

Statements made during the opening session

CEREMONY

Introductory remarks by Dr. Pieter Botha, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this opening ceremony of the 6th Conference of the Parties to CMS and the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement in an area that has been described by the early travellers as the fairest cape of them all.

We will have gathered at this venue, during the next 10 days, a large number of delegates representing countries from all over the world. More than 250 delegates from 80 countries will attend the AEWA meeting and almost 250 delegates from 100 countries will attend the CMS meetings. It is indeed a memorable occasion to have so many representatives present. Something which is also very encouraging is the fact that not only do we have present Parties to the Convention and the Agreement but also a large number of observer countries. As a matter of interest no less than 60 non-party countries will be attending the AEWA meeting and 44 the CMS meeting. I would like to believe that those countries will in due course become full members to the family of countries involved in the CMS.

It is the first time that the COP is being hosted by one of the countries party to the CMS and I believe it is very appropriate that this event takes place at the southern most tip of Africa, as the area in which we are having our meetings is the end of the flyway of a large number of migratory birds. Marine mammals also frequent our waters and shores.

I would also like to point out that 1999 represents the 20th anniversary of the Convention. So not only is the venue for the meetings very appropriate, but also the timing of the event, because the Convention entered into force on 3 November 1983, almost to the day 16 years ago.

**NOTES FOR THE OPENING OF THE
6th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES
OF WILD ANIMALS (the Bonn Convention)**

By the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
MOHAMMED VALLI MOOSA

Welcome

The State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands, Ms Geke Faber; The German Federal Minister of the Environment, Nature conservation and Nuclear Safety, Ms Gila Altmann; The Executive Director of UNEP, Dr Klaus Töpfer; Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the start of the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention. The meeting today is particularly auspicious as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Bonn Convention.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) takes place every three years and is the decision-making organ of the Convention. We are honoured that you chose to hold the 6th COP of the Bonn Convention and the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in our country. South Africa, at one end of the migratory route for a number of birds and marine mammals, and thus plays an important role in their conservation, is an ideal venue to celebrate these two milestones in the history of the Convention.

Animal migration is one of the many wonders of the world. It is a universal and natural phenomenon encompassing a wide variety of species from antelopes, to dolphins, whales and marine turtles, to bats and many bird species. Migratory species usually choose one area in which to breed and another in which to spend the non-breeding season. Most bird migrants to South Africa breed in Europe, Western Asia and northern Africa during the boreal (northern) summer. These include species such as the White Stork and European Swallow. There are some species that breed in South Africa and migrate into tropical Africa during the austral (southern) winter, such as the Redchested Cuckoo. In both cases, the migrant birds enjoy the benefits of living in a perpetual summer, never experiencing extreme cold and always enjoying an abundance of food. To these highly mobile animals, among which birds are the most numerous example, the non-breeding areas are just as important as the breeding grounds. The migration routes form the highways and the stopover points provide essential services during the journey. All these habitats are of equal importance to migrant birds and stretch over great geographical areas.

But there is another reason for Southern Africa to take a keen interest in the work of the Bonn Convention. Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe last month signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA). The agreement supports the establishment of a TFCA that will bring the parks of Gaza in Mozambique, Kruger National Park in South Africa and Gonarezhou in Zimbabwe together under a joint management creating one of the biggest conservation areas in the world. The agreement established a Ministerial Committee and an International TFCA Technical Committee to oversee the implementation of the agreement. This is the second agreement to be signed this year as Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa signed the Lubombo Protocol to establish a transfrontier conservation area. The protocols recognize that ecosystems transcend national boundaries and the need for trans-border co-operation in the conservation and management of the shared natural resources for the benefit of the people of the region. They follow the ratification of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park Protocol which makes the adjacent Gemsbok National Park (in Botswana) and Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (in South Africa) a single ecological unit to be known as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The Park, which will be formally opened by the Presidents of the two countries in

February next year, formalises the previous arrangements to ensure that no barrier to wildlife movement exists along the international boundary which separates the 9,591 km² Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and the 28,400 km² Gemsbok National Park. These three Transfrontier areas carry this continent's vision of an African Renaissance - where we put our colonial past behind us as we work for common goals such as conservation of our natural heritage.

This is the spirit of the Bonn Convention and your presence here today in our country at the 20th anniversary of the convention gives us renewed energy and hope in striving for its speedy implementation.

Thank you.

**Opening Statement to
the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Bonn
Convention and the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian
Waterbird Agreement**

**by
Geke Faber, State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management
and Fisheries of the Netherlands**

Mr. Valli Moosa, Mr. Töpfer, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a honour for me to address this first Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. Furthermore, I would like to thank and congratulate the government of South Africa for hosting this important meeting.

Picture this. Before starting their journey south, a flock of Siberian geese must agree on their destination, their route and their in-flight duties. The ensuing debate would probably run well into the winter. Luckily, geese don't have endless rounds of talks. Every year, they follow their instinct to the right place to spend the winter.

This is not how our international community works. We are birds of different feathers, different characters and different preferences. It is both our strength and our weakness. International conferences are necessary before we can agree on anything, and there are a lot of these. Many meetings achieve good results, including those about international nature protection. They are a step in the right direction, but meetings and resolutions *alone* are not enough. The real value of an agreement depends on effective implementation, and this often poses a problem. Only then it is possible to reach the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

Why do I bring this up now? I do so because I think the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement could serve as an example in nature preservation. The Agreement allows for practical implementation of the Bonn Convention, and so far progress has been swift and smooth. I hope we will be able to take another big step forward during this conference. That we will be able to show practical results soon, not just results on paper. That we will succeed in providing *real* protection to waterbirds, protection that they deserve and need so much. I hope we can achieve this. Also because this way our efforts for the protection of waterbirds will have a positive effect in many other fields of nature conservation, where we simply must co-operate internationally. AEWA can be an important step in the development of an integral strategy for sustainable development. That is how I see it.

Now, let me list what I think are the most important items on the agenda of this First Meeting of the Parties. In the first place, there is the very important principle of sustainable use. Waterbirds are a favourite target for hunters, because of their weight, and the fact that they stick together in large numbers. That underlines the need for strict rules protecting migratory waterbirds. In the Netherlands, there is now a ban on hunting for almost all migratory waterbirds. Of course I would like other countries to adopt such strict rules too. But I understand that they have a different history and different problems, and that they may therefore choose different solutions. That is a fact. At the same time, *none* of us want vulnerable species to decline again. That is why close international co-operation is so very important. AEWA is a good example of this. Co-operation is the best way of finding a balance between use and conservation, in Europe and in Africa.

How do we realize this in practice? To start with, I think AEWA could play a key role in collecting and

distributing information about the hunting of waterbirds. AEWA could also provide funds for waterbird protection programmes, and education and training. A good example of co-operation within AEWA is a major project promoting sustainable use which is being carried out by the Netherlands, Mali and other West African countries.

The second important topic concerns AEWA's administration. In other words, the AEWA secretariat. As you know, my country has financed and housed the interim secretariat for the past four years. In the next few days, you will be making a decision about the permanent location of the secretariat. The Netherlands supports the idea of a single location for the secretariats of international agreements, such as UNEP. This is efficient, this encourages mutual policy adjustments and gives the agreements more international clout. These are the reasons why I favour moving the AEWA secretariat to Bonn, where it could be housed in the Agreement Unit of the CMS secretariat. It goes without saying that the rights of each party should be guaranteed and laid down in writing.

The third item on the agenda that I would like to mention specifically is the joint implementation of AEWA. This joint implementation is of the utmost importance. The international priority plan, which you will be discussing here, offers plenty of scope for that. Working together is particularly essential in vulnerable regions like the African Sahel Desert. Close co-operation with international organizations like UNEP and UNDP is crucial there. By joining forces, we can make AEWA a shining example of an efficient, practical Agreement.

AEWA is a model agreement which can have relevance for other fields. I think it is possible. I know it would be welcomed, too. In the first instance I see AEWA as a model for three or four new flyway agreements. If we succeed in that, we will have a world-wide guarantee for the protection of that most international of species: migratory birds. Wouldn't that be wonderful!

But of course co-operation doesn't have to be limited to birds. Through joint efforts, we could do a lot more to protect our forests, which are *essential reservoirs* of biodiversity. The UN's Agenda 21, the action programme for sustainable development, formulated the goals and the necessary concrete measures at the regional and national level. However, important things like a world-wide network of protected forests and an international certification system for sustainable produced wood are *just not happening*. In my opinion, the lack of an international instrument for forest conservation partly explains this failure. And our forests are paying the price.

International instruments for the protection of certain natural species are not an end in themselves. I see them as key components of a larger system. An *integrated* system. A system which would enable us to better protect our environment. I am talking about a world-wide ecological network of nature areas and ecological corridors. Wishful thinking? I don't think so. In the Netherlands, our efforts to realize a National Ecological Network are paying back. Europe, too, is building such a network in the Natura 2000 project. Agreements like AEWA are, in my opinion, a good basis for realising such a network on a global scale. Of course, it won't happen overnight. Vision and dedication are required from *all* partners. As with AEWA, the Netherlands is prepared to pave the way.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this meeting in South Africa marks the end of an era, and the beginning of a new one. In close co-operation with our partners, we have worked hard for twelve years to create AEWA. And our work has paid off. Now we are entering a new period, one of implementation. The Netherlands will continue to give its full co-operation and support. With you, we would like to make this Agreement an example of concrete international co-operation with tangible results in the next century.

Thank you for your attention.

**Greetings for the Opening Ceremony of the First Session of the Meeting of the Parties
to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement and the Sixth Conference of the Parties to
the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals**
by
**Parliamentary State Secretary Gila Altmann, Federal Ministry for the Environment,
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany**

Minister, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address on behalf of the German Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin representatives from countries and international organizations that are committed to conserving migratory species and in particular migratory water birds.

Today's opening ceremony is to celebrate two events:

The recent entry into force of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Water Birds, adopted in The Hague in 1995 and this year's 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Bonn Convention. The importance of these two agreements can be clearly illustrated using the example of the white stork in Germany.

The white stork is a species covered by AEWA and at the same time an indispensable element of our native bird life and that of our neighbouring countries. White stork population development is not only influenced by conditions in Europe, but to a large extent by conditions along the flyway and conditions in wintering areas in Africa. What is true for many bird species or other migratory species, is also true for a large and striking species such as the white stork: due to the lack of data on ecology and the behaviour of migratory bird species, it is extremely difficult to recommend specific conservation measures. Co-ordinated research activities are thus needed in many cases.

To overcome this lack of knowledge and to collect more data in addition to the data from ringed storks, the German Environment Ministry sponsors a long-term German-Israeli project, geared towards systematically investigating the flyway of central European white storks of the eastern population with the help of satellite tracking and detailed ecological monitoring. Interim results, which were published last year, seem very promising. One of the surprise results of the project is that a completely unknown wintering area has been discovered in the West of Sudan.

Against this background we consider how to co-operate with countries on the Eastern rim of the Mediterranean to protect important resting areas for the white stork and other waterbird species covered by AEWA, such as the white-headed duck, the marbled teal and the red-breasted merganser. The Middle East contains a number of important sites for migratory birds. We have provided expertise to support the elaboration of a conservation area concept for this region and investigate potential GEF funding. You will hear more about this here at the Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very happy that a few days ago, on 1st November 1999, the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Waterbirds entered into force. The government of the Netherlands and the Secretariat of the Bonn Convention have made considerable efforts to support and promote this important regional agreement. You have made tomorrow's conference possible. My heartfelt thanks to you.

At the meeting we will discuss the further development of the Agreement, in other words, the extension of the action plan, as well as the adoption of important conservation guidelines and priorities for the further work of the Convention.

Another item will be the establishment of a permanent Agreement Secretariat in accordance with article VI, paragraph 7, within the framework of the CMS Secretariat. This means that the interim secretariat, which was so far provided and funded by the government of the Netherlands, would move from The Hague to Bonn. We will warmly welcome the Secretariat. Since the CMS Secretariat, and other Agreement Secretariats, i.e. the EUROBATS Secretariat and the ASCOBANS Secretariat are already in Bonn, the Convention and the Agreements will benefit from a host of synergy effects. On behalf of the German government I can assure you that we will do everything to provide the AEWAS Secretariat with optimum start-up and adequate working conditions. We have already submitted an offer to the Government of the Netherlands.

The success of AEWAS, the Bonn Convention and other conservation agreements will depend on the parties' or signatories' abilities to fulfil their commitments. For many countries this is a financial and capacity issue. I am happy to see that this issue will be addressed under various agenda items. In this context Germany would like to make an additional annual contribution for projects or events of the Secretariat. This contribution will support the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the agreement area.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would now like to talk about the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The Convention had its 20th anniversary this year. From 11 to 23 June 1979 representatives of 50 governments accepted the invitation of the German government and came to Bonn to sign the Convention. It was, and still is, the goal of the Convention to provide migratory animal species with the protection necessary in their reproduction, wintering and migration sites.

Against this background the German Minister for the Environment, Jürgen Trittin invited guests to an anniversary ceremony to Bonn. More than 100 foreign embassies followed the invitation. Some of the people present here today attended the ceremony.

Ladies and Gentlemen, after 20 years our conclusion is: The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals has passed the test and has a future.

The Convention contains the instruments necessary to meet the protection and conservation requirements of these animals. The first instrument is the obligation to take strict conservation measures for all species listed in Annex I. Another important instrument is the commitment of the parties to enter into special regional agreements, based on two fundamental principles, namely international co-ordination and international co-operation, if possible among all range states with a view to conservation, and management. This is the spirit of the Bonn Convention and at the same time a precondition for conserving endangered species in their range areas, including the migration areas.

The Convention on Biological Diversity supports the Bonn Convention, it does not replace it. It seems recommendable however, to make GEF funding available for CMS projects, too.

In 1979, 22 states signed the Convention in Bonn. More than 60 parties are expected to participate in this year's Conference of the Parties. This is an encouraging development, but it is not enough. Many regions in the world are not yet adequately represented and some large range states (the US, Canada, Brazil and China) are not yet parties to the Convention. Some countries participate in the work under regional agreements or memoranda of understanding, without being parties to the CMS. Trying to attract further countries is thus a priority on the work list of the Convention. The German government will continue its efforts to promote the Agreement. The report of the German government contains a number of details about this promotion. Let me just stress in this context, that the Environment Minister, Jürgen Trittin when inviting non-parties to the anniversary ceremony on 23rd June 1999 in Bonn, requested non-party governments to consider accession to the Bonn Convention.

We intend to use both conferences here in Cape Town to inform you about the progress made in establishing the so-called, "Global Register of Migratory Animals" data base. This register will contain scientific data on migratory animals, data which may be combined with data from a geographical information system. It looks as if this project may be prolonged by the end of the year 2000. That would make it possible to gather additional fine-tuned data, to adapt data to specific user requirements (for instance for users such as CMS, ASCOBANS and EUROBATS and to test functionalities. The project manager Dr. Riede will be attending both conferences here, and he will be ready to explain the details about the data base.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I conclude allow me to issue two invitations to you:

First of all I would like to invite all participants of the 6th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention, that is all representatives of contracting parties, non-contracting parties, IGOs and NGOs, and of course the Secretariats, to a reception on 10th November 1999, from 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. here at the Hotel.

The second invitation is an invitation to Bonn in three years time. On behalf of the Federal Minister for the Environment, Jürgen Trittin I would like to invite the 2nd session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of African Eurasian Waterbirds and the 7th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals to Bonn. It would give me great pleasure to welcome you to my country in 2002 or 2003.

With these invitations the Federal Minister for the Environment, Jürgen Trittin would like to stress the importance the Federal Republic of Germany attaches to both the Convention and the Agreement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in Bonn we just had the 5th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Both the Climate Framework Convention and the Agreement on African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds show how important international or global co-operation is for the protection the world that we live in. We owe this to our future generations. Let us continue our work in this spirit.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**6th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES**

**1st MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN WATERBIRD
AGREEMENT**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS**

D E Pritchard

Minister, State Secretaries, colleagues and friends,

It is an honour and a pleasure to greet you at the anniversary Conference of this well matured Convention, to the birth of one of its most significant offspring, the Waterbird Agreement, and to an occasion of hard work and achievement for both of them.

That includes the contribution of the variety of non-governmental organizations on behalf of whom I now speak; and in particular four international conservation NGOs: BirdLife International, IUCN - the World Conservation Union, Wetlands International, and the World Wide Fund For Nature. We are represented here in good numbers, with a range of specialist expertise and perspectives from every part of the globe, including countries which are not yet Parties to the Convention or its various Agreements. We are continuing to use our good offices in those countries, hopefully with support from everyone who can give it, to bring new Parties in. There are still some very significant gaps in coverage - while we recognize that some of these are for reasons of historically deep difficulty, I hope we can all take renewed vigour from our meetings here to push hard for more signatures and ratifications where they are required, in partnership with those among you who have special relationships with the relevant governments.

Despite those gaps, the Convention goes from strength to strength, and the priority we give it in our own programmes has increased too. For example, IUCN at its recent European meeting agreed to give greater attention to CMS implementation issues in future. BirdLife's recent world conference was very pleased to have a keynote address from the CMS Deputy Executive Secretary, and one of its workshops, on migrants, exemplified the heightened profile that CMS matters are now being given at regional and national level among BirdLife Partners. WWF programmes prominently feature many migratory species. You will know of the integral involvement of Wetlands International in the preparation of technical documents for the Waterbird Agreement. This Agreement is a fantastic milestone which opens the way for a new era of commitment from everyone to the needs of our shared heritage of waterbirds in the African and Eurasian regions.

We appreciate the way that your Convention and its Agreements generally afford access to NGO interests. Policies and decisions are stronger where there has been a transparent view of what is being done, and we also bring a wealth of technical input to help the Convention achieve its goals. The proposal at this meeting regarding permanent observer status for various NGOs in the Scientific Council is a welcome alignment with the practice of some other treaties, and if the Standing Committee did the same you would then be as open as any of them. The Technical Committee of the Waterbird Agreement has an option to admit observers, and speaking for my own organization, BirdLife International will be among the first to request an involvement in that way too.

As participants in all the global biodiversity-related Conventions we have seen great advantage in recent moves towards joint working and synergy between them, and we encourage the best possible use of their complementary strengths in relation to habitats, sites and species to equip countries with the best tools for the job. This integration needs to be further improved at national level between the respective focal

points for each Convention, and we urge delegates to do what they can to advance that, once they return home from Cape Town.

Implementation of actions in countries is of course the real measure of what the Convention is achieving. National reports to meetings of Parties are the key indicator that the world community can use in judging this. There is scope for improvement here, in the number of reports completed in time for meetings, and in giving honest qualitative assessments in those reports of how far commitments have been followed through, what the obstacles have been and how to solve them, rather than just presenting descriptions of activity.

You will be able to agree some vital enabling steps here in the coming days. You will have our support, for example, for proposals to add new species to the Convention Appendices, to encourage measures to combat by-catch of fisheries and to draw up a new Agreement on albatrosses. We will ask reasonable questions about why some initiatives have not progressed as much as we hoped, such as those for the Houbara and Great Bustards.

In particular we will need to report back to our many millions of supporters throughout the world on the financial resources which you decide to commit to all this: to the concerted actions for selected Appendix-listed species, to conservation projects under the Agreements, especially getting the Waterbird Agreement off to the start that it needs; to regional meetings that stimulate momentum in developing countries in particular; and to the necessary resourcing of Secretariat functions. Delegates should keep in mind that the actual sums required are extremely small by comparison to government expenditures in other areas. Also, if we think about cost-effectiveness over a sufficiently strategic timescale, we will realize that resourcing the right actions adequately now, will often avoid the need for much greater demands on national exchequers in future. So we earnestly expect the verbal expressions of commitment that you make here to be backed by the right levels of funding.

We are present at a historic moment in international co-operation for the conservation of migratory species. The partnership between governments and non-governmental organizations represented here offers huge opportunities to make progress with some of the most urgent issues we face, and we pledge our energetic and constructive contribution to that. I wish you all a fruitful series of meetings.

Thank you very much.

**Key Note Address of
Dr. Klaus Töpfer at the Joint Opening Ceremony
for the
Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention
on Migratory Species and
the First Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement,
Lord Charles Hotel, Somerset West/Cape Town, 6 November 1999**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am really privileged and honoured to address this distinguished audience today.

To you - Minister, the Right Honourable Valli Moosa - go our special thanks for your personal involvement in hosting this conference. And through you we extend to your Government and the People of South Africa our thanks for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded us since our arrival in this beautiful city and for the excellent arrangements made for our deliberations.

I wish to thank you, Hon. Moosa, for presenting me with the South African State of Environment Report.

It is a tribute to the stature and capabilities of South Africa that it has taken over the responsibility of hosting this important Conference. This initiative complements and supports my endeavours to strengthen the United Nations presence in Africa.

It is my vision to see the importance of the United Nations headquarters in Nairobi grow to the level of other United Nations Headquarters in Geneva and Vienna. I am now in the position to inform you, as I recently informed the Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi, that Africa is on the way to achieving this goal. By April next year we will have expanded the meeting facilities at the United Nations Office in Nairobi to accommodate global meetings for up to two thousand five hundred participants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we have already heard from Mr. Moosa and from you Ms. Faber, we are opening two conferences simultaneously. This is remarkable, because one of them, the meeting of the parties to the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) is being hosted by the Government of the Netherlands but here in South Africa. I wish to thank the Netherlands Government for their efforts and generous support as hosts of the Interim Secretariat of AEWA. These meetings are a living proof of partnership between the industrialised countries of Europe and the countries of Africa.

The Convention on Migratory Species and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) are closely related to each other. The AEWA is a regional Agreement for certain migratory species, in this case migratory waterbirds, under the Convention. However, both the Convention and this Agreement are independent treaties governed by their respective Parties. Nevertheless, these joint meetings prove that it is possible, as is very often requested at the political level, to benefit from synergies between multilateral environmental agreements.

I learnt from the Executive Secretary, Mr. Müller-Helmbrecht, that great efforts have been necessary on the part of the organizers - the Governments of South Africa and the Netherlands, the Secretariats of the

meeting. However, the savings which are being made in terms of expenditure for this Conference and in terms of time saved by the delegates and the concentration of all organizational matters more than offsets the additional administrative work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The AEWA and its parent Convention, the CMS, are symbolic of the need to create partnerships between states which share natural resources. I wish to stress that the CMS and the AEWA must concern themselves deeply with the human aspects of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, because biodiversity is closely correlated with both cultural and spiritual values. Indeed, it may be noted that of the 6000 languages currently in use today, 2800 are endangered along with the biodiversity associated with the areas where these languages originate.

Migratory species connect not only cultures but also countries with each other. The dependence of migratory species on different ecosystems in different climatic zones in their annual or lifetime migratory cycles requires a common approach for their conservation and sustainable use. There is, therefore, great need for co-ordinated and integrated approaches to address the challenges of globalisation. Accordingly, conservation of species and their habitats/ecosystems must be linked with the issue of eradication of poverty which is a most poisonous commodity in the world.

A long-term research and monitoring programme co-ordinated by the Max-Planck-Society has produced some alarming results. The study shows that in the past 25 years the number of migratory birds between Europe and Africa has decreased on average by 1% per annum. Taking into account that migratory birds have evolved over 200 million years, you will agree that the fact that these species may become extinct within the next 100-200 years is a horrifying prospect.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migratory species are travellers without passports or visas. They are not interested in or bothered with ideological differences or political borders. The need for transboundary co-operation among States to protect the species and their habitats is of critical importance. In order to demonstrate to you all and to the public what an astonishing phenomenon migration is, I have taken up an idea of the Executive Secretary of CMS. Following his advice, I sent a message to His Excellency, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, the President of the Republic of South Africa in a very unusual way. This message was sent - not by e-mail, not by fax, not by ordinary mail but by eagles! These eagles were caught in North Eastern Germany and Poland in July for scientific purposes in order to track their migration by satellite telemetry. A small capsule has been attached to four of the tracked birds. The message to the President of the Republic of South Africa reads as follows:

“This Eagle connects ecosystems of Europe, Middle East and Africa. Migratory animals are paramount symbols of our common natural heritage”.

The birds actually left their breeding area in the Northern Hemisphere between 16th and 21st September to migrate through Southern Europe, Asia Minor, Egypt, Sudan, following the Rift Valley down to somewhere in Southern Africa, either Zambia or Botswana or Namibia to arrive after 6-8 weeks in South Africa. As you can see on the “movie” map here on the wall, five eagles are being tracked by satellite. The fifth one does not bear the message because it was caught last year and the satellite transmitter on its back is still working. Four of these five eagles are at present at Lake Victoria in Northern Uganda and the fifth one, surprising, as it started out last, is now in the border area between Zambia and Zimbabwe. So there is a chance that in the next few days this bird will enter the territory of South Africa - by the way without a visa. Although the eagles have not yet reached the territory of South Africa, I would appreciate

and not only one ?” The answer to this question is quite simple but frightening. On their migration from the breeding to the wintering grounds the eagles pass through twenty to thirty countries. In all countries of south-eastern Europe and the Near East as well as to some extent of northern and eastern Africa, bird hunting is very common and therefore a major threat to migratory bird species. While passing through the narrow corridors of the Mediterranean basin, they congregate by hundreds or thousands. And in doing so, they are easy targets for all people bearing weapons. In addition, the satellite transmitters are technically unreliable and the wintering areas of the eagles in eastern and southern Africa are fairly large. Therefore, in order to have a good chance to bring the message over to South Africa it was decided to use four instead of only one eagle as messengers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These birds and my message, hopefully, will have explained to people who are not professionally involved with conservation of nature and wild animal species that:

- ☞ migratory species connect ecosystems, countries and people over long distances, even over continents;
- ☞ they encounter many risks in all the places that they visit along their migration routes; and
- ☞ therefore, they need co-ordinated concerted and co-operative action for their long term conservation and where applicable, sustainable use.

Both CMS and the Convention on Biological Diversity, highlight in their preambles the “ever-growing value of wild animals from environmental, ecological, genetic, scientific, aesthetic, recreational, cultural, educational, social and economic points of view”. The majority of wild animals subject to subsistence and sport hunting can be found among the waterbird species covered by AEWA. If all hunters had been let loose on Africa’s “Big Five”, by now these species would have been extinct for decades.

To highlight the importance of migratory animal species, I would like to give you two examples. The first is the polar bear which inhabits all of the polar regions of the entire northern hemisphere including Canada, Greenland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States.

Polar bears travel throughout the year within individual home ranges of 50,000 to 350,000 km² in size. Pregnant polar bear females enter winter hide-aways to hibernate after putting on as much reserve fat as possible in order to have sufficient resources for that period. While hibernating, a bear’s heart-rate drops from forty to seventy beats per minute to only eight to twelve and its metabolism slows down by half. During the period of hibernation, the polar bear will neither pass urea or solid faecal wastes. While urea poisoning causing death would occur in all other animals within a week, bears have developed a unique physiological process of recycling the urea into usable proteins. Therefore they are now the subject of intensive medicinal research.

The second example I would like to give derives from the bionic, a more and more important scientific research area. The technically complicated analysis of bird flight over many years has revealed a number of aerodynamic secrets of great interest for application in aeroplanes, as for example the so-called “Multi-winglets”. These are peculiar arrangements of the wing tips to minimise induced flow impedance following the natural prototype of birds like storks, vultures and eagles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I could go on and on, but I would like to return to the key words of “partnership” and “synergy”. And in doing so, I would like to stress the close relationship between industrialised countries and developing countries in implementing the CMS including its subsidiary Agreements. The aim of holding these meetings in Africa is to show the importance of the Convention and the African-Eurasian Agreement for the African continent and its people.

In 1979 the countries which negotiated and thereafter concluded the Bonn Convention passed a declaration which appeals for mutual assistance in terms of financial, technical and educational support. Now, under the African-Eurasian Agreement, this appeal has been incorporated into the legally binding text of the Agreement.

I hope that the initial implementation work already done mainly through the West African programme of Wetlands International funded by the Netherlands, can be extended to the entire geographic area of the

Agreement. If successful, the AEWA will develop further to become one of the major tools in conserving our common natural heritage.

Excellencies,

UNEP is not standing on the sidelines. UNEP and CMS have common aims in their programmes of work. UNEP already supports the implementation of CMS work programmes. It assists CMS in the development of appropriate projects for submission to the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It assists CMS with financial support for the development of other projects. With the anticipated increase in UNEP's activities in the field of scientific capacity-building and project oriented work in the developing world, there will be increased opportunities for synergies in UNEP's and CMS's work programmes.

In this regard, a four-country GEF project for the "conservation of globally significant wetlands and migration corridors required by Siberian cranes and other globally significant migratory waterbirds in Asia" has recently received the GEF approval for funding. UNEP played a key role, with CMS and the International Crane Foundation, in securing approval of this so-called PDF-B phase.

Another project to identify and conserve important wetlands for migratory waterbirds, led by Wetlands International, is under preparation with the assistance of UNEP. I am certain that this project will be a top priority for Africa.

I have, however, noted with concern that, apart from South Africa, no other country in the Southern African region has yet joined the Convention. As the millennium draws to a close, cross-cultural and cross-boundary solidarity are essential to promote biodiversity conservation, its sustainable use and benefit sharing prospects not only across the continent of Africa but beyond. While in Uganda recently, I was informed that Uganda would soon join the CMS and reminded of the need for the Convention to address the issue of poverty.

It is true that migratory species have long been used by local people as a source of food and useful indicators of the changing seasons. In more recent times, many local communities have developed highly successful eco-tourism industries around their large migratory species, incorporating innovative and sophisticated methods for ensuring sustainable use of their resources. Money spent on conservation is a sound investment - good for the environment - good for local people - and, for this audience, perhaps the most important, good for migratory species.

Some examples may illustrate this point.

First, the African Elephant is a migratory species, listed on Appendix II of CMS since 1979. It is one of the African "Big Five" and has become one of the most important attractions for the tourists who come here. In addition, the utilisation of the animals by local communities has made considerable progress in recent years, starting with the "Campfire" programme in Zimbabwe.

Secondly, the sand grouse is a most interesting species for hunters in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, now suffering from uncoordinated exploitation. I would consider it very important to organize the conservation and utilisation on a sustainable basis for the advantage and benefit of the local people among others.

Thirdly, antelopes are being managed successfully with their products being exported to industrial countries.

Fourthly, whale watching, seal colonies and leather-back turtles (particularly successful in South Africa) are well established attractions for eco-tourism with the potential to be developed further.

The recurrent theme remains that migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats, and for example, wildebeest, zebras, penguins and a number of other migratory species and their habitats, warrant internationally co-ordinated and concerted conservation, not only for the conservation of the species but also for the benefit of people.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to make a special appeal to all States of Africa who have not yet done so, to join both the Convention and the AEWA. Only if the African countries are Parties to these treaties, and articulate their needs for assistance in the development of their conservation programmes for migratory species, is there a chance for the partnership with the industrialised and developed world to take off in a meaningful way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, I would like to congratulate, Mechthild Meyer, the winner of a recent competition to design a poster organised by the City of Bonn in conjunction with the CMS Secretariat. The imagery of her poster, in my opinion, captures exactly the inter-relation between migratory species and the environment and the responsibility of all countries to protect and nurture our planet. The poster will be used to promote the Convention world-wide and is on display here in the Conference Centre. I am also delighted to welcome Ms Meyer as a guest at the Opening Ceremony today.

CMS is a historic beginning, - historic, certainly, but equally certainly, just a beginning.

There can be no lapses into comfortable complacency. Joining and ratifying the convention is just the first step. What has been achieved will prove a temporary victory unless it leads irreversibly and without interruption to the complete preservation of our biological capital for future generations.

We have made incredible progress in charting the great ocean of knowledge. Now it is our task, the task of the Meeting of the Parties of AEWA and Conference of the Parties of the CMS to convert that knowledge into political action and to transfer the international co-operation which characterises the world of science into the world of politics.

Thank you very much for your attention. I wish you every success in your endeavours.