



AEWA MOP6 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2015

The sixth Meeting of the Parties (MOP6) to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) opened today in Bonn, Germany.

In the morning, delegates heard opening statements and addressed organizational matters. In the afternoon, they heard reports from AEWA bodies and discussed, *inter alia*, CMS developments relevant to AEWA. They also attended an AEWA 20th Anniversary Celebration Ceremony.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

François Lamarque (France), former AEWA MOP Chair, opened the meeting.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), via video, linked AEWA to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that biodiversity conservation is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Jacques Trouvilliez, AEWA Executive Secretary, stated that AEWA has much to be proud of but that “the path ahead remains long.” He noted that without solid scientific knowledge, public policies and commitment by all, “wetlands will dry up little by little, and the skies will no longer be filled with the calls of migratory birds.”

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Delegates adopted the Rules of Procedure (AEWA/MOP 6.2). They elected Fernando Spina (Italy) as MOP6 Chair and Uganda as Vice-Chair, and adopted the Provisional Agenda and Meeting Schedule (AEWA/MOP 6.3 Rev.2 and AEWA/MOP 6.4 Rev.2). They decided, after considerable discussion, to close the Working Group on Finance and Administrative Matters to observers, but to invite UNEP and the AEWA Secretariat to contribute as necessary.

Ghana, Libya, Luxembourg and the Netherlands were elected to the Credentials Committee. Delegates elected Chandanee Jhowry (Mauritius) as Chair of the Finance and Administrative Working Group and David Stroud (UK) as Chair of the Scientific and Technical Working Group, and admitted numerous observers to MOP6.

OPENING STATEMENTS

Noting the 20th anniversary of AEWA, the EU, on behalf of its member states, requested that parties give outcome-oriented input at MOP6 as “the best birthday gift for such an important agreement.” He called for, *inter alia*, progress on facilitating synergies between CMS instruments and other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

A number of parties submitted opening statements in writing.

AEWA WATERBIRD CONSERVATION AWARDS

Lamarque introduced the AEWA Waterbird Conservation Awards, which recognize individuals and institutions for their contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of

waterbirds. Standing Committee (SC) Chair Øystein Størkersen (Norway) presented the 2015 Award in the Individual Category to Abdoulaye Ndiaye, for his work on wetland management and bird conservation across Western, Central and Eastern Africa. The 2015 Award in the Institutional Category was given to the Association Inter-Villageoise du Ndiaël (the Inter-village Association of the Ndiaël), for floodplain restoration efforts by villagers near the special wildlife reserve of the Ndiaël, a Ramsar site in Senegal. Accepting the award on behalf of the Association, Amadou Sow highlighted the importance of collaboration between international organizations and local communities in wetlands restoration.

REPORTS

STANDING COMMITTEE: SC Chair Størkersen presented the SC’s report (AEWA/MOP 6.6).

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE: Technical Committee (TC) Chair David Stroud (UK) reported on the TC’s activities (AEWA/MOP 6.7). He said the TC recommends that AEWA, *inter alia*: put greater focus on the sustainable use and hunting of migratory water birds; facilitate initiatives targeting children and youth; coordinate with relevant MEAs and organizations; and develop more strategic funding partnerships.

Stroud presented the TC’s costed and prioritized work programme for the next three years. He said that due to lack of adequate funding, the TC has been unable to complete many tasks assigned to it by parties before this MOP. He asked that the new core budget include funding for TC work.

DEPOSITARY: The NETHERLANDS provided the status report from the Depositary (AEWA/MOP 6.8). She noted that ten parties had acceded to AEWA since MOP5, bringing the total number of contracting parties to 75.

SECRETARIAT: AEWA Executive Secretary Trouvilliez presented the report of the Secretariat 2012-2015 (AEWA/MOP 6.9). Trouvilliez highlighted, *inter alia*: recruitment of new parties to the Agreement; strategic cooperation with other organizations; the implementation and development of AEWA International Single Species Action and Management Plans (ISSAPs and ISSMPs); and policy-related developments, including on synergies with biodiversity-related conventions. He highlighted the importance of sufficient funding to enable the Secretariat to better serve parties.

SOUTH AFRICA called for a “best practices” website to improve information sharing between parties.

UNEP: Jiří Hlaváček, UNEP, reported on UNEP’s activities relevant to AEWA and CMS aimed at, among other things, clarifying the relations and strengthening programmatic cooperation between UNEP and MEA secretariats, including areas for potential synergies. He said a report will be presented to the Second UN Environment Assembly (UNEA2) in May



2016. He also highlighted efforts to incorporate MEA targets into the UN Development Assistance Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Upon NORWAY's suggestion, Hlaváček said he would provide his report in writing to the Secretariat, noting that he would also submit the outcomes of resolutions of UNEA1, including on illegal wildlife trade.

COMMON CMS/AEWA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING UNIT

AEWA Executive Secretary Trouvilliez reported on the pilot phase of the common CMS/AEWA Information, Communication and Awareness-raising Unit (AEWA/MOP 6.10 Rev.1 and AEWA/MOP Inf. 6.8). He highlighted that MOP6 must decide whether to continue with this joint communications unit or return to two separate units. He said if the joint unit is to continue, efforts should be made to: improve its management; set clear priorities; improve medium-term planning; fully implement the cost-sharing formula and monitor staff time allocation; and increase the technical capacity of the team. Discussions ensued on, *inter alia*, why cost calculation was not a part of the study and the benefits of the joint unit already witnessed.

CMS DEVELOPMENTS OF RELEVANCE TO AEWA

CMS Executive Secretary Bradnee Chambers presented the outcomes of CMS COP11 relevant to AEWA, including resolutions on: a strategic plan for migratory species; renewable energy; marine debris; enhancing synergies; preventing the poisoning and illegal killing of migratory birds; and taxonomy and nomenclature of birds on the CMS appendices. Noting that the pilot phase of the joint communications unit "wasn't always an easy ride," he supported its continuation.

CMS SC Chair Storkersen, who also serves as AEWA SC Chair, reported on the CMS 44th Standing Committee Decision on Enhancing Synergies and Common Services among the CMS Family Instruments (AEWA/MOP Inf.6.12). Noting that capacity-building, cross-cutting implementation issues, conference services and fundraising benefit from joint approaches between AEWA and CMS, he encouraged parties to support the continuation of the pilot phase.

MIGRATORY SPECIES CHAMPION AWARDS

Chair Spina elaborated on the Migratory Species Champion Programme, led by CMS, which promotes conservation initiatives under the CMS family that provide medium- and long-term financial support. CMS Executive Secretary Chambers and AEWA Executive Secretary Trouvilliez presented Migratory Bird Champion Awards to: the Norwegian government for supporting the conservation of the lesser white-fronted goose; the European Commission for its actions to combat the illegal killing of birds; and the German government for its long-term efforts to reconcile energy sector development with migratory animals conservation.

Sergey Dereliev, AEWA Secretariat, highlighted corporate fundraising efforts within the CMS family, including in the context of AEWA's African Initiative, and noted that funding remains a challenge.

20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CEREMONY

This celebration was introduced by AEWA Executive Secretary Trouvilliez and chaired by Abdoulaye Ndiaye, AEWA African Initiative.

Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, German State Secretary for Environment, addressed challenges in migratory species conservation, stressing the need to increase the number of AEWA contracting parties. She highlighted successful past and ongoing AEWA initiatives, including the Global Environment Facility Wings over Wetlands Project (2006-2010), the African Initiative and associated Plan of Action for Africa, and World Migratory Bird Day.

Gerard Boere, Honorary Patron of AEWA, reflected on the history and the future of waterbird conservation and AEWA. He highlighted that AEWA risks focusing too much on administration and information rather than implementation. He emphasized the importance of monitoring in the AEWA region.

Melissa Lewis, Tilburg University, reflected on AEWA's unique place in international environmental law for its: use of the precautionary principle; level of detail and legal rigor; and flexibility to evolve over time. She said AEWA is also progressive with respect to its stakeholder involvement and its role in monitoring and supporting implementation. Noting AEWA's current broad range of activities, she recommended it focus on its niche areas and better define its role vis-à-vis other MEAs.

Jesper Madsen, University of Aarhus, discussed the sustainable harvest of waterbirds within the African-Eurasian region. Noting the long history of waterbird hunting from the Arctic to Africa, he reviewed the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of adaptive harvest management. He said that with a few exceptions, it is not currently possible to assess the ecological sustainability of waterbird harvest in the AEWA region, noting that "we are managing by chance, we are flying blind."

Ndiaye discussed the meaning of "flyway conservation" in Africa and stressed that shared resources imply a shared responsibility for sustainable management. Among priority issues for implementing the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa, he identified, *inter alia*, the development of synergies, capacity building to fill monitoring gaps, fundraising, technical and scientific support, the engagement of local partners and wetlands conservation.

Nicola Crockford, BirdLife International, discussed AEWA's strong engagement with the NGO community as fostered through its "inclusive, objective, and transparent atmosphere." She lauded the technical excellence and commitment of the AEWA Secretariat and TC, and AEWA's prompt responsiveness to waterbird population trends. She described the collaborative role of NGOs and civil society in monitoring populations and identifying conservation priorities. She called for AEWA to, *inter alia*: give greater emphasis to implementation rather than documentation; increase resource mobilization from the private sector and non-environmental sectors of government; develop adaptive harvest management; maximize flyway conservation; and foster synergies within the CMS family.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Brilliant autumn colors and balmy temperatures were "birthday presents" awaiting delegates who arrived in Bonn for MOP6, which marks the 20th anniversary of AEWA. The spirit of celebration faded slightly during Monday's morning plenary, though, as participants tackled administrative and organizational matters. "I just zone out on those agenda items," said one delegate, referring in particular to quibbling over the "open" versus "closed" status of the Finance and Administrative Working Group – the first but probably not the last time budgetary issues will prove contentious at MOP6.

A disproportionate amount of time in morning plenary was also devoted to rustling up volunteers for the Credentials Committee, with parties so reluctant to participate that the AEWA Secretariat threatened to withhold lunch unless candidates stepped forward. "Seriously," the Secretariat exhorted the gathering, "we need to see more flags." The minimum number of volunteers eventually raised their flags, proving that delegates in Bonn are hungry – not only for lunch, one hopes, but also for the chance to tackle the more substantive issues further down MOP6's agenda. Given the overall state of waterbirds has worsened since MOP5, with eleven AEWA species upgraded to a higher threat status on the 2015 IUCN Red List, there's little time to waste.