

8th Meeting of the Parties to the The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the opening of the 8th meeting of parties to the The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement. Established in 1995, this Agreement spans more than 119 countries, aiming to protect 560 populations of majestic waterbird and seabird species. And protect and conserve we must because we are seeing huge declines in wildlife across the board. Indeed, the report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area which will be presented at this meeting highlights that 40 per cent of water bird populations protected under this Agreement are witnessing a decline. So, we need continued and coordinated conservation actions.

This year's discussions will focus on the need to strengthen flyway conservation in a changing world. When implemented, AEWA's internationally coordinated action plans can be successful tools to improve the conservation status of endangered waterbird populations. And so, I call on all stakeholders to invest time and resources in these action plans. Second, while AEWA has a strong track record on work on conserving wetlands and habitats, it is now time to strengthen flyway conservation from the arctic circle to South Africa.

Third, as we seek to deepen our impact through this Agreement, we must remember that the ecosystem-based approach to habitat conservation taken for migratory waterbirds supports both effective environmental management, and local communities who often depend on the ecosystem services derived from the same wetlands used by waterbirds. So AEWA is and will be an important instrument for countries to make progress on the SDGs and the objectives of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that Member States will finalize at the end of the year. And finally, to strengthen conservation of waterbirds, and their flyway, and to bring together all nations to stop and reverse biodiversity loss, I invite Range States throughout Africa-Eurasia who are not yet a Party to join this collaborative effort.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, as many of you have heard me say before – the world faces a triple planetary crisis – the crisis of climate change; the crisis of nature and biodiversity loss; and the crisis of pollution and waste. Each of these crisis presents a roadblock in flyway conservation and therefore, sustainable funding, compliance and strengthened implementation are absolutely critical. I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the meeting and to your important efforts in the years ahead. Thank you.