



The role of Tunisia in the challenge of preserving The Mediterranean wetlands

Press release

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Wetlands are the richest ecosystems on the planet and have the greatest biodiversity. They ensure the livelihoods of millions of people living in their surroundings and protect them by reducing the risk of disasters such as floods and storms. They improve water quality and are a source of fresh water. They are also an important destination for tourism, and can generate income for local economies.

Unfortunately, 48% of wetlands in the Mediterranean basin have disappeared since 1970, according to the report published by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO). The consequences of this loss could be dramatic if no conservation measures are taken.

The General Directorate of Forests (DGF) of Tunisia, WWF North Africa, the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) [1] and the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory will organize a public event on 12 July 2019 at the Golden Tulipe El Mechtel Hotel in Tunis (Tunisia). The event will take place under the theme "The role of Tunisia in the challenge of preserving the Mediterranean wetlands", and in the presence of governmental, private and associative actors in the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands at national and regional levels.

In Tunisia, from 2010 to 2017, some 20 sites were included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands [2], bringing the total number of sites in the country to 41. For better management and valorisation of these sites, the DGF has carried out numerous activities, including inventories and management plans, since the ratification of the Ramsar Convention. In addition, and in response to Tunisia's international commitments under international conventions, the DGF is developing a **National Wetlands Strategy**, with the support of WWF North Africa and involving relevant stakeholders.

This strategy is an instrument that will accompany all sectors for the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands, contributing to the fight against desertification, adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its effect, and the protection of resources of the country.

The different axes of the strategy are also correlated with the targets of **the MedWet Framework for Action 2016-2030** in the areas of the inclusion in the Ramsar List, the development and implementation of pilot restoration projects in degraded wetlands, and the integration of good practices for water management and wetland conservation into the national land use plans and policies in order to avoid damages to wetland functions and values.

The **Satellite-based Wetland Observation Service (SWOS)** and **GlobWetland-Africa** approaches will be promoted, within the framework of the national Strategy, in order to update **the inventory of Tunisian wetlands**. In addition, the wetland mapping information provided will make it possible to



better inform certain indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular 6.6.1 (monitoring of water-related ecosystems).

The National Strategy also aims to encourage new cities to obtain **the Wetland City Accreditation Award** provided by the Ramsar Convention, drawing inspiration from the outstanding example of Ghar el Melh (Bizerte), the first Arab and North African city to be awarded this label. The latter is mobilizing resources for pilot projects aimed at protecting the Ghar el Melh lagoon, such as those funded by the MAVA Foundation: the "**GEMWET**" project coordinated by WWF North Africa, and the **communication campaign "Off Your Map"** (<http://offyourmap.org>) on coastal wetlands, coordinated by MedWet.

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Notes:

[1] [MedWet](#) is a Regional Initiative of the Ramsar Convention and aims to ensure and support the effective conservation of the functions and values of Mediterranean wetlands and the sustainable use of their resources and services.

[2] [The Convention on Wetlands](#), called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

More information

The report "[Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 2: Solutions for Sustainable Mediterranean Wetlands \(MWO-2\)](#)", published by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO), functioning under the umbrella of [Tour du Valat](#) and [MedWet](#).

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