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PRESS RELEASE

International Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose sets stage for broader Eurasian cooperation along the species' flyway

Bonn, 10 November 2008 - The recently adopted "International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Western Palearctic Population)" provides a framework for coordinated international action to conserve this threatened species across its full migratory range spanning Europe and parts of Asia.

Adopted at the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement in Antananarivo, Madagascar, the plan sets the stage for strengthened cooperative conservation action between 22 Eurasian countries in which this species regularly occurs.

The Lesser White-fronted Goose's extraordinary migration route takes it across more individual countries than any other goose species. Shared by a large number of countries such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Russia; Greece and Turkey, but also Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany, it is a flagship species for international cooperation.

"An important compromise has been achieved with the adoption of this action plan - particularly between countries in Europe." said Bert Lenten, the Executive Secretary of AEWA - the international treaty under which this plan was developed. The plan concludes several years of negotiation and political debate about the principles and merits of different conservation instruments, such as on the supplementation of populations and their introduction into new or historically existing flyways.

"We now have a solid basis of consolidated information and a practical roadmap which will help countries to work together for the protection of this threatened species."

The Western Palearctic population of the Lesser White-fronted Goose is decreasing faster than those of almost any other species in the area covered by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, with a decline rate of 30-49% over the last 10 years.

Apart from the threat from habitat loss in its European breeding range, hunting is the biggest problem that countries are trying to tackle through this action plan. Its complicated migration route takes the bird through a number of countries where there are no effective hunting regulations.

The new Action Plan brings together countries of highly diverse economic, cultural and geographic backgrounds within one framework for international action to better conserve this threatened species.

"By far the largest part of the bird's population nests in Russia, migrates across Central Asian states like Kazakhstan and winters in countries like Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq and Iran. What is common to this whole region is a shortage of financial means for nature conservation and, in

some countries facing political instability, nature conservation has not been particularly high on the agenda” says Tim Jones, one of the action plan compilers.

“One of the things this action plan can do is to promote international cooperation and capacity building in order to assist the countries in this region to strengthen their actions for the species and thereby for wetlands conservation more broadly.” said Jones.

“An international agreement of this kind is often a requirement before national conservation actions can be justified. If we get the habitats and sites for this species protected through the implementation of this action plan – it will be benefiting not only the Lesser White-fronted Goose but also many other waterbird species as well” said Lenten.

Further information:

- The full International Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose is available at:
www.unep-aewa.org/news/news_lwfg/lwfg_news.htm
- A selection of recent audio interviews relating to the LWfG Action Plan are available on the AEWA website: www.unep-aewa.org/press
- For latest field observations and monitoring information on Lesser White-fronted Geese go to: www.piskulka.net , a species information platform maintained by the Fennoscandian Lesser White-fronted Goose LIFE Nature Project.
- More facts on the species can be found at:
www.unep-aewa.org/activities/working_groups/lwfg/lwfg_species_facts.htm

The 22 countries identified as “LWfG Principal Range States” include:

Non-EU	EU
Azerbaijan	Bulgaria
Iraq	Estonia
Islamic Republic of Iran	Finland
Kazakhstan	Germany
Norway	Greece
Russian Federation	Hungary
Syria	Lithuania
Turkey	The Netherlands
Turkmenistan	Poland
Ukraine	Romania
Uzbekistan	Sweden

LWfG Photo & Distribution Map:

Photo: Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*), picture taken at the Valdak Marshes in northern Norway. © Ingar Jostein Øien. [www.unep-aewa.org/press]

Map: A global distribution map of wild populations of Lesser White-fronted Goose for the period 2000–2005 (© BirdLife Norway). Dashed lines show the linkages between breeding and wintering areas for the Eastern main population, but the precise migration routes followed are unknown. The small reintroduced population migrating between Sweden and the Netherlands is not on this map. [www.unep-aewa.org/press]

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.

MOP4 in Madagascar – The Fourth Meeting of the Parties to AEWA (MOP4) was jointly organized by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the Madagascan Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) in Antananarivo, Madagascar, 15-19 September 2008. A total of 20 resolutions were adopted, the implementation of the Agreement was reviewed and delegates addressed a number of issues relating to the conservation of migratory waterbirds. The meeting also provided the chance to put the finishing touches to the agreement on the Lesser White-fronted Goose after several years of negotiations and debating between scientists, decision-makers and practitioners from the 22 Range States of the waterbird species.

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

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