



I have been celebrating World Wetlands Day with Ramsar for 12 years, including 6 years as Secretary General. World Wetlands Day (WWD) 2013 will be a special year for me as Secretary General – it will be my last WWD as part of the Ramsar Secretariat! Over the last six years I have been much encouraged by the growing number and diversity of people and organisations that have used WWD as a key communication tool to deliver our wetland message to a very broad range of stakeholders – schoolchildren, decision-makers, politicians, local communities, journalists, among others – *that healthy wetlands, and the water they are providing, are vital for life and its diversity*. I am hopeful that this trend will continue, stimulating collective action for conservation and wise use of water and wetlands in the years to come.

Wetlands take care of water is this year's slogan. I hope you agree and that you will join with the Ramsar Secretariat this year in celebrating World Wetlands Day on 2nd February with our focus on wetlands and water management.

This is the UN's International Year of Water Cooperation, an occasion for all of us to look at the water challenges facing the world and some possible solutions. It is a fine opportunity for the Ramsar family to reinforce the understanding of the critical link between wetlands and water: without wetlands there will be no water – and without water there will be no wetlands.

This year we have joined hands with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme in preparing our illustrated brochure that takes readers through a broad look at wetlands and water. It is well recognized that access to a clean and adequate water supply is critical for human survival. Less well understood is that wetlands, as defined by Ramsar, are fundamental regulators of water regimes. Without adequate management of wetlands from the mountains to the sea there is no water of the right quality and quantity where and when it is needed.

Our WWD focus this year is the chance for all of us working for wetlands to convince those who manage water that wetlands are not *competitors* for water but rather they are *essential components of water infrastructure*, providing a clean source and store of freshwater.

In our brochure we look broadly at various water management perspectives, for example at the many challenges of transboundary, agricultural and urban water management. And of course there are challenges for the consumer; managing water is the responsibility of all of us. As consumers we can commit to recycle, reuse and conserve water in our private lives whether it is through rainwater harvesting, water-friendly garden design, reducing water usage in our home or supporting our local wetland. Whatever your particular interest in wetlands, you can help take forward the key message for World Wetlands Day 2013 – *wetlands take care of water* – at the global, regional and local level.

So please join us in celebrating World Wetlands Day this year and help us to raise awareness about the critical role of wetlands in water management. To spread the word about World Wetlands Day, why not use our WWD ecards to wish your colleagues a **Happy World Wetlands Day? The ecards will be available on our web site from the 21st of January.**

Anada Tiéga
Secretary General
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands