



15th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
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**DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE FORMAT AND CONTENT OF THE 8TH EDITION OF
THE CONSERVATION STATUS REPORT**

Introduction

Article 7.4 of Annex 3 to the AEWA Agreement (AEWA Action Plan) requires the Secretariat, in coordination with the Technical Committee (TC) and the Parties, to prepare a series of international reviews including (a) reports on the status and trends of populations (AEWA Conservation Status Report) for every session of the Meeting of the Parties.

So far, seven editions of the AEWA Conservation Status Report (CSR) have been produced¹. Over time, the report has gone through significant changes. The first two editions presented a description of the changes in the status of each waterbird populations listed in Table 1. The third edition contained only revised population size and trend data in a tabular format. A shift towards a more analytical approach started with CSR4 in response to the Technical Committee's proposal on how to report on status and trends of waterbird populations for MOP3 (document [AEWA/TC 5.8](#)) and it has been produced in the same format since CSR5, which aimed to take on the TC proposal to a greater extent.

At MOP8, Parties have adopted the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, which presents a new framework also for the CSRs in the coming three AEWA MOP cycles. The new CSR will have to report on new purpose-level indicators and it has to respond to new requirements Parties have adopted. In particular, its Target 1.4, which states that “*the quality of waterbird population status assessments, including information on drivers of population trends, is improved so that at least two-thirds of all AEWA populations are being assessed on the basis of the most complete and up-to-date monitoring information available*” represents new perspectives both for waterbird monitoring and for the future CSRs.

The current structure of the CSR reports in relation to the TC's proposals in document AEWA/TC 5.8

The **current** structure of the CSR contains:

- A high-level summary of the key findings;

¹ CSR1: https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/publication/ts1_conservation_status_report_wi_0.pdf
CSR2: https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/inf2_14_conservation_status_report_0.pdf
CSR3: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/report-conservation-status-migratory-waterbirds-agreement-area-1>
CSR4: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/report-conservation-status-migratory-waterbirds-agreement-area-4th-edition>
CSR5: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/report-conservation-status-migratory-waterbirds-agreement-area-fifth-edition>
CSR6: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/report-conservation-status-migratory-waterbirds-agreement-area-sixth-edition>
CSR7: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/7th-edition-conservation-status-report-csr7-including-annexes-1>

- Summary statistics on population sizes and trends, their geographic and taxonomic patterns and an assessment in the pattern of data quality for population sizes and trends in the form of a series of one-pagers for easier read;
- Reports on the progress towards the population-related targets of the [AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2018](#);
- An annex on the population size and trend estimates for each AEWA population with full documentation of sources;
- Another annex on changes in the Red List status of species listed on Annex II of the Agreement.
- Part of the information is mobilised through reports commissioned as part of the CSR process focusing on regions with less structured monitoring and reporting schemes such as Africa and Central Asia and on seabirds. Until CSR5 these reports formed part of the CSR. Since CSR6, these have been made available on a [dedicated page](#) on Wetlands International's website and the results of the IWC trend analyses are presented on the [IWC Online](#) portal.

This way, the last three CSRs have gone a long way to fulfill the objectives identified in the TC proposal. Annex I of the CSR documents the current status of each waterbird population (1), documents the data, information and judgments (2), the report itself and its executive summary provide both top-level and more detailed information for decision-makers (3), press-releases produced by the Secretariat provide information to the wider public (4), it relates changes to migratory status, distribution and taxonomy (5), but does not identify root causes of the changes. The recent CSRs also assist appropriately in the general harmonisation of the assessment on the state of environment (6) because population size and trend estimates (especially for the breeding season) build on the EU Article 12 reporting and the EU funded European Red List of Birds processes. It integrates reports from the IUCN Red List authority for birds and information from the CAFF cBird Group. In addition, the population size and trend estimates (as well as updated 1% estimates) generated through the CSR process contribute to the application of Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (and by the provisions of Article 4.2 of the EU Birds Directive, this is also relevant for the designation of Special Protection Areas). Information from the CSRs also contributed to the Global Wetland Outlook produced by the Ramsar Convention.

What creates the need to change the format and content of the CSR?

1. The indicators for the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 are different from the ones of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2018;
2. Target 1.4 of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 requires also information on drivers of population trends;
3. The AEWA national reporting on population status is now aligned with the reporting of the EU Member States on Article 12 of the Birds Directive and will be conducted every 6 years, thus, data flow for CSR will be at its full every second MOP cycle.

Consideration of formats and target groups

In 2005, the Technical Committee observed that the Agreement's Action Plan actually refers not to a single report, but to reports in plural. It proposed **three types of reports** based on the target groups:

1. A technical report that includes results of summarising information on status and that provides an audit trail to proposed changes. The former is roughly equivalent to the main body of the current report, while the latter to Annex 1 and to the justifications provided to the proposed amendments to Table 1.
2. A non-technical report to governmental decision-makers summarising the main issues related to conservation status changes.
3. A similar non-technical report to the public and interested parties but maybe including also additional material.

In principle, this distinction between different types of reports seems to be still appropriate. The question is more what to present to the MOPs and in what format.

Information required by the MOP and format of delivery:

1. **Proposed amendments to Table 1 with audit trail:** this is always presented as a draft resolution with justification included. Annex 1 to the CSR (and the web version of the [WPE portal](#) provides this audit trail. Information generated specifically for the CSR also presented on the [IWC Online](#) (IWC trend analyses) or on a [dedicated page](#) of Wetlands International's website (expert reports).
2. **Progress towards the purpose-level indicators and the population-related targets of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027.** The plan contains seven purpose-level indicators all setting a target for the proportion of the populations with stable or increasing trends. Other targets of the plan that include population-related indicators are 1.2, 1.3(a), 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.4.
3. **Summary of main issues related to conservation status changes.** Currently, the CSR process is ill-suited to deliver on these requirements. On the one hand, statistical analyses of available trend information can provide only correlational evidence that would support the identification of factors that drive population changes. On the other hand, there is a host of other relevant data and analysis carried out outside of the remit of the CSR process that is not synthesized and made available to decision-makers and the public. In this context, it is important to note that the MOPs do not adopt the CSR itself. They adopt one or more resolutions on actions in response to the findings of the CSR.

Proposal for the future format of the CSR

Any proposal for the future format of the CSR should take into account the limitations of the funding available for the CSR. The funding available in the last years is more or less sufficient to produce the technical analyses (i.e. update of population size and trend estimates based on IWC data and literature review including reviewing the results of other monitoring projects). However, it is insufficient to produce a succinct non-technical version directed to decision-makers and the public.

Taking account of the above considerations of needs and limitations it is proposed to produce two types of CSRs in the future that would alternate with each other on a six-year-cycle (Annex I):

1. A **population sizes and trends report:** following the years with national reports on population sizes and trends that is also harmonised with the EU Birds Directive Article 12 reporting to reduce reporting burden and maximise synergies. This report will correspond to the format and content of the current CSR.
2. A **drivers and responses report:** for the MOPs interim to the ones with full updates based on national reports on population sizes and trends focusing on identifying causes of changes identified as priority

concerns by the Technical Committee and the priority responses required. These reports could be similar in nature to the ones listed in Annex II.

The short summaries of both of these types should be presented in a more attractive non-technical format and used to promote AEWA's conservation priorities and thus contributing to the advocacy objectives outlined in the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (e.g. Targets 1.6, 4.2, 5.4).

Efforts should also be made to feature the CSRs more prominently on the AEWA website as currently they are buried deep amongst the AEWA MOP meeting documents and difficult to find for a wider audience.

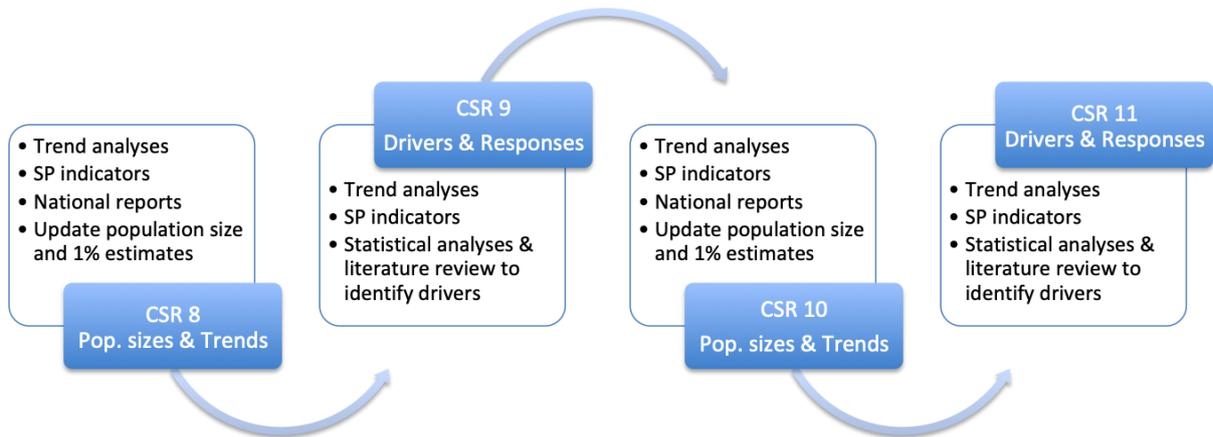
In the same cycle of the "drivers and responses" report will be still carried out trend analyses based on monitoring programmes and would be used to assess whether any amendments to Table 1 would be necessary to reflect primarily rapid short-term declines. These analyses will be summarised in a short technical document and the audit trail to any proposed changes in population listing will be made available as an annex to the proposal for amendments to AEWA Table 1.

This way the MOP could be informed about a wider array of issues that affect waterbirds and the responses taken by Contracting Parties and in the Agreement area and the CSR would become more policy relevant.

Action requested from the Technical Committee

The Technical Committee is invited to discuss the proposal and decide concerning the CSR objectives and format in the future.

Annex I. Outline of the proposed six-year-cycles of CSRs



Annex II. Selected examples of global, regional and national state of bird reports

Geographic and thematic scope	Organisation	Links to versions
<i>Global</i>		
All birds	BirdLife International	2004 , 2008 , 2013 , 2018
Waterbirds	Wetlands International ²	2010
<i>Regional</i>		
Africa	BirdLife International	2013 , 2017
European Union	European Commission & European Environment Agency	2015 official report , brochure
North America	North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)	2009-2017
<i>National</i>		
Australia, all birds, thematic focus	BirdLife Australia	2003-2015
Canada	NABCI-Canada	2012
Jordan	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature	Year unknown
Lebanon	Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon	Year unknown
Macedonia	Macedonian Ecological Society	2012
Sierra Leone	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone	Year unknown
South Africa	BirdLife South Africa	2018
Switzerland	Swiss Ornithological Institute	2015-2017 , 2018
Netherlands	Sovon, Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology	2007-2018
UK	RSPB in collaboration with other NGOs and agencies	2002-2017
Uganda	Nature Uganda	2014

² Co-funded by DEFRA, UK, through AEWAs.