



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

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS (AEWA) TO THE 36th MEETING OF THE CMS STANDING COMMITTEE (2-3 DECEMBER 2009, BONN, GERMANY)

INTRODUCTION

AEWA was concluded in 1995 and entered into force in 1999. So far 62 of the 118 Range States (+ the EU) to AEWA have ratified the Agreement and more are expected to do so in the months to come.

From 15-19 September 2008 the 4th session of the Meeting of Parties took place in Antananarivo, hosted by the Government of Madagascar. The theme of MOP4 was *'Review of the Past, Vision for the Future'*. Over 160 delegates from 80 countries, representing Contracting Parties and non-Parties, IGOs and NGOs participated at this meeting and reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the Agreement. In addition, they guided the future direction of the Agreement primarily through the adoption of the first-ever Strategic Plan for AEWA as well as other decisions.

This report will only give a brief overview of the progress made in the implementation of the Agreement; a full overview is provided by the documents tabled at MOP4, which are available on the AEWA website: www.unep-aewa.org

REVIEW OF THE PAST

INTERNATIONAL REVIEWS

A set of seven international reviews on the implementation of the Agreement were submitted to MOP4.

In accordance with paragraph 7.4 of the AEWA Action Plan, the Secretariat in close cooperation with the Technical Committee and Parties, shall prepare a series of international reviews necessary for the implementation of the Action Plan including:

- a) Reports on status and trends of populations;
- b) Gaps in information from surveys;
- c) The networks of sites used by each population, including reviews of the protection status for each site as well as of the respective management measures taken;
- d) Pertinent hunting and trade legislation in each country relating to species listed under Annex 2 to this Agreements;
- e) The stage of preparation and implementation of Single Species Action Plans;
- f) Re-establishment projects, and;
- g) The status of introduced non-native waterbird species and hybrids thereof.

From the above-mentioned list the international reviews (a), (d), (e), (f) and (g) were compiled and tabled at MOP4. It was only possible to carry out this extensive piece of work due to the financial support received from several Contracting Parties.

While the reviews (d), (e) and (f) were submitted to MOP for the first time, for review (g) this was its second edition and for review (a) this was its fourth edition.

The reviews (b) and (c) are part of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project and it is expected that they will become available by the end of 2010.

In addition to the above-mentioned international reviews required by the AEWA Action Plan, the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Technical Committee, prepared an update on the use of non-toxic shot for hunting in wetlands and a report on the effects of climate change on migratory waterbirds within the African-Eurasian flyways, thus providing insight into additional aspects of the implementation of AEWA.

General findings from these seven reviews tabled at MOP4 show that Contracting Parties have made considerable progress in the implementation of the Agreement. The key message from these reviews is, however, that even more has to be done by the Contracting Parties to fully implement the Agreement at national level. Where necessary and appropriate, the support of the Secretariat will be needed to meet this requirement.

AEWA is in an advanced stage of substantially reviewing the implementation of the Agreement by its Contracting Parties. The above-mentioned reviews provide valuable and in-depth information in addition to the more general information that could be drawn from the National Reports from Contracting Parties.

For additional information on the findings of each review please visit http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop4_docs/mop4.htm

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AEWA ACTION PLAN

The legally binding Action Plan appended to the Agreement is divided into six sections under the headings:

- 1) Species Conservation;
- 2) Habitat Conservation;
- 3) Management of Human Activities
- 4) Information Management;
- 5) Research and Monitoring; and
- 6) Implementation.

1) Species conservation

International Single Species Action Plans

The following International Single Species Action Plans (SSAP) were adopted by MOP4

- Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*
- Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
- Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
- Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*
- Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*
- White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi*
- Madagascar Pond-Heron *Ardeola idae*

With the adoption of these 7 new Plans the total number of SSAPs adopted by past MOPs has been doubled. For more information on the SSAPs please visit: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/index.htm>

Work is ongoing to publish these Single Species Action Plans after all amendments proposed at MOP4 have been incorporated.

Over the last three years AEWA has provided support to the coordination of the implementation of the SSAP for the Sociable Lapwing, the Black-winged Pratincole and the Red-breasted Goose. In addition, the post of Coordinator for the Lesser White-fronted Goose has been established within the AEWA Secretariat. This post has been fully funded by the Government of Norway for the last two years and the Government of Norway is considering providing support for 2010 as well in order to enable the Secretariat to continue this activity.

Conservation Guidelines

Over the years, AEWA has developed 10 sets of guidelines dealing with a wide range of topics relevant to the conservation of migratory waterbirds. At MOP4, the following two additional guidelines were adopted:

- Guidelines on how to avoid, minimize or mitigate the impact of infrastructure developments and related disturbance affecting waterbirds;
- Guidelines on the measures needed to help waterbirds adapt to climate change.

For more information on the AEWA Conservation Guidelines please visit:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/conservation_guidelines.htm

2) Habitat conservation

Naturally most waterbird habitats are wetlands and at an international policy level they are therefore covered by the Ramsar Convention. Under AEWA, relevant practical conservation activities are underway through the development of a Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool as part of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project. The “CSN Tool” will combine the databases on Ramsar Sites, the International Waterbird Database, the Important Bird Area Database and the World Protected Area Database. It is expected that by the end of 2010 this tool will be operational. A first beta-version of the CSN Tool is now accessible via the WOW Project website: <http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/CSN>

As a follow up to MOP4, particularly regarding the study carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) on ‘The Effect of Climate Change on Migratory Waterbirds within the African-Eurasian Flyways’, the Technical Committee will review the adequacy of the existing international networks of sites for the conservation of migratory waterbird populations, taking into consideration the projected climate change effects, and will suggest complementary approaches to be taken under AEWA.

3) Management of Human Activities

Over the past triennium the AEWA Secretariat was a partner in a project on the development of Sustainable Hunting in the Middle East and North Africa implemented by BirdLife International. This project focussed particularly on the necessity to phase out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

The AEWA Secretariat moreover undertook a survey among governmental focal points and hunting organisations of AEWA Range States, which have phased out the use of lead shot in wetlands already, in order to receive detailed information on experiences made by individual countries during this process. The outcomes of the survey have been published in an informative brochure on “*Phasing out the use of lead*”

shot for hunting in wetlands: Experiences made and lessons learned by AEWA Range States”, which is meant to provide guidance to Parties which still have to phase out the use of lead shot.

4) Information and education

Information activities

In 2005 the Government of Germany decided to provide a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) to work on Information Management for the Agreement. As of 17 October 2008, this arrangement came to an end. As foreseen in the budget 2006-2008, a fixed-term post would follow the JPO post. Early 2009 the recruitment process was finalised and Mr. Florian Keil was reconfirmed in this position.

At MOP3 the AEWA Communication Strategy was adopted. The main task of the JPO has been to implement the Communication Strategy. This task has now been taken over by the Information Officer who spends 50% of his time on the WOW project and 50% on the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy in close cooperation with the whole AEWA Team; significant outputs and achievements in the implementation of the strategy include:

I. Development of websites:

- a) World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) [www.worldmigratorybirdday.org]
- b) Wings over Wetlands (WOW) [www.wingsoverwetlands.org]
- c) African Ringing Schemes [www.afring.org]
- d) AEWA Technical Committee Work Space (online community / password-protected website)

Besides the development of these new websites substantial improvement have been made to the AEWA Website.

II. Development of Information materials:

- a) Several publications under the Technical Series of AEWA (Single Species Action Plans, Guidelines and Reports; see above);
- b) Proceedings of MOP4;
- c) Regular AEWA Newsletters (hard copy);
- d) E-newsletter (every two months);
- e) Species Stickers;
- f) AEWA “Flyway Conservation at Work” - Exhibition Stand (backdrop & pull-up banner for public events)
- g) Posters (e.g. Sociable Lapwing, Madagascar Pond Heron, etc);
- h) WMBD Calendar 2009;
- i) Information brochure on migratory waterbirds and climate change.
- j) Brochure on phasing out the use of Lead Shot for hunting in Wetlands—Experience made and lessons learned by AEWA Range States.

III. Awareness-raising campaigns

The AEWA Secretariat initiated the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) in 2006. The launch of WMBD took place in April 2006 at a special event called ‘WINGS’ in Laikipia, Kenya. Since then WMBD has been celebrated annually and the number of countries participating in the event has grown each year.

In 2009 the theme was “Barriers to Migration” – highlighting the effects man-made structures such as wind turbines, communication masts and tall buildings have on migratory birds. Over 140 events in over 50 countries were registered on the WMBD website (www.worldmigratorybirdday.org) and more than 500 children sent in their paintings in the context of a designated WMBD Children’s Painting Competition in 2009 alone.

This is a remarkable achievement taking into account the limited financial and human resources available to conduct this global awareness raising campaign each year. Hence, the AEWA Secretariat is very grateful for all the support it has received from its partner organisations in particular for the support from BirdLife International, Wetlands International and UNEP who promoted the celebrations of WMBD through their networks.

Education and capacity building activities

A framework programme for training and awareness raising has been developed under the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project, which is being adapted to different sub-regions of the AEWA area. Training of trainers workshops have already been organized in the regions of the Middle East and West and Central Africa and are expected to be followed up by national training in all participating countries. More of such training workshops are planned to take place in the near future.

Moreover, a €1.6 million project on strengthening waterbird and wetland conservation capacities in North Africa (WetCap) was developed by the AEWA Secretariat and launched under the umbrella of AEWA in March 2009. This project was developed to complement the WOW project, which does not focus on the region of North Africa. Within the framework of this project, capacity-building activities will take place in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Mauritania over a period of three years. Through a series of regional and national workshops based on the above-mentioned training programme developed under the WOW project, the WetCap project will provide targeted training of trainers and of conservation professionals from the five North African countries. Training workshops will start to take place as of November 2009. This project also foresees the allocation of small grants to local projects as well as a series of surveys and monitoring field missions in all countries in order to fill existing gaps of knowledge. It is hoped that the WetCap project will boost the implementation of AEWA in the five project countries. <http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/>

On 13 and 14 September 2008, a training workshop was organised in Madagascar, in close cooperation with UNEP. The focus was on improving the negotiation skills of African delegates so that they could effectively participate in MOPs/COPs of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Anglophone African delegates were invited and it is our plan to organise a similar training for the Francophone African delegates in the near future. This training workshop took place directly prior to MOP4 and helped these participants to participate more effectively in the deliberations and discussions during MOP4.

For the successful implementation of the AEWA Agreement more training and capacity-building is essential. The Secretariat will do its utmost in finding additional resources in the years to come and would welcome any support in this respect.

5. Monitoring and research

Over the last few years AEWA strongly supported the:

- 1) Establishment of Waterbird Ringing Schemes in Africa;
- 2) Desk study on impact of Marine Fisheries on Migratory Waterbirds in Africa;

- 3) Desk study on impact of Agrochemicals on Migratory Waterbirds in Africa;
- 4) Desk study on Traditional Knowledge on waterbird and wetland management in Africa;
- 5) Desk Study on Effect of Climate Change on Migratory Waterbirds within the African-Eurasian Flyways;
- 6) Annual International Waterbird Census in different regions;
- 7) Waterbird surveys in the Middle East;
- 8) Sociable Lapwing satellite tracking;
- 9) Effect of hunting and annual survival rates of the Dark-bellied Brent Goose

6. Implementation

Projects and programmes are developed to improve and support the implementation of the Agreement. At each MOP a list of International Implementation Priorities are tabled and adopted. The Secretariat is then tasked to fundraise for these projects. In addition to this list of priorities, the AEWA Secretariat aims to develop regional Programmes and to secure the funds needed for their implementation. So far the following Programmes/ major projects have been developed, with funding partly secured:

- 1) **Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project**
This project is in its final stage of implementation. For more information see: www.wingsoverwetlands.org
- 2) **WETCAP** focuses on capacity building for waterbird and wetland conservation in North Africa. The main donor for this project is the Spanish Development Cooperation Agency (AECID), which has approved our proposal and will contribute up to € 1.6 million to this project.
- 3) **The African Initiative to strengthen the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats**
This Initiative has just been adopted at MOP4 and work will continue to elaborate on this concept. A concrete proposal on this Initiative will be delivered at MOP5. Meanwhile the Government of France has provided substantial support that enabled us to recruit a Coordinator for the African Initiative. As of 1st of August Mrs Evelyn Moloko entered on duty as Coordinator. The tasks under this new position include the drafting of a Plan of Action for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa, fundraising and awareness raising activities, membership development and advisory services to the Parties from the region. Additional support for the Small Grant Fund for Africa is expected to materialize in the months to come.

In the years to come the Secretariat will do its utmost to initiate and, if appropriate, to develop new programme/ project proposals.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

AEWA STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2017

The CMS Strategic Plan called upon the Agreements concluded under the auspices of CMS to develop Strategic Plans based on the CMS Strategic Plan. MOP3 decided to follow this call and MOP4 adopted the first ever Strategic Plan for AEWA through Resolution 4.7.

AMENDMENT TO THE LIST OF SPECIES COVERED BY THE AGREEMENT

After lengthy discussion at MOP3 and further review by the Technical Committee, MOP4 approved the inclusion of additional twenty species of waterbirds, traditionally referred to as seabirds, in Annex 2 of the Agreement. By doing this, potentially all waterbirds that would qualify as 'AEWA species' are now included. The decision taken by MOP4 is of great strategic importance because seabirds are an important part of our biodiversity and their conservation is of particular interest to countries such as Canada and Iceland; the decision to thus augment Annex 2 may provide the countries concerned with an extra incentive to join AEWA.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW PROCESS

To assist in the implementation of the Agreement an Implementation Review Process was established. It was decided that the Standing Committee will undertake that Process. Recently the first case has been tabled under the framework of IRP dealing with hunting on the critical endangered Sociable Lapwing in Syria. Consultations with the Government of Syria are ongoing on a possible advisory mission to take place early 2010.

It is expected that the Implementation Process will lead to an increase in the level of implementation of the Agreement.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS OF INTEREST FOR THE FUTURE

In early 2008, CMS launched the Action Plan for the Central Asian Flyway (CAF). It should be noted that there is an overlap of 50% between the CAF Action Plan and the AEWA Agreement in geographical terms as well as in species and populations coverage.

The second development is a Memorandum of Understanding for the African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors and Owls which was recently concluded under the auspices of the CMS. This MoU covers the whole AEWA region plus 12 additional Range States.

The AEWA MOP4 called for close cooperation between AEWA and these initiatives.

CONCLUSION

One of the outcomes of the international reviews is that 41% of the AEWA populations for which trend data is available are still in decline. At least one of the AEWA Table 1 Column A /CMS Appendix I species, the Slender-billed Curlew, might already be extinct. The threats migratory birds are facing are rapidly increasing; for example, climate change is likely to have a very negative effect on several AEWA species that were listed as critically endangered according to IUCN red listing criteria. There is no time for contemplation; on the contrary we should boost our efforts to meet the 2010 target to halt the current rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. The AEWA Secretariat is ready to take increased action but will need substantial voluntary support to join other organisations in making a real and long-lasting change.