



# Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

## Mekong Region Ramsar Initiative Proposed at Ramsar COP 9

In response to Resolution VIII.30 of the Ramsar Convention the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)\* has been facilitating the development of a Mekong Region Ramsar Initiative. The primary intention of this initiative is to facilitate improved implementation of the principles and priorities of the Ramsar Convention through increased regional cooperation

A side event was organised at Ramsar COP9 to discuss the potential for this regional initiative covering the wider Mekong Region. Representatives from the six countries of this region – Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam discussed the added value that such an initiative could bring to existing Ramsar and wetlands work in the region, and the steps ahead to progress this idea. The meeting was also attended by other interested parties and key partner organisations including WWF, BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). There was general support for the idea, although concerns were raised about its ambitious geographic scope. The delegates from China noted that they were working to support the Himalayan Ramsar Initiative, and suggested developing the idea of the Mekong Initiative more closely with the Yunnan Provincial authorities. It was recognised by the meeting that there was a direct upstream-downstream connection between the Himalayan and Mekong initiatives.

The initiative was seen as adding value in the exchange of information and experience in wetland management, in sustainable use of wetlands for addressing livelihoods and poverty issues. Indeed the issue of poverty and wetlands was highlighted by many representatives. It was noted that such an initiative could also strengthen the voice of the countries concerned in their contributions to the Convention.

It was noted that this initiative would take some time to develop. It was important to get governmental support for the idea so an extensive consultation process was required and the MWBP agreed to follow this meeting up with a revised draft of the concept which would be used as a basis for consultation with all six governments. An institutional analysis would be carried out to consider how this initiative would fit with the work of existing institutions, and whether an institutional home could be found for it within these. It was agreed that after consultation with each country, a regional meeting would be called during the latter half of 2006 to take the initiative forward.

\* The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) is a joint programme of the four riparian governments of the Lower Mekong Basin – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other stakeholders.

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



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