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PRESS RELEASE

New initiative gives boost to waterbird conservation in Africa

The "Initiative for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their habitats in Africa" was adopted at the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (UNEP/AEWA).

Bonn, 23 October 2008 - the decision to increase international efforts to conserve waterbirds and their habitats in Africa was made by government representatives from 80 African, Asian and European countries attending the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to AEWA (MOP4) in Antananarivo, Madagascar, 15-19 September 2008.

At the meeting delegates adopted, among others, AEWA Resolution 4.9 on the Initiative for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats in Africa, which calls for the mobilization of resources to support the new initiative aimed at building capacity for and strengthening the coordination of the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats in Africa.

Bert Lenten, the Executive Secretary of AEWA said: "Africa is an important wintering area for many birds from Eurasia. At the same time Africa is home to many intra-African migrants such as the Lesser Flamingo. Increased habitat and waterbird conservation in Africa does not only mean more protection for these birds, it is also a means of poverty alleviation and resource preservation for many African countries."

The new initiative gives all 118 AEWA Range States (plus the European Community) and the AEWA Secretariat a mandate to increase efforts to strengthen capacity for waterbird and habitat conservation in Africa.

"The African Initiative represents an important step in recognizing the flyway conservation principle upon which AEWA is based. If we are serious about conserving migratory waterbirds and their habitats across the African-Eurasian Flyways, we must make sure that all countries along the bird's migration routes have the capacity, resources and know-how to really do so." continued Lenten.

At the meeting in Antananarivo, delegates agreed on the development of a new international plan of action for Africa which will include proposals for priority areas for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa and instructed the AEWA Secretariat to explore synergies and to enhance cooperation with existing conservation activities of other relevant conventions and organisations in Africa.

Following the adoption of the "African Initiative for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats in Africa" (AEWA Resolution 4.9), the European Union (EU) welcomed its approval and the African Union (AU) congratulated delegates on the adoption of the initiative and also urged African states that had not yet signed the Agreement to do so as soon as possible.

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Notes for Editors:

AEWA – The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, or AEWA is a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) backed treaty dedicated to the protection of 255 species of waterbirds which migrate along the African-Eurasian Flyways. Developed under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), AEWA provides the framework for countries in the region to work together to conserve such species as ducks, waders, storks, flamingos and many other migratory waterbirds. Countries that have become Parties to the Agreement commit themselves to putting measures in place to conserve the region's waterbird populations and the habitats on which they depend. Currently 62 Parties out of 118 Range States in Africa and Eurasia have joined AEWA.

For more information on AEWA please see: www.unep-aewa.org

Waterbirds in Africa – Resolution 4.9 makes reference to a number of reports which underline the need to increase conservation efforts for waterbirds in Africa. For example, the fourth edition of the **Conservation Status Report (CSR4)** highlights that Africa holds the highest proportion of populations of waterbirds recognised as being Globally Threatened with 34 of the 38 AEWA Globally Threatened or Near Threatened species occurring in Africa and that particularly the sub-Saharan African parts of the AEWA area are among the regions where the need to improve the quality of population estimates is greatest. The **International Review on Hunting and Trade Legislation in the AEWA area** highlights that due to insufficient enforcement measures, illegal hunting is particularly widespread in Africa compared to other regions in the AEWA area with 96% of African countries being affected. The findings of this review also show that in 25% of the African Parties to AEWA, neither hunting nor trade is prohibited for any population listed in Column A of the Agreement (populations listed on Column A have the poorest conservation status and are protected by the provisions of the Agreement). **A report on the use of non-toxic shot for hunting in wetlands**, shows that no African Parties to AEWA have so far introduced a legal ban on lead shot and that, particularly in Africa, there is a general lack of awareness on the issue. The resolution also highlights that many AEWA Range States in Africa lack the expertise and finances to provide adequate **conservation responses to the impacts of climate change on migratory waterbirds** and calls for the mobilization of resources and better cooperation and exchange of information among African Range States for the conservation of migratory species of waterbirds and their habitats in Africa.

For more information please see Resolution 4.9 under “Final Resolutions”:

www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop4_docs/mop4.htm

MOP4 in Madagascar – Madagascar was host country to the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to AEWA (MOP4), which was jointly organized by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the Madagascar Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) in Antananarivo, Madagascar, 15-19 September 2008. At the meeting a total of 20 resolutions were adopted and delegates reviewed the implementation of the Agreement and Action Plan and addressed a number of issues relating to the conservation of migratory waterbirds. The theme of MOP4 was “**Flyway conservation at work – Review of the past, vision for the future**”.

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