



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

Distr: GENERAL

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 8.27*

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

MIGRATORY SPECIES AND HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Eighth Meeting (Nairobi, 20-25 November 2005)

Aware that migratory species are victims and vectors of a range of contagious (e.g., viral, bacterial and fungal) diseases and some of these diseases may be transmitted to resident species, domestic stock, captive wild animals and humans. Some diseases have the potential to reduce biodiversity, especially in the case of threatened species;

Aware of the emerging issue of outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) (subtype H5N1), which have had major impacts on livelihoods linked to the keeping of domesticated birds (mainly poultry) and on nature conservation values (including mortality of waterbirds on at least four internationally important Ramsar sites in Eurasia, and *conscious* of the increasing number of countries in which HPAI has recently been detected following its westward spread through Eurasia;

Very conscious that, if the current subtype of HPAI either genetically reassorts or adaptively mutates into a form transmissible between humans, this could have the global health, social and economic consequences of a human influenza pandemic;

Mindful, however, that the limited number of currently known cases of human infection with the current strain of HPAI is restricted to certain parts of Asia and have been through contact with infected poultry and none through contact with wild birds, and *recognizing* that public attitudes and support for wetland and species (particularly waterbirds) conservation and sustainable use, could be negatively affected by concerns as to the possible role of waterbirds in the spread of HPAI (subtype H5N1);

Concerned, however, that in most countries there is a significant lack of information and, in some cases, public misinformation, on important issues related to the spread of HPAI, the risks it may pose, and how to anticipate and respond to outbreaks of HPAI, and *noting* in particular the difficulties that developing countries face in assessing and responding to the threat of HPAI, especially given the significance in many of these countries of both domesticated and wild birds as the basis of rural livelihoods;

Concerned also that ill-informed responses may have unfortunate and possibly disastrous long-term consequences for conservation, especially for some of the species which are globally threatened, and already have small or localised populations and particularly those species listed in Appendix I of the Convention and in Column A, Category 1 of Table 1 of the Action Plan of the Agreement on the Conservation of African Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds;

* Revised version March 2006.

Noting that HPAI is considered to have been spread between countries by a number of different known vectors, including through the movement of avian livestock, cage birds and bird by-products, legal and illegal trade in birds, equipment associated with these respective industries, and movement of people, and *noting* that the migration of waterbirds has been suspected to be a vector as well, although direct evidence is lacking and *aware* that the relative significance of these different modes of spread has varied and evidence of causal links in many cases is weak or lacking;

Welcoming the involvement in this issue of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), notably through the publication in May 2005 of a *Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza* and its implementation, *inter alia*, through regional Technical Cooperation Programmes on Emergency Assistance for Early Detection and Prevention of Avian Influenza;

Aware of the Convention's leading participation in various coordinating mechanisms, including the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza convened in late August 2005 by the Convention, which comprises representatives and observers from nine international organisations, namely CMS, AEWA, Ramsar Convention, FAO, WHO, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), *recognising* the role of the IUCN Veterinary Specialist Group and *also noting* Resolution 3.18 on Avian Influenza of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds and Resolution IX.25 of the Ramsar Convention on managing wetlands and waterbirds in response to highly pathogenic avian influenza;

Recalling that the Global Flyways Conference (Edinburgh 2004) called, in particular, for urgent action to assess disease risk, and establish monitoring programmes in relation to migratory waterbird movements, the trade of wild birds, and implications for human health;

Acknowledging the opportunities for information exchange provided by the Special Round-Table on the spread of HPAI held on 19 November 2005 at Nairobi, Kenya, during the 8th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, and *encouraged by* the participation of all African and other CMS Scientific Councillors;

Recognizing that exploration of possible scenarios of the current HPAI spread, including identification of areas of higher relative risk and development of possible policy responses to outbreaks will benefit from analysis of extensive and long-term data sets relating to bird movements, waterbird counts, trade and movements of people, but *noting* the urgency to access and analyze such data, networks, and other information, and to fill outstanding gaps in the scientific understanding of these factors;

Recalling also that, although outbreaks of H5N1 in Hong Kong in 1997, in Japan in 2004, of H7N1 in Italy in 1999, of H7N3 in Chile in 2002 and of H7N7 in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany in 2003 were all successfully stamped out using rigorous control and biosecurity measures, HPAI now appears to be endemic in some parts of Asia, highlighting the practical difficulties of control in countries with limited veterinary capacity;

Recognizing the potential risk of transmission of HPAI between captive birds and other animals at wetland centres and zoological gardens and wild waterbirds visiting these sites, being mindful both of animal welfare requirements and the important role such sites play in wetland communication, education and public awareness;

Recognizing also ongoing national actions and plans for monitoring habitats and bird populations for HPAI; and also *noting* that, although development of surveillance schemes and contingency planning will need to be determined nationally, there are significant benefits from international cooperation;

Aware of the outcomes of the recent WHO/FAO/World Bank meeting in Geneva of 7-9 November 2005 on 'Avian Influenza and human pandemic influenza' which identified the significant gap of knowledge concerning the role that wild birds might play in the spread of HPAI, *noting* the need to strengthen research and monitoring related to waterbird migration and trade in birds, as well as disease processes in wild bird populations, especially research identified by the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza;

Recognising the need for rapid and continued sharing of information given the potential significance of this information in terms of bird conservation and population dynamics, so as to enable or improve risk assessments and be better prepared to improve conservation of waterbirds and future management of avian disease outbreaks; and

Aware of the decision of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (Resolution 3.6) to request the support of the CMS and other stakeholders to establish long-term funding regimes in order to develop long-term monitoring of waterbird populations *inter alia* via the International Waterbird Census and its derived outputs, and further to Ramsar Resolution VIII.38, as a means of informing a wide range of national and international conservation policies including risk assessment for HPAI;

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Calls* for fully integrated approaches, at both national and international levels, to address HPAI and other animal borne diseases by bringing ornithological, wildlife, and wetland management expertise together with those traditionally responsible for public health and zoonosis, including veterinary, agricultural, virological, epidemiological, and medical expertise;

Wild bird information (knowledge needs)

2. In response to the emerging issue of HPAI H5N1, given its potential significance for conservation of migratory species, and the need to be better prepared for the future management of avian disease outbreaks, *calls* upon Contracting Parties, non-contracting Parties, international and national organisations, in cooperation with FAO, OIE and other competent authorities in domesticated and captive birds, to support and build capacity for research (see annex) related to disease processes in migratory bird species, long-term monitoring of their movements and populations and rapid development of surveillance programmes for HPAI in populations of wild birds; and to strengthen ongoing efforts to improve, integrate and analyse existing data sets across different flyways to determine precise migratory routes, fluxes and population dynamics of species, and to disseminate the results;

Specific Instructions

3. *Supports* the conclusions of WHO, FAO and OIE that attempts to eliminate HPAI in wild bird populations through lethal responses such as culling are not feasible and may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds;
4. *Emphasises* that destruction or substantive modification of wetland and other habitats with the objective of reducing contact between domesticated and wild birds does not amount to wise use as urged by Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention and Articles 1 and 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds;
5. *Calls* on Contracting Parties and urges non-contracting Parties to strictly apply internationally agreed quarantine and health standards for the cross-border transport of bird products and captive birds of all kinds and further *calls* for a crackdown on the illegal transport of bird products and captive birds of all kinds, both nationally and internationally;
6. *Suggests* that African Contracting Parties and non-contracting Parties coordinate their responses to the threats posed by the spread of HPAI through the New Partnership for Africa's Development amongst others;
7. *Urges* that hunting communities, in the framework of existing hunting activities, contribute to monitoring the spread of HPAI and co-operate actively with national authorities in the event that measures, *inter alia* special temporary hunting regulations are considered or put into force;

Strategic advice

8. *Notes* the overriding importance of enhanced biosecurity measures, including adequate farming and aquaculture standards, and the need for competent authorities to develop strategies that limit the risk of disease transmission between wild and domestic animals (through enhanced biosecurity measures) and humans;
9. *Underlines* the importance of developing and implementing national contingency or action plans related to the potential risk of disease transmission, and the need for national preparedness to respond effectively to instances of detection of HPAI in birds, notably in wetland-dependent species;
10. *Requests* Contracting Parties and urges non-contracting Parties to develop and implement programmes of education and public awareness on HPAI, especially aimed at actually or potentially affected stakeholders, in particular those engaged in outdoor activities and the poultry industry;

Funding Needs

11. *Urges* the Contracting Parties to:
 - (a) support the establishment of an internationally or regionally coordinated well-structured long-term monitoring and surveillance programme for migratory birds, as appropriate, to assess, *inter alia*, current and new disease risks, making best use of, and building on existing schemes; and

- (b) rapidly fill specific gaps in knowledge through provision of support to establish programmes to study migratory patterns of targeted species at flyway level (including bird-ringing/banding, colour-marking, satellite tracking and isotope study);

12. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to explore possibilities for establishing partnerships so as to support the development of long-term funding for monitoring schemes, including the International Waterbird Census and its derived outputs, that are relevant to the Convention's interests;

13. *Requests* the Executive Secretary working with the Scientific Council and in cooperation with the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza to approach urgently FAO, OIE and WHO in response to their call for further research into fully understanding the role of wild birds in spreading HPAI, and seek the necessary resources to perform this work;

CMS Engagement

14. *Requests* the Executive Secretary working with the Scientific Council and its Working Group on Migratory Species as Vectors of Diseases, to assist, with relevant international agencies and the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, in sharing information, including practical advice that will assist countries to respond to this serious and rapidly developing situation, and to report back on progress on research and other relevant information to each Scientific Council meeting, to the Standing Committee and to COP9 and to publish this information on a regular basis on the CMS and partner websites for wider availability;

15. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to ensure continued leadership of the Convention in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, through appropriate representatives of the Scientific Council and the Secretariat, and *urges* the Scientific Council, with and through the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, to provide relevant input on practical measures to reduce the risk of disease transmission between wild, captive and domesticated birds, to those agencies developing contingency and wetland management plans related to HPAI; and

16. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, working with the Scientific Council and its Working Group on Migratory Species as Vectors of Diseases to make recommendations regarding the nature and extent of risks associated with other diseases in migratory species and possible areas of action to be taken by Contracting Parties in addressing this.

Annex: Key research needs related to the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in relation to migratory birds and their habitats

1. Identification and mapping of the precise nature of migration routes, including stop over sites, flux and timing for key migratory waterbirds so as to expand and/or refine existing ecological monitoring of these populations.
2. Clarification of virus behaviour and survival in the aquatic habitats which are waterbird breeding, staging and non-breeding (wintering) areas.
3. Clarification of viral incubation periods, the infectious period in birds and the symptoms affecting individual wild birds, including implications for migratory movements, as well as determining survival rates of birds and persistence of viruses in birds.
4. Establishment of informed assessments of the possibility of transmission between populations of wild birds and domestic flocks, including by non-waterbird species found near poultry-keeping areas.
5. Surveillance of the prevalence of HPAI in wild bird populations.
6. Development of combined risk assessments based on the known epidemiological behaviour of the virus, risks of transmission, routes and timing of migratory species, as well as known poultry and captive bird husbandry techniques.
7. Research on methods for improvement of farming standards and the development of strategies to limit the risk of any disease transmission between wild and domesticated birds.