



4th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES
15 – 19 September 2008, Antananarivo, Madagascar

“Flyway Conservation at Work – Review of the Past, Vision for the Future”

**REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE AGREEMENT ON
THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY
WATERBIRDS (AEWA) OVER THE PERIOD 2006-2008**

Introduction

The AEWA Standing Committee was established at the 2nd session of the Meeting of Parties (Germany, 2002) by Resolution 2.6. According to this Resolution the Standing Committee shall:

- (a) Carry out between sessions of the Meeting of the Parties, such interim activity on behalf of the Meeting as may be necessary;
- (b) Make recommendations for consideration at the next session of the Meeting of the Parties;
- (c) Oversee, on behalf of the Parties, the development and execution of the Secretariat’s budget as derived from the Trust Fund and other sources, and also all aspects of fund-raising undertaken by the Secretariat in order to carry out specific functions authorized by the Meeting of the Parties;
- (d) Oversee, as the representative of the Meeting of the Parties, the implementation of policy by the Secretariat and conduct of the Secretariat’s programmes;
- (e) Provide guidance and advice to the Secretariat on implementation of the Agreement, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of the Secretariat's functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
- (f) Represent the Meeting of the Parties, vis-à-vis the Government of the host country of the Secretariat’s headquarters, the United Nations Environment Programme and other international organizations for consideration of matters relating to the Agreement and its Secretariat;
- (g) Act as bureau at the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Meeting of the Parties;
- (h) Report to the Meeting of the Parties on the activities that have been carried out between ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties;
- (i) Perform any other functions that may be entrusted to it by the Meeting of the Parties.

The Standing Committee consists of seven Contracting Parties being: Tanzania (Chair), Germany, Romania, Egypt, Senegal, the Netherlands/ Depository (Vice-Chair) and Madagascar (Host MOP4).

Since its establishment in 2002, this Committee met annually between MOP2 and MOP3 and, due to budget limitations, only twice during the ensuing triennium, between MOP3 and MOP4.

This report will briefly inform you about the main activities of the Standing Committee since MOP3.

Meetings of the Standing Committee

During the period 2006-2008 only two meetings of the Standing Committee have taken place, being the fourth and fifth meetings respectively from 20-21 November 2006 and from 24-25 June 2008. Meetings of

the Standing Committee are usually held in Bonn. Since the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat moved to the new UN Premises 'Langen Eugen' in 2006, meetings of the Standing Committee have been taking place at that venue, which has excellent meeting facilities.

Unfortunately the Standing Committee meeting scheduled for 2007 could not take place due to a lack of financial resources. At MOP3 it was decided that the travel and subsistence costs of eligible funded Members of the Standing Committee should no longer be part of the Core Budget. This means that these costs now have to be covered by voluntary contributions. Although the Executive Secretary did his utmost to raise funds for the Standing Committee meeting it was extremely difficult to secure voluntary contributions for the purpose of meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Agreement. *Therefore the Standing Committee strongly recommends to the Meeting of Parties to reconsider the current arrangements for covering the costs of funded delegates.* In the view of the Standing Committee sufficient funds should be allocated in the Core Budget to cover the costs of both Technical and Standing Committee meetings. Without such a provision the Standing Committee will not be in a position to be able to carry out all the tasks specified by the Meeting of Parties and laid down in Resolution 2.6, effectively and appropriately. The efficient functioning of the Technical and Standing Committees should not depend solely on voluntary contributions.

At both meetings of the Standing Committee, progress made regarding the implementation of the Agreement was reviewed. The Standing Committee received written reports, which were presented by the Secretariat e.g. on the implementation of the International Implementation Priorities and noted that despite the limited resources available, good progress has been made.

The Standing Committee also reviewed the actual financial situation based on the overviews presented by the Secretariat regarding income and expenditures since MOP3. The Standing Committee noted that the Secretariat does its utmost to ensure that the financial situation is and will remain a healthy one. The Standing Committee also agreed on how to allocate contributions received from new Parties to some specific activities.

Unfortunately the Standing Committee also received information on the serious shortfall that the Wings over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project is facing. According to the latest information an amount of €1 million is still lacking to fully implement this project. However at the same time the Standing Committee took note of the fact that the implementation of this project is well underway and good progress has been made so far.

At each meeting, the Standing Committee received an update on the progress made regarding the implementation of the Communication Strategy. The Secretariat has also made significant progress in this area, taking into account the limited resources available. One activity especially worth mentioning is the launch of the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), an initiative of the Executive Secretary. When Avian Influenza spread to Europe mid 2005 he felt that CMS and AEWA should take this issue seriously. At that time migratory birds were receiving very negative publicity and were seen as being responsible for spreading the disease. The fear was that this negative publicity could harm any conservation efforts and therefore the WMBD was created. The aim of this day is to raise awareness among the general public about the threats that migratory birds are facing. The Standing Committee has taken note of the success of WMBD, which has been celebrated annually since 2006. In 2008 more than 60 countries participated with over 140 different events. Although WMBD is a common CMS and AEWA activity most of the substantive work is done by the AEWA Secretariat. In addition to WMBD a scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza H5 N1 and Wild Birds was launched. The CMS and AEWA Secretariats are the founding fathers of this Task Force which is now led by CMS and FAO. At each meeting, the Standing Committee received the latest information on Avian Influenza which was highly appreciated.

The drafting of a Strategic Plan for the Agreement was initiated at StC4; the consultant contracted to draft the Strategic Plan had already drafted the Communication Strategy for AEWA. During the drafting procedure for the Communication Strategy, interviews were held with representatives of Contracting Parties, international NGOs, Members of the Technical and Standing Committee and last but not least with staff members of the CMS and AEWA Secretariats. Through these interviews the consultant gained a wealth of information that was also relevant for drafting the Strategic Plan so that the consultant was able to start work

on this immediately afterwards. Facilitated by the consultant, the Standing Committee took part in two group discussions with the aim of elaborating suggestions for the possible objectives and targets of the Strategic Plan. The discussion was very lively and many ideas and suggestion came up that were later on used by the consultant when drafting the Strategic Plan. At its 5th meeting, the Standing Committee reviewed the final draft and approved the submission of the Plan to MOP4 for formal adoption.

Furthermore the Secretariat provided information on progress made regarding the international reviews and some Single Species Action Plans. Regarding the latter, the Standing Committee approved the Action Plan for the Maccoa Duck at its 4th meeting.

On the subject of cooperation with other organisations the Standing Committee approved the drafting and concluding of a Memorandum of Cooperation with OMPO (Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental), at its 4th meeting.

The 5th meeting of the Standing Committee, which was the last before MOP4 was a very intensive meeting. During this meeting all substantive documents and 21 draft Resolutions were reviewed. The meeting agreed that these documents could be submitted to MOP4 for formal adoption.

For a full report on the 4th and 5th meetings of the Standing Committee please visit the AEWA website: http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/stc_meetings/stc_overview.htm

Activities of the Chair

The Chair of the Standing Committee has been involved in the establishment and recruitment for the post of Programme Officer (L-2).

The Chair participated in the launch of the World Migratory Bird Day and the Avian Influenza Workshop, which was organised back to back by CMS and AEWA in Kenya, 2006.

As indicated above, the planned meeting of the Standing Committee for 2007 was not able to take place. On the request of the Secretariat, the Chair reviewed and signed off the proposal on how to allocate contributions received from new Parties to some particular projects. This enabled the Secretariat to continue some of the activities and avoided any unnecessary delays or cancellations due to having to wait for a decision by the Standing Committee at its next meeting.

The Executive Secretary contacted the Chair at regular intervals throughout the triennium in order to provide an update on the activities of the Secretariat.