

CMS Statement to East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership Meeting

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species welcomes the Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway. The Secretariat and key CMS Parties have taken part in the negotiation of the Partnership. The Secretariat will also take an active role, subject to its resources, in the technical and other work of the Partnership.

Building on the achievements of the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, the partnership aims at developing a single flyway network for all species of migratory waterbirds, potentially resulting in a more streamlined and integrated approach for many coordination and conservation activities, including communication, education, awareness raising, population monitoring and capacity building. CMS supports the establishment of a central coordination point for the collection and dissemination of information relevant to the Partnership, and notes that each individual state is encouraged to develop national partnerships to support the international framework and facilitate and guide implementation at the national level.

Within the partnership, CMS will deploy their experience in the development of similar intergovernmental instruments under Article IV of the Convention, notably the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). A CMS instrument is currently being developed for the Central Asian Flyway. A Meeting of Range States to develop a common international framework to promote the conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands, organised in New Delhi, India (10-12 June 2005) under the auspices of CMS in cooperation with Wetlands International, finalized a *Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats*. Negotiations are ongoing concerning the most appropriate intergovernmental instrument to provide the institutional and legal framework for the implementation of the Action Plan. In the meantime, interim measures are being put in place to promote the early implementation of the Plan. Close liaison between the CAF and East Asian co-ordinators will be particularly important as several countries are traversed by both flyways.

Single-species, non legally-binding types of agreements have also been developed under CMS which, besides promoting the conservation of the species concerned, are producing spin-offs for other migratory species using the same flyway. A good example is the Memorandum of Understanding concerning conservation measures for the Siberian Crane.

CMS Agreements, besides promoting coordination of conservation and management measures along flyways, provide suitable frameworks for action on the ground. In 2003, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) agreed to finance a US\$12 million project within the AEWA Agreement area. The African-Eurasian Flyway GEF project, now known as Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) aims to enhance and coordinate catalytic strategic measures to conserve a network of critical wetland areas that migratory waterbirds depend upon to complete their annual cycle. There are three linked components to the project: establishing a network of sites, enhancing technical capacity and improving communication and coordination. Wetlands International and BirdLife International are leading the implementation of this ambitious project.

GEF is also supporting a project to develop a wetland site and flyway network to conserve the Siberian crane and other migratory waterbirds in Asia. The project, currently being implemented, was proposed by CMS and the International Crane Foundation, and is using the Siberian Crane MoU as framework for its implementation. GEF will contribute a total of US\$10 million over a 6-year period. An additional US\$12.7 million in co-financing has been committed.

The examples mentioned above testify to the relevance and value of CMS in the conclusion and implementation of flyway Agreements. As regards the East Asian – Australasian Flyway, subject of the meeting of today, CMS contributed in paving the way for Governments of this region to begin thinking about cooperative arrangements through exploratory negotiations in the early 1990s to develop a regional agreement. Indeed, we are pleased to note that many of the principles embodied in those early drafts are reflected in the present Partnership document.

Conscious of the need for more Governments to be involved as willing, active partners, CMS is hopeful that this informal, voluntary partnership will serve as a bridge to a more permanent arrangement under its auspices. We note in this regard that more than half of the States covered by the Partnership are either Parties to the Convention or are participating in species Agreements developed under its auspices. The present partnership will be complementary to most of the CMS initiatives I already mentioned above, notably AEWA, CAF, and the Siberian Crane MoU. CMS stands ready to discuss the establishment of appropriate coordination arrangements.

The CMS Standing Committee at its 31st Meeting, endorsed the East Asian Flyway Partnership initiative and encouraged all Parties and other States from the region to join it.

The Standing Committee further decided that it would be appropriate for the Secretariat to indicate the Convention's willingness to participate in the Partnership's implementation by formally endorsing the text, and to make arrangements to include appropriate provisions in its programme of work.

Without prejudice to their potential endorsement of the Partnership, the Secretariat and undersigned Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species acknowledge that the Partnership could fulfil the conditions of a non-binding agreement under Article IV (4) of the Convention, and recognize it as such.

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