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## 6<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

9-14 November 2015, Bonn, Germany

*“Making flyway conservation happen”*

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### IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW PROCESS – REPORT TO MOP6

*Compiled by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat for the AEWA Standing Committee*

#### Introduction

With Resolution 4.6, the Meeting of the Parties established a specific procedure to assist Contracting Parties with the implementation of the Agreement; the *Implementation Review Process (IRP)* and that this procedure will be undertaken by the Standing Committee.

The IRP entitles the AEWA Standing Committee (StC) to address incidents of adverse or potential adverse effects on migratory waterbirds or on their sites and habitats as a result of human activities. Upon receiving information on such incidents, the Standing Committee shall contact the Contracting Party concerned and assess the impact on migratory waterbirds, also through on-the-spot missions, and recommend measures for preventing or mitigating the impact.

After receiving recommendations from the Standing Committee for preventing or mitigating the respective impact on waterbirds, or on their sites and habitats, the Party concerned shall ensure that any measures undertaken regarding the activity, site or habitat concerned are in accordance with its obligations under the Agreement and based on the precautionary principle. The Party concerned shall inform the Standing Committee as to the above measures at the earliest opportunity.

MOP4 also instructed the Standing Committee to prepare and submit to each ordinary session of the MOP a report on its operations in the framework of the IRP. The Secretariat was instructed to support the Standing Committee, resources permitting, in performing IRP activities.

At its 9<sup>th</sup> meeting (20-23 April 2009) the AEWA Technical Committee discussed and agreed on its role in supporting the Standing Committee in performing the IRP. After the meeting, the TC prepared and endorsed, by correspondence, an information sheet on possible IRP cases in order to allow various stakeholders to submit information to the Standing Committee on cases, which, in their opinion, represent threats to waterbirds and require an IRP procedure. This information sheet is available on the [AEWA website](#).

## **Standing Committee report to MOP6 on the Implementation Review Process**

This report summarises the four cases considered in the period 2012-2015 following MOP5 and the actions undertaken by the Standing Committee and other involved stakeholders. The following cases are reported:

- Syrian Arab Republic: Illegal hunting of the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*)
- Montenegro: Drainage of the salina of Ulcinj for tourism development
- Bulgaria: Windfarming project adjacent to Lake Durankulak putting at risk the globally threatened Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*)
- Iceland: Plans for lowland afforestation threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species

In addition, the Standing Committee keeps as a watching brief the case of planned windfarm construction in Site d'Arjuzanx in the region of Aquitaine in SW France. This is an important stop-over and wintering site for the Eurasian Crane. No IRP case has been opened yet and France is requested to regularly update the Standing Committee at each of its meetings. This report does not include further information on this possible IRP case.

This report was compiled by the Secretariat for the Standing Committee and approved by correspondence by the Standing Committee for submission to MOP6.

### **Action requested from the Meeting of the Parties**

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to take note of this report and provide guidance, as appropriate.

## Implementation Review Process (IRP) cases considered in the period 2012-2015

<b>IRP Case Number:</b> 1	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing / On hold	
<b>Party:</b> Syrian Arab Republic	<b>Year opened:</b> 2009	<b>Year closed:</b> n/a
<b>Issue:</b> Illegal hunting of the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus gregarius</i> )		
<p><b>Official correspondence:</b></p> <p>1 October 2009 – letter from the AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten on behalf of the AEWA Standing Committee to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs (<i>introducing the issue, requesting official information, informing about the StC decision to open a case, offering an on-the-spot assessment mission</i>);</p> <p>15 December 2009 – letter from H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs to the AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten (<i>welcoming the offer for a mission</i>);</p> <p>28 December 2009 - letter from the AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs (<i>confirming the mission and forwarding the mission's Terms of Reference</i>);</p> <p>14 April 2010 - letter from the AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs (<i>submitting the draft mission report and inviting comments</i>);</p> <p>3 August 2010 – letter from the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkersen to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs (<i>forwarding the mission report and its recommendations, requesting submission of progress reports twice a year</i>);</p> <p>22 February 2012 - letter from the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkersen to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, Minister of State for Environment Affairs (<i>reminder of pending progress reports</i>).</p>		
<b>On-the-spot assessment mission(s):</b> 23 February – 1 March 2010, funding provided by the Government of Germany		
<b>Mission report(s):</b> 24 May 2010 - <a href="http://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/basic_page_documents/final_aewa_syria_irp_report.pdf">http://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/basic_page_documents/final_aewa_syria_irp_report.pdf</a>		
<b>Party report(s):</b> Pending four progress reports		

### Case trigger

At the end of August 2009 the AEWA Secretariat received a Possible IRP Case Information Sheet from the BirdLife International Middle East Secretariat. The issue concerned high risk of hunting to the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*) in Syria. Since the discovery of large concentrations of Sociable Lapwing staging during migration in northern Syria in 2007, several hunting incidents have been reported with unknown exact magnitude of impact. The reports indicated massive hunting with at least 150 birds killed at one site in the spring of 2009.

### Consultations

The Secretariat uploaded the received information sheet on the Technical Committee (TC) Workspace and requested for the advice of the TC, to be forwarded to the Standing Committee (StC). The TC advised to open

an IRP case. Following this advice, and on the basis of its own assessment of the information provided, the StC decided to open a case at the end of September 2009.

### **Actions (2009-2012 by MOP5)**

On 1 October 2009, the AEWA Executive Secretary Mr. Bert Lenten sent a letter on behalf of the StC to H.E. Kawkab Dayeh, the Syrian Minister of State for Environment Affairs, introducing the issue, informing about the StC decision to open a case and offering an on-the-spot assessment mission. The Minister responded on 15 December 2009, accepting the mission. In consultation with the TC, the Secretariat drafted Terms of Reference for the mission, which were finalised and agreed upon between the Secretariat and the Ministry of State for Environment. On 28 December 2009, the AEWA Executive Secretary confirmed the mission, the agreed dates and Terms of Reference to the Minister.

The on-the-spot assessment mission took place from 23 February to 1 March 2010, with financial support provided by the Government of Germany. The international mission comprised the following people: Mr. Sergey Dereliev (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat), Mr. Sharif Jbour (BirdLife International, Middle East Secretariat), Mr. Tim Jones (consultant to the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat) and Mr. Robert Sheldon (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds/BirdLife UK). A detailed mission report with recommendations is available on the AEWA website at the link above. The draft mission report was sent to the Minister on 14 April 2010 by the AEWA Executive Secretary and comments were invited. The report was finalised on 24 May 2010.

At its 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting (16-17 June 2010), the StC reviewed the mission report and approved the recommendations made and that these should be forwarded to the Government of Syria. On 3 August 2010 the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkersen sent a letter to the Minister of State for Environment Affairs forwarding the mission report and its recommendations as well as requesting submission of progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations twice a year after each migration period (May and December).

Unofficial communications testified that activities to implement recommendations were taking place in Syria. However, it proved challenging for the Secretariat to obtain progress reports to be submitted to the StC. At its 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting (26-27 November 2011) the Standing Committee decided to send a reminder to the Minister of State for Environment Affairs and to request a consolidated report covering the past two year to be submitted in advance of MOP5.

On 22 February 2012 the Chair of the StC sent a letter to the Minister inviting the submission of a consolidated report by 13 April 2012.

### **Actions (2012-2015)**

Due to the complicated political situation in Syria, the Standing Committee has decided to put this IRP case on hold and there have not been any follow up actions since MOP5.

<b>IRP Case Number:</b> 2	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing (Standing Committee to decide on next steps)	
<b>Party:</b> Montenegro	<b>Year opened:</b> 2012	<b>Year closed:</b> n/a
<b>Issue:</b> Drainage of the salina of Ulcinj for tourism development		
<p><b>Official correspondence:</b>  12 January 2012 – letter from the AEWA Acting Executive Secretary Mr. Marco Barbieri and the CMS Officer in Charge Mr. Bert Lenten to H.E. Predrag Sekulic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism (<i>expressing concerns, requesting official information on the issue, introducing the option of an IRP case and on-the-spot assessment mission</i>);</p> <p>20 February 2012 – letter from H.E. Predrag Sekulic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism to the AEWA Acting Executive Secretary Mr. Marco Barbieri and the CMS Officer in Charge Mr. Bert Lenten (<i>providing information and welcoming a mission</i>);</p> <p>18 July 2013 – letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Ivana Vojinovic, Deputy Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism (<i>requesting official information and update on the issue</i>);</p> <p>08 May 2014 – letter from the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkensen to H.E. Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism (<i>requesting official information and update on the issue</i>);</p> <p>16 March 2015 – letter from the AEWA Secretariat to H.E. Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism (<i>requesting an appointment for a face-to-face meeting</i>).</p>		
<b>On-the-spot assessment mission(s):</b> n/a		
<b>Mission report(s):</b> n/a		
<b>Party report(s):</b> n/a		

## Case trigger

In late December 2011 the UNEP/AEWA and UNEP/CMS Secretariats received information from various sources about projects to drain the salina of Ulcinj in Montenegro for tourism development. The salina is the most important wetland for migratory waterbirds in Montenegro as well as one of the most important sites along the eastern Adriatic coast. The site has no statutory designation, but has been recognised for its values and identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA), potential Ramsar site, Emerald site and Natura 2000 site as well as a Critical Site as part of the AEWA Critical Site Network. Some 55 breeding species have been recorded, as well as high concentrations of waterbirds in winter and during migration. It is an important site for the globally threatened Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) and other Column A listed species, such as the Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*), Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) and Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*).

## Consultations

In consultation with the Chairs of the Standing and Technical Committees, the Secretariat prepared a joint letter with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat (also consulted with the Chairs of the CMS Standing Committee and Scientific Council). Upon the receipt of the response to the letter the Standing Committee considered the issue and decided to open a case and send an on-the-spot assessment mission.

## **Actions (2012 by MOP5)**

On 12 January 2012, the AEWA Acting Executive Secretary Mr. Marco Barbieri and the CMS Officer in Charge Mr. Bert Lenten sent a letter to H.E. Predrag Sekulic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism, expressing concern, requesting further information and introducing the IRP. Simultaneously, separate letters were also sent by the Ramsar and Bern Conventions Secretariats. The Minister responded to the joint AEWA-CMS letter on 20 February 2012 providing some additional information and welcoming an IRP mission.

## **Actions (2012-2015)**

While the Secretariat was undertaking consultations for a possible joint mission with CMS, and the Ramsar and Bern Convention Secretariats, information received from other stakeholders alluded to the fact that the case has been possibly resolved, at least to some extent. In April 2013 the Secretariat requested an update from Ms. Ivana Vojinovic, Deputy Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism, followed by a letter in July 2013 reminding of the pending update.

A further reminder was sent in May 2014 by the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkensen to H.E. Branimir Gvozdenovic requesting an update on the case before an on-the-spot assessment mission is convened. This reminder was reiterated in August 2014 to Ms. Daliborka Pejovic, State Secretary of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism.

As the latest communication from the Government of Montenegro to the AEWA Secretariat dated back to February 2012, in March 2015 the Secretariat requested an appointment in Podgorica in the margins of another meeting in April 2015 attended by a representative of the Secretariat.

An international meeting on the conservation of the salina of Ulcinj took place on 8-9 April 2015 in Podgorica and was convened by the Montenegrin Centre for the Protection and Study of Birds and EuroNatur in cooperation with the Municipality of Ulcinj. A representative of the Secretariat met with officials of the Ministry on 7 April 2015 and it was agreed that the outcomes of the international meeting will be considered in the follow up work on the IRP case.

The conclusions of the international conference resulted in a list of action points with clear deadlines and responsibility, which were agreed by all attendees and were also presented on 9 April 2015 in the town of Ulcinj to a delegation of the European Parliament which took interest in this case.

## **Follow-up**

At the time of writing the AEWA Standing Committee is to consider the conclusions of the international conference on the conservation of the salina of Ulcinj and to decide on the next steps to be taken in the framework of the IRP case procedure.

<b>IRP Case Number:</b> 3	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing (further update to be requested from the Government)	
<b>Party:</b> Bulgaria	<b>Year opened:</b> 2012	<b>Year closed:</b> n/a
<b>Issue:</b> Windfarming project adjacent to Lake Durankulak putting at risk the globally threatened Red-breasted Goose ( <i>Branta ruficollis</i> )		
<p><b>Official correspondence:</b></p> <p>29 March 2012 – letter from the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkersen to H.E. Nona Karadjova, Minister of Environment and Water (<i>expressing concerns, requesting official information on the issue, informing about the StC decision to open a case, offering an on-the-spot assessment mission</i>)</p> <p>08 May 2012 – letter from Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat (<i>asking for clarifications about the exact windfarm that has raised concerns and the obligations that the Ministry would need to comply with arising from an IRP on-the-spot assessment mission</i>)</p> <p>29 May 2012 – letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water (<i>providing required clarifications in their letter of 08 May 2012</i>)</p> <p>10 July 2012 - letter from Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat (<i>providing information on the procedural and legal status of the investment proposal for construction of the windfarm and asking for further clarifications on the obligations that the Ministry would need to comply with arising from an IRP on-the-spot assessment mission</i>)</p> <p>14 August 2012 – letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water (<i>providing required clarifications in their letter of 10 July 2012</i>)</p> <p>31 October 2012 - letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water (<i>requesting confirmation on the acceptance of an IRP on-the-spot assessment mission</i>)</p> <p>07 December 2012 - letter from Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat (<i>providing information on the ongoing legal appeals against the permission for construction of the windfarm and declining the IRP on-the-spot assessment mission at this stage</i>).</p> <p>22 January 2013 - letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water (<i>requesting clarification on the options for further development of the case following a decision of a three-member panel of the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court</i>)</p> <p>01 February 2013 - letter from Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat (<i>clarifying that only after the final decision of the five-member panel of the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court further action by the Ministry will be decided</i>)</p> <p>19 July 2013 - letter from the AEWA Secretariat to H.E. Iskra Mihaylova-Koparova, Minister of Environment and Water (<i>requesting clarification on the next steps of the Ministry following the final decision of a five-member panel of the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court and reiterating the offer to send an on-the-spot assessment mission</i>)</p> <p>13 November 2013 - letter from H.E. Iskra Mihaylova-Koparova, Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat (<i>providing information on the actions the Ministry has been undertaking on this case and welcoming support from AEWA</i>)</p>		

06 January 2014 - letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Emilia Kraeva, Head of the International Cooperation Department in the Minister of Environment and Water ( <i>requesting suggestions on how the Secretariat can support the process ahead and requesting an appointment for a meeting</i> )
06 March 2014 - letter from the AEWA Secretariat to Ms. Emilia Kraeva, Head of the International Cooperation Department in the Minister of Environment and Water ( <i>summarising the outcomes of the face-to-face meeting in Sofia on 17 February 2014 and requesting updates once suggested measures have been implemented</i> )
07 July 2014 - letter from H.E. Stanislav Anastasov, Minister of Environment and Water to the AEWA Secretariat ( <i>summarising some information on this case and providing a short update on steps undertaken by the Ministry</i> )
<b>On-the-spot assessment mission(s):</b> n/a
<b>Mission report(s):</b> n/a
<b>Party report(s):</b> n/a

### Case trigger

At the end of February 2012, the AEWA Secretariat received a Possible IRP Case Information Sheet from the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Bulgaria). The issue concerned a new windfarming project adjacent to Lake Durankulak in Bulgaria aiming at the installation of 95 turbines. Lake Durankulak, together with the nearby situated Lake Shabla, is located in a geographic region called Dobrudzha. Dobrudzha is known to host up to 90% of the population of the globally threatened Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*), centered around lakes Durankulak and Shabla, as well high numbers of the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) as well as the Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) and the globally threatened Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*). This new project is particularly threatening and spatially overlaps with goose feeding areas while also creating a barrier between the lake as a roosting site and other potential feeding areas. Currently, there are 278 operational wind turbines in Dobrudzha, but the total number of planned installations is 3606.

### Consultations

The Secretariat uploaded the information sheet received on the Technical Committee (TC) Workspace and requested for the advice of the TC to be forwarded to the Standing Committee (StC). The TC advised to open an IRP case. Following this advice and on the basis of its own assessment of the information provided, the StC decided to open a case at the end of March 2012.

### Actions (2012 by MOP5)

On 29 March 2012 the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkensen sent a letter to H.E. Nona Karadjova, Minister of Environment and Water expressing concerns, requesting official information on the issue, informing about the StC decision to open a case and offering an on-the-spot assessment mission. The letter was copied to the Ramsar and Bern Convention Secretariats.

On 08 May 2012 Ms. Evdokia Maneva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water sent a letter to the AEWA Secretariat asking for clarifications about the exact windfarm that has raised concerns and the obligations that the Ministry would need to comply with arising from an on-the-spot assessment mission.

### Actions (2012-2015)

Between the end of May and early December 2012 there was an exchange of letters between the Deputy Minister Maneva and the Secretariat. In essence, the decision of the Regional Office of the Ministry on the Environmental Impact Assessment, granting a permission for the construction of the windfarm, was appealed

by NGOs and on the basis of further evaluation, the Minister has revoked the decision of the Director of the Regional Office. The investor, however, appealed against this act of the Minister and the appeal was considered by the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court (SAC). On these grounds they declined to accept an IRP on-the-spot assessment mission at this stage.

The verdict of the three-member panel of the SAC was announced on 17 January 2013 and it annulled the decision of the Minister to revoke the permission for construction of the windfarm. This decision could have been appealed before a three-member panel of the Court. On 22 January 2013 the Secretariat sent a letter to Deputy Minister Maneva asking for the actions that the Ministry is planning to take and reiterating the offer to send an on-the-spot assessment mission. The response received indicated that the Ministry will precise its further actions only after the final decision of the Court.

The final verdict of the SAC was issued on 9 May 2013 and it confirmed that annulment of Minister's decision, thus allowing for the project to be implemented. On 19 July 2013 the Secretariat inquired the newly-appointed Minister H.E. Iskra Mihaylova-Koparova on the options for the EIA to allow for the revision of the EIA and once again reiterating the offer to send a mission.

The Minister responded on 13 November 2013 informing that following a new appeal by NGOs to the Supreme Administrative Prosecution Office (SAPO) the positive decision on the EIA for the windfarm construction project was repealed by a decision of the Minister on 14 October 2013, which also ordered a revision of the whole EIA procedure. In addition, on 18 October 2013 the Minister issued an order for preventive protection of areas to be included within a new Special Protection Area "Bilo" under the Natura2000 network aiming at the conservation of the Red-breasted Goose, amongst other species. This new SPA is located west of Lake Durankulak and provides feeding habitat. The regimes of the new SPA prohibit the construction of windfarms and associated infrastructure. Finally, the Minister welcomed support from AEWA on this case.

In January 2014 the Secretariat inquired with Ms. Emilia Kraeva, the Head of the International Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Environment and Water, how the renewed EIA process will be conducted and how the Secretariat can advise and counsel during this process.

On 17 February 2014, in the margins of another meeting in Bulgaria, a representative of the Secretariat met with representatives of the Ministry in Sofia. The outcomes of this meeting were summarised in a letter dated 6 March 2014 from the Secretariat to the Head of the International Cooperation Department. The Ministry had informed that the SPAs around Lake Durankulak will be enlarged and that the procedure will be finalised within months. Infrastructure developments will not be allowed by the SPA regimes, which according to the Ministry officials excluded the possibility for the windfarm to be constructed. Thus no new EIA procedure would be needed and no further support from the Secretariat would be necessary.

On 7 July 2014 the newly-appointed Minister H.E. Stanislav Anastasov updated the Secretariat that the SPA "Bilo" was designated in April 2014 and that the SPA "Kaliakra" located south of Lake Durankulak has been enlarged with a decision of February 2014.

### **Follow-up**

At the time of writing further updated and more detailed information on the new and enlarged SPAs was to be requested from the Ministry in order to inform a decision of the Standing Committee on the case.

<b>IRP Case Number:</b> 4	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing (on-the-spot assessment mission to be convened)	
<b>Party:</b> Iceland	<b>Year opened:</b> 2014	<b>Year closed:</b> n/a
<b>Issue:</b> Plans for lowland afforestation threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species		
<b>Official correspondence:</b> 22 April 2014 – letter from the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkensen to H.E. Sigurður Ingi Jóhannsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources ( <i>expressing concerns, requesting official information on the issue, informing about the StC decision to open a case, offering an on-the-spot assessment mission</i> ).  10 July 2014 – electronic message from the Director General of the Department of Land and Natural Heritage in the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources Mr. Jón Geir Pétursson to the AEWA Secretariat ( <i>confirming the receipt of the letter, welcoming an on-the-spot assessment mission, requesting the background information that triggered the opening of the case, designating a corresponding focal point at their end</i> ).		
<b>On-the-spot assessment mission(s):</b> n/a		
<b>Mission report(s):</b> n/a		
<b>Party report(s):</b> n/a		

### Case trigger

At the beginning of April 2014, the AEWA Secretariat received a Possible IRP Case Information Sheet from Fuglavernd - the Icelandic partner organisation of BirdLife International. The issue concerned plans for large-scale state-subsidised lowland afforestation which are threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed species. According to the information provided, the Icelandic forestry policy under several legal acts adopted in the 1990s and more recently in 2006 have set the afforestation target at 5% of each region's lowlands (land below the 400m contour) to be reached by year 2040. Such afforestation predominantly involves non-native tree species and the purpose is mainly for timber production. Further information pointed that in 2007 a committee convened by the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources recommended extending birch woodland cover to 10% of the land area and in 2013 a similar committee produced a National Forestry Strategy proposing a new target of 12% forest cover by year 2100.

Iceland is second only to Russia in its importance as a source of breeding migratory waterbirds in the AEWA region. It supports the most important breeding populations in Europe for six species of shorebirds and it is the second most important country for three. Information compiled in 2007 pointed out that the afforestation plans will impact on 10 species listed under AEWA that breed in Iceland, mainly grassland-breeding waders, one of which is a globally near-threatened species (Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*).

### Consultations

The Secretariat uploaded the information sheet received on the Technical Committee (TC) Workspace and requested for the advice of the TC to be forwarded to the Standing Committee (StC). The TC advised to open an IRP case. Following this advice and on the basis of its own assessment of the information provided, the StC decided to open a case in April 2014.

### Actions

On 22 March 2012 the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee Mr. Øystein Størkensen sent a letter to H.E. Sigurður Ingi Jóhannsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources expressing concerns,

requesting official information on the issue, informing about the StC decision to open a case and offering an on-the-spot assessment mission. The letter was copied to the Ramsar and Bern Convention Secretariats, as well as the CAFF Secretariat, considering in particular that the Bern Convention Standing Committee has taken an interest in this issue since 2001.

On 10 July 2014 the Director General of the Department of Land and Natural Heritage in the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources Mr. Jón Geir Pétursson sent an electronic message to the AEWAs Secretariat confirming the receipt of the letter, welcoming an on-the-spot assessment mission, requesting the background information that triggered the opening of the case and designating a corresponding focal point at their end.

In August the Secretariat provided the Icelandic Ministry with the requested background information and prompted submission of further official information from the Ministry and in mid-September 2014 the Secretariat received from the Ministry their response to the Bern Convention Standing Committee.

In mid-January 2015, after a consultation with the Secretariats of the Ramsar and Bern Conventions and of CAFF, the Secretariat sent to the Ministry draft Terms of reference for an AEWAs IRP on-the-spot assessment mission to be undertaken in conjunction the Ramsar Convention, the Bern Convention and CAFF.

In the course of January and later in March 2015 there was an exchange and consultation between the Secretariat and the Ministry on the draft ToR and the tentative dates for the IRP mission were set for 21-25 September 2015.

In May 2015 the Ministry informed the Secretariat that since the IRP mission involves other MEAs as well, they would like to undertake separate consultations with them. The Secretariat provided the Ministry with contact details for the Ramsar, Bern and Caff Secretariats for this purpose.

On 1 September 2015, the Secretariat received a revised version of the ToR from the Ministry, narrowing the scope and objectives of the mission and also limiting the role of other frameworks by excluding the Ramsar Convention and CAFF.

### **Follow-up**

At the time of writing the AEWAs Standing Committee was to consider the feedback from the Ministry and decide on the proposed revision and narrowing of scope. The mission is re-scheduled for the second quarter of 2016 as holding it in 2015 is no longer feasible.