



**Convention on the
Conservation of
Migratory Species
of Wild Animals**



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



Bonn, 2 March 2006

PRESS RELEASE

Peter Schei is next CMS Ambassador and Chair of the UNEP seminar of international experts on “Avian Influenza, the Environment and Migratory Birds”

Robert Hepworth, the Executive Secretary of the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), announced today that Mr. Peter Schei, current Chairman of BirdLife International and Director of the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) - an independent foundation engaged in research on international environmental, energy, and resource management - will become CMS Ambassador.

Mr. Schei, a biologist by training, could be considered a ‘guru’ of biodiversity also in the diplomatic world, as he worked in the Norwegian Ministry of Environment, and subsequently became International Negotiations Director at the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management. Mr. Schei is one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the Convention on Biological Diversity and has been chairman of its Scientific Body. He has also worked with the World Conservation Union, as member of the Commission on Parks and Protected Areas, the Species Survival Commission and the Commission on Ecosystem Management. Mr. Schei has also been High Level Advisor for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on biodiversity during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

“We are very honored to announce today that Mr. Schei has accepted to become a CMS Ambassador” said Mr. Hepworth. “This title,” he continues, “is issued in recognition of Mr. Schei’s accomplishments and lifetime commitment to promote the cause of biodiversity and his work on the conservation of migratory species and their habitats.”

CMS Ambassadors promote the cause of migratory species through their work and their contacts with the press and media, thus enhancing knowledge of the animals and the threats they face to the public and decision makers worldwide.

The first key contribution Mr. Schei will make to the work of the CMS Family will be in April, when he will chair a UNEP seminar on Avian Influenza, the Environment and Migratory Birds, convened at UNEP Headquarters in Gigiri, Nairobi, on 10 and 11 April 2006. During a short ceremony in the margins of the seminar, Mr. Hepworth will present Mr. Schei with a symbol of CMS and congratulate him for his work on conservation.

The scientific seminar on Avian Influenza is convened by the Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) in collaboration with the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment (UNEP/DEWA) and the UNEP African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (UNEP/AEWA). “The meeting” commented Mr. Bert Lenten, Executive Secretary of AEWA, “aims at reviewing the latest scientific studies concerning the evolution and spread of Avian Influenza, its impact on wild birds and the wider environment, including assessing risks of transmission and identifying optimal mitigation measures”.

The seminar is expected to issue recommendations for decision-makers, the media and other stakeholders on action to take in light of the latest scientific findings on Avian Influenza, and in the context of the conservation of biodiversity and the environment. “The CMS-led task force, which has been so far issuing communiqués and press releases on the role of migratory birds as vectors of diseases, has now felt it is time to provide governments with scientific information and advice on causes and solutions for the spread of avian influenza and its impact on the environment” says Marco Barbieri, Senior Scientific Officer of CMS and coordinator of the Task Force.

“Moreover” concludes Mr. Schei, chairman of the seminar, “the participants are due to discuss and suggest options for monitoring and early warning schemes of the spread of the virus in the natural environment, and the development of risk assessment and mitigations measures. This will provide effective and practical tools for the control and management of this disease and its possible impacts.”

Participants will include experts in a variety of disciplines, including, but not limited to, members of the CMS Task Force, presently composed of representatives from organizations such as UNEP, AEWA, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), FAO, WHO, Ramsar, BirdLife International and Wetlands International. Invited observers will also include representatives of governments, other international organizations, relevant biodiversity conventions and non-governmental organizations.

For more information please contact:

Paola Deda

External relations and media
8, Martin Luther-King Strasse
53175 Bonn
Tel +49. 228.815.2462
e-mail:pdeda@cms.int

Useful links:

<http://www.fni.no/about.htm>

http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/global/peter_schei_biog.html

www.cms.int

www.unep-aewa.org