

RESOLUTION 3.17

CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS

Sponsored by the United Kingdom

Conscious of the findings of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change's *Third Assessment Report – Climate Change 2001*, especially in relation to the vulnerability of habitats and species to the direct and indirect consequences of unprecedented changes to the global climate,

Further conscious of the role that AEWA has in facilitating achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),

Also aware of the findings of the CBD Technical Report on interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change and that this Report is to be followed up by one issued in 2006 on the integration of biodiversity considerations in the implementation of climate change adaptation activities at the local level through to the international level,

Recognizing that climate change may significantly change the ecological character of the habitats of migratory waterbirds, *inter alia*, through changed patterns of land-use, the loss of intertidal habitats through rising sea-levels, the loss or degradation of wetlands, possible increases in mortality caused by potential changes in harvest regimes, and changes in distribution of waterbird diseases and their vectors; and that such changes operating at different scales will have consequences for the status and trends of waterbird populations,

Recognizing also that climate change may significantly affect the behaviour of migratory waterbirds, bringing about changes in the timing of reproduction and migration, and in spatial patterns of habitat use, *inter alia*, through changes in the ecological character of habitats,

Noting that the regulation of harvesting, to remain in accordance with the principle of sustainable use as envisaged by the Action Plan, should be responsive to significant changes in pressures on waterbirds caused by climate change,

Aware that strategies for the conservation of protected areas for waterbirds, developed according to the ecosystem approach, need to take into account the potential effects of climate change and be adapted to ensure the maintenance of the ecological functions of the individual areas within the framework of flyway-scale networks,

Noting also that such changes will significantly influence measures to achieve AEWA's fundamental objective, which is to maintain migratory waterbird species in a favourable conservation status, or restore them to such status, and yet aware that the Agreement's Action Plan makes no reference to the complex issues raised by climatic change and its direct and indirect consequences,

Conscious that the possible effects of climate change on ecosystems and biological diversity have been noted by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and that in particular CMS has recognized the need to ensure that its decisions are based on the best and most recent scientific data available,

Aware that the Scientific Council of CMS has established a working group to review scientific work being undertaken on climate change, to assess the relevance of this to migratory species and the aims of CMS, and to strengthen links with other bodies working on this issue,

Noting the desk study into the effects of climate change on migratory species commissioned by the UK Government earlier this year found:

- migratory species have, and will continue to be, adversely affected by climate change – over 80% of CMS listed bird species face some threat from it, almost half because of changes in water regimes,
- migratory waders, such as the Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, are expected to face large population declines and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* faces extinction,
- that knowledge of the likely impacts of future climate change varies greatly between taxonomic groups, but the best knowledge exists for birds,
- that confident predictions on breeding performance and survival need to be underpinned by more research, and
- that changes to water regimes and loss of vulnerable habitats are likely to affect the greatest number of migratory species, and in many cases a reduction in human impacts will help species adapt.

Conscious that the possible effects of climate change with relevance to waterbirds and their habitats have also been recognized by other MEAs, notably the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and for the desirability for AEWA to consider these issues and the work done by them given the scale and nature of likely impacts on migratory waterbirds.

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Instructs* the Technical Committee, working with the Agreement Secretariat, and taking into consideration the work of the CMS Scientific Council and others as appropriate, to give priority, resources permitting, to an assessment of current evidence of the effects of changing climate on migratory waterbirds, a review of the implications of modelled future patterns of climate change on waterbirds, and an outline of possible means of adapting to these changes, and to report conclusions to a future Meeting of the Parties;
2. *Requests* that the Technical Committee's review seeks to identify those species listed in Table 1 of the Agreement's Action Plan that current knowledge suggests are especially vulnerable to the consequences of a changing climate, and to identify measures that may help to maintain such populations;
3. *Requests also* that the Technical Committee's review identifies relevant actions that might be undertaken as part of the international implementation of the Agreement;
4. *Urges* the Secretariat, drawing on the results of the Technical Committee's review, to give priority, resources permitting, to the development of Conservation Guidelines on possible adaptation measures, and requests that these be brought to a future Meeting of the Parties following review by the Technical Committee;
5. *Urges* Parties to address climate change in so far as it is regarded as likely to bring about significant change in the ecological character of wetlands and affect the behaviour of migrating waterbirds;
6. *Stresses* the importance of including potentially beneficial adaptation measures in the development and implementation of single and multi-species action plans at both national and international scales;

7. *Highlights* the need to include relevant actions related to climate change impacts and adaptation in the Agreement's Action Plan, and requests that the Standing Committee, following review by the Technical Committee, communicates any relevant amendments to the Secretariat for consideration by a future Meeting of the Parties; and

8. *Encourages* the Technical Committee to identify international research needs into the effects of climate change on migratory waterbirds and their habitats, so as to better understand implications and appropriate policy responses, that could be taken forward collaboratively with other stakeholders, as resources permit.