



Press Release

Stung Sen, a unique wetland in Tonle Sap Great Lake, was internationally recognized as a fifth Ramsar Site in Cambodia

The tallest and pristine seasonally flooded freshwater swamp forest of the Tonle Sap Great Lake, the 9,293 hectares Stung Sen has been designated as a Wetland of International Importance (also known as a 'Ramsar Site'), by the Royal Government of Cambodia and recognized by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The declaration of Cambodia's fifth Ramsar Site was made on 2 November 2018 by Prime Ministerial Sub-Decree.

Stung Sen Ramsar Site is located along the south-eastern edge of the Tonle Sap Great Lake, and is a typical representative of inland forest wetland in the Tonle Sap Freshwater Swamp Forests biogeographic region. The site is characterized by the old growth natural seasonally flooded forest, which is widely recognised as the most species-rich ecosystem type in the Tonle Sap landscape and is a threatened forest assemblage in Southeast Asia. Additionally, low-stature shrub land, and surrounding natural grasslands are crucial as foraging area and refuge for many waterbirds, mammals, fishes, and others. The site also plays an important role in flood mitigation during the rainy season, water regulation, groundwater recharge to surrounding areas, water purification through aquatic plant and flooded forests, and water provision for living and agriculture. Because of these values and importance, Stung Sen has received recognition as a Ramsar Site

"It is delighted to see the Ramsar designation of Stung Sen wetland as a result of co-operative and continuous efforts among various stakeholders," said Mr. Masaru Horikami, Director of the Wildlife Division, Ministry of the Environment of Japan, "we have supported this designation process and capacity building of the site managers since 2016 to ensure the ecosystem services of Stung Sen will be sustainably managed for the benefit of both biodiversity and local livelihood."

"We congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia for putting forward Stung Sen as a new Ramsar Site", said Mr. Suh Seung Oh, Executive Director of Ramsar Regional Center East Asia. "Stung Seng is significantly important in the region as habitats for a number of globally threatened species, the migratory pathway and feeding ground for water birds, and important habitat for mammals. The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is looking forward to working with the Royal Government of Cambodia to ensure sustainable wetland management and to promote the wise use of wetlands for benefits for local people and the environment. Furthermore, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat will continue to support the Government to designate more Ramsar Sites, as important wetlands like Stung Seng, in the future" said Ms. Reiko Iitsuka, Senior Regional Advisor for Asia/Oceania of the Ramsar Secretariat.

30% of Cambodia is covered by wetlands and the majority of them have been identified as globally important, owing to the ecosystem services that they provide and populations of threatened species that they support. On 23 October 1999 Cambodia became a Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and four Ramsar Sites had been designated. They are:

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- Boeung Chhmar and Associated River System and Floodplain (Ramsar Site no. 997, <https://rsis.ramsar.org/rs/997>);
- Koh Kapik and Associated Islets (Site no. 998, <https://rsis.ramsar.org/rs/998>),
- Middle Stretches of Mekong River North of Stoeng Treng (Site no. 999, <https://rsis.ramsar.org/rs/999>), and;
- Prek Toal Ramsar Site (Site no. 2245, <https://rsis.ramsar.org/rs/2245>)

Ministry of Environment of the Royal Government of Cambodia and BirdLife International have been working together towards designating more wetlands as Ramsar Sites in Cambodia since 2006. For wetland conservation, it is crucial to designate biodiversity-rich areas as a Ramsar Site while allowing their "wise use" by various stakeholders with appropriate wetland management.

"To support the designation process, biodiversity survey and consultation meetings have been done since 2016" said Mr. Bou Vorsak, Programme Manager of BirdLife International Cambodia Programme "the boundary of Stung Sen Ramsar Site had been drawn with endorsement from local communities and local authorities ranging from commune to provincial level".

"Receive recognizing as internationally important wetland will bring significant benefit to this site including more protection support from international, national and local communities. I also expect contribution to conservation of critical biodiversity and endangered species through sustainable use of this wetland, including eco-tourism" said Dr. Tsubasa Iwabuchi, Senior Programme Officer, BirdLife International Tokyo, which supported the designation process with Ministry of the Environment of Japan.

"Recognizing Stung Sen as a Ramsar Site not only draws attention to the international importance of this wetland but it will be a bridge for Cambodia to nominate more wetlands as Ramsar Sites in the future", said H.E Say Samal, Minister of Environment of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Each Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention designates at least one wetland for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and these sites are selected by the Party based on the site's international significance in terms of their vital ecological function, their biological diversity value, and their economic, cultural and recreational value. Worldwide, there are 2,331 Ramsar Sites, making this the largest network of wetland managed for conservation.

BirdLife International Cambodia Programme received financial support from Ministry of the Environment of Japan, BirdLife International Tokyo, and Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia for working with Ministry of Environment of Cambodia to designate Stung Sen as Ramsar Site.

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