

## **World Wetlands Week 2010 Celebration**

**Victoria, Seychelles**

**30<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010**

The first day of the World Wetlands Week 2010 celebrations in Seychelles focusing on raising awareness of the values of wetlands during the ‘Sports and Recreation Day’ was held at the first designated Ramsar site Port Launay.

In attendance was Minister Joel Morgan (Minster of Environment, Natural Resources and Transport), Mr. Anada Tiega, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Mr Didier Dogley (Permanent Secretary), Mr Wills Agricole (General Director of the Environment/Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority), Mrs Ginette Gamatis (Member of the National Assembly), Mr. Kevin Erwin of Ramsar STRP, representative of the Ephelia Hotel (sponsors of the day), Non Governmental Organisations such as Sustainability for Seychelles, numerous members of the local community and tourists.

Geared towards raising awareness of the values of wetlands to all, young and old, the day was a success, including to the young winners of the sports competitions.



*Minister Joel Morgan (Minster of Environment, Natural Resources and Transport), Mr. Anada Tiega (Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention) and Mr Wills Agricole (General Director of the Environment/Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority)*

The second day of the World Wetlands Week 2010 celebration in Seychelles, began with visits to the wetlands of Mahe; the largest of the Seychellois islands. This visit was organized and sponsored by the Seychelles Tourism Board and accompanied by the Ramsar National Focal Point, Dr Pughazendi Murugaiyan and Ms Vanessa Zialor of the Ministry of Environment (Coastal Zone Management Programme).

Amongst those visited was Anse Royale and Police Bay; both examples of outstanding wetlands aesthetically and in terms of the support they provide to the range of biodiversity reliant upon them. These two wetlands are also of note as it is evident that they are potential designations as Ramsar sites of International Importance and it is intended that this process be completed by the end of the year.



*Police Bay Wetland, Mahe Island*

The official opening of the weeks' celebration was held in the evening with a ceremony attended by Mr Joseph Belmont (Vice President of Seychelles), Minister Morgan, other Ministry heads of the Government of Seychelles, Mr Luigi Cabrini (Director of the Sustainable Development of Tourism Department, UNWTO) diplomats, local school children, international media coverage from the Inter Press Service News Agency, local media, wetland site stakeholders amongst many others.

The ceremony was opened through song by students of Anse Etoile School who called for all to 'Protect our sky, sea and planet to ensure that it lives on'. This sentiment was echoed by the messages of support from Dr Ahmed Djoghlaf (CBD) and Mr Franck Riboud (Danone-Evian).

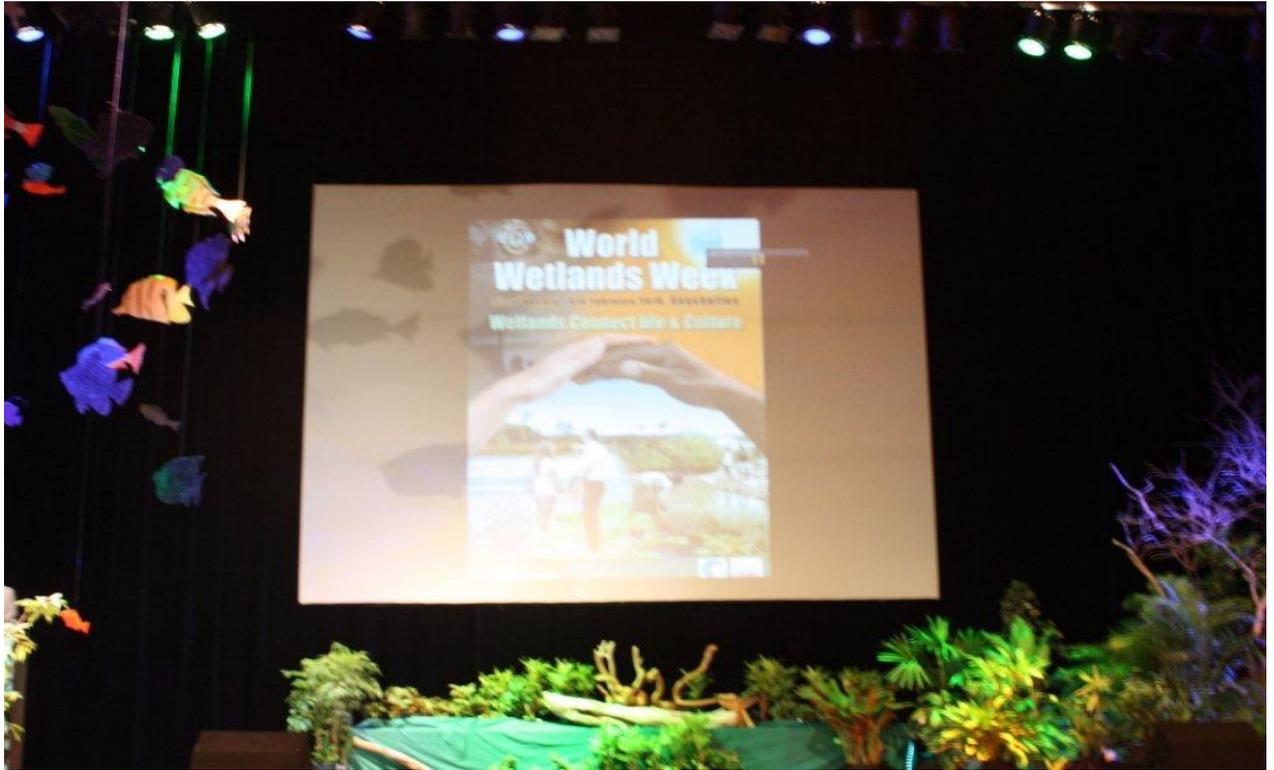
Both as well as all other speakers further focused on the point that in order to implement the Ramsar principles and ensure that the rich yet fragile ecosystems of all the worlds' wetlands ,it is essential to promote partnership with stakeholders at all levels; local and national, governmental and private etc.

With this event being hosted in the Seychelles, where tourists are attracted by the beauty of its natural environment, the tourism industry is a major source of income. Mr Cabrini noted that 2010 will be the year of transformation following the economic troubles that have faced all in the recent past. With this he called to Seychelles to initiate joint projects with partner organisations which would then allow for all to share information for the benefit of the country without detriment to the biodiversity and other natural wonders that draw people to the Seychelles. This message he reiterated is one that is applicable to all nations.

With the debut of the Danone-Evian sponsored World Wetlands Week theme song (to be available through the Ramsar website soon), Minster Morgan took the opportunity to officially launch the World Wetlands Week 2010 celebrations.



*Mr. Anada Tiega (Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention) addressing the audience at the Opening ceremony.*



*The International Conference Centre stage during the World Wetlands Week 2010 opening ceremony*



*Students of Anse Etoile School calling for all to 'Protect our sky, sea and planet to ensure that it lives on'*