



SIXTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
16 – 17 June 2010, The Hague, the Netherlands

**UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
AEWA COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

Introduction

At its third session, which took place from 23-27 October 2005 in Dakar, Senegal, the Meeting of the Parties adopted the Communication Strategy for AEWA under **Resolution 3.10**. As laid down in this Resolution, the Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Adopts* the Communication Strategy, contained in Annex 1 to this Resolution as an instrument to effectively address the conservation of waterbirds on the flyway level;
2. *Instructs* the AEWA Secretariat to implement the Communication Strategy and to develop it taking into account resources available, to review its effectiveness on a regular basis and to report on its implementation to the meetings of the Standing Committee and to the 4th Meeting of the Parties;
3. *Further instructs* the Secretariat to undertake specific efforts to obtain additional resources for the implementation of the Communication Strategy;
4. *Urges* Contracting Parties, donors and private sector sponsors to provide supplementary financial support to enable the Secretariat to realize all identified activities of the Strategy;
5. *Invites* all Parties, Range States and other stakeholders along the African-Eurasian Flyway to support the implementation of the Communication Strategy at the global, regional, national or local levels, as appropriate, with the expertise, networks, skills and resources at their disposal;
6. *Encourages* all Contracting Parties to host AEWA Exchange Centres for their region, as stipulated in the Communication Strategy;
7. *Further encourages* all representatives of Contracting Parties and partner organisations to envisage functioning as ambassadors to AEWA in order to help the Secretariat with the recruitment of new Parties to AEWA.

The operational paragraph of Resolution 3.10 makes clear that implementation of the Communication Strategy is a shared responsibility, particularly of the Contracting Parties and the Agreement Secretariat.

A comprehensive overview of the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy (Document AEWA/MOP 4.18) was prepared by the AEWA Secretariat for the 4th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP4), which took place from 15-19 September 2008 in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

This update aims to provide the AEWA Standing Committee with an overview of progress made by the Agreement Secretariat in the implementation of the Communication Strategy since MOP4. It provides an overview of communication related activities undertaken by the Agreement Secretariat in the period from September 2008 to June 2010.

As already mentioned, the implementation of the Communication Strategy is a shared responsibility. The Secretariat would therefore welcome any information from Contracting Parties and partner organizations regarding their activities undertaken to implement the AEWA Communication Strategy. Further input from Parties would enable the Secretariat to gain a clearer picture of the current status of progress made towards the implementation of the Communications Strategy.

Summary & Review of Effectiveness

The AEWA Communication Strategy adopted by MOP3 in October 2005 aims to provide a framework to help guide AEWA Parties, Range States, Partners and the AEWA Secretariat in their efforts to raise awareness and understanding generally of conservation issues concerning migratory waterbird and more specifically on raising awareness on the provisions and objectives of the Agreement itself. It also contains guidance on how to improve the internal communication among the formal bodies of AEWA, develop mechanisms for external communication & cooperation between AEWA stakeholders, build regional capacity for communication and (on how to) increase awareness of AEWA.

From the Secretariat's point of view, the strategy has definitely helped to put communication efforts undertaken by the Secretariat since MOP3 into perspective and has helped provide an overall structure for them. Perhaps more importantly, it also continues to help the Secretariat find and define its role as the process facilitator - as the "spider in the web" of flyway conservation for the African-Eurasian region.

In addition to the useful vision for the role of the Secretariat, the original communication strategy adopted by MOP3 also contained a number of specific "communication related" activities, upon which the Secretariat should focus in the period 2006 – 2009. These activities were attached to the strategy as Annex I and listed in the AEWA Communication Action Plan 2006 – 2009. The same Annex also contained a detailed budget totalling €502,250 for all the envisioned activities listed in the Communication Action Plan. However, from the very beginning (since the adoption of the Strategy by MOP3) the implementation of these activities has been fully dependent on voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties and other potential donors and few funds have come in to support these activities to date.

Furthermore, many of the activities outlined in the Communication Action Plan that were not budgeted for, were assigned as tasks for the incumbent Junior Professional Officer (JPO) provided by the Government of Germany – assuming that he would be able to allocate 100 percent of his working time towards the implementation of the Communication Strategy. However, as the section on Communication Capacity in this report highlights the reality looked very different.

A number of other important factors could also not have been foreseen in the original Communication Strategy: first and foremost, the overall positive impact the UNEP-GEF Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project has had on strengthening AEWA, both in terms of promoting the Agreement in the AEWA region, update, the WOW Project has not only indirectly contributed towards the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy in some areas, but it has also developed the network and resources which could, funding permitting, be used in the years to come to conduct the training envisioned (but not yet implemented) in the original Strategy.

Another important activity which was not foreseen in 2005 which has significantly helped to increase awareness on AEWA is World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD). Initiated by the AEWA Secretariat in 2006, the global campaign has helped to increase awareness on AEWA both within and outside the AEWA region in unprecedented ways.

Finally, with the adoption of the African Initiative by MOP4 and the recruitment of a designated Coordinator (made possible through a voluntary contribution from the French Government) a Plan of Action (PoA) for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa is now being prepared, which should also help contribute towards the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy in Africa, especially with regards to Objective 3 (Capacity Building).

As will be hopefully evident from the report and the presentation during the meeting, the Secretariat has still managed to achieve a great deal despite the lack of funds and the actual human capacity for communication.

Looking back, just a few days before the 15th Anniversary Celebration of AEWA is due to commence in The Hague, the outline vision for the AEWA Secretariat in the Communication Strategy in the year 2005 seems (at the very least) as valid today as it was then.

Action requested from the Standing Committee

- 1) The Standing Committee is requested to review progress made regarding the implementation of the Communication Strategy and give further guidance for improvement;
- 2) To give guidance on how to approach the lack of funding to carry out many of the activities foreseen in the Communication Strategy;
- 3) To take note of the contributions made by the UNEP-GEF Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) African-Eurasian Flyways Project towards the implementation of the Communication Strategy and that resources developed in the framework of the project could, funding permitting, also be used towards the implementation of the Communication Strategy;
- 4) To take note of the significant contribution that the African Initiative can potentially make towards the implementation of the Communication Strategy, especially with regard to Objectives 2, 3 and 4 of the Communication Strategy;
- 5) To provide feedback on some of the main awareness raising activities carried out by the AEWA Secretariat, in particular with regard to World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) and to consider giving the Secretariat a formal mandate to continue to take the lead in organizing this annual awareness raising campaign.

Communication Capacity

Before starting to report back on the progress made on the implementation of the Communication Strategy, it would be opportune to consider how the Communication Strategy refers to the capacity for communication, which will determine the extent to which the Communication Strategy can be implemented. Capacity can be assessed in terms of human resources, technical expertise and financial resources.

Financial Resources

Since the adoption of the Communication Strategy at MOP3, it has been fully dependent on voluntary contributions of the Contracting Parties or organizations and very few funds have come in to support its implementation to date. While the AEWA budget for 2009-2012 contains a number of activities which could be considered to be indirectly supporting the implementation of the Communication Strategy (such as some of the regional training activities under “WOW related Projects”), it contains no resources specifically dedicated to implementing the Communication Strategy.

Human Resources

In terms of human resources, the capacity for communication at the AEWA Secretariat has increased since MOP3, particularly due to the provision of a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) dedicated to Communication & Information Management provided by the German Government from September 2005 until October 2008. In addition, by the end of 2006 the post of Information Assistant (part-time) as agreed by MOP3 was filled and in February 2009 the Associate Information Officer as agreed by MOP4 was also recruited. It should be noted that since 2005, both the JPO position and subsequently the position of Associate Information Officer has been divided – with 50 percent of the Officer’s time allocated to supporting communication activities of the Wings over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project. Up until February 2009, the remaining 50 percent of the Officer’s time was split even further – whereby 20 percent went to the CMS Family and 30 percent towards AEWA activities. However, it is expected that starting in 2011 (once the WOW Project will be completed) the Officer will be able to dedicate 100 percent of his time towards the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy.

Technical Expertise

Although the implementation of the Strategy is the responsibility of the Associate Information Officer, it should be underlined that all other AEWA staff members are also involved and contribute to the implementation of the Communication Strategy, albeit for probably only a few hours a week. With the creation of both the post of Associate Information Officer and (part time) Information Assistant, the overall technical expertise and capacity related to communication within the Secretariat has been given a boost.

However, it is hoped that in coming years the level of technical expertise and actual time available to implement the Communication Strategy will continue to increase. In addition, the relevant expertise spread across the AEWA Secretariat related to communication, capacity building and conducting trainings will need to be increasingly mobilized to assist with the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy.

Internal Communication

Objective 1: to stimulate and increase the effective internal communication and exchange among the formal governing bodies of the Agreement

Objective 1 focuses on *the internal communication processes* among the formal bodies of AEWA and provides guidance on how the functioning of the Agreement's formal decision-making bodies could be improved, by improving communication and exchange between them.

The activities foreseen under this heading in the Communication Strategy are to:

- 1.1 Increase interactivity of meetings
- 1.2 Increase interactivity in-between meetings
- 1.3 Evaluate regional representation in AEWA formal bodies

As already indicated, due to a lack of resources both in financial and human terms, progress made regarding the implementation of this part of the Communication Strategy has been limited, with the exception of activity 1.2., as reported below.

Activity 1.2 Interactivity in-between meetings

The Secretariat has established designated web pages for the AEWA Technical and Standing Committees on its public website. Here, members of both Committees are introduced; the background and contact information of each member is being made publicly available as well as information regarding regional representation. The Secretariat also regularly reports back on meetings on the public website, including on decisions taken and on future meetings.

Technical Committee Workspace¹

A new web-based interactive working space for the Technical Committee (TC) has been developed by the Secretariat, enabling online discussion and better archiving of TC-related work. It provides a central platform for online collaboration and supports the work and the communication of the TC between meetings. It has been operational since January 2009 and is being actively maintained by the AEWA Technical Officer. While it has proven to be a very useful resource, more attention needs to be given to try to encourage more members of the TC to use the tool and to become part of the ongoing discussions.

External Communication

Objective 2: to strengthen and/or develop mechanisms for effective external communication & cooperation between and among the AEWA stakeholders and the AEWA Secretariat.

Objective 2 focuses on the *external communication processes* among AEWA Contracting Parties, Range States and other Stakeholders, as well between them and the AEWA Secretariat. It calls upon these stakeholders to increasingly play the role of partners, intermediaries and ambassadors in AEWA communication and to facilitate more regional cooperation and exchange among them.

The activities foreseen under this heading in the Communication Strategy are:

- 2.1 Regional Meetings (West Africa and East Africa)
- 2.2 Exchange centres for AEWA
- 2.3 Engaging ambassadors to encourage further Range States to become Contracting Parties, focusing on Russia, the Baltic States, Central Asia and Africa in 2006.

¹ <http://tcworkspace.aewa.info/>

Although funds have generally been scarce for the implementation of this objective, funds received prior to MOP4 enabled the Secretariat to conduct a first-ever regional workshop/meeting for AEWA focal points from African countries (Activity 2.1). The two-day negotiation training for Anglophone countries in Africa directly preceded the 4th Meeting of the Parties and was carried out in close cooperation with the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions and Law (UNEP/DELCL). It is hoped that more funds will be made available so that additional capacity building and negotiation training workshops can be offered by the Secretariat to focal points in other AEWA regions (francophone Africa, Middle East, Central Asia). In addition, a number of regional, species-oriented and WOW Project-related meetings have also taken place since MOP4, which are indirectly supporting the implementation of Activity 2.1.

With regards to Activity 2.2 it should be noted, that the four Regional Centres established in the context of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) (located in Dakar, Almaty, Moscow, Nairobi and Amman) have in many ways functioned as regional hubs for the exchange of information and capacity building on AEWA over the course of the project. However, with the GEF funded project ending in 2010, more funds would be urgently needed to allow these Regional Centres to continue to act as “AEWA Exchange Centres” as foreseen in Activity 2.2.

Regarding activity 2.3 - OMPO continues to play a role as AEWA Ambassador and is promoting the Agreement particularly in the Baltic States, Russia, Malta and Morocco. Also BirdLife International, CIC and Wetlands International are promoting the Agreement whenever appropriate. The WOW Project and the resulting WOW Partnership Agreement will also likely continue to strengthen the role played by both BirdLife International and Wetlands International in this respect. The Wetlands International Office in Dakar and the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat in Kenya has supported us in the past and continues to do so. The Executive Secretary has contacts with these NGOs on a regular basis to inform them about the recruitment of Parties and to encourage them to continue with their support.

Capacity Building

Objective 3: to build regional capacity for communication

Objective 3 focuses on the need to build regional capacity for communication, by enhancing the ability of contracting parties, and others, to implement AEWA communication activities in the regions. The objective is to strengthen capacity for communication among contracting parties through regional and national Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes and to strengthen the role of the Secretariat as facilitator and “spider in the web of waterbird conservation” within the AEWA region.

The activities foreseen under this heading in the Communication Strategy are the:

- 3.1 ToT at the regional level focussing in 2006 on West Africa and East Africa
- 3.2 Provision of follow-up on ToT at the national level

So far no activities have been undertaken directly by the Secretariat to implement these two activities due to a lack of resources. However, it should be noted that the capacity building component of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project included several activities closely related to Objective 3.

For example, since MOP4 a number of WOW ToT courses have taken place, including most recently in Limbe, Cameroon from 2-10 November 2009. In addition, the WOW Flyway Training Kit has now been produced (printed in May 2010), which is a unique training resource specifically designed to build capacity to plan, implement, monitor and engage in effective flyway-scale conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands in the AEWA region. The tool will be available in English, French, Arabic and Russian and includes three modules with comprehensive text, case studies and exercises supported by ready-to-use presentations, as well as accompanying CDs (including one with all of the most important AEWA documents) and a range of additional material.

Although funding is still needed to implement ToT workshops, especially ones focusing on “strengthening

capacity for communication among contracting parties” called for in Objective 3, the Flyway Training Kit and the capacity building and training network established through the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project, will provide an excellent basis and resource for any future ToT activity being carried out to meet Objective 3 of the AEWA Communication Strategy.

In addition, activities foreseen under the African Initiative will also help support the implementation of Objective 3.

Awareness Raising

Objective 4: to increase knowledge and awareness of AEWA, its added value and its objectives

Objective 4 of the AEWA Communication Strategy specifically focuses on the role communication can play to increase knowledge and awareness of AEWA. It identifies a number of concrete communication activities and tools, which the Secretariat and other stakeholders can use to promote the added value of - and the achieved successes of AEWA more strongly.

The activities foreseen under this heading in the Communication Strategy are:

- 4.1. To improve and maintain the AEWA Website
- 4.2. The regular publication of the AEWA Newsletter
- 4.3. To initiate and provide the infrastructure for e-discussion
- 4.4. To develop guidelines for accession
- 4.5. To develop a set of resource materials for awareness-raising at national level

As previously mentioned, the Secretariat’s overall communication capacity depends on the available human and financial resources and technical expertise. Most of the activities listed under Objective 4 have been successfully addressed by the Secretariat since MOP3 using the available human resources and limited funds earmarked for communication activities, which have been received through voluntary contributions. Progress regarding each of the activities will be reported in more detail below.

Activity 4.1: Improve and maintain the AEWA Website

The current AEWA website is being regularly updated and news on current activities and projects are regularly featured. It should be noted, that the maintenance of the website is a true team effort involving several AEWA staff members and its overall management is the responsibility of the Associate Information Officer.

However, since the last re-designed of the website was carried out in 2005 it is becoming outdated from a technological standpoint. The current AEWA website is purely HTML based and has no database or web-content management system lying behind it. It also does not make use of many new interactive features which have become available in the years since it was developed, such as RSS and other Web 2.0 type features. However, the Secretariat is hesitant to embark on re-designing the AEWA website, without a clear mandate from its Parties and sufficient time and financial resources allocated to such a project.

List of other AEWA related websites & online resources:

In addition to maintaining the official AEWA Website, the Secretariat has also been actively involved in the development and maintenance of a number of other AEWA related websites and online resources since MOP4. A brief list can be found below:

- **Interactive Work Space for the AEWA Technical Committee** (tcworkspace.aewa.info)
- **World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) Website** (www.worldmigratorybirdday.org)
- **Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project Website** (www.wingsoverwetlands.org)
- **AFRING - African Bird Ringing Scheme Website** (www.afring.org)
- **Community Websites for AEWA Species Working Groups (planned)**

Activity 4.2: Regular publication of the AEWA Newsletter

Since MOP3 the AEWA e-Newsletter has evolved to become one of the primary communication tools to reach out to the currently 4000+ contacts in the AEWA database. The e-Newsletter is produced entirely in-house by the Secretariat on a bi-monthly basis and provides a summary of AEWA related news and events. A total of 25 e-Newsletters have been sent out since the availability of the tool in 2006. The Secretariat has received hundreds of new subscriptions to the e-Newsletter through its website and has also received a considerable amount of positive feedback from individual readers on it.

Activity 4.3: Initiate and provide the infrastructure for e-discussion

One of the tasks of the Information Assistant was to improve the current address database and to establish an email distribution list. This has meanwhile taken place and is of great importance due to the fact that this list is used for distribution of the regular e-Newsletter and to inform addressees about any changes on the website.

No progress was able to be made regarding the establishment of an e-discussion forum due to lack of resources. If the funding was made available, the Secretariat would be in a position to develop this resource fairly quickly (within 2 months), however maintaining such an active e-discussion forum would be more time consuming and probably best outsourced.

Activity 4.4: Develop guidelines for accession

These guidelines for accession were drafted in 2004. By the end of that year the Secretariat was in the position, due to the generous support of the government of Luxembourg, to translate and print these guidelines, which were originally only available in English, into Russian, Arabic and French. Since then the guidelines for accession have been distributed regularly to countries that are in the process of acceding to AEWA. They have also been updated electronically recently as some information was already out of date.

Activity 4.5: Develop a set of resource materials for awareness-raising at the national level.

Work is ongoing to develop an AEWA Toolkit. Many of the materials to be included in this toolkit are now available (DVD film and general powerpoint presentation on AEWA, CD-Rom with all available AEWA Documents (being updated on a regular basis), Flyway Posters and several new AEWA Publications). In addition, the WOW Flyway Training Kit published in May 2010 will likely become a primary resource for both training activities and for raising awareness on AEWA. The Flyway Training Kit contains a CD Rom with all AEWA materials, publications and official documents as well as an entire module dedicated to communications.

The Secretariat has also made an effort to re-produce and re-print many of the key documents such as the Agreement Text and Strategic Plan using the new house-style of AEWA. This way the materials will all fit nicely together into the AEWA Toolkit.

A wide range of new publications have also been prepared by the Secretariat since MOP4, including two recent books especially produced for the 15th Anniversary of AEWA. An overview of some of the publications will be given by the Associate Information Officer during the meeting.

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)

,The AEWA Secretariat has taken the lead in organizing World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) each year since its launch in Kenya in 2006. WMBD is one of the primary awareness raising activities being conducted by the AEWA Secretariat and receives significant attention globally each year.

Although WMBD is a joint activity of CMS and AEWA, most of the substantial work connected to the organization of WMBD is carried out by the AEWA Secretariat. Additional highlights related to WMBD will be given by the Associate Information Officer during the meeting.