



## MEDIA RELEASE

### REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROGRAMME ESTABLISHED IN VIET NAM

**Hanoi, Viet Nam, 02 June 2005** – Viet Nam celebrates the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May, and the World Environment Day, 05 June this year with the recent successful establishment of the National Programme Office of the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP).

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), IUCN – The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), in collaboration with 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 addresses the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands.

The programme's objective is to enhance the conservation capacity and develop sustainable human resources in wetlands in the region, at national, provincial and local levels.

Viet Nam Prime Minister Phan Van Khai signed the approval for the establishment of programme's Viet Nam component in January 2005 and delegated the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) to be the programmes' Viet Nameese Government counterpart. Since then, MONRE and Viet Nam Environment Protection Agency (VEPA) have been working with IUCN to set up a National office, based in VEPA, Hanoi and a demonstration site located in the Plain of Reeds, serving Tram Chim National Park (Dong Thap) and Lang Sen Provincial Nature Reserve (Long An). Dr. Tran Hong Ha, General Director of VEPA, is appointed to be National Programme Director of MWBP Viet Nam National Programme.

"We believe that the MWBP's intervention in Viet Nam is one of the successful starts for the conservation of natural resources of Viet Nam as well as of other countries in the Mekong River Low Basin", quoted by Dr. Tran Hong Ha, MWBP's National Programme Director and General Director of VEPA.

The main task of MWBP's Viet Nam National Programme Office (NPO) is to coordinate with relevant ministries, departments to ensure the well implementation of MWBP's activities at national level, namely (i) advocacy to enhance the awareness to the policy makers in order to receive their support on wetland biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam, contributing to the committed implementation of Ramsar Convention and (ii) contribute to the development of strategies, action plans for conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, for not only being applied by the demonstration sites but also by other wetland areas in Viet Nam. The NPO is also responsible for maintaining close coordination with the Regional office for the implementation of the programme.

MWBP has already started a substantial programme of studies in Tram Chim for the development of a Fire and Water Management Strategy for the National Park. In March 2005 an inception workshop in Cao Lanh (Dong Thap) endorsed a study on the hydrology, biodiversity and fire management measures of the area.

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In addition, the first Viet Nam National Steering Committee meeting will be held in early July 2005. Members of the National Steering Committee include representatives from MONRE, the Viet Nam National Mekong Committee, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and the Provincial People's Committees of Dong Thap and Long An provinces. The meeting will also be combined with the MWBP National Office Opening Ceremony.

To reinforce Viet Nam's significant contribution to the regional programme, the next Programme Management Committee (PMC) meeting will be held in Hanoi on 05 July 2005.

For further information about MWBP in Viet Nam, please contact:

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