

African Wetlands Watch is an African regional biannual newsletter issued by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is "working towards the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world."

[www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

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Welcome to Christopher Briggs, new Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

[Click here](#) to know more about the SG

## Editorial



*Christopher Briggs, Ramsar Secretary General*

I joined the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in August 2013 as the fifth Secretary General, and it is my pleasure to introduce this second edition of the African Wetlands Watch.

v. to invite all Parties to complete the Questionnaire [on the Strategic Plan] by 15 April 2014. The Secretariat communicated this to Administrative Authorities and National Focal Points on 2 April through the Ramsar Exchange.

vi. to encourage all Parties to submit their National Reports, if possible, by 1 August 2014, so they can be used for the preparation of the new Strategic Plan.

The Secretariat would be very grateful if Contracting Parties could take note of these points and the deadlines associated with them and act accordingly.

I invite all Contracting Parties in Africa to actively contribute to the development of this new Strategic Plan and also encourage them all to submit their national reports as they did so efficiently in 2012.

*Christopher Briggs  
Secretary General  
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*

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Due to the success of the first edition, this newsletter was extended to cover more on-the-ground activities in the region and at the Secretariat. It includes a special focus on the implementation of the Ramsar principles in Africa, as well as proceedings of meetings and interviews.

For this second edition, we have chosen to showcase the achievements of the Africa team in 2013. It also presents interviews with Ramsar Heads of Administrative Authorities, National Focal Points and International Organisation Partners (IOPs) working on wetlands in Africa, and reviews the activities carried out to mark 2014 World Wetlands Day in the Region.

This newsletter provides information that complements what you can find on the News pages of the Ramsar Convention website, at [www.ramsar.org/news](http://www.ramsar.org/news).

This issue comes right after the 47<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee Meeting (SC47) of the Convention, which took place from 24 to 28 March 2014. The 95 participants from Europe, Africa, North America, Neotropics, Asia and Oceania, came up with 26 Standing Committee Decisions.

Among these was Decision SC47-8, which includes two important points on the preparation of the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan:



Lake Edward, Virunga National Park, Ramsar Site N°787; Democratic Republic of Congo

*Photo: ICCN*

## Activities and achievements in 2013

### Contracting Parties and Ramsar Sites

We are pleased to report that in 2013 three new countries acceded to the Convention: Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Swaziland.

In 2013 Ramsar's Africa Team has focused its activities on three regions following the zoning made in 2012: Eastern, Southern and Central Africa. In particular, we supported Contracting Parties in their efforts to:

- designate Ramsar Sites;
- update Site information;
- establish management plans for designated and to-be-designated Sites.

We also helped the Government of Angola select Sites in the context of the country's accession, following the ratification of the Convention by Angola's Parliament.

### Communications and capacity building

2013 saw the creation of the African Wetlands Watch Newsletter on the implementation of the Convention in Africa, with the first edition published in July 2013.

We provided technical supervision to twelve students who are doing research and developing projects on African wetlands.

### Projects

The third quarter was rich in design and submission of project proposals. A total of five projects have been developed with Ramsar's partners:

- Integrated wetland management for sustainable development in Eastern Africa;

- Development of national policies on wetlands in at least three countries of the Niger Basin;
- A water-secure future for Southern Africa;
- Urban wetlands ecosystem services for sustainable livelihood and wellbeing (UWESL) in West Africa;
- Children's health, urban wetlands and eco-system services in West Africa: from school to household.

We also provided project-related technical assistance to several countries including: Burundi, Mozambique, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Gabon and Burkina Faso.

We engaged with the European Space Agency for the development of the GlobWetland Africa (GW-A) project on earth observation that will build on findings from the GlobWetland II project. The GW-A project helps countries exploit satellite observations to support effective management of wetlands and the wise use of associated resources. It is expected to start by autumn 2014.

### Regional Initiatives

The 2013 annual summary report and the 2014 work plan for the three Ramsar Regional Initiatives, Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), Niger River Basin Networks (NigerWet) and West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WaCoWet), are accessible [here](#).

*Paul Ouedraogo  
Senior Advisor for Africa*

### List of ongoing Ramsar Projects in Africa

Four Small Grants Fund (SGF) projects:

- Congo
- Morocco
- Ghana
- Uganda

Seven Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA) projects:

- Mauritania
- Sudan
- South Sudan
- Mozambique
- Swaziland
- Angola
- ACEPA (African Centre for Parliamentarian Affairs)

### Ramsar Sites designated in Africa since January 2014

- Guinea Bissau: Archipel Boloma-Bijagós (Site no. 2198)
- Namibia: Bwabwata Okavango (Site no. 2193)
- Senegal: Reserve Naturelle Communautaire de Tocc Tocc (Site no. 2199)

### Ramsar Site updated in Africa since January 2014

- Seychelles: Port Launay Coastal Wetlands - Port Glaud (Site no. 1432)

## Upcoming events

**Global wastewater initiative, 2nd Steering Committee meeting: Nairobi, Kenya, 14-15 May 2014**

**Training of trainers on GlobWetland II toolbox on wetlands: Tunis, Tunisia, 2-6 June 2014**

**Inaugural Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee for Water and Sanitation For Africa (WSA): June/July 2014**

**Wetlands local governance courses in Africa: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, June/July/August 2014**

**4th Edition of the High Level Forum for Water and Sanitation: Yaoundé, Cameroon, 11-13 November 2014**

**Africa PreCOP12 meeting: Hammamet, Tunisia, November 2014**

## Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC) signed in 2013



Université Senghor

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with **Université Senghor** on 13 May 2013 to promote scientific and educational exchange and develop a programme to strengthen the capacity of African countries, including on wetland management.



Ramsar and the **Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)** signed an agreement on 23 May 2013. Its purpose is to reinforce existing mechanisms for sustainable wetland management in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes regions. It also strengthens the partnership between ARCOS and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) and supports informed decision making, threat mitigation and sustainable management of fresh water.

ACEPA

The **African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA)** signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Ramsar on 20 June 2013. The purpose of the collaboration is to increase cooperation, exchange of information and networking between parliamentarians at regional, sub-regional and national level on current and emerging issues related to wetlands in Africa.

## WWF International

**Mr Denis Landenbergue**  
Freshwater Programme Manager  
WWF International



*According to the regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan produced for COP11, WWF was the most active International Organization Partner (IOP) in Africa from 2009 to 2012. Can you tell us briefly what WWF plans to do in Africa in 2014?*

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) will continue supporting the implementation of the Convention's objectives in 2014, particularly in WWF's priority areas which include the Congo Basin, the Zambezi Basin, the African Rifts Lakes region and the Maghreb.

Several projects currently supported by WWF for the designation of new Ramsar Sites should be successfully finalized and formally announced during 2014.

In the meantime, Contracting Parties – particularly those located in the above-mentioned regions – interested in undertaking large-scale designations of additional Wetlands of International Importance in their country are welcome to contact WWF for assistance.

By providing support to Parties for Site designation, WWF is glad to contribute to the objective set in the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 to designate 2,500 Sites by 2015.

## IUCN/Programme pour l'Afrique Centrale et Occidentale (PACO)

**Mr Aboubacar Awais**  
Regional Coordinator Water and Wetlands Programme, IUCN/PACO



*The third quarter report of the Ramsar Africa team indicates that the Regional Water and Wetlands Program (PREZOH) IUCN/PACO is contributing to the implementation of the Convention in West and Central Africa. Can you summarize IUCN/PACO activities in this context?*

The PREZOH, through the Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management Initiative (PREMI) funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), supported the Ramsar Contracting Parties in several areas: capacity building and revitalization of national Ramsar Committees, development of national policies / strategies for wetlands and technical and financial support to the National Ramsar Committee (NRC) for the development of regional initiatives.

PREZOH's support mainly included:

- Assistance in the establishment of National Ramsar Committees in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau;
- Support to National Ramsar Committees in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau for the development of action plans;
- Capacity building of National Ramsar Committees on economic valuation of goods and services of wetland ecosystems;
- Support for the development of an action plan for the implementation of a national wetland policy in Burkina Faso;
- Technical support for the development of the national strategy for wetlands in Mauritania;
- Technical and financial support for the development of a regional project on wetlands and urbanization in West Africa;
- Technical support for the implementation of the regional action plan on wetlands in the Congo Basin.

## Other major ongoing wetland projects

### RESSOURCE-Wetlands

« Renforcement d'Expertise au Sud du Sahara sur les Oiseaux et leur Utilisation Rationnelle en faveur des Communautés et de leur Environnement : vers une gestion intégrée des oiseaux d'eau migrateurs et des zones humides en Afrique »

“RESSOURCE” is a joint project developed by ONCFS (French Wildlife and Hunting Agency), AEW (Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands “to identify, foster and make available to local communities and decision makers modes of monitoring, conservation and wise use of migratory waterbirds in a network of pilot sites chosen amongst important Sub-Saharan wetlands”.

For more information, please check out the project website at <http://www.oncfs.gouv.fr/Connaitre-l-Office-ru17> or contact [jean-yves.mondain-monval@oncfs.gouv.fr](mailto:jean-yves.mondain-monval@oncfs.gouv.fr).

### Diploma in local governance on wetlands in Africa

Under the auspices of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and in collaboration with CEFREPADE (Centre Francophone de Recherche Partenariale sur l'Assainissement, les Déchets et l'Environnement), INSA-Université de Lyon, France, COGEL (Project on enhancement of local governance on environment), Université of Ouagadougou and Université Senghor of Alexandria, Egypt, a series of lectures to build capacity of national wetlands managers and train practitioners on local wetland governance will take place from 16 June to 31 August 2014 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

The purpose of these lectures will be to train students, wetland managers and practitioners on Ramsar Sites management to build momentum for the wise use of wetlands and their resources.

The training will focus on the following:

- Wetlands governance: process, practical guides and institutions
- Management of environmental projects
- Wetlands and climate change
- Environmental economy related to wetlands

## Ghana video

One of the winners of the video competition organized by the Ramsar Secretariat for WWD 14 is Kwabena Akuamoah-Boateng from Ghana. [Watch](#) his video showing young people cleaning-up the Sakumo Ramsar Site.

Reported activities are published in an [interactive map](#) on the Ramsar website. Should you like to report your activities, please [complete the online form](#).

## Activities were reported from:

- Madagascar
- Seychelles
- South Africa
- Namibia
- Botswana
- Zimbabwe
- Kenya
- D. R. Congo
- Ghana
- Mauritania
- Morocco
- Algeria
- Tunisia
- Cameroon
- Burkina Faso
- Senegal
- Gabon

## Botswana

This year Paul Ouedraogo, Senior Advisor for Africa, was in Botswana to commemorate WWD. The event was organized by the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT) in collaboration with the Kgalagadi District. [Full mission report](#)

## 2014 World Wetland Day Special address by Christopher Briggs, Secretary General of the Convention

“There is already a global, active community that loves and cares for wetlands, and you are part of that community.

However, despite all your efforts and enthusiasm, wetlands are still in danger.

In some regions, more than half of wetlands have been lost. This year on World Wetlands Day we are highlighting that relationship between wetlands and agriculture.

Wetlands support agriculture by providing reliable sources of water and fertile soils.

I encourage you to keep engaging throughout the year, as many of you are already doing, by learning more about wetlands, and for example visiting wetlands in your region; by spreading the word among your friends and your communities; and by engaging with the rest of the world on social media.” [Watch](#) the video.



The Senior Advisor with government officials and a representative of FAO-Botswana during the WWD celebrations.

## 2014 WWD celebrated with Université Senghor, Alexandria, Egypt

The Senghor University of Alexandria organized a Wetlands Week from 26 February to 5 March 2014. The programme included an official opening by the Rector, Prof. Albert Lourde, a photo exhibition, the screening of a documentary film and a video conference held with the Ramsar Convention and chaired by Dr Christopher Briggs, Secretary General of the Convention. Ms Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN participated with a [video statement](#).

On World Wetlands Day 2014, the **Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)** called for all governments in the Great Lakes Region to reduce the impact of agriculture on wetlands and water in the region. [Read the press release](#).

## WWD celebrations in pictures

South Africa



Université Senghor, Egypt



Burkina Faso



Kenya



DR Congo South Kivu



Cameroon



## Algeria



**Ms Bessah Ghania**  
Ramsar National  
Focal Point

*Algeria was a beneficiary of GlobWetland II from the beginning of the project. What skills have you gained?*

In June 2012, the GW II system was officially presented to the Directorate General of Forests (DGF), and approved to be used for monitoring coastal wetlands and watersheds. 19 users were trained through two sessions based on ArcGIS provided by DGF, and additional sessions were organized to ensure users became familiar with the tool for producing maps.

*How will this knowledge and tools be used for better planning and effective wetland monitoring in your country?*

Thanks to this tool, we are able to develop comprehensive management plans for our wetlands. We are currently implementing management plans for eight out of 50 Ramsar Sites and we are ready to implement plans for another 17 Sites.

Algeria's National Strategy for Wetlands is being developed: it includes

participatory management activities that ensure sustainability.

The GW II system is helping to facilitate easier monitoring of wetland status by managers and practitioners. It will assist in identifying and assessing changes, including over large areas such as Chott Ech Chergui which covers 855,500 hectares. It is therefore an important tool for land planning and management.

## Angola



**Mr Nascimento António**  
CBD Focal point

*Why do all new Angolan Kwanza (AOA) bank notes have a wetland picture?*

The Angolan currency, the Kwanza, is named after the largest river which is entirely in Angola.

The Kwanza River basin covers 147,690 square kilometres,

extending for about 1,000 kilometres from the centre of the country to the sea, south of the capital city Luanda.

All new generation Kwanza banknotes have an image of a different wetland of the country.

Now that the Angolan economy is experiencing significant growth, the Government considers that water is the basis for a sustainable economy, as it provides energy and supports agriculture, industry, tourism, biodiversity, and so on.

Angola and the welfare of its people entirely depend on wetlands, one of the treasures of the country.

## Seychelles



**Mr Pughazendhi Murugaiyan**  
Ramsar National Focal Point

*Can you tell us what mechanism you use to update the Ramsar Information Sheets in your country? What are the challenges?*

The Seychelles uses the RIS format recommended by the Secretariat. We recently updated our first Ramsar Site, Port Launay, using the same format. Updating existing Sites is usually not that challenging, but if there have been considerable changes those have to be notified.

NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other stakeholders are showing interest in Ramsar, leveraging the Ramsar label when applying for small grants from the Global Envi-

ronment Facility (GEF) or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Recently a USD 40,000 grant was awarded to an NGO that has been collaborating with a local hotel for the conservation of our first Ramsar Site.

*We know that the Seychelles are also home to privately owned wetlands. Is there any opportunity to designate some of them as Ramsar Sites?*

We have been working on this for the last two years. We have identified two sites: La Plaine Hollandaise (a high altitude freshwater wetland with high biodiversity) and Anse Lazio (coastal wetlands from Praslin Island). Both are partly privately owned, and the Ministry of Environment is negotiating with the owners. As many of them are based overseas, for example in the UK, the process can be time consuming.

The wetlands section of the Ministry of the Environment is also considering proposing for designation wetlands managed by five star hotels. These high-end resorts would greatly benefit from the Ramsar label.

## Cape Verde



**Ms Ana Veiga**  
Ramsar National  
Focal Point

*Cape Verde joined the Convention in 2005 and since then only four Ramsar Sites have been listed. Are there challenges in designating new Sites?*

Cape Verde is a small country and large part of the country is dry land. If we take into account the Convention's definition of wetlands, the only wetlands we have in Cape Verde are coastal stretches of salt water.

These areas are important for the occurrence of halophytes (plants that grow in water of high salinity) and because they provide breeding grounds for birds and marine turtles.

The Designated National Authority (Directorate General of Environment) is working on a Management Plan for Ramsar Sites and is studying the possibility of designating more Sites.

*What are your needs for capacity building in wetland planning and monitoring?*

There is the need to train stakeholders, such as NGOs, about the role and importance of wetlands and ways of protecting, maintaining and restoring them.

We need to develop awareness campaigns and materials or to adapt them to our country.

## South Africa



**Ms Malta Qwathekana**  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Vice Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee

*During Ramsar's 46th Standing Committee meeting, South Africa has decided to participate in several Working Groups. Why such a strong commitment?*

South Africa is committed to conserving wetlands, which are very important but unfortunately not often given priority in the allocation of resources. South Africa is, in this regard, a step ahead of other countries: our Working for Wetlands programme to restore degraded wetlands while providing jobs and alleviating poverty has been given national priority.

We decided to get involved in various Working Groups of the Convention's Standing Committee to demonstrate the country's commitment to implement the decisions taken during previous Conferences of the Parties (COP).

In particular, we are keen on following-up on the proposal of organising a high-level segment to enhance political buy-in and recognition of the Convention at a national level.

In order to demonstrate its commitment to the Convention and to ensure the success of the COP, South Africa is also giving priority to supporting the host country of the forthcoming Conference, Uruguay, in the context of south-south cooperation.

It will therefore be useful if the Secretariat worked with the host country to identify areas in which developing countries can provide support. For example, we have recently hosted the Meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC17) and we would be happy to provide support by sharing lessons learned and best practices.

I would also like to raise the issue of the Convention's languages. This issue requires careful consideration for effective and active participation of all Parties. The introduction of new languages, such as Arabic, could increase sense of ownership, enhance understanding and lead to wider implementation of the Convention.

*How is your country preparing for the 12th Conference of the Parties and how are you coordinating the preparation of Contracting Parties within your subregion?*

As Vice Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee I will focus on identifying gaps in the implementation of the Convention and ensuring that the most pressing issues are tackled.

These include improving the conservation status of Ramsar Sites and ensuring that management plans are in place. Countries with Sites listed in the Montreux Record should lead by example and take appropriate action to improve the status of these Sites.

Another priority is to initiate the process of setting up a regional initiative for the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Consultations have already taken place on this regard at various levels, and we are planning to have something tangible to report on for COP12.

At national level, we are committed to ensuring that wetlands conservation issues are adequately captured in the National Strategies and Action Plans.

## Project highlights

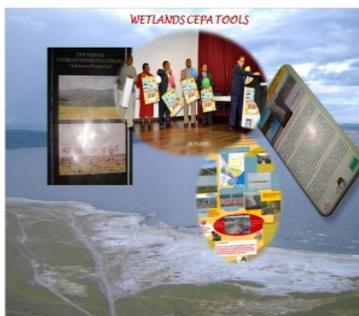
### Defining an exit strategy for GlobWetland II Project

The second GW-II user workshop was held in September 2013 in Jena, Germany, to summarize the results and findings of the GW-II project, to assess the usability of the GW-II toolbox, to review the value of the maps and indicators and to share some first ideas on how to pursue the established partnership. [Read more](#) on the workshop.



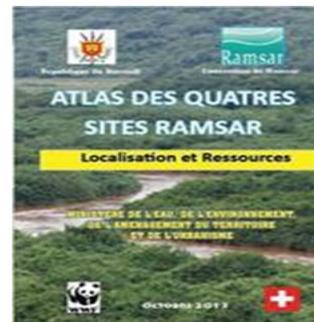
### Small Grants Fund Project in Kenya

Kenya has completed the Ramsar SGF/06/KE/02 project aimed at developing awareness and educational materials on Ramsar Sites in Kenya. The project was implemented by the National Museums of Kenya in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). [Read more](#)

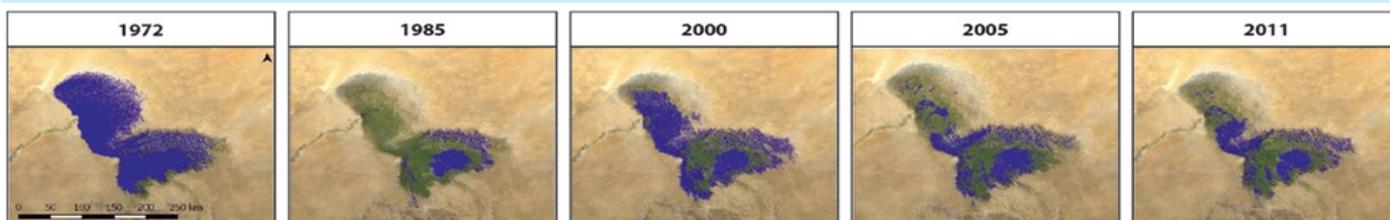


### Burundi's Ramsar Sites

With financial support from the 2012 Swiss Grant for Africa (SGA) and WWF, and with technical support from Ramsar's Africa Team, Burundi has produced an atlas detailing the location and the resources of its four Ramsar sites. [Click here](#) to download the Atlas.



## Decline of Lake Chad over the years



## World Wetland Network (WWN)



*Mr Chris Roston  
Head of WWN*

The World Wetland Network (WWN) is a support network for small to medium sized NGOs that are working to deliver wetland conservation, often at grassroots level, and currently with around 1,500 members worldwide. The network was set up at the Ramsar COP10 in 2008, as a result of the international NGO meeting, and is hosted by WWT (the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust).

WWN has several objectives: to raise the profile of wetland conservation delivered through civil society groups; to support civil society reporting on wetlands; and to deliver specific support to local groups that are trying to protect wetlands in danger.

One high profile project that WWN runs is the Wetland Globe Awards, given at the Ramsar Conference of Parties. The Wetland Globe Awards are based on public voting and highlight examples of well managed wetlands, as well as examples of wetlands under threat.



*African delegates with Baboucarr Mbye and Chris Rostron at the Blue Globe Award for Lake Natron*

WWN works with representatives from civil society groups at regional, sub-regional or country level. An increasingly active region is West Africa. Despite challenges with internet accessibility, WWN is building local contacts, and increasing communication through Skype and e-mail.

Our Africa representatives are from Benin and The Gambia, with sub-regional representatives covering the continent at a more national / regional level. We are also receiving support and advice from the Ramsar Senior Regional Advisor for Africa, Mr Paul Ouedraogo.

Based on Skype and e-mail consultations we have produced a WWN Africa workplan, focused on building the network, improving communication, holding a WWN Africa meeting at one of our representatives' sites, and feeding into the next Ramsar COP meeting in 2015.

The Africa face-to-face meeting would allow us to share best practice, develop tools for our colleagues, plan for the Wetland Globe Awards and the Ramsar COP, and provide training and capacity building.

Our next steps are to identify funding for our work, build a new website that allows us to show the work of civil society groups, and explore opportunities to work more closely with the Ramsar Convention, particularly in view of the next COP12 in Uruguay.

For more details, please [visit](#) our website or contact the head of WWN, Mr Chris Rostron, at [Chris.Rostron@wwt.org.uk](mailto:Chris.Rostron@wwt.org.uk)

## Standing Committee 47

The 47th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands took place in Gland, Switzerland from 24 - 28 March 2014.

The report and documents are available [here](#)

## Who is Ms. Dédé Amah?

Dédé Amah is the new Assistant Advisor for Africa. She is a Togolese national. She joined the Africa team of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat in December 2013. Prior to joining the Convention, Dédé worked with the Regional Office of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Accra, Ghana.

## Where is Ms. Ako Charlotte Eyong?



*Ako Charlotte Eyong, Former Assistant for Africa,* is currently working with IUCN-Cameroon as a consultant on extractive operations in Cameroon. She is also developing a concept note for the evaluation of Ramsar Sites and the potential interaction with extractive activities in Cameroon.

## Contact us: Ramsar Africa Team

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