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13 MAY 2016

## Mauritius Marks World Migratory Bird Day

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### PRESS RELEASE

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) was observed by a ceremony organised yesterday by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security at the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary at Roche Bois.

The Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary is in the port area where port activities considered as polluting activities are carried out and yet it is a natural, peaceful and well protected place where one can have the opportunity to admire seasonal migratory bird visitors.

WMBD, initiated in the year 2006, is an annual awareness-raising campaign to highlight the need for the protection of these migratory birds and their environment. The theme chosen for this year's campaign is "Stop the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds" and the slogan is "And when the skies fall silent". WMBD campaign is led by two international wildlife treaties under the United Nations Environment Programme namely, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

Present at the ceremony, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Mr Mahen Seeruttun stated that migratory birds as they travel hundreds and thousands of kilometres across oceans and continents, face a wide range of threats along their migration routes, including habitat shrinkage in breeding areas, excessive hunting and degradation of their feeding grounds. These threats are seriously affecting these bird populations and some are on the brink of extinction and if nothing is done, they will disappear, he stressed.



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Hence there is urgent need for the governments of all countries to take actions to prevent the killing and trade of migratory birds and protect their habitats, otherwise these birds will slowly disappear and the skies will one day really fall completely silent, he added.

The Minister recalled that the CMS, also known as the Bonn Convention, recognises that States must be the protectors of migratory species that live within or pass through their national jurisdictions, and the Convention aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their ranges. The AEWA, he added, which is an instrument of the CMS, covers some 255 species of bird ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle.

Mauritius is one of the range State found along the African Eurasian flyway, Mr Seeruttun pointed out. Mauritius is a Contracting Party to the CMS and the AEWA and as part of the obligations towards these two international conventions, the Ministry Agro-Industry and Food Security has developed a number of policies and programmes to protect the birds which migrate here at the estuary.

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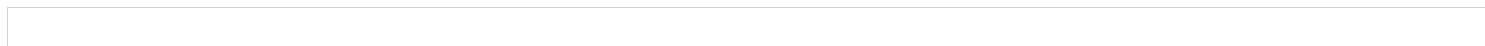
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This site is a protected reserve as it is a Ramsar Site of international importance. It is a wetland and a habitat for these migratory birds. Consequently, the uniqueness of this site is that it is a Ramsar site and a bird migratory site which is protected by four international conventions, namely CMS, AEWA, Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar Convention.

According to the Minister, we are indeed proud that we have such a place which is unique in Mauritius for its biological importance. We have bird species which are not endemic ones but which we give protection as they migrate to our borders on their route to rest and feed and to escape the harsh winter of the northern hemispheres. Mauritians can watch migratory birds in large numbers from September to March.


It is recalled that to mark WMBD, the Ministry has organised a number of activities including the distribution of a flyer and a poster, radio talks, an essay competition for Lower Six students and a photo competition targeting both young and adults.



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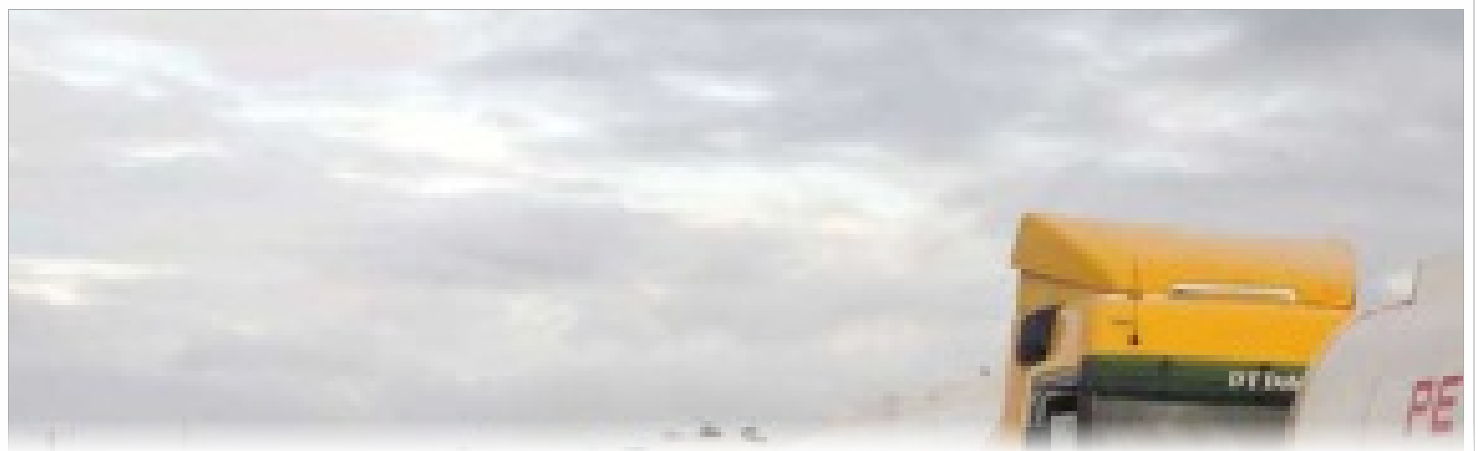




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