



Convention on the
Conservation of
Migratory Species of
Wild Animals



Agreement on the
Conservation of
African-Eurasian
Migratory
Waterbirds (AEWA)



Avian Influenza Seminar at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi

CMS and AEWA in partnership with UNEP will convene a scientific seminar on avian influenza at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya 10-11 April 2006. At the invitation of the CMS Secretariat, over 40 experts in virology, epidemiology, human and animal health, poultry farming, ecology and migration will review the latest scientific evidence on the spread of avian influenza and contribute to effective solutions for its containment. The objective is to produce a status report based on the latest scientific findings, with advice on preventing or mitigating the spread of H5N1. It will be aimed at decision-makers, as well as the media and other stakeholders in the fight against avian influenza.

The Seminar is organized in conjunction with the “Wings” event to celebrate the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) in Laikipia, Kenya, on 9 April. Participants in the Seminar have been invited to the event in Laikipia to address participants and the media. The host of the “Wings” event is the conservationist Kuki Gallmann and amongst her guests will be the Kenyan Nobel prize winner Wangari Maathai.

Participants in the CMS-led Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, currently including members from 10 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and WHO as observers, will be among the main contributors to the Seminar. Renowned experts from several other institutions and organizations worldwide are also expected to give presentations and contribute to the discussions during the Seminar.

Participants will review recent additions to the scientific understanding of the evolution and spread of avian influenza virus (HPAI H5N1). The Seminar will give recommendations on the possible management and biosecurity measures to be taken in poultry farming to prevent infection from and to wildlife, and will discuss and suggest options for the establishment of early warning schemes and the monitoring of the spread of the virus in the natural environment, the development of risk assessment models and mitigation measures.

During his visit to the CMS Secretariat on 30 March, Norberto Fernandez, Head of the Early Warning Systems Section at UNEP/DEWA (Division of Early Warning and Assessment) stressed the importance of early warning systems as a powerful tool to fight the global spread of the disease.

Task Force members have consistently emphasized evidence that HPAI is being spread by various mechanisms including trade in poultry and its products; legal and illegal trade in wild and captive bred birds; human movements and migrating birds. Bert Lenten,

Executive Secretary of AEWA emphasizes: “The loss of wetlands forces migratory water birds to share habitats with domestic birds. This promotes cross-infection between poultry and wild birds.” The relative importance of each method of transmission remains open to argument. Marco Barbieri, Scientific Officer of CMS notes: “While there is now direct evidence that wild migratory birds can play a role in the spread of the disease, outbreak patterns often do not correspond to the path and timing of bird migration”.

Results of the seminar will be made available to the press and selected target audiences. This includes a Seminar Summary and a concept for the establishment of an Early Warning System on HPAI in wild birds. Proceedings of the Seminar will be issued at a later stage under the lead of UNEP/DEWA.

CMS Executive Secretary Robert Hepworth acknowledges support given to the event: “I think this Seminar can make a substantial contribution to fight the disease. Its organization would not have been possible without the financial and technical support of three UNEP Divisions, the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the BirdLife Partner in the Netherlands (Vogelbescherming Nederland), FAO and OIE. Thanks to their help, we will be able to contribute to find comprehensive solutions to a global threat. “