



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 37th MEETING OF THE CMS STANDING COMMITTEE
(23-24 NOVEMBER 2010, BONN, GERMANY)**

INTRODUCTION

AEWA was concluded in 1995 and entered into force in 1999. So far 62 of the 118 Range States (as well as the European Community) to AEWA have ratified the Agreement and more are expected to do so in the months to come. The Agreement covers 255 species of waterbirds including 20 seabirds, which were included by MOP4 in September 2008.

This report represents a brief overview of the contribution of the AEWA Secretariat to the implementation of the Agreement, highlighting some main activities since the last meeting of the CMS StC in December 2009.

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 (SSAP)

All the seven International Single Species Action Plans (SSAP) adopted by MOP4 (see the list below) were printed by the Secretariat and also published on the AEWa website:

<http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/index.htm>

- 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*

Following the approval by the 9th meeting of the Technical Committee of generic Terms of Reference for AEWa Species Working Groups, the Secretariat established cooperation with several NGOs to assist in the coordination of the work of seven such groups.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust will be providing coordination to the AEWa International Working Groups on the White-headed Duck and the Red-breasted Goose. The Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan is in charge of the Sociable Lapwing International Working Group, while BirdLife International undertook a large task, involving support towards coordinating governments' activities for the conservation of four species – the Northern Bald Ibis, the Lesser Flamingo, the White-winged Flufftail and the Madagascar Pond-heron.

The commissioning of the coordination of the working group on the Black-tailed Godwit is currently under a discussion with an organisation in the Netherlands.

Action planning processes are ongoing for the following species/populations: Slaty Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*), Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*), Siberian-NW European population of the Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*).

Two SSAPs are being revised – for the Sociable Lapwing and for the Red-breasted Goose (in cooperation with the European Commission).

The Dark-bellied Brent Goose working group met in mid-December 2009 and decided that no SSAP is needed for the species; instead it was decided that a conservation brief will be put together and presented to the next MOP.

Lesser White-fronted Goose

The overall coordination for the implementation of the SSAP for the Western Palearctic population of the Lesser White-fronted Goose was placed within the AEWA Secretariat and is currently being facilitated by the Coordinator for the Lesser White-fronted Goose. This post is currently sponsored by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

The overall implementation approach of the Secretariat is to encourage and assist all key Range States to establish national working groups and national action plans for the species. To this aim, the Secretariat convened the International LWfG Working Group as foreseen in the Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) in 2009. The first meeting of the group will be held in Helsinki on the 30th of November and the 1st of December 2010.

Efforts to institutionalize LWfG conservation in all the key Range States is a lengthy process, which makes it crucial to simultaneously back this work with concrete conservation measures targeting key threats to the species. Therefore the Secretariat is assisting in the planning of and fundraising for LWfG conservation projects in accordance with the priorities set out in the SSAP. The focus for these concentrate conservation efforts is currently on those Range States outside of Europe where the threats to the species are thought to be most severe (i.e. Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan etc.).

Concrete conservation projects facilitated by the Secretariat in 2010 include; a LWfG monitoring mission to the Syrian Arab Republic in February 2010 to identify potential key LWfG wintering sites in Syria as well as train local conservationists in identifying LWfG, an ongoing project in the Kumo-Manych Depression in Kalmykia, Russian Federation for the regulation of spring and autumn hunting on waterbirds during spring and autumn migration and an extensive monitoring mission in Kazakhstan in October 2010 followed by a workshop in Kostanay, Kazakhstan facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat with the aim to establish start the drafting of a national Action Plan for the species.

The Secretariat is also involved in conservation measures along the LWfG European flyway: A new EU LIFE+ project application for the LWfG was submitted to the EU Commission in September 2010 and, if accepted, the AEWA Secretariat will also be a project partner and beneficiary. A first preparatory meeting was arranged in Greece in March 2010 by the Hellenistic Ornithological Society (HOS), WWF Finland and the AEWA Secretariat.

The AEWA Secretariat also facilitates the work of the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (RECAP Committee). The third RECAP Committee meeting was held in October 2010 at the UN Campus in Bonn. For more information, please see:

http://www.unep-awa.org/news/news_lwfg/lwfg_news.htm

Adaptive Management Plans

Following up on paragraph 4.3.4 of the AEWA Action Plan and target 2.5 of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017, the development of the first Adaptive Management Plan for a hunted population was launched recently. The AMP deals with the Svalbard-breeding population of the Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). The process is being financed by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

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 web-based portal combines the databases on Ramsar Sites, the International Waterbird Database, the Important Bird Area Database and the World Protected Area Database. A beta version of the “CSN Tool” was launched at the 15th Anniversary of AEWA in June 2010 in The Hague, the Netherlands and it is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2010: A first beta-version of the CSN Tool is already accessible via the WOW Project website:

<http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool>

In June 2010 the AEWA Secretariat, also representing the CMS Secretariat, took part in a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) (jointly undertaken by the three MEAs) to Congo on advising the Government of Congo on the conservation of Cayo-Loufoualeba Ramsar Site. The RAM report was approved and is now available here:

http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/ram/ram_rpt_66e.pdf

3) Management of Human Activities

Implementation Review Process (IRP)

To assist in the implementation of the Agreement an Implementation Review Process was established. It was decided that the Standing Committee will undertake this Process. It is expected that the Implementation Review Process will lead to an increase in the level of implementation of the Agreement.

In late 2009, the first IRP case was launched dealing with the illegal hunting of the Sociable Lapwing in Syria. In the end of February 2010 an AEWA on-the-spot assessment mission took place. The mission report and recommendations were approved by the AEWA Standing Committee in June 2010 and were transmitted to the Syrian authorities for further implementation. The IRP report is available here:

<http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/irp/index.htm>.

The work on this first IRP case was sponsored through a voluntary contribution of the Government of Germany. A small grant was made available to BirdLife International to provide assistance in the autumn of 2010 to the Syrian government in the implementation of the IRP recommendations.

4) Information and education

Information activities

At MOP3 the AEWA Communication Strategy was adopted and a comprehensive overview of the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy (Document AEWA/MOP 4.18) was prepared by the AEWA Secretariat for the 4th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA (MOP4), which took place from 15-19 September 2008 in Antananarivo, Madagascar. A recent

“Update on the status of the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy” (AEWA StC 6.7) was also prepared by the AEWA Secretariat for the 6th Meeting of the AEWA Standing Committee, which took place 16-17 June 2010 in The Hague, the Netherlands. This full report can be found here:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/stc_meetings/stc6docs/pdf/stc6_7_report_communication_strategy.pdf

Outputs and achievements in the implementation of the strategy since 2009 include:

I. Development of websites:

Substantial improvements have been made to the AEWA Website, including new pages for AEWA activities, such as the African Initiative, WetCap, Small Grants Fund, Single Species Action Plans and the AEWA Implementation Review Process (IRP).

- 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)

II. Development of Information materials / Print publications:

- a) E-newsletter (every two months);
- b) Agreement Text – Print Publication ;
- c) AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017;
- d) Black-tailed Godwit Book;
- e) AEWA History Book;
- f) African-Initiative leaflet;
- g) Flyway Conservation at Work (WOW Publication / Newsletter);
- h) Seven International Single Species Action Plans (as listed above).

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 a joint initiative between the AEWA and CMS Secretariat and has been celebrated annually and the number of countries participating in the event has grown each year.

In 2010 the theme of WMBD was “Save migratory birds in crisis – every species counts!”. The theme was closely linked to the International Year of Biodiversity raising awareness on globally threatened migratory birds, with a particular focus on those on the very edge of extinction – the Critically Endangered migratory birds. In line with the International Year of Biodiversity, the 2010 WMBD theme highlighted how migratory birds are part of the biological diversity and how the threat of extinction faced by individual bird species is a reflection of the larger extinction crisis threatening other species and the natural diversity that underpins all life on earth. In 2010 over 90 events in over 40 countries were registered on the WMBD website (www.worldmigratorybirdday.org).

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 currently 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.

A 'Flyway Training Kit' has also been developed as part of the capacity building component of the WOW Project to enhance decision-making and technical capacity for wetland management and migratory waterbird conservation in the AEWA region.

Launched in May 2010, the Flyway Training Kit (FTK) was developed in collaboration with over 40 international conservation training institutions that are committed and involved in the conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetland habitats in Africa and Eurasia. The comprehensive kit has three main sections focusing on Understanding, Applying and Communicating the flyway conservation approach. It includes user-friendly and illustrated text, course planning tools, practical exercises and support material, ready-to-use presentations, 4 CDs with all relevant files and reference literature. Content within the FTK can be tailored to individual regional, national and local training needs, providing a flexible platform for a wide range of training courses and awareness raising activities. The Flyway Training Kit can be downloaded in pdf format from the WOW website at

<http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/flywaytrainingkit> and is available in three main languages used in the project region: French, Russian and Arabic.

5. Monitoring and research

Over the last year, the AEWA Secretariat supported the International Waterbird Census and the purchase of satellite transmitters for tracking of Slender-billed Curlews in case the species was observed in the course of the field surveys coordinated by the species working group under the CMS MoU.

6. Implementation

Projects and programmes are developed to improve and support the implementation of the Agreement. At each MOP a list of International Implementation Tasks is 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. The project was implemented for one year, however due to change of priorities within AECID, the further funding and continuation of the project are unlikely to be realised.
- 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 1 August 2009, 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.

As part of the implementation of the African Initiative, the Secretariat launched the first cycle of the AEWA Small Grant Fund, approved through Resolution 1.7. Funds available in the first cycle constituted 70,000 Euros, including 20,000 Euros from the core budget and 56,500 Euros voluntary contribution from France.

From the 31 submissions the following four projects received support from SGF 2010:

- **Kenya:** Conserving the Madagascar Pond-heron in its non-breeding range – investigating its key sites and habitat requirements in Kenya and raising its profile nationally;
- **Madagascar:** Conservation of migratory waterbird species in Madagascar – improving the knowledge base and status of the Madagascar Pond-heron;
- **Egypt:** Assessment of breeding waterbird populations on ten Red Sea islands; and
- **Ethiopia:** White-winged Flufftail status survey, research and conservation.

Additional five projects from Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana and Benin were approved for funding in case more resources become available in the course of the year.

For more information on SGF 2010 please see this link:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/news_elements/2010/small_grants_fund_programme_2010.htm

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Celebration of the AEWA's 15th anniversary

The Agreement celebrated its 15th Anniversary in The Hague, the Netherlands on 14-15 June 2010. The Hague is where AEWA was concluded on 16 June 1995 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Netherlands is also an important breeding, staging and wintering ground for millions of migratory waterbirds.

The Symposium was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and was facilitated by Dr. Gerard C. Boere, one of AEWA's founding fathers. The two-day event was opened by Prof. Dr. André van der Zande, Secretary General of LNV on behalf of the Minister, Her Excellency, Ms. Gerda Verburg and by Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species. Representatives from over 25 countries and a large number of partner organizations participated in the two day event, celebrating 15 years of success in waterbird conservation and defining the major challenges that lie ahead, which can only be tackled successfully if all stakeholders join forces. During the two-

day Symposium, a number of workshops were held on various issues, such as climate change, land use developments and the sustainable management of migratory birds.

The discussions and outcomes of the workshops and the plenary discussions culminated in a declaration -**The Hague Action Statement** - which defines the Agreement's role in the future of international waterbird conservation and identifies the steps to be taken in order to protect migratory waterbirds in the most efficient way; particularly with regard to the 5th Meeting of the Parties (MOP5), which is scheduled to take place on 14-18 May 2012 in La Rochelle, France. The Hage Action Statement can be downloaded under:

(http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/symposium/docs/the_hague_action_statement.pdf)

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat will be publishing a special newsletter devoted exclusively to the 15th Anniversary Symposium of AEWA at the end of the year. The newsletter will be accompanied by a multimedia website dedicated to this special event, which will include all the presentations and several interviews conducted with participants of the Symposium. For more information see: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/symposium/symposium.htm>

Recruitment of new Contracting Parties

A promotional workshop for the Russian Federation was organised in Moscow on 30-31 March 2010 with the support of the Government of the Netherlands. The workshop, chaired by the AEWA Patron Dr. Gerard C. Boere, was attended by experts from throughout the country, as well as internationally, and representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology. Please visit this page on the AEWA web site for more information on the event and reading the workshop conclusions and recommendations:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/news_elements/2010/moscow_workshop.htm

On the 23rd and 24th of September 2010, an information and awareness-raising workshop on the accession of Burkina Faso to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) took place in Loubila, Burkina Faso. The workshop was jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment and Livelihoods in Burkina Faso (MECV) and the AEWA Secretariat, and its implementation was made possible thanks to a voluntary financial contribution from the Swiss Government. The workshop brought together 31 participants from the Burkina Faso public administration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation - MAECR, Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Environment and Livelihoods), non-governmental organizations (International Union for the Conservation of Nature – IUCN and the Foundation of Friends of Nature – NATURAMA, the BirdLife Partner in Burkina Faso), and the AEWA Secretariat. A final declaration was signed between the Ministry of Environment and Livelihoods and the AEWA Secretariat outlining the road map towards the accession of Burkina Faso to AEWA. For more information please see this link:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/news_elements/2010/workshop_burkina_faso.htm

Preparations for the 5th Meeting of the Parties (MOP5)

The Government of France offered to host the 5th Meeting of the Parties (MOP5) at MOP4 in Madagascar in 2008, which was accepted with great appreciation by the Parties. MOP5 is scheduled to take place from 14 - 18 May 2012 in La Rochelle, France and preparations for this important event are well underway.

The French Government has set up an organization committee consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Sea (MEEDDM), Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental (OMPO), Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS), BirdLife partner Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO), France Nature

Environnement (FNE), Fédération Nationale des Chasseurs (FNC) and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. The organization committee is taking care of the logistical preparations for MOP5. Its first preparatory meeting, which was attended by AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten, was convened in Paris on 22 April. A second meeting took place in the French capital on 8 September.

For the venue of MOP5, the organizers have chosen La Rochelle, a major conference center and seaport city on the Atlantic coast, which offers all the facilities required to ensure a successful meeting.

The Secretariat recently sent a first announcement letter to all Contracting Parties, informing them, among other things, about the date and venue of MOP as well as indicating deadlines for the submission of proposals for amendment of the Agreement or its annexes and National Reports.

With funding from the core budget and a voluntary contribution from Switzerland the Secretariat commissioned to Wetlands International the preparation of the 5th edition of the Conservation Status Report – a major review of the status of the AEWA populations submitted to each MOP. The first draft is expected to be ready in March 2011.

Latest publications

- **International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*** : http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/lesser_flamingo/index.htm
- **International Single Species Action Plan for the Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*** : http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/eurasian_spoonbill/index.htm
- **International Single Species Action Plans for the Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***: http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/bt_godwit/index.htm
- **International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus***: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/lwfg/index.htm>
- **International Single Species Action Plan for the Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*** http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/maccoa_duck/index.htm
- **International Single Species Action Plan for the White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi***: http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/ww_flufftail/index.htm
- **International Single Species Action Plan for the Madagascar Pond-Heron *Ardeola idea***: http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/madag_pond_heron/index.htm
- **Flyway Conservation at Work (WOW Flyway News)**
<http://wow.wetlands.org/ABOUTWOW/LATESTNEWS/tabid/125/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2164/Default.aspx>
- **E-newsletter**
http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/e_newsletter_archive.htm
- **Agreement text:**
http://www.unep-aewa.org/documents/agreement_text/agree_main.htm
- **AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017**
http://www.unep-aewa.org/documents/agreement_text/strategic-plan.htm

- **African Initiative leaflet**
<http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/africaninitiative/publication/index.htm>
- **AEWA History Book**
http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/books/aewa_history_book_sm.pdf
- **Black-tailed Godwit Book:**
English.: http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/books/btg_engl_sm.pdf
French: http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/books/btg_fr_sm.pdf