



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



PRESS RELEASE

Governments adopt Joint Declaration to protect the Wadden Sea and its migratory species

Bonn, 18 March 2010 - The Governments of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands have identified activities to protect the Wadden Sea ecosystem. The Ministerial Council Declaration was adopted today at the 11th Trilateral Ministerial Conference on the protection of the Wadden Sea in Westerland, Island of Sylt, Germany.

The Wadden Sea is one of the largest unbroken systems of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world. It hosts 10,000 different species and it is an important stop over site for up to 12 million migratory waterbirds every year.

CMS Executive Secretary Elizabeth Maruma Mrema said: "The Wadden Sea is of global importance as a crucial habitat for millions of migratory waterbirds and home to marine mammals. During the International Year of Biodiversity, the Convention on Migratory Species will do its utmost to better protect waterbirds, seals and porpoises and the unique ecosystem they depend on."

On an international level the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) provides the framework for protection and sustainable use of migratory waterbirds. Seals are protected under the Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea. Both agreements were concluded under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

As a response to sea level rise, storms, increased temperatures and sediment deficits, adaptation schemes shall be developed to cope with the impact of climate change. Invasive species such as the Pacific oyster that were introduced to Wadden Sea ecosystem need to be dealt with. As shipping is important to the Wadden Sea region, ship safety will be further improved.

These objectives will be implemented through the Wadden Sea Plan 2010, which aims to conserve the natural ecosystem and unique biodiversity of this World Heritage Site. It sets out targets, as well as policies and actions to be implemented by the Wadden Sea countries. Tourism and recreation, agriculture, industry, shipping, and fisheries can be permitted, if they harmonize with suitable protection of the Wadden Sea. This will be done in cooperation with governments, fisheries and energy associations as well as NGOs in the Wadden Sea Forum.

Gas exploration, wind energy, farming practice, coastal protection, recreational activities, increased sea level rise and predation by invasive species pose major threats to migratory birds. New challenges for the Wadden Sea have arisen as some birds arrive earlier and stay longer during autumn due to climate change.

"The Wadden Sea is one of the critical sites for waterbirds along the East-Atlantic Flyway. At least 41 different waterbird species occur in high numbers as migrant, moulting or wintering birds in the Wadden Sea. For 34 species, the Wadden Sea is an indispensable roosting area", said Bert Lenten, Executive Secretary of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement.

All these species depend on the East-Atlantic flyway, a system of migration routes between Greenland and Western Siberia in the Arctic and wetlands in Western and Southern Africa and the Wadden Sea is a critical point along this flyway. It plays a significant role for waders, geese and ducks.

Protection of birds primarily depends on the availability of intact and connected habitats, adequate breeding or roosting areas, food as well as reduced disturbance and pollution.

In the Ministerial Council Declaration the three Governments have agreed on a work programme for the coming years. The World Heritage listing shall be used as an instrument for nature conservation

including species protection. It will be the cornerstone of the new Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in cooperation with UNESCO and the Wadden Sea countries.

Like birds, marine mammals are important indicators for the quality of the Wadden Sea ecosystem. As top predators and due to their longevity and dependence on large areas, they are vulnerable to disturbance and pollution. The Harbour Seal, Grey Seal and the Harbour Porpoise may be regarded as indigenous Wadden Sea species. Throughout the year, seals use water, sand banks, beaches, coastal shores and dunes for whelping, nursing, breeding, moulting, resting and feeding.

Human activities such as recreation and construction activities for off-shore wind parks, fisheries, air traffic, shipping and food availability have an impact on the protection of harbour seals, grey seals and harbour porpoises in the Wadden Sea Area. Viable stocks and a natural reproduction capacity of the Harbour Seal and Grey Seal need to be maintained while juvenile survival shall be further reduced.

The quality of the habitat of seals and harbour porpoises must at least be maintained. This is the case both within the Wadden Sea area and in the adjacent North Sea, especially as extensive plans exist to further exploit the areas for a variety of industries, including sand mining and wind farming in the near future. The Wadden Sea Plan seeks to avoid wind turbines or wind parks from becoming barriers between feeding, breeding and moulting areas.

The challenge of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation is to develop joint strategies for the future management of the landscape and cultural heritage. It is based on the ecosystem approach of integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

Notes to Editors:

The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS or Bonn Convention)** is an intergovernmental treaty concluded under the United Nations Environment Programme and focusing on the conservation of migratory species and their habitats. CMS established 3 Agreements for the conservation of migratory birds, seals and harbour porpoises which occur in the Wadden Sea. The Harbour Seal, the Grey Seal and the Harbour Porpoise are listed on Appendix II of the Convention.

www.cms.int

The **Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea** contains provisions on research and monitoring, on taking and on the protection of habitats according to the Conservation and Management Plan for the Wadden Sea Seal Population 2007-2010. The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat supports the three countries in the preparation of ministerial conferences and their work.

www.waddensea-secretariat.org

AEWA - The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) is an intergovernmental treaty developed under the CMS dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds. AEWA covers 255 species of birds, ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle.

www.unep-aewa.org

ASCOBANS - The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and the North Seas (ASCOBANS) was also concluded under CMS. Its objective is to implement a variety of measures to reduce by-catch, marine pollution and disturbance, conduct surveys and research on species ecology and abundance, adopt protective national laws and raise public awareness. A Conservation Plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea is under development.

www.ascobans.org

For more information please contact:
Veronika Lenarz, Public Information,
UNEP/CMS Secretariat
Tel.: +49 228 815 2409
e-mail: vlendarz@cms.int
www.cms.int

