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DECLARATION OF THE GLOBAL FLYWAYS SUMMIT: CONNECTING NATURE, CONNECTING PEOPLE,

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 26 April 2018

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*“If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world.”
– Thomas Lovejoy, eminent Biologist and inventor of the word “biodiversity”*

From 23-26 April 2018, government, donor, private sector, research, NGO and international convention representatives, from more than 70 countries and 100 organisations, gathered in Abu Dhabi for the first Global Flyways Summit. This **unprecedented meeting** brought together actors and decision-makers from all eight flyways of the world to address the critical declines in many migratory bird populations. The outcomes of the Summit were informed by the release of the **State of the World’s Birds 2018**; of the world’s 11,000 bird species, one in five are migratory, of which nearly 40% are in decline, with one in nine being threatened with global extinction.

In an increasingly globalised world, **migratory birds connect peoples, ecosystems and nations** and are critical indicators of the state of the environment and global life support systems. Their conservation depends on safeguarding the **large-scale connectivity** of habitats and ecological processes. Flyway conservation therefore epitomises the sort of global cooperation we urgently need, across nations, conventions, policy processes and sectors, to achieve wider **biodiversity, climate and sustainable development goals**.

Participants of the Summit resolved that **urgent actions** must be taken to fully implement existing conservation strategies, action plans and commitments and that experience gained should feed into the development of an **ambitious and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework** incorporating the concept of ‘ecological civilisation’ and contributing to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to place nature at the centre of both government and corporate decision-making and individual action. Key messages from the Summit include:

Migratory birds are flagships and indicators for nature conservation:

- Migratory birds **connect** us through their marathon journeys, often spanning the globe and inspiring people across countries and continents. They are especially **vulnerable** due to threats along the length of their flyways. The wonder and spectacle of bird migration symbolises the triumph of wildlife over the many obstacles and challenges along these journeys, but increasingly these obstacles are man-made and ever-more severe.
- Major **threats** to birds travelling along flyways include agricultural and coastal development leading to loss or degradation of habitat, inappropriately sited or operated wind turbines and powerlines resulting in collision, electrocution or displacement, unsustainable harvesting including illegal killing and taking of birds, other poisoning and climate change.

Effective flyway conservation depends on concerted, coordinated and cooperative action at a truly local to global and global to local scale, within and between flyways, involving key stakeholders including local communities and all conservation approaches and frameworks such as:

- Ensuring a robust **evidence-base**, with clear **scientific underpinning** of priority-setting, decision-making and conservation action, involving local people to help monitor birds and their habitats on the ground.
- Identifying, protecting, managing, restoring, connecting and monitoring **networks of key sites**, such as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (a subset of Key Biodiversity Areas) triggered by migratory birds, including via site networks such as those of the East Asian Australasian Flyway

Partnership Flyway and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, and ensuring **landscape-scale** sustainable land use (especially agriculture).

- Ensuring cumulative impacts on migratory species are taken into account in **land use and seascape planning** and execution of development plans, programmes and projects, including through **strategic environmental assessment** at flyway scale, and by engaging with governments, business and other stakeholders.
- Ensuring **mainstreaming** of migratory bird and other biodiversity conservation into sectors such as energy, infrastructures and extractive industries.
- Supporting **Multilateral Environmental Agreements** (MEAs), especially the UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), operating in a more coordinated way, to ensure agreement and implementation of actions at national and intergovernmental level, including through establishing multi-stakeholder thematic and species working groups, task forces and networks to facilitate and coordinate action and share experience and information.
- Strengthening the **governance** of flyway conservation, especially for the Americas and Central Asian flyways, the West Asia-East African component of the African-Eurasian Flyway and intra-African flyways, with international institutions anchoring the cooperation between all countries and stakeholders along the flyway.
- Strengthening and enforcing, where needed, relevant **national and regional policies, laws and legal frameworks** such as the European Union's Nature Directives and the US's Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- **Raising awareness, understanding and support** for migratory birds to increase the public drive and political imperative for their conservation.

The summit discussed eight top priorities for flyway conservation, agreeing on a number of key actions including:

Coasts: A multi-stakeholder Global 'Caring for Coasts' Forum, mandated by the relevant MEAs, should be established to bring together relevant stakeholders, to advance sustainable approaches to coastal ecosystem protection, management and restoration for migratory species and ecosystem services including climate change resilience. It should support existing partnerships and mechanisms for flyway-scale conservation, such as *flyway site networks*, and be underpinned by regional situation analyses of coastal habitat status and trends (e.g. for the Arabian region).

Energy: The needs of migratory birds must be *mainstreamed* into the onshore and offshore renewable energy and power transmission sectors, at all phases of energy production (planning, generation, transmission and distribution). Awareness of the issues and solutions must be raised early on among stakeholders, such as energy ministries, investors, project developers, donors and utilities companies, emphasising the business case for integrating bird/bat conservation. Targeted guidance needs to be developed, communicated and followed with stronger compliance mechanisms and greater power and remit of environmental ministries. The CMS Energy Task Force can facilitate this.

Illegal killing: All governments must commit to zero tolerance of illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds. Increased effort is needed to strengthen, comply with and *enforce* relevant legislation and judicial processes, and engage with stakeholders, local communities and wider society to *change attitudes*. The Bern Convention Tunis Action Plan for Europe and CMS Mediterranean Task Force, which have taken as a baseline the BirdLife review of illegal killing of birds, and adopted a Scoreboard to

assess national progress, including through national action plans involving all stakeholders, are important tools for facilitating this. Other regions, most urgently Asia, need similar mechanisms.

Bustards: Bustards are flagships for *agro-pastoral/grassland landscapes* and their conservation requires managing key protected areas appropriately, supporting wider land-use that is sympathetic to bustard conservation, preventing illegal killing, raising awareness, more effective international cooperation and, for Houbara Bustards, ensuring that hunting is regulated and sustainable as part of an integrated in situ and ex situ approach. Urgent action is needed for tropical Asian species, particularly for Great Indian Bustard.

African-Eurasian Vultures: Delegates reinforced the importance of the CMS Vulture *Multi-species Action Plan* and highlighted the need for a 'community of implementers' bringing together all stakeholders. There is a particular urgency to put in place rapid response mechanisms for communities and governments to jointly tackle the threat of poison baits, and safety testing for veterinary pharmaceuticals to reduce this proven risk. 'Vulture Safe Zones' are crucial in South Asia; similar, appropriately adapted landscape approaches show great promise in other regions, particularly Africa.

Saker Falcon: Reaffirmed importance of the Saker Falcon *Global Action Plan* (SakerGAP), including a management and monitoring system, particularly in relation to its transparent and consensus-building approach. Noting excellent progress on its flagship projects, SakerGAP implementation needs to be scaled up and extended to other range states, especially in addressing the primary threat of electrocution.

Capacity building: Just as flyway conservation needs a network of sites, it needs a network of people and organisations taking action in every country along each flyway. To support civil society organisations, including BirdLife Partners, to identify, advocate for and carry out flyway conservation, there is a need to identify key capacity development gaps and success stories and develop and implement strategies to build on such efforts.

Donor Alliance for Bird Conservation: Donors* present at the Summit expressed their interest in collaborating more effectively through an alliance to leverage their efforts in promoting bird conservation along global flyways and to use birds as ambassadors of biodiversity and human wellbeing. Donors recognise the need to bring additional resources to this effort and welcome the offers of the US National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and Qiaonyu Foundation to host meetings in the next twelve months to build and expand an alliance. Donors look forward to working with BirdLife International as a convener on this collaboration.

**Qiaonyu Foundation, International Fund for Houbara Conservation, MAVA Foundation, Jensen Foundation, The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund*

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