc Mont-Repos](#) (Perle du Lac) / pavillon Plantamour (La Libellule)
- LPO activities in France: <http://www.zones-humides.eafrance.fr/agir/ramsar-et-la-journee-mondiale-des-zones-humides/espace-visiteurs-programme-2013>

WWD materials available at www.ramsar.org/WWD2013/.

About the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention is a global intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Signed in the Iranian town of Ramsar in 1971, the Convention established the basis for the management and sustainable use of wetlands. To date, it remains the only environmental agreement in the world devoted to a particular ecosystem. www.ramsar.org

About TEEB

The UNEP-hosted Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) is a major international initiative to draw attention to the global economic benefits of biodiversity, to highlight the growing costs of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, and to draw together expertise from the fields of science, economics and policy to enable practical actions moving forward. TEEB is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). www.teebweb.org

About IEEP

The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) is an independent not-for-profit institute. Based in London and Brussels, the Institute's major focus is the development, implementation and evaluation of policies of environmental significance, with a focus both on Europe and the global dimension. www.ieep.eu

About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. www.iucn.org

About the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. www.cbd.int