

**The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the **conservation** and **wise use** of wetlands and their resources.

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# STRP Newsletter

The Newsletter of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention

## STRP: SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION XI.11

Issue no. 3/2013



Rufisque, Senegal © Rob McInnes

### INTRODUCTION

Contracting Parties adopted Resolution [XI.11](#) on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* at COP11. To help them implement the Resolution, the STRP, Ramsar Secretariat, UN-Habitat and West African Parties started a project on *Wetlands and Urbanisation in West Africa: Sustainable urban futures for people and wetlands*. Wetlands and urbanization is an ongoing theme in the STRP's Work Plan and the latest Scientific and Technical Briefing note (BN n. 6), *Towards the wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands*, summarizes some of this work (see page 6 of this newsletter for more details).

### CITIES AND WETLANDS

Towns and cities are human constructs and society has the power to influence their form and development. Therefore, the loss and degradation of wetlands associated with urbanisation results from the failure of human systems rather than from urbanisation.

Colleagues from UN-Habitat emphasize that there is unequivocal evidence that well-planned cities can generate high levels of societal well-being, drive economic growth and generate prosperity. Therefore, sustainable urbanisation and the wise use of wetlands should be natural bedfellows.

[Resolution X.27](#) on *Wetlands and Urbanisation* asked the STRP to prepare guidelines for managing urban and peri-urban wetlands. In collaboration with UN-Habitat guidelines were produced and adopted through [Resolution XI.11](#), which called Parties to consider policy development and implementation principles, as well as the practical management and wise use of wetlands.

A major challenge for Parties, especially for those with limited resources, is how to implement a Resolution. At COP11, Paul Ouédraogo, Ramsar Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisor for Africa, initiated a discussion with a group of countries from West Africa to investigate the issue.

### WEST AFRICA PROJECT

In response, the Ramsar Secretariat, members of the STRP, UN-Habitat and West African states initiated a project, which aims to promote the wise use of wetlands for improved human health and well-being in urban areas of West Africa.

Following a scoping workshop in Senegal, through generous financial support from the three national governments, participatory workshops were held in Togo, Ghana and Senegal, highlighting specific guidance needs and target audiences. The project seeks to help Parties integrate wetland ecosystem services and wise use into their planning processes. This project continues to evolve through local initiatives, on-going development by UN-Habitat, funding opportunities identified by STRP members and the efforts of the Ramsar Secretariat. It has potential to assist in the implementation of [Resolution XI.11](#) beyond West Africa.

The STRP's work on urban wetlands has highlighted the need for, and value of, collaboration. The transition from adopting [Resolution X.27](#) to mobilizing local municipalities in West Africa to actively integrating wetlands and the benefits they provide to society is an excellent example of the bodies of the Convention working in concert to deliver the wise use of wetlands.

*Rob McInnes, STRP Representative of the Society of Wetlands Scientist*

### New Ramsar Sites

- ALBANIA—ALBANIAN PRESAPA LAKES (LIQENET E PRESPE SHQIPTARE)
- ANDORRA—VALL DE MADRIU-PERAFITA-CLAROR
- BRAZIL—CAPO ORANGE NATIONAL PARK
- BURUNDI—RÉSERVE NATURELLE DE LA MALAGAZI
- CAPE VERDE—SALINAS OF THE ENGLISH PORT (SALINAS DE PORTO INGLÊS)
- CHINA—DONGFANGHONG WETLAND; HUBEI CHEN LAKE WETLAND NATURE RESERVE; HUBEI DAJIU LAKE WETLAND; JILIN MOMOGE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE; SHANDONG YELLOW RIVER DELTA WETLAND
- DENMARK—LILLE VILDMOSE
- HONDURAS—SISTEMA DE HUMEDALES LAGUNA DE ZAMBUCO (SH-LZ)
- MEXICO—HUMEDALES DE LA LAGUNA LA CRUZ
- NORWAY—ANDA; FISKUMVAN- NET NATURE RESERVE; HORSVÆR; HORTA; INNHERRED FRESHWATER SYSTEM; Laukvikøyene; LOVUNDA/LUNDEURA; MÅSTADFJELLET; RISØYSUNDET; RUNDE; WEST-VIKNA ARCHIPELAGO

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**STRP CHAIR PROVIDES SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO OMAN**

STRP Chair Roy Gardner, Scientific and Technical Support Officer Marcela Bonells and former Assistant Advisor for Asia-Oceania Nessrine Alzahlawi visited the Sultanate of Oman in late October to provide technical support on national implementation of the Convention. Oman became a Ramsar Contracting Party in August 2013.

The visit had four objectives:

- To provide advice on the drafting of a National Wetland Policy or Strategy;
- To provide advice on the establishment of a National Wetland Committee;
- To review existing environmental legislation to ensure it supports the Ramsar principles of wise use and conservation of wetlands; and
- To provide technical advice regarding the development of a national wetland inventory in Oman.

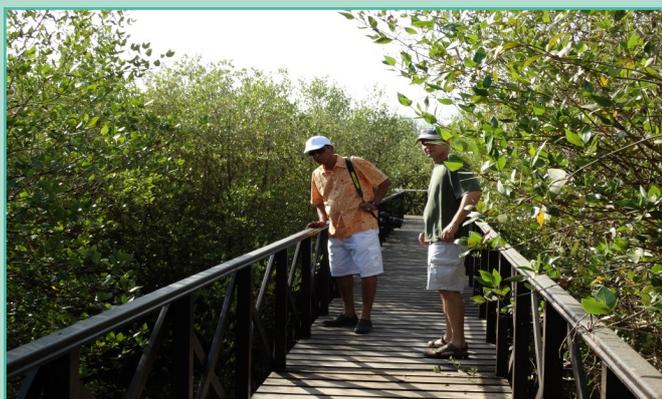
During the visit, the team met officials from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, other ministries and organisations. The visit identified ongoing processes into which Ramsar-related principles and activities can be integrated, including the process to amend Oman's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and a new effort to develop a National Spatial Strategy. It is anticipated that this visit will lead to ongoing collaboration as Oman's environmental laws are reviewed and a structure for a National



Left to right: Roy Gardner, Aziza Al-Adhubi, Marcela Bonells and Badar Al-Bulushi © Nessrine Alzahlawi

Wetland Committee is proposed. The team very much appreciated the kind hospitality extended to them, especially by Mr Bader Al-Bulushi and Ms Aziza Al-Adhubi.

*Roy Gardner, STRP Chair*



Left to right: Badar Al-Bulushi and Roy Gardner at Qurm Nature Reserve Ramsar Site © Marcela Bonells



Roy Gardner presenting about the Convention to Ministry representatives © Badar Al-Bulushi

**GLOBAL WETLANDS OBSERVING SYSTEM (GWOS) DEVELOPMENTS**

A recent workshop at Wetlands International drafted a short and medium-term implementation plan to take the Global Wetlands Observation System (GWOS) from a concept to reality. This plan builds on the conceptual models of GWOS outputs created during a workshop hosted by the European Space Agency (ESA) in Italy.

GWOS has existed as a concept and STRP task for some time. GWOS is defined as: "A collaborative effort of various organisations to bring together available information on the status and values of wetlands and water in a way that can support policy processes and decision making at various geographic scales."

Wetlands International has been working, with the support of Synchronicity Earth, to bring this STRP task closer to reality with major contributions by GEO-BON, ESA, Conservation International, the EU FP7 project BioFresh, the Ramsar Secretariat and others.

GWOS will use a motto borrowed from lean software development: "think big, act small, fail fast and learn rapidly". In 2014, GWOS should leave the conceptual phase behind, get the minimum required partnership to deliver the first output and gradually build up mechanisms for collaboration. We are confident that GWOS will soon be able to contribute to the wise use of wetlands.



GWOS workshop, Frascati, Italy © Lammert Hilarides

*Lammert Hilarides, STRP representative of Wetlands International*

## NORDIC BALTIC REGIONAL PROJECT ON PEAT AND CLIMATE REGULATION



Conference participants at Ilulissat Icefjord World Heritage Site and potential Ramsar Site, Greenland © Herdis Fridolin

A Ramsar peat project was launched at the Nordic Baltic Regional Ramsar Conference on *Wetlands and Climate Change – mitigation, adaptation and resilience* in Ilulissat Greenland in September.

The objective of the project, undertaken by a peat expert in collaboration with the University of Greifswald and steered by the Nordic Baltic Wetland Coordination Group, is to review the potential of Nordic Baltic wetlands to mitigate climate change. Carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, creates global warming when absorbed in the atmosphere and acidification when absorbed in the oceans. However, we can buildup carbon stocks (e.g., in coastal or terres-

trial areas such as peatlands) to mitigate the effects of global warming. The effectiveness of peat has been widely recognized in regulating climate through carbon storage and in mitigating emissions in restored peatlands.

This new Ramsar project includes an overall assessment of the peat carbon stock in the region and recommendations for areas for halting carbon dioxide emissions by restoring former exploited peat areas. Moreover, it explores the option to consider using criterion 1 (VI), relating to climate regulation, of the *Ramsar Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance* when designating new Ramsar sites or when updating Ramsar Information Sheets. The project will develop further guidance in this respect and will incorporate it into the work of the STRP on Ramsar Sites and Climate Change.

Countries participating in the project include Denmark/Greenland, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden. The preliminary results of the work will be discussed at a regional meeting in Copenhagen in summer 2014 and a report will be made available on the webpage of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the sponsor of the project.

Lars Dinesen, STRP member and Denmark's STRP NFP

### STRP MEMBER PARTICIPATES AT THE AFRICA CLIMATE CONFERENCE

STRP member Guéladio Cissé, presented on the *Research Needs on Wetlands Multifaceted Challenges in the Face of Climate Change*, at the Africa Climate Conference (ACC2013) in October in Tanzania. He called for multidisciplinary and integrated programs with special consideration of wetlands among the priority areas of research on climate in Africa.

The theme of the Conference was *Advancing African Climate Science Research and Knowledge to Inform Adaptation Decision-Making in Africa*.

For more information, please contact [gueladio.cisse@unibas.ch](mailto:gueladio.cisse@unibas.ch).

Guéladio Cissé, STRP member



Presentations during ACC2013 © Guéladio Cissé

### EXPERT WORKSHOP ON THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IPBES



The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) held an Expert workshop on the Conceptual Framework for IPBES in August in South Africa. STRP member Stanley Liphadzi attended the workshop on behalf of

STRP Chair Royal Gardner. The IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and members of the IPBES Bureau attended the workshop.

The workshop discussed and developed the Conceptual Framework for IPBES, work programme or operating principles to be followed by IPBES and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems or local knowledge systems in the science-policy framework of IPBES. In addition, the workshop discussed and agreed that future IPBES projects should have a capacity building component to empower countries with limited expertise and skills needed in carrying out assessments. IPBES indicated the importance of working with other organizations and conventions, such as the Ramsar Convention, because they complement IPBES' work.

Stanley Liphadzi, STRP member and South Africa's STRP NFP

## BELMONT FORUM PROJECT ON SUSTAINABLE DELTAS



Erosion of a large bar adjacent to the main Meghna River Channel in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta © Irina Overeem

*DELTA*: Catalyzing action towards sustainability of deltaic systems with an integrated modeling framework for risk assessment is a three year project that started in September 2013, funded by the [Belmont Forum](#). Led by Efi Foufoula-Georgiou (University of Minnesota), the project brings together experts from the physical and social sciences, economics, health/demographics, management and policy, as well as local stakeholders from government, business and non-profit organizations. It includes partners from Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, UK, U.S.A. and Vietnam.

The project will investigate how climate change, combined with the pressures of engineering, development and human population growth, makes deltaic ecosystems vulnerable and how this affects the human communities which depend upon them. The project will look at the characters of deltas that make them resilient to change, so that we can reduce future risk to deltas while attaining sustainable development. It will consolidate data on bio-physical, social and economic parameters of deltas; create tools for assessing delta vulnerability and guide decision-making to promote sustainably managed deltas.

The project includes three demonstration sites: the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna, Mekong and Amazon deltas. The project will be a critical component supporting the Sustainable Deltas 2015 Initiative that has been proposed by the project's team to ICSU (International Council for Science) (and accepted though not formally announced).

My role is to foster connections with other organizations, conventions and consortia. Please contact me ([harrison.deltas@gmail.com](mailto:harrison.deltas@gmail.com)) to discuss opportunities to link the DELTAS project with the priorities of the Ramsar STRP. Also see the project website: <http://www.delta.umn.edu/>.

*Ian Harrison, Fellow,  
Centre for Environment and Peace, Conservation International*



Commercial shrimp farm in polder just North of the Sundarbans, Ganges-Brahmaputra delta. University of Colorado graduate student Stephanie Higgins sets sediment traps on both sides of the dike © Irina Overeem

## SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BODY OF CBD HOLDS 17TH MEETING



The Seventeenth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Montreal in October.

The main agenda item of SBSTTA 17 included a discussion on the assessment of the available tools and approaches to underpin the scientific and technical needs related to the

implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020), including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Although it was recognised that the priority is applying existing tools and approaches, some gaps were identified.

Many of these relate to the social sciences; for example, a better understanding of, and ability to influence, behavioural change nec-

essary to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

One outcome of immediate relevance to the STRP was the recommendation by SBSTTA 17 that COP12 considers convening a meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators for the Strategic Plan with a view to identifying and filling important gaps in the monitoring and indicators framework.

The draft terms of reference for the possible AHTEG are being prepared by the CBD Secretariat and inputs from the STRP are most welcome. The official outcomes of the meeting are currently being edited and will shortly be posted on the CBD web-site. In the interim, the background documents for the topics discussed are available [here](#), with a flavour of the draft outcomes [here](#) (noting that these are not the officially adopted outcomes).

*David Coates, STRP representative of the CBD  
Secretariat*

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT WORKSHOP FOR  
NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS IN CHANGWON**



Scientific and Technical Workshop participants take a break to pose © RRC-EA

In October 2013, the Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia (RRC-EA) organized an *Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for Implementation of the Convention* in Changwon, Republic of Korea. The Ministry of Environment and Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea generously funded the workshop. STRP Chair Royal Gardner led the workshop and Ramsar Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania Lew Young and Scientific and Technical Support Officer Marcela Bonells represented the Secretariat.

Around 60 wetland experts from over 20 countries, including Asian National Focal Points for the STRP, Ramsar National Focal Points and STRP experts attended the workshop, which objectives were to:

- improve awareness of STRP and Ramsar Convention processes;
- explain and clarify the role of STRP National Focal Points;
- highlight the importance and role of the [Changwon Declaration \(Resolution X.3\)](#);
- update Asian STRP National Focal Points on the work of the STRP over the coming triennium, especially its priority tasks; and
- identify best ways to encourage good networking between STRP National Focal Points, the STRP and wetland experts in the region and to contribute to the progress of the highest priority tasks of the STRP.

The week-long workshop focused on most of the highest priority tasks of the STRP, as approved by the Standing Committee, through the following working sessions:

- The role of STRP National Focal Points (Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA));
- Capacity building needs for STRP National Focal Points and National Focal Points and implementation support (CEPA);
- Invasive species and wetlands;
- Ramsar, water and wetlands: review and development of a strategy for engaging in the global water debate;

- Ramsar Information Sheet- 2012 revision;
- Wetlands and climate change;
- Wetlands and poverty eradication and
- The economics of wetland ecosystems

The workshop provided an opportunity for participants, including STRP National Focal Points from the Region, to contribute meaningfully to the development of the work of the STRP on the aforementioned tasks by sharing case studies, lessons learnt and presentations.

The Ramsar Secretariat would like to thank the Ministry of Environment and Gyeongnam province for their support, as well as the RRC-EA, particularly Mr Seung Oh Suh and Ms Seong-Bo Kim, for their hospitality and invaluable assistance with the organisation of the workshop.



Workshop participants during a fieldtrip to Hwapochun Wetland, Republic of Korea © RRC-EA

*Marcela Bonells, Scientific and Technical Support Officer*

**COUNTDOWN TO WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2014!**

The materials for World Wetlands Day 2014 are now available on our website and can be downloaded [here](#). This year's theme is Wetlands and Agriculture and our slogan is *Wetlands and Agriculture: Partners for Growth*, emphasizing the need for the agricultural and wetland sectors to work together. If you did not receive our materials by mail, including our CD, please contact [wwd@ramsar.org](mailto:wwd@ramsar.org) and request to be included in

the mailing list. The design files for our materials for adaptations are available. To receive them please write to [wwd@ramsar.org](mailto:wwd@ramsar.org). For more information on World Wetlands Day 2014 click [here](#).



**6th RAMSAR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL BRIEFING NOTE AVAILABLE**



The Ramsar Secretariat's 6th Scientific and Technical Briefing Note, written by Rob McInnes, Society of Wetland Scientists

representative to the STRP, and published on December 2013, provides additional background to urbanisation issues, namely impacts to urban and peri-urban wetlands.

The Briefing Note expands on the policy and practical principles contained within Resolution XI.11 and highlights the lessons

learnt from recent work in West Africa conducted by the Ramsar Secretariat, the STRP and UN-Habitat. You can download the Briefing Note [here](#). For past Briefing Notes click [here](#).

**MASTERS STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE STRP**

Suzanne Greene, a Masters student at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Sciences at the University of Zürich, will be conducting research with Ramsar throughout 2014. Her research will contribute to the work of the STRP on wetlands and climate change. She plans to investigate the ability of riparian wetlands to serve as natural infrastructure for communities adapting to increasingly severe storm-related flood events. Situations will be examined where wetlands have been particularly effective, or ineffective, at flood mitigation, with the goal of identifying a set of characteristics that define the conditions under which wetland infrastructure can be successful. Furthermore, Suzanne will investigate if the quality of flood mitigation varies spatially within a riparian area, potentially providing a pathway for optimizing wetland management and conservation for the retention of particular ecosystem services.

Prior to her Masters studies, Suzanne advocated for and facilitated wetland restoration projects in the Pacific Northwest and Chesapeake Bay areas of the United States, and more recently acted as a project manager for a greenhouse gas accounting research initiative at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For more information, please contact Suzanne at [suzanne.greene@uzh.ch](mailto:suzanne.greene@uzh.ch).

*Suzanne Greene, University of Zürich*



The International Water Management Institute (IWMI), South East Asia, has taken on board Masters student James Lyon to undertake a five month internship based at the IWMI office in Vientiane under the supervision of Dr Sonali Senaratna, STRP member, to contribute to the work of the Panel on poverty eradication, including:

- Development of a structured guide to available guidelines and tools for addressing poverty eradication in relation to wetlands.
- Preparation of case studies and best practices on the application of the Framework for assessing poverty in association with wetlands wise use.

James is a citizen of the United Kingdom and received a BSc in Biology from the University of Sheffield, spending one year of his studies at the University of Western Australia. He obtained an MSc in Conservation Science from the Imperial College of London. He completed an internship in Colombia, South America, working on food production. Most recently he completed a 6 month internship with Kew, Royal Botanical Gardens working on the Sampled Red List Index for plants.

*James Lyons, IWMI*



- [Seventh Meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals](#), 6-10 January 2014, New York City, U.S.A.
- 2014 [UN-Water International Zaragoza Conference](#), 13-16 January 2014, Zaragoza, Aragon, Spain.
- [GEO \(Group on Earth Observations\) X Plenary Session and Ministerial Summit](#), 13-17 January 2014, Geneva, Switzerland.
- [The Science, Practice and Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems](#), 17-18 January 2014, East Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.
- [International Water Summit](#), 20-22 January 2014, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.
- [World Wetlands Day](#), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 02 February 2014, worldwide.
- [Eight Meeting of the open group on Sustainable Development Goals](#), 3-7 February 2014, New York City, U.S.A.
- [Global Ocean Action Summit](#), 28 April-2 May 2014, The Hague, Netherlands.

### Publications

- Alam, A.B.M.S., et al. (2012). [Biodiversity of Tanquar Haor: A Ramsar Site of Bangladesh. Volume I: Wildlife](#). Bangladesh, Dhaka: IUCN.
- Finlayson, C. M., et al., (2013). [The Ramsar Convention and Urban Wetlands: an Opportunity for Wetland Education and Training](#). In Paul, S. (ed.). *WET eBook: Workbook for Managing Urban Wetlands in Australia*. 34-51 pp. New South Wales, Australia: Sydney Olympic Park Authority.
- Kettunen, M. & ten Brink, P. (eds.)(2013). [Social and Economic Benefits of Protected Areas: An Assessment Guide](#). Oxfordshire, U.K.: Routledge.
- McInnes, R. (2013). *Towards the Wise Use of Urban and Peri-urban Wetlands*. Ramsar Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes Series. No. 6. Gland, Switzerland: Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

### Useful links

List of STRP National Focal Points [Click here](#)

List of Ramsar Administrative Authorities [Click here](#)

List of CEPA National Focal Points [Click here](#)

List of STRP Members [Click here](#)

STRP Platform <http://strp.ramsar.org/>

The Ramsar Sites Information Service <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/>

Ramsar's International Organisation Partners (IOPs):

BirdLife International [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

IWMI (International Water Management Institute) [www.iwmi.cgiar.org](http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org)

Wetlands International (WI) [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org)

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

This newsletter has been prepared by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat in collaboration with STRP members and Observer Organisations, with the purpose of keeping STRP National Focal Points and other STRP friends informed about the progress of the Panel's work during the 2013-2015 cycle and to provide you with useful information on wetland conservation for the implementation of the Convention in your own country, as well as to enhance our STRP network throughout the regions.

Previous editions of the STRP Newsletter are posted on the main Ramsar website. You can view them [here](#).

**Acknowledgements:** special thanks for the contributions to this newsletter issue go to Marcela Bonells, Scientific and Technical Support Officer; Guéladio Cissé, STRP member; David Coates, CBD Secretariat representative to the STRP; Lars Dinesen, STRP member and STRP National Focal Point for Denmark; Ian Harrison, IUCN/Conservation International representative to the STRP; Lammert Hilarides, Wetlands International representative to the STRP; James Lyons, IWMI intern; Roy Gardner, STRP Chair; Suzanne Greene, University of Zürich student; Stanley Liphadzi, STRP member and STRP National Focal Point for South Africa; and Rob McInnes, Society of Wetland Scientists representative to the STRP.

**CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER AS WELL! SEND US ARTICLES AND OTHER INTERESTING NEWS RELEVANT TO WETLANDS IN YOUR COUNTRY AND REGION IN ANY OF THE CONVENTION LANGUAGES!**

**Photos:** Front page - left: Chalan Bil, Rajshahi, Bangladesh © Humaira Armin Prithy; Right: Tverlandet, Norway © Laura Maiz-Tomé.