



MEDIA RELEASE

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Viet Nam's First Wetlands Status Report launched in conjunction with World Wetlands Day

Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 16 January 2006 (VEPA/MWBP/IUCN) - A comprehensive assessment of wetlands status in Viet Nam, titled "Overview of Wetlands Status in Viet Nam Following 15 Years of Ramsar Convention Implementation" will be nationally launched by Viet Nam Environment Protection Agency (VEPA) on 16 January 2006. The launch will also coincide with World Wetlands Day (2 February 2006) and its theme of the year "Wetlands as a tool in poverty alleviation".

Officers from Ministry of Nature Resource and Environment, relevant ministries, institutions, research centres, university, international organisations and NGOs will participate in the report launch. The report is the product of a collaborative effort of the Vietnam Environment Protection Agency (VEPA)*, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Viet Nam*, and the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)**, with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and experts in the field of nature conservation, water and wetlands nature resources management

"The report serves as a comprehensive, up-to-date source of information on wetlands for policy-makers and researchers alike, thus facilitating future policies, research, and strategies. Finally, it identifies those national and international laws and policies that relate to wetlands, and highlights those aspects that are relevant or critical to future wetlands management in Viet Nam", said Dr Tran Hong Ha, Director of VEPA.

Viet Nam signed the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands fifteen years ago, and recently designated a second wetland site to the List of Wetlands of International Importance according to Ramsar criteria. The new report is intended to serve as a benchmark for progress and trends in wetlands management and protection in the last fifteen years, highlighting recommendations for the future.

"According to the Ramsar Convention definition of wetlands, Viet Nam has a wide variety of wetlands including inland and coastal wetlands areas, which belong to the management of different ministries. Because of this, information about the status of wetlands is scattered within various offices. The consultant team in collaboration with VEPA have received support from related departments. It is a great achievement of behalf of all that were involved and has resulted in this comprehensive wetlands report", said Dr Mai Trong Nhuan, the leader of the consultant team which carried out the assessment.

Wetlands play a key role in Viet Nam's socioeconomic development, national defense, poverty alleviation, disaster prevention, cultural maintenance, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. By drawing national and international attention to their importance and to strategic steps towards their wise use and sustainable development, it is hoped that they may be maintained for the benefit of present and future generations in Viet Nam.

The report was launched internationally at the Ramsar COP9 in Uganda, 8-15 November 2005.

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The full report "Overview of Wetlands Status in Viet Nam Following 15 Years of Ramsar Convention Implementation" will soon be available to download from the following websites (by 1 February 2006):

www.nea.gov.vn

www.iucn.org.vn

www.mekongwetlands.org

(¹) Viet Nam Environment Protection Agency (VEPA) mission: To support the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's leadership to implement the state environmental management activities in terms of environmental inspectorate and supervision, pollution prevention, environmental quality improvement, natural conservation, environmental technology promotion and public awareness enhancement.

(²) IUCN mission: To influence, encourage, and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

(³) 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), in collaboration with and other key stakeholders. With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, The Royal Netherlands Government, MRCS, the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) and other donors, the programme tries to address the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands.

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