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MEETING TO CONCLUDE AND ENDORSE  
THE PROPOSED CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY  
ACTION PLAN TO CONSERVE MIGRATORY  
WATERBIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS  
New Delhi, 10-13 June 2005  
Agenda Item 8.0

**PROPOSALS TO IMPLEMENT THE CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY ACTION PLAN  
TO CONSERVE MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS: OPTIONS  
FOR CONSIDERATION**

*(Produced by Wetlands International in consultation with the CMS Secretariat)*

### **Background**

1. Conserving migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) is a shared responsibility of the CAF Range States. This responsibility can be most effectively fulfilled by coordinating the development and implementation of actions at national and local levels, and at a flyway-scale.
2. The proposed Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to Conserve Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats (see Doc. CMS/CAF/5) would provide a flyway level mechanism to:
  - build on, coordinate and complement existing conservation actions undertaken by Range States individually;
  - provide opportunities to link existing national and local/site activities of governments and non-government organisations at the sub-regional and flyway levels;
  - provide a framework for coordinated new activities to be developed and implemented at three scales: flyway, national and local/site level;
  - complement and strengthen higher level programmes and actions to promote regional and national cooperation and conservation action at the landscape levels across the flyway that are being undertaken or planned by conventions, development agencies and international non-government organisations and others; and

- provide a platform for integrating biodiversity conservation action into sustainable development.

3. Therefore, even though the Action Plan will be primarily directed to the Range States, it should be viewed as a mechanism that could provide a broader context for existing and new migratory waterbird and habitat conservation activities undertaken by all actors engaged within the region and not just the Range States. Range States will need to proactively involve all of these actors to develop and implement a range of activities at the site, national and international scales. The Action Plan can help to support this.

Key international components of the Action Plan include:

- Developing priority conservation actions for threatened species or species with low populations (paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2);
- Developing (an) international network(s) of sites important for migratory waterbirds (paragraph 5.3);
- Developing conservation guidelines (paragraph 5.4);
- Developing a monitoring strategy for - and strengthening the monitoring capacity in the region to inform and prioritise implementation (paragraphs 4.4, 5.4 and 5.5);
- Preparing international reviews and compiling of flyway scale documentation to inform implementation (paragraph 5.5); and
- Identifying additional resources to support implementation (paragraph 5.8).

4. Implementation of the Action Plan will benefit from the development of a regularly reviewed, prioritised list of flyway-level implementation activities. Such activities would provide a basis to develop a more detailed implementation plan and schedule whose implementation could be facilitated through an agreed coordinated mechanism.

### **Coordination Mechanism to Support Action Plan Implementation**

5. To successfully support Action Plan implementation, an interim coordination mechanism could be envisioned to, among other things, support development of flyway-level projects or national level projects requiring international cooperation. Whatever legal and institutional option is ultimately chosen, a regionally based interim coordination mechanism could be created whether hosted by a Range State or an IGO/NGO. A partnership arrangement, including the provision of financial and in-kind support, would be critical to support this.

### **Possible First Tranche of Activities to Support the CAF Action Plan**

6. Given that international cooperation on the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway is in its initial stages, there is a strong need to develop flyway-wide overviews to inform decision makers on waterbird and habitat conservation needs and enable more targeted conservation effort at both national and international levels.

7. Seven flyway level concepts that address selected priority activities outlined in the proposed CAF Action Plan have been identified for implementation in the first three years (Annex I).

8. Range States are invited to identify additional flyway level priority activities for consideration. These and additional priority activities identified by the 2005 New Delhi meeting would also need to be reviewed and considered for implementation.

**Actions requested:**

The Range States within the CAF region participating in the meeting are invited to:

- Consider a possible first tranche of concepts for international priority activities to support the CAF Action Plan's initial implementation within the first three years after its endorsement.
- Identify other international priority activities that should be added to the list and considered for implementation within the first three years.
- Advise on interest to lead on or facilitate implementation of listed priority activities.
- Identify opportunities for financial and in kind support from Range States and other potential partners to develop and implement the priority activities.
- Consider the desirability of a coordination mechanism especially to support interim implementation of the CAF Action Plan, and invite the CMS Secretariat to further explore this with the Range States and other potential partners.

## **Annex I: Possible First Tranche of Concepts to Support Implementation of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats**

Seven flyway level priority activities are proposed to support the CAF Action Plan's implementation in the first three years after it is endorsed. For each activity, an indicative timescale along with the types of activity involved is presented for guidance. Detailed project proposals and budgets for each activity will be required at a later stage. The order of presentation does NOT reflect any order of priority.

A. Developing an overview of the status and conservation issues for migratory waterbirds and habitats in the Flyway:

1. Prepare a flyway overview of the status and trends of waterbird populations in the Central Asian Flyway to determine future monitoring and conservation priorities.
2. Prepare a flyway status overview of national and international conservation aspects of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway as a basis for cooperative conservation action.
3. Establish a flyway network of key contacts and collate an international register of Central Asian Flyway waterbird and habitat projects.
4. Prepare a directory of sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway.
5. Develop a framework to establish a "Central Asian Flyway Site Network".
6. Develop a monitoring strategy and strengthen capacity for monitoring waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway.

B. Strategic Planning in the Flyway

7. Develop a medium-term Flyway Strategic Plan (2006-2008) to support implementation of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan

### **1. Prepare a flyway overview of the status and trends of waterbird populations in the Central Asian Flyway to determine future monitoring and conservation priorities**

The CAF Action Plan covers at least 274 migratory waterbird populations of 175 species, including 26 globally threatened and near-threatened species that breed, migrate and spend the non-breeding (winter period) within the region. Reliable information on the current status of populations is required by Range States to plan and monitor conservation efforts for populations listed in the Action Plan<sup>1</sup>. At present, only limited information exists on the status, distribution and trends of populations as is reported in the third edition of *Waterbird Population Estimates* (Wetlands International 2002), whereas no information is available on breeding ranges, non-breeding distributions and migration routes, and long-term trends of all populations. The *CAF Waterbird Population Status Overview* would provide a detailed account of the distribution, status and population trends of each population. It will offer a more comprehensive basis for determining future monitoring and conservation priorities and actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Action 5.5.a. of the CAF Action Plan calls for developing a report "on the status and trends of populations", whereas Section 4.4 calls for various measures to improve the status of knowledge of distribution, population dynamics, status, trends of waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway.

**Duration:** Twelve months  
**Activities:** Review, drafting of population overviews, consultation, finalisation, publication, distribution, posting on website.

**2. Prepare a flyway-scale overview of national and international conservation aspects of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway, as a basis for cooperative conservation action**

The Central Asian Flyway comprises 30 Range States, many of which have a limited history of flyway-wide cooperation to conserve migratory waterbird species that have specialised requirements and are dependent on a variety of habitats. An overview is required that would describe the national and international conservation aspects of migratory waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway, including their management and conservation issues and assist flyway countries to determine who to work with, why, and how to work together to resolve migratory waterbird and habitat conservation issues of mutual concern.<sup>2</sup> The overview would summarize (a) national administrative structures for migratory waterbirds and wetlands, (b) national policy and legislation relating to migratory waterbirds and habitats, (c) international instruments relating to migratory waterbirds and habitats, (d) national government institutions, non-government organizations and academic institutions involved in migratory waterbirds and habitat research/management, (e) international programmes and activities relating to migratory waterbirds and habitats, (f) a listing of regular breeding and migratory waterbirds, (g) status of knowledge on migration routes, staging sites, and non-breeding areas, and (h) identify waterbird populations of conservation concern. The overview will thus also provide a more comprehensive and up-to-date basis for planning future conservation programmes and actions.

**Duration:** Twelve months  
**Activities:** Review, drafting of national sections and flyway overview sections, consultation, finalisation, publication, distribution, posting on website.

**3. Establish a Central Asian Flyway network of key contacts and collate an international register of waterbird and habitat projects**

The CAF Action Plan outlines actions needed for: (a) species conservation, (b) habitat conservation, (c) management of human activities, (d) research and monitoring, and (e) training, education and public awareness. Implementation of these actions will require establishing and strengthening networks of key contacts and experts. At present, there is a range of national and international projects and activities on waterbirds that are ongoing in different countries (see Doc. CMS/CAF/Inf.12). There is a need to avoid duplication and to exploit mutual synergies offered by sharing information on these projects. Implementation of priorities as identified by the 2005 New Delhi Meeting will require co-ordination with many existing international co-operation projects in the CAF region. These international actions, together with ongoing and proposed national and local activities being undertaken by governments, technical institutions, NGOs and others, provide a powerful basis for the successful implementation of the CAF Action Plan. Establishing a flyway network of key

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<sup>2</sup> The Country Reports provided by Range States to the CAF New Delhi Meeting will provide a strong basis for the development of the overview. Additional work will be required to review and standardize country sections, collect missing information and developing flyway summaries and synthesis of national sections.

contacts and experts<sup>3</sup>, and developing an international register of all major regional projects, (web accessible to all Range States, technical institutions, development agencies and others) will provide a basis to develop further cooperation and activities<sup>4</sup>.

**Duration:** Twelve months  
**Activities:** Review, questionnaire survey, consultation, finalisation, posting on website.

#### **4. Prepare a *Directory of Sites of International Importance for Migratory Waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway* as a basis to establish a “Central Asian Flyway Site Network”**

Vital for the conservation of migratory waterbird populations is the proper management of key sites used by these birds on their annual migration cycle, during breeding, staging, moulting and non-breeding (wintering) periods, in addition to sites used as refuges during conditions of drought and cold/inclement weather. Improved coordination and management of these sites can be enhanced when the value of these sites is recognised in the national and international context, as through the establishment of an international Site Network that spans the Flyway<sup>5</sup>. Establishing the Site Network would require identifying all sites meeting approved criteria of international importance for all populations in each Range State in the Flyway region. Information on internationally important sites for waterbirds is available for some Range States in the flyway, including those that have developed national directories of important sites for species conservation, national inventories of wetlands of international importance for waterbirds (including as a basis for Ramsar Site designation), participate in the Important Bird Areas programme (coordinated by BirdLife International) and participate in the International Waterbird Census (coordinated by Wetlands International). Other unpublished information is also available for many sites based on one-off surveys and projects. Producing a *Directory of Sites of International Importance for Migratory Waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway* to collate all this information meets an urgent need to develop a standard reference for all Range States and other user groups. Gaps identified through such an analysis will provide a basis for prioritisation of future actions.

**Duration:** Twenty four months  
**Activities:** Review, drafting, drafting of national and flyway site overviews for each population, consultation, finalisation, posting on website.

#### **5. Develop a framework to establish a “Central Asian Flyway Site Network”**

Managing migratory populations depends on managing of a network of key sites used by the birds on their annual migration cycle, including sites used for breeding, staging and during the non-breeding (wintering) period. The CAF Action Plan calls for the establishment of a

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<sup>3</sup> Action 4.4.1 of the CAF Action Plan calls for the establishment of an international network of specialists to assist in this work.

<sup>4</sup> Implementation of the project would benefit from being coordinated with the AEWA Technical Committee which maintains register of international projects in the AEWA Agreement Area which overlaps with the northern part of the CAF region.

<sup>5</sup> Action 3.3.1 of the CAF Action Plan calls for establishing a Central Asian Flyway Site Network, to link national networks of waterbird sites of international importance across the Flyway.

Central Asian Flyway Site Network<sup>6</sup> and <sup>7</sup>. Based on the principle of establishing an ecological network of internationally important sites to promote conservation and sustainable management of wetlands and other habitats, the Network will also provide a mechanism to target actions to improve the well being of local people dependent on the sites.

Development of the Site Network will documents to be prepared in relation to the following: (a) defining the main purposes of the Site Network, (b) defining the institutional framework, flyway-wide and national coordination mechanisms to support and promote development of the Site Network, (c) developing of fund raising goals, strategies and responsibilities to sustain coordination and actions of the Site Network, (d) developing of criteria for identification of network sites of international importance for waterbirds, and (e) determining of a timeframe and procedure for establishment of the Site Network. Review and documentation and development of the network proposal will require extensive consultation with range states and partners through meetings.

<i>Duration:</i>	Eighteen months
<i>Activities:</i>	Review, drafting, consultation, meeting of a working group, documentation, posting on website.

## **6. Strengthen monitoring capacity for migratory waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway**

Regular and region-wide waterbird monitoring will provide the basis to determine the status and trends of populations and the effectiveness of management actions being implemented under the Action Plan<sup>8</sup>. The existing regional monitoring programmes for waterbirds in the Central Asian Flyway include the International Waterbird Census that is conducted every January (during the non-breeding period for most Arctic migrants) across the central, eastern and southern parts of Asia and Arabian Gulf States by national networks of mainly volunteers (coordinated by Wetlands International), and the annual International Breeding Conditions Survey on Arctic Birds that collates information on the arctic breeding grounds for many migratory waterbirds during June-August (coordinated by the Moscow State University). Information generated by these programmes is providing useful baseline information in many countries and has led to the identification of important sites and monitoring of many of them on a regular basis. A number of other surveys and local census programmes have also provided the basis to collect valuable information. However, as the region is large and there are many wetlands which are not covered, additional effort is needed to extend, enhance and

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<sup>6</sup> Action 3.3.1 of the CAF Action Plan states that “Range States shall actively support the establishment of the Central Asian Flyway Site Network, as a mechanism for linking national networks of waterbird sites of international importance across the Flyway. The Network will encourage implementation of a range of actions including, (a) information sharing for conservation and management of waterbird populations with focus on increasing awareness, (b) training to improve monitoring and management, (c) research and monitoring of habitats and waterbirds and (d) study tours for site managers”.

<sup>7</sup> The Fifth Meeting of Signatory States to the CMS Siberian Crane Memorandum of Understanding (Moscow, April 2004) agreed on the need to establish a network of sites critical for Siberian Cranes of the Western and Central populations to promote protection of key wetlands and coordination among the Range States in the Central Asian Flyway. The Flyways of the Siberian Crane form a small subset of internationally important sites used by migratory waterbird populations. Such a network of sites for Siberian Cranes could provide the basis to develop a larger site network for migratory waterbirds. The Site Network will be further conceptualised in a meeting held under the auspices of the MOU on 13 June 2005 in New Delhi.

<sup>8</sup> Actions 4.4.2, 4.4.8 and 4.4.9 of the CAF Action Plan call for an improved knowledge on waterbird populations based on collection of information.

strengthen the monitoring programmes to cover all important sites on a regular basis. Some important sites are very remote and require special expeditions.

Priorities include improving the selection of important and representative count sites (including implementation of special surveys/expeditions to remote sites), extending the monitoring coverage to include breeding and migration periods, providing training and equipment support to national volunteer networks to ensure consistency in data collection and reporting, building the capacity of national and flyway coordinators to improve coordination, data collation, entry, analysis and streamlining reporting at the national and flyway level, etc.

***Duration:*** Three years

***Activities:*** Planning, training workshops, in-field training, equipment support, surveys, training in database and network coordination, report preparation and dissemination, coordination.

## **7. Develop a medium-term Flyway Strategic Plan (2006-2008) to support implementation of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan**

Based on the discussion of the first tranche of concepts for priority flyway activities at the New Delhi meeting and a review of additional international priorities proposed by the various stakeholders, a comprehensive list of priorities will guide initial implementation of the CAF Action Plan. However, further strategic implementation of the Action Plan will necessitate development of a time-bound Flyway Strategic Plan with clear objectives and targets and proposed activities and for the setting of funding targets that allow for regular review of progress. The Flyway Strategic Plan would focus on activities requiring international cooperation<sup>9</sup>. Development of the Flyway Strategic Plan will require consultation with Range States, multilateral environmental agencies/agreements, scientific institutions and non-government organisations dealing with waterbirds and their habitats.

***Duration:*** Eighteen months

***Activities:*** Review, drafting, consultation, finalisation.

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<sup>9</sup> In addition, Range States will need to contribute to the Flyway Strategic Plan by developing national implementation plans. Conceptually national implementation plans would contribute to and would be an integral part of the Flyway Strategic Plan, however, Range States may also have some priorities that are different from international ones and that are specific for their national situation and can provide wider conservation benefits[0].