



8th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES
26-30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary

“Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World”

RESOLUTION 8.15

ADDRESSING CAUSES OF WATERBIRD MORTALITY

Recalling the 8th edition of the *Conservation Status Report* (document AEWA/MOP 8.19) which shows that 43% of the AEWA populations are in long-term decline including many globally threatened species, and that the causes of such declines, which occur in every flyway, are frequently due to enhanced mortality,

Recalling that AEWA's *Action Plan* highlights several causes of actual or potential mortality arising from legal taking, illegal killing, unfavourable or endangering conditions, collisions with and the effects of built infrastructure, disturbance, bycatch, pollution, non-native species, aquaculture, and lead poisoning from fishing weights and gunshot, the regulation of which is desirable to help achieve the objectives of the Agreement,

Recalling also Target 1.6 of AEWA's *Strategic Plan 2019-2027* which seeks that "AEWA priorities relating to four causes of unnecessary additional mortality and other key threats to migratory waterbirds and their habitats¹ are integrated in key multilateral processes²", with the delivery of this target envisaging the following actions:

- a) Identify those multilateral processes that can contribute most to progressing AEWA priorities (led by Technical Committee in consultation with Secretariat and Partners);
- b) Identify strategic opportunities for positively influencing these processes (meetings of technical bodies, working groups etc.) and ensure, as far as possible, that AEWA's views are represented;
- c) Communicate/advocate AEWA priorities in a clear and timely manner;
- d) Ensure that AEWA Parties take coherent, mutually reinforcing aligned positions under different conventions and related processes,

Conscious of the significant degree of commonality of membership and synergies in mandates of AEWA and other relevant multilateral biodiversity processes that facilitate the development of mutually beneficial actions,

Concerned that despite these synergies in mandate and geography, the joint integration and implementation of AEWA and other policy instruments such as the Baltic Marine Environment Protection

¹ "Causes of unnecessary additional mortality and other key threats include: energy infrastructure (especially powerlines, wind turbines); illegal taking & killing; fisheries bycatch; and invasive alien species." Note that other sources of mortality are also significant for some waterbirds including non-energy infrastructure developments, the effects of habitat loss, climate change, and unsustainable hunting/harvesting.

² "Examples of relevant multilateral processes include, but are not limited to, Agenda 2030, Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change."

Commission (HELCOM) as well as the Benguela Current Convention are lagging behind, especially with regards to assessing cumulative pressures across critical parts of the flyway as well as planning and implementation of spatial and temporal mitigation actions,

Recalling Resolution 3.18 which mandated AEWA involvement in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, co-convened by the Convention on Migratory Species and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), and which brings together multiple international organisations and UN bodies to share information on issues arising from continuing outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza worldwide,

Recalling also Resolution 6.12 on *Avoiding additional and unnecessary mortality for migratory waterbirds*³ which summarised AEWA's previous relevant decisions and guidance on multiple causes of mortality, and document AEWA/MOP 7.34 (*Guidance on taking a systematic approach to responding to waterbird declines: a checklist of potential actions*) which further presented sources of guidance,

Noting document AEWA/MOP 8.40 '*Opportunities for addressing causes of waterbird mortality*' which outlines, in the context of Strategic Plan Target 1.6, opportunities to reduce waterbird mortality by identifying those multilateral processes that can contribute most to progressing AEWA priorities and specific strategic opportunities for positively influencing these processes,

Acknowledging the outcomes of the *Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas* made by EURING and the Convention of Migratory Species, with the financial support from the Government of Italy, and in particular the research module "*Intentional killing of birds by man*", which show that African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds are still object of illegal killing,

Recognising the multiple sources of guidance and information on how to reduce waterbird mortality provided in AEWA's Conservation Guidelines⁴ and past decisions (*inter alia* Resolutions 7.6, 6.4, 6.11 and as fully listed in Appendix 1 of Resolution 6.12) as well as decisions and guidelines of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)⁵, yet *appreciating* that problems arise from frequent lack of implementation of mitigating actions rather than lack of guidance, and thus *acknowledging* the need to better understand the root causes of poor implementation such that this can be addressed,

Recalling that climate change mitigation and adaptation need to be tackled in synergy with biodiversity conservation, as highlighted by the 2020 IPBES-IPCC workshop on biodiversity and climate change⁶, and *Recognising* that waterbirds are particularly vulnerable if such synergies are not implemented locally and internationally, for example with regards to the extensive transition to clean energy,

Welcoming the outcomes of IPBES-9 on the initial scoping to form the basis of a fast-track assessment on ecological connectivity, with input from relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other organisations,

³ https://www.unep-aeewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop6_res12_mortality_en.pdf

⁴ In particular, AEWA Guidelines nos. 5 (sustainable harvests), 6 (regulating trade), 8 (conflicts including bird strikes and fisheries), 11 (infrastructure development); 12 (emergency situations) and 14 (electricity power grids).

⁵ Including CMS Resolutions 7.3 (oil pollution), 7.4 (electrocution), 7.5 (wind turbines), 10.26 and 11.15 (poisoning), 11.16 (illegal killing, taking and trade), 11.27 (power lines), 11.27 (renewable energy) and 11.30 (impacts of marine debris).

⁶ Pörtner, H.O., *et al.* 2021. *Scientific outcome of the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change*. IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4659158.

taking into account the draft elements related to a thematic assessment of connectivity, and noting this work will contribute to conservation of the migratory birds,

Concerned that some state actors may wish to accelerate the transition to clean and renewable energy by relaxing and simplifying permitting processes to the detriment of biodiversity,

Aware that energy infrastructure such as offshore wind can not only have a negative impact on waterbird mortality through direct killing, but through habitat loss, disturbance and other indirect effects, which thereby significantly increases the spatial impact of that infrastructure,

Recognising the efforts and conservation and mitigation measures that are taken by governments to manage the energy infrastructure and wind farms effectively and actively to minimise the mortalities and casualties of migratory soaring and waterbirds along the African-Eurasian Flyway, in particular where there are bottlenecks to migration,

Additionally Recognising other development projects possibly responsible for waterbird mortality as a consequence of their potential contributions to water pollution or inappropriate water-use (such as soda ash and blue green algae extractions) which should be subject to Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, with strict environmental auditing and compliance being put in place for enforcement by relevant planning bodies,

Welcoming the UN Decade on Nature Restoration and noting the importance of integrating biodiversity ‘net gain’ into infrastructure developments and associated measures in order to benefit waterbird habitat restoration across the flyway,

Recalling the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans adopted for the globally threatened Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) and Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) as well as AEWA Resolution 7.6. on seabird conservation which highlight the threat of offshore windfarm development to AEWA-listed seabirds,

Noting the Joint Working Group on Seabirds of HELCOM, OSPAR, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) formed to jointly work on the migration modelling with respect to windfarms in the Baltic,

Conscious of the anticipated Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which may establish targets relevant to AEWA (Resolution 8.9 and document AEWA/MOP 8.36 Rev.2), especially in the context of improving the status of migratory waterbird and other species through reduction of unnecessary mortality and other conservation actions,

Concerned about the possible negative effects of exceptional and widespread drought and the anthropogenic factors leading to exacerbating the effects of drought on the breeding success and survival of populations of waterbird species breeding in the Agreement area, especially on the ones already in long-term decline, and *Recalling* Article III.2(f) of the Agreement and paragraph 2.3 of the AEWA Action Plan that require Parties to cooperate in emergency situations requiring international concerted action as well as to develop and implement emergency measures for populations listed in Table 1 when exceptionally unfavourable or endangering conditions occur anywhere in the Agreement area and noting that such exceptional droughts are likely to occur more frequently in the future.

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. Welcomes document AEWA/MOP 8.40 '*Opportunities for addressing causes of waterbird mortality*' as guidance to support delivery of *Strategic Plan* Target 1.6, *Urges* Parties and *Directs* the Secretariat, resources permitting, to respond to the opportunities identified there to reduce waterbird mortality by devising concrete activities to integrate AEWA priorities into other relevant frameworks and processes;
2. *Urges* Parties, with the support of the Secretariat and the Technical Committee, where resources permit, to develop, in line with other multilateral biodiversity processes, the following initial actions that will increase thematic synergies:

Energy infrastructure

- 2.1 Mainstream migratory waterbird conservation aspects into relevant energy infrastructure development policy and processes, *inter alia*, by ensuring that baseline data about waterbird population dynamics, distribution and avoidance distances is available and up-to-date so that this can inform energy planning; and ensuring that the planning, development and growth in energy infrastructure is subject to appropriate Environmental Impact Assessments which consider both lethal and non-lethal effects on migratory waterbirds and that energy development is avoided, whenever possible, at sites critical for migratory waterbirds;
- 2.2 Consider the establishment of buffer zones between energy infrastructure and protected areas, as well as other critical sites for waterbirds, taking into account local species-specific avoidance distances;
- 2.3 Where adverse impacts on waterbirds are likely, put in place mitigation measures to prevent additional mortality due to the development of energy infrastructure and establish conservation measures, for example, by increasing the area of habitats suitable for waterbirds to address possible negative impacts of renewable energy infrastructure on bird populations or by taking measures to reduce other human-related causes of mortality;
- 2.4 Integrate the AEWA flyway perspective into international, national and local grid and renewable energy planning processes, notably Marine Spatial Plans and in these fora highlight the impact on waterbird population dynamics across the flyway;
- 2.5 Ensure that Strategic Environmental Assessments and other pertinent assessment processes associated with energy infrastructure development include and respond to AEWA provisions and guidelines;
- 2.6 Work with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), especially its Energy Task Force (Task Force on Reconciling Selected Energy Sector Developments with Migratory Species Conservation), to review the extent and quality of national implementation measures taken, and which follow recommended measures in respective guidelines on minimising impact of power lines and renewable energy developments to reduce waterbird mortality;
- 2.7 Encourage relevant supportive actions by energy stakeholders and industry groups to implement best practice guidance to reduce and eliminate waterbird mortality arising from energy sector operations;
- 2.8 Seek membership of CMS Energy Task Force to support and influence their work;
- 2.9 Work with CMS, HELCOM, OSPAR and the Bern Convention to collate and disseminate/promote examples of evolving innovations in mitigation techniques relevant to energy infrastructure, and identify examples of successful implementation;

2.10 Work with HELCOM (in particular its Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group VASAB) and OSPAR to ensure Marine Spatial Plans across the Baltic (and more widely as appropriate) and specifically offshore wind developments are based on ecological carrying capacity and cumulative impact assessments for the entire ocean basin, with due consideration of potential flyway-wide effects of local infrastructure development;

2.11 Together with HELCOM and OSPAR, develop a best-practice demonstration project in a critical flyway site where energy infrastructure is undergoing strong growth (such as in the Baltic) to illustrate that climate and biodiversity protection can be successfully integrated where Marine Spatial Planning and other relevant planning tools are based on sensitivity mapping, cumulative impact assessments and the application of the ecosystem-based approach;

2.12 Work with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to identify actual examples of conservation measures put in place in the context of renewable energy installations in accordance with Ramsar Resolution VII.24, and accordingly how future measures could be encouraged more routinely, in the context of updating its 2012 “*Guidance for addressing the implications for wetlands of policies, plans and activities in the energy sector*”⁷ (Ramsar Resolution XI.10);

Illegal killing, taking & trade

2.13 Review species listings under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species against AEWA population priorities to assess potential for any changes desirable;

2.14 Influence and work with the Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT), the Bern Convention’s Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds, and European Commission, especially encouraging adequate funding, and to ensure appropriate consideration of migratory waterbird issues;

2.15 Work with MIKT and CMS to analyse lessons learned from initiatives to address illegal bird trapping and killing in the Mediterranean basin so as to develop follow-up actions and initiatives in other regions within the flyway;

Fisheries bycatch⁸

2.16 Work with CMS, HELCOM, OSPAR and the European Commission to promote effective action to minimise bycatch issues at relevant future meetings;

2.17 Work with the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) to explore opportunities for collaboration/synergy given their long engagement with bycatch issues;

2.18 Identify priority Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) from the AEWA perspective; identify potential representatives for AEWA on each, and secure representation – seeking guidance from ACAP and other relevant CMS agreements as to effective influencing strategies;

2.19 Work with the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation to better understand implementation monitoring of the 1999 *International Plan of Action for Reducing incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries* in the context of AEWA;

⁷ <https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res10-e.pdf>

⁸ Recalling that Resolution 6.9 determined that in addressing seabird conservation issues, AEWA’s priority should be those species, regions, or threats not already the subject of pre-existing international or conservation frameworks, for example - but not restricted to - tropical seabirds or those impacted by small or artisanal fisheries not regulated by RFMOs.

Invasive alien species

2.20 Work with the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Bern Convention and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, European Union, and other relevant frameworks/actors to promote and support prioritised approaches to the eradication and/or appropriate management of non-native invasive species, from those offshore islands of importance for AEWA-listed breeding seabirds, and wetlands more widely;

Other infrastructure developments

2.21 With reference to operative paragraph 2.2 above, encourage Parties to also consider the establishment of buffer zones between other infrastructure developments and protected areas, as well as other critical sites for waterbirds;

3. *Urges* continued engagement by the Technical Committee with the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, and *Requests* that via the Secretariat, recommendations and guidance produced by the Task Force be widely disseminated to Parties and stakeholders;
4. *Encourages* Parties to co-ordinate across government and work with stakeholders to establish HPAI contingency plans nationally and at sites of significant importance to waterbirds, including coastal seabirds, and to implement these as appropriate, especially giving priority to surveillance and rapid testing for HPAI of sick and dead birds so as to inform site-related management and biosecurity measures as needed;
5. *Requests* the Technical Committee, working with the Secretariat, where resources permit, to explore how information could be gathered from Parties and others on lack of/poor implementation of guidance on reducing mortality. This information will support the development of strategies in regional and/or sector-based initiatives. Initially, such an assessment might be piloted to address mortality issues arising from energy infrastructure development with any conclusions on improving the implementation of guidance to be reported to MOP9;
6. *Requests* the Technical Committee, working with the Secretariat, where resources permit, to assess national reporting processes under other multilateral and/or international processes, *inter alia* the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CMS and the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as relevant national reporting to the European Union, to assess sources of relevant information on waterbird mortality additional to information within AEWA national reports, and make recommendations as to how this information could be routinely summarised;
7. *Requests* the Technical Committee, working with the Secretariat, where resources permit, to update the list of AEWA and CMS decisions and guidelines relevant to avoiding additional and unnecessary mortality contained in Appendix 1 of Resolution 6.12 and the inventory of relevant multilateral instruments and processes summarised in document AEWA/MOP 8.40 '*Opportunities for addressing causes of waterbird mortality*'. This synthesis will be made available on the AEWA's website in a form that can be regularly updated and broadened including material and opportunities for addressing waterbird mortality from fields beyond those motivated by biodiversity conservation;
8. *Encourages* Parties to actively implement, and nationally disseminate, the multiple guidances on how to reduce waterbird mortality as listed in Appendix 1 of Resolution 6.12 and also in Resolution 7.6 concerning seabird bycatch, 6.4 concerning risk of look-alike shooting, non-native species, and lead gunshot, and 6.11 concerning renewable energy impacts, and feed-back experiences in their triennial national reports;

9. *Urges* Parties and other Range States and *Encourages* other stakeholders to mitigate the possible impact of drought and to facilitate the recovery of the affected populations by adequate site and game management measures and *Requests* the Parties to cooperate with each other in the implementation of emergency measures and submit available information to the Secretariat on the impact of drought on populations listed in AEWA Table 1 (e.g. data concerning possible decreased breeding success and/or survival) and the implementation of short, medium and long-term emergency measures and to consider developing a drought response plan for waterbirds;

10. *Urges* Parties and *Encourages* stakeholders, both in prior planning and post-project appraisal phases of interventions to reduce mortality, make explicit the methods used to evaluate project cost-effectiveness, the degree of success achieved, and problems encountered and resolved (using guidance in document AEWA/MOP 7.34⁹), to publish these assessments in order to learn lessons from experience and help build an international body of good practice important both for AEWA as well as delivery of anticipated targets under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

⁹ *'Guidance on taking a systematic approach to responding to waterbird declines: a checklist of potential actions'*