



AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF
AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS



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”

RESOLUTION 4.4

**DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF
THREATENED WATERBIRDS THROUGH ACTION PLANNING AND RE-
ESTABLISHMENT**

Noting that the processes of action planning for species including programmes of re-establishment can represent valuable means of improving the conservation status of endangered species,

Aware of the international guidance on best practice with respect of species re-establishments represented by the IUCN’s *Guidelines for Re-introductions* (1995),

Welcoming international reviews of the Implementation and Effectiveness of Single Species Action Plans (SSAP) (document AEWA/MOP 4.10) and Waterbird Re-establishment (document AEWA/MOP 4.11), and *Thanking* those Contracting Parties and other individuals and organisations who have outlined their previous experiences, which have been summarised in these reviews,

Stressing the key finding of the Review of waterbird re-establishment that those projects, which most closely conformed to the IUCN’s *Guidelines for Re-introductions*, were those which were most successful,

Recalling the obligation of Contracting Parties “to inform the Agreement secretariat, in advance, of all re-establishment programmes for programmes listed in Table I” [of the Action Plan] and that “a re-establishment plan should include assessment of the impact on the environment and shall be made widely available.”,

Welcoming the implementation and further development of Single Species Action Plans under the Agreement as a means of targeting focussed attention and conservation action for the most threatened waterbirds within the Agreement area,

Noting that the establishment of structures of international co-ordination, in particular of Working Groups, is critical to the success of plans, and leads to more effective delivery of conservation actions,

Noting with concern that most SSAPs relate to European waterbirds both as consequences of the existence of funding opportunities and of higher conservation capacity, yet there is a significant number of highly threatened waterbirds in other parts of the Agreement area that are in urgent need of targeted conservation actions, especially within Asia and Africa where land-use change and climatic change impacts are rapidly occurring, and

Conscious of the potential that the activities and policies of other multilateral and international organisations give to supplement AEWA’s objectives, especially in regions where there are currently few Contracting Parties; and *Desiring* to create active partnerships to this end.

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Urges* Contracting Parties, inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations to follow IUCN's *Guidelines for Re-introductions* with regard to projects for the re-establishment of waterbirds, and, in particular, to pay attention to key elements of best-practise summarised in the Annex to this Resolution;
2. *Requests* the Technical Committee, in cooperation with appropriate experts and the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Re-introduction Specialist Group (IUCN SSC RSG), to:
 - a) develop supplementary guidance for the re-establishment of waterbirds drawing from data and information compiled in the AEWA review, and *inter alia* including simple check-lists of necessary activities to guide conservation practitioners; and
 - b) develop a reporting structure, including a standard set of evaluation criteria, to encourage practitioners to provide detailed information about each project stage, and to make this information widely accessible; and
 - c) provide access to the AEWA re-establishment database, via the internet, so as to facilitate its updating by Contracting Parties and others with information on re-establishment projects, and as an aid to national reporting on re-establishments and the dissemination of such information;
3. *Urges* AEWA National Focal Points to maintain a national register of re-establishment projects occurring or planned to occur wholly or partly within their countries as an aid to their reporting to the Agreement Secretariat further to paragraph 2.4 of the Agreement's Action Plan;
4. *Requests* the Technical Committee to work with other international parties developing international action plans for waterbirds, *inter alia* the Convention on Migratory Species, the Council of Europe, BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the European Commission, to continue to harmonise collective approaches to the collection of relevant information including international reporting timetables;
5. *Instructs* the Secretariat to seek funds for the development and implementation of SSAPs for African and Asian species as opportunities permit, and *Urges* Contracting Parties to provide resources for the further development and implementation of SSAPs;
6. *Further Instructs* the Secretariat, working with the relevant SSAP Working Groups to note and respond to recommendations made in document AEWA/MOP 4.10 concerning the need to update or revise SSAPs for the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* and the Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, which have been developed under the auspices of other organisations before AEWA's entry into force, and to report on progress to this effect to MOP5;
7. *Endorses* the priority list for elaboration of new SSAPs as presented in document AEWA/MOP 4.10 and recommends that this list is used for guiding further efforts to develop SSAPs;
8. *Approves* the revised format for SSAPs as presented in document AEWA/MOP 4.36 and also invites other international bodies such as the Convention on Migratory Species, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and others to use it for the development of future SSAPs; and
9. *Encourages* the Contracting Parties and all other Range States to implement SSAPs more actively and provide funding for the coordination of their implementation.

Appendix I

International best-practice in projects to re-establish migratory waterbirds

In order to improve the success of re-establishment as a conservation tool for migratory waterbird species, the following best-practice should be adopted:

1. Re-establishment projects should always be conducted in strict accordance with the IUCN Guidelines for Re-Introductions (IUCN/SSC RSG, 1995).
2. The IUCN/SSC RSG should always be consulted prior to any re-establishment project so as to provide specific best-practice guidance, expertise and a list of relevant contacts pertinent to the species to be re-established. Consultations should be made as a first step before a feasibility study or any planning has been initiated.
3. Re-establishment projects should be conducted by groups of organisations and experts with diverse skill bases. Collaboration brings a number of distinct advantages: enhanced expertise, transfer of skills, shared responsibilities and accountability, and increased funding opportunities.
4. Networks or groups of experts with knowledge relevant to re-establishment of a particular species are assembled to act as advisory groups for specific re-establishment projects. These should be assembled for those species where re-establishment has been recommended, and for those species for which re-establishment projects are currently occurring or being planned. It may be appropriate for these species-specific groups to be formed within the IUCN/SSC RSG.
5. During pre-project activities, particular attention should be paid to the following:
 - completing a comprehensive feasibility study, comprising an assessment against IUCN re-introduction criteria, a review of historic status, an assessment of the species' critical needs, a scientific assessment of the habitat suitability of the release site(s), and a Populations and Habitat Viability Analysis to determine the number of birds that need to be released in order to establish a self-sustaining population; and
 - securing long-term financial and political support.
6. During re-establishment activities, particular attention should be paid to the following:
 - ensuring birds are acclimatized to their release area prior to release;
 - ensuring a sufficient amount of good quality habitat is available where the original causes of decline have been eliminated or sufficiently reduced; and
 - identifying both short and long-term indicators of success.
7. All re-establishment projects for migratory waterbirds should be reported to the IUCN/SSC RSG.

Appendix II

Recommended best-practice in the implementation and reporting of Single Species Action Plans

1. Single Species Action Plans (SSAP) should be developed and managed by working groups involving relevant expertise both within government and non-government organisations. Such working groups require a coordinator with sufficient time and resources to promote conservation action and to provide assistance in raising funds for the implementation of the plan.
2. Each established SSAP Working Group should have Terms of Reference endorsed by AEWA's Technical Committee so as to establish its *modus operandi*.
3. The aim of an AEWA International Species Working Group (IWG) should be:
 - to coordinate and catalyse the implementation of the international SSAPs;
 - to stimulate and support Range States and national Focal Points of Contracting Parties to achieve this, particularly through the development and implementation of national implementation plans; and
 - to monitor and report upon the implementation of the SSAP.
4. An IWG should ideally comprise:
 - a chair – elected by IWG members;
 - a coordinator – to act as the focal point and catalyse the IWG's activity;
 - National Focal Points – to contribute expertise, advise and data to the IWG, and to stimulate and coordinate national activities, and
 - individual experts.
5. Members of the IWG will normally be representatives of governmental organisations actively involved in conservation activities and with relevant specialist or policy expertise, national non-governmental organisations and institutes.
6. National Focal Points should be appointed for all Range States, and particularly for those supporting a significant proportion of the population, or those required to make a significant contribution to conservation activities.
7. The coordinators post may be a dedicated, funded post, and will usually be hosted by an IWG's member organisation or institute in a key Range State.
8. IWGs should undertake the following activities:
 - implementation and priority-setting;
 - coordination and communication;
 - fund-raising;
 - species monitoring;
 - research;
 - the promotion of protection of networks of critical sites;
 - implementation monitoring; and
 - reporting and outputs.

9. The IWG should aim to hold face-to-face meetings once every three years. Other meetings may be arranged as circumstances require and allow. Between meetings, business will be conducted electronically. A Species Action Planning Workshop will be held, as required, within a year of the end of the period of application of any SSAP.