



## Joint Press Release

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Bucharest, Romania / Madrid, Spain 9 July 2012

PR No. PR12044

### Well-managed tourism can help protect the world's wetlands

*Whether kayaking in the Iberá Marshes in Argentina or bird-watching at Ba-Be Lake in Vietnam, tourists are providing income for the conservation of wetlands worldwide, as demonstrated in a new publication launched by the Ramsar Secretariat and UNWTO.*

Besides providing essential services such as water, food and energy, wetlands offer significant opportunities for tourism, which can in turn deliver economic benefits for local communities and the sustainable management of wetlands, according to the publication *Destination Wetlands: Supporting Sustainable Tourism*.

Growth in sustainable tourism not only reflects environmental realities, but also a desire from tourists themselves to embrace green tourism. "There is a trend among tourists of turning towards green forms of tourism, towards destinations that offer wildlife and heritage," said Cristian Barhalescu, State Secretary, Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism of Romania. "As wetlands, with their diversity and richness, become subject to tourism development, the interconnection between tourism and wetlands should be given special attention by all actors involved."

Through 14 cases studies, covering different wetland types around the world, the publication demonstrates how sustainable tourism practices in and around wetlands can contribute to conservation, economic growth, poverty reduction and support to local cultures.

The publication was launched at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP11) in Bucharest, Romania (6-13 July 2012). Held under the theme Wetlands and Tourism, COP11 will debate a landmark Resolution on Wetlands and Tourism, urging sound tourism practices in wetlands.

"The adoption of this Resolution on Tourism and Wetlands will provide an important framework to help countries better recognize the linkages between wetlands and tourism so as to develop sustainable tourism in wetlands and other ecosystems. It proposes measures that they can take in the short and long term to ensure sustainable wetland tourism," said Anada Tiéga, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention. "Of course it is important to consider tourism in all wetlands – not just those designated as Ramsar Sites – since the Contracting Parties to the Convention are committed to managing all wetlands and promoting their wise use."

"For Romania, the development of eco-tourism in the wetlands is a priority, and an example in this respect is the Danube Delta. Ramsar Sites in Romania must be placed at the very centre of our attention and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, together with the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, will ensure that this becomes a reality," stated Corneliu Mugurel Cozmanciuc, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests of Romania.

The focus on tourism at COP11 comes on the back of increasing collaboration between UNWTO and the Ramsar Secretariat. Since 2010, both have been working together towards the development of

sustainable wetland tourism, with World Wetlands Day 2012 (2 February) celebrated under the theme "Wetlands and Tourism: A Great Experience".

"Wetlands are one of tourism's greatest assets, attracting millions of tourists each year," said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. "Working in close partnership with the Ramsar Secretariat, UNWTO is determined to sustainably manage wetland tourism through sound policies and planning, thereby conserving them for the enjoyment of generations to come."

International tourist arrivals reached 982 million in 2011 and are expected to top one billion in 2012, generating over US\$ 1 trillion in international tourism receipts. It is estimated that half of all tourists travel to wetlands, particularly coastal areas.

#### Useful links:

"Destination Wetlands: Supporting Sustainable Tourism": [www.ramsar.org/tourism-publication](http://www.ramsar.org/tourism-publication)

Wetland Tourism Case Studies: [www.ramsar.org/tourism-studies](http://www.ramsar.org/tourism-studies)

World Wetlands Day 2012: [www.ramsar.org/wwd2012](http://www.ramsar.org/wwd2012)

UNWTO Sustainable Development of Tourism Programme: <http://sdt.unwto.org/en>

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*The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO: [www.UNWTO.org](http://www.UNWTO.org)), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 155 countries, 7 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 400 Affiliate Members. Follow us on [twitter](#), [vimeo](#) and [flickr](#).*

*The Ramsar Convention (The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)) is a global intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Signed in the Iranian town of Ramsar in 1971, the Convention established the basis for the management and sustainable use of wetlands. To date, it remains the only environmental agreement in the world devoted to a particular ecosystem. Under this treaty, the member States, also known as "Contracting Parties", undertake to protect and sustainably use all the wetlands on their territory by implementing the necessary local measures as well as through national and international cooperation. As part of their commitment, the countries actively collaborate to maintain the ecological characteristics of wetlands, including through the inclusion of wetland conservation in their national land-use and management plans.*