



SIXTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS: 9-14 NOVEMBER 2015

The sixth Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) will open today in Bonn, Germany, and will continue through Saturday, 14 November 2015. The meeting marks the 20th anniversary of AEWA, and will convene under the theme “Making flyway conservation happen.”

Representatives from governments and inter- and non-governmental organizations as well as scientists will discuss, among other things: implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017; implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2012-2017; implementation and revision of the AEWA International Implementation Tasks 2012-2015; and a common Information Management, Communication and Awareness-raising Team for AEWA and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). They will also review an Independent Analysis on Common Services and Synergies in the CMS Family.

Other agenda items include: financial and administrative matters, including a draft budget proposal for 2016-2018; implementation of the Communication Strategy and adoption of a new Communication Strategy; and proposals for amendments to the Agreement and/or its Annexes. Several technical issues are also on the agenda, including: International Single Species and Multi-species Action Plans and Management Plans; Conservation Guidelines; and issues affecting the conservation status of migratory waterbirds in the AEWA Region.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AEWA

Migratory species are especially vulnerable to a wide range of threats, including habitat loss in breeding areas, excessive hunting along migration routes and degradation of feeding grounds. In the early 1960s, international conservation organizations began to draw attention to these problems and called for a convention on migratory species.

In response, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) was adopted in 1979 and entered into force in 1983. CMS, also known as the Bonn Convention, recognizes that states must be the protectors of migratory species that live within or pass through their national jurisdictions. CMS aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their ranges, and currently has 121 parties.

The Convention was designed to allow for the expansion and revision of commitments, and to provide a framework through which parties may act to conserve migratory species and their habitats. One of the mechanisms established by CMS is the development of specialized regional agreements for the conservation and management of migratory species that have an unfavorable conservation status or that would benefit significantly from international cooperation. At present, seven agreements and 19 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been concluded in this regard. The largest of the agreements is the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, also known as the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

At the first Conference of Parties (COP1) to CMS, held in Bonn, Germany, in 1985, delegates decided to prepare an Agreement for the Western Palearctic Anatidae. Consequently, in 1988 the Government of the Netherlands started work on a draft Western Palearctic Waterfowl Agreement as part of its Western Palearctic Flyway conservation programme. During the drafting and consultation process, the name of the Agreement was changed into the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, emphasizing the importance of Africa for migratory birds.

The first consultative meeting of AEWA range states was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1994. In 1995, the final negotiation meeting was held in The Hague, the Netherlands. The meeting adopted the Agreement by consensus and accepted the offer of the Dutch Government to provide an Interim Secretariat. Opened for signature in 1996, the Agreement entered into force on 1 November 1999. Only a few days later, the first session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP1) took place in Cape Town, South Africa. This meeting, among other achievements, established a Technical Committee and adopted Conservation Guidelines. In 2000, a permanent Secretariat was created, administered by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and co-located with the CMS Secretariat in Bonn. The number of contracting parties currently stands at 75. Mauritania is the most recent country to accede, having joined the Agreement on 1 May 2015.

AEWA provides for coordinated and concerted action to be taken by the range states throughout the migration system of the waterbirds to which it applies. The Agreement has three annexes. Annex I outlines the Agreement’s geographical area, which covers countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia and Canada. Annex II lists the species of waterbirds to which the Agreement applies. The list includes 255 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their



annual cycle, including many species of divers, grebes, pelicans, cormorants, herons, storks, rails, ibises, spoonbills, flamingos, ducks, swans, geese, cranes, waders, gulls and terns, and the South African penguin. Annex III contains a comprehensive Action Plan, which describes actions to be undertaken in the areas of: species and habitat conservation; management of human activities; research and monitoring; education and information; and implementation. The Action Plan also contains a table on the conservation status of populations of migratory waterbirds.

AEWA MOP2: This meeting took place from 25-27 September 2002, in Bonn, Germany. MOP2 established a Standing Committee and added 65 species to Annex II of the Agreement. It also adopted resolutions on, *inter alia*: phasing out lead shot for hunting in wetlands; draft conservation guidelines on national legislation and on introduced non-native waterbirds; International Implementation Priorities 2003-2007; International Single Species Action Plans; and the budget for 2003-2005.

AEWA MOP3: This meeting was held from 23-27 October 2005, in Dakar, Senegal. Delegates adopted resolutions on, *inter alia*: avian influenza; climate change in relation to migratory waterbirds; guidelines for criteria used in Table 1 of the Action Plan; online reporting; an international partnership for support of waterbird population assessments; amendments to the annexes to the Agreement; a Strategic Plan; a Communication Strategy; International Implementation Priorities 2006-2008; International Single Species Action Plans; and the budget for 2006-2008.

AEWA MOP4: This meeting convened from 15-19 September 2008, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. This meeting adopted 20 resolutions including: a budget allowing the Secretariat to maintain its level of staff and activities, with additional costs for interpretation and meeting travel support covered by funds from increased minimum annual contributions; and a resolution establishing an African Initiative for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats in Africa, funded partially out of the core budget.

AEWA MOP5: This meeting took place from 14-18 May 2012, in La Rochelle, France. Delegates adopted 27 resolutions. Among the meeting's main achievements was the adoption of a budget that allowed the Secretariat to maintain its level of staff and activities. In addition, the African Initiative was granted additional technical assistance through the provision of a France-based and -funded technical coordinator, working directly with African subregional coordinators. Delegates also adopted, among other things: several new International Single Species Action Plans and Species Management Plans; amendments to the Agreement's Action Plan; and resolutions on conservation guidelines and issues affecting the conservation status of migratory waterbirds in the AEWA region.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

RAPTOR MoU MoS1: The first Meeting of Signatories (MoS1) to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) (9-11 December 2012, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates) agreed on: a process on future work and national reporting; the creation of the Raptors MoU Coordination Unit and Technical and Advisory Group; identification of priority areas to address the threats facing birds of prey; and the endorsement of CMS Resolution 10.11 on power lines and migratory birds.

GREAT BUSTARD MoU MoS3: MoS3 to the MoU on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (8-12 April 2013, Szarvas, Hungary) adopted a new Action Plan for the period 2012-2016. The meeting revised the Medium-term International Work Programme to elaborate how the plan will be implemented in coming years. Participants adopted a series of guidelines on reintroduction, population monitoring and mitigation of the impacts of infrastructure, as well as a joint research programme. They also highlighted synergies with CMS Resolution 10.11 on power lines and CMS Resolution 10.26 on poisoning, as well as with components of the Raptors MoU Action Plan.

CMS STANDING COMMITTEE 41: The 41st Meeting of the Standing Committee (27-28 November 2013, Bonn, Germany) discussed the increased competition for funding with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the need for synergies, policy coherence and greater efficiency. The Secretariat highlighted progress in the development of an international action plan for the conservation of argali sheep as well as the Central Asian Initiative to conserve migratory mammals. Participants also discussed: the future shape of CMS; progress in implementing Resolution 10.9 (reform of the Scientific Council); the review and the viability of MoUs and agreements; and opportunities to merge common services and areas in the CMS Family.

RAPTOR MoU TAG1: The First Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG1) of the Raptors MoU (21-24 January 2014, Edinburgh, Scotland) developed a two-year work plan (2014-2015) with ten key tasks. Among the highest priorities identified were activities to address the central threats to migratory birds of prey, such as electrocution, poisoning and illegal persecution.

CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL 18: The Scientific Council (1-3 July 2014, Bonn, Germany) discussed, among other things: the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023; impacts of invasive alien species on animals listed under CMS; individual listing proposals submitted to COP11 for the amendment of CMS Appendices; the draft Saker Falcon Global Action Plan; and the reduction of the risk of bird poisoning and the illegal killing of migratory birds.

CMS COP11: The eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP11) to CMS met from 3-9 November 2014, in Quito, Ecuador. Delegates adopted 35 resolutions, including on: the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023; the Programme of Work on Climate Change and Migratory Species; renewable energy and migratory species; enhancing the relationship between the CMS family and civil society; fighting wildlife crime and offenses within and beyond borders; and enhancing synergies and common services among the CMS family of instruments. The COP decided to list 31 new species to the appendices of the Convention, including the great bustard.

RAPTOR MoU MoS2: This meeting was held from 5-8 October 2015 in Trondheim, Norway. Among other things, signatories reviewed the implementation of the MoU and Action Plan. They agreed to: amend Annex 1 of the Raptors MoU's species list to include 12 additional African-Eurasian vulture species and six additional raptor species; amend Annex 3, the geographic scope of the Raptors MoU, to include South Sudan in the range state list; set a deadline of 31 December 2016 for receipt of National or Regional Raptor Conservation Strategies; and add Comoros as the 53rd signatory.