



7th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES
4-8 December 2018, Durban, South Africa

“Beyond 2020: Shaping flyway conservation for the future”

RESOLUTION 7.9

CLIMATE RESILIENT FLYWAYS

Recalling the need, expressed in Article III of the Agreement, for Contracting Parties to identify networks of sites and habitats for migratory waterbirds (such as for example the Critical Site Network), and to protect, manage, rehabilitate and restore these as essential actions to maintain the favourable conservation status of species,

Recalling again Resolution 3.17 on *Climate Change and Migratory Waterbirds*, Resolution 4.14 on *The Effects of Climate Change on Migratory Waterbirds* and Resolutions 5.13 and 6.6 on *Climate Change Adaptation Measures for Waterbirds*,

Further recalling the adoption in Resolution 6.6 of the AEWA guidance framework for climate change adaptation relevant to migratory waterbirds as guidance for the Contracting Parties, which encourages Parties to:

- Maintain and increase ecological resilience to climate change to support the widest range of biodiversity to survive and adapt;
- Conserve the range and ecological variability of habitats and species, to increase the chances that species whose current habitat becomes inhospitable will be able to spread locally into newly favourable habitat;
- Maintain existing ecological networks *and* establish ecological networks through habitat restoration and creation, to promote the success of species dispersal;
- Integrate adaptation and mitigation measures into conservation management to complement existing policies; and
- Undertake vulnerability assessments of biodiversity and associated ecosystem goods and services without delay to prioritise and develop appropriate actions,

Noting that the guidance framework for climate change adaptation, although legally non-binding, provides a common framework for action, which aids the coherent implementation of the Agreement by the Contracting Parties to the Agreement, as well as other Range States and interested parties and that it is for each Party to determine whether or how to implement the guidance framework, whilst having regard to their international obligations and commitment,

Noting recent relevant decisions from the Ramsar COP 13 in relation to climate change and wetlands, inter alia in respect to peatlands (Resolution XIII.13), and coastal and ecologically-associated habitats (Resolutions XIII.20 and XIII.14), and that for coastal areas “*that the projected sea level rises and other climate change aspects such as rising temperatures and acidifying waters are anticipated to result in significant further losses of intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats*”; and *noting* that the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C released this year reports that warming of 1.5°C or higher increases the risk associated with long-lasting or irreversible changes such as the loss of ecosystems,

Acknowledging adoption of the decision of the COP14 of the CBD on Biodiversity and Climate Change and voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction,

Noting that the Critical Site Network includes sites that meet internationally agreed criteria of international importance as they are based on Criteria 2 and 6 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,

Further noting that protection of the Critical Site Network would also contribute to fulfilling international obligations of Contracting Parties under other MEAs, most notably the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Emerald Network of the Bern Convention, as well as the Natura 2000 network of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives,

Noting the available EU guidance document “Guidelines on Climate Change and Natura 2000¹: Dealing with the impact of climate change on the management of the Natura 2000 Network of areas of high biodiversity value”,

Noting with appreciation the generous support to the project *Climate Resilient Site Network in the African-Eurasian Flyway* (aka *Climate Resilient Flyway* project) through the International Climate Initiative provided by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Parliament,

Being aware that the *Climate Resilient Flyway* project has delivered or is set to deliver the following results:

- To redevelop the Critical Site Network Tool (CSN 2.0), which now includes enhanced functionalities to support Contracting Parties and other stakeholders in implementing AEWA and waterbird conservation more broadly. Amongst others, the CSN 2.0 now can help with the production of a list of AEWA populations and identification of look-alike species with their Table 1 status for each Range State. The content of the CSN Tool has been enhanced to support Range States in their climate change adaptation planning by providing information on predicted range changes of waterbirds in the Agreement Area and identifying the Critical Sites, which are likely to be vulnerable to climate change;
- To show the importance of adopting a multi-purpose approach to ecosystem-based adaptation that integrates conservation objectives with livelihood and disaster risk mitigation objectives focusing on synergies;
- To demonstrate national level assessments of the vulnerability of Critical Sites to climate change and identify areas where wetland restoration can contribute ecosystem-based climate change adaptation benefiting both the human and the waterbird populations in Ethiopia and Mali;

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/climatechange/pdf/Guidance%20document.pdf>

- To demonstrate the importance of water and land management practices both within and in the catchment of the Critical Sites at the Inner Niger Delta in Mali and at the Abijatta-Shalla National Park in Ethiopia;
- To share the experience gained during the project with African Contracting Parties from two regional workshops and use of a best practice guide,

Recalling that AEWA's text does not provide a definition of Favourable Conservation Status, but that it incorporates through reference (Article I.2) the definition provided in Article I.1(c)-(d) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS),

Referring to Resolution 12.21 of CMS which, *inter alia*, agreed on an interpretation of the definition of Favourable Conservation Status in the light of climate change and invited the governing bodies of relevant CMS instruments to also approve this interpretation,

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Notes with satisfaction* the results of the *Climate Resilient Flyway* project, most notably the redevelopment and enhancement of the functionalities of the Critical Site Network Tool (CSN 2.0), in particular the new information available to support national and flyway-level planning of climate change adaptation, in particular predicted changes in wetland extent, range changes of waterbird species and vulnerability assessments of Critical Sites and populations to climate change, and the national and site-level achievements of the demonstration projects in Ethiopia and Mali;
2. *Underlines* the importance of the project's results in implementing the Agreement and the relevance of those results for the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027;
3. *Requests* the Technical Committee, subject to the availability of resources, to work on better understanding of the consequences of sea-level rise on the Critical Site Network and the waterbird populations dependent on coastal habitats, working collaboratively with Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel as possible and in the light of the desire to create technical synergies expressed in Resolution 5.19;
4. *Encourages* Contracting Parties to consider using the information available through the Critical Site Network Tool in their national planning for the implementation of the Agreement, such as identifying waterbird populations listed in Column A of Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan and look-alike species occurring on their territory as well as their internationally important sites, and, in particular, for planning ecosystem-based climate change adaptation measures that take account of the vulnerability and management needs of waterbird populations;
5. *Requests* that detailed guidance on using the Critical Site Network Tool be provided as part of the Climate Resilient Flyway project;
6. *Welcomes* the opportunity to share experiences in relation to climate change adaptation and for representatives of the Parties to receive training in the use of the Critical Site Network Tool during the two regional workshops planned in Africa in the framework of the project;
7. *Urges* Contracting Parties to provide adequate legal protection to the Critical Sites and to improve their management to enhance the conditions for waterbird populations, in order to maximise persistence, particularly in the face of climate change, and to facilitate population range shifts;

8. *Encourages* Contracting Parties to consider using the experiences and approaches developed under the Climate Resilient Flyway project and to consider undertaking national assessments of the resilience of their national site and habitat networks and where appropriate integrate measures into national policies and plans;

9. *Strongly urges* donors and funding agencies to support the implementation of integrated ecosystem based adaptation measures, in particular, for the priority areas identified by the Climate Resilient Flyway project considering their outstanding importance for the entire AEWA Critical Site Network and its contribution to the Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals;

10. *Adopts* the following interpretation of the definition of Favourable Conservation Status in the light of climate change as in line with Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Resolution 12.21:

According to CMS Article I(1)(c)(4), one of the conditions to be met for the conservation status of a species to be taken as “favourable” is that: “*the distribution and abundance of the migratory species approach historic coverage and levels to the extent that potentially suitable ecosystems exist and to the extent consistent with wise wildlife management*”; and that whereas there is a continued need to undertake conservation action within the historic range of migratory species, such action will increasingly also need to be taken beyond the historic range of species, in order to ensure a favourable conservation status, particularly with a view to climate-induced range shifts, and that further, such action beyond the historic range of species is compatible with and may be required, in order to meet the objectives and the obligations of Parties under the Agreement.