



7th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

04-08 December 2018, Durban, South Africa

“Beyond 2020: Shaping flyway conservation for the future”

DRAFT RESOLUTION 7.6

**PRIORITIES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF SEABIRDS IN THE
AFRICAN-EURASIAN FLYWAYS**

Conscious that globally, seabirds remain one of the most threatened groups of birds, and *concerned* that of the 84 seabird species listed by AEWA, many are threatened and/or have declining populations at both regional and global level, including four species listed on the IUCN Global Red List as Endangered, seven species listed as Vulnerable, eleven species as Near Threatened, and a total of 39 populations which are in decline within the Agreement,

Further conscious that this marks a continued overall decline in the status of AEWA-listed seabirds,

Noting the outcomes of the 7th edition of the Conservation Status Report, in particular that, whilst the overall status of AEWA waterbird populations has improved during the period of the Strategic Plan 2009-2018, an increasing number of mainly marine and farmland species are listed as globally threatened and Near Threatened as well as in significant long-term decline, which highlights the importance of sustainable management beyond protected areas,

Noting the relevance of Sustainable Development Goal 14 regarding the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and in particular, the following targets for achieving this goal: Target 14.1, on the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution, Target 14.4, on effectively regulating harvesting and ending overfishing, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices; and Target 14.5, on conserving at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas,

Recalling AEWA Strategic Plan (2019-2027) objective 1: To strengthen species conservation and recovery and reduce causes of unnecessary mortality; objective 2: To ensure that any use and management of migratory waterbird populations is sustainable across their flyways; objective 3: To establish and sustain a coherent and comprehensive flyway network of protected areas and other sites, managed to maintain – and where necessary restore – their national and international importance for migratory waterbird populations; and objective 4: To ensure there is sufficient quantity and quality of habitat in the wider environment for achieving and maintaining favourable conservation status for migratory waterbird populations,

Further recalling the actions and recommendations outlined in AEWA Resolution 6.9 on improving the status of AEWA-listed seabirds, in particular, the need to further define AEWA priorities for seabird conservation, to produce relevant guidance and to assess the threat posed by plastics and marine debris to AEWA seabirds,

Welcoming the “Advice on AEWA Priorities for Seabird Conservation” (document AEWA/MOP 7.29), the “Guide to Guidance to Reduce the Impact of Fisheries on AEWA Seabirds” (document AEWA/MOP 7.30), as well as the “Assessment on Plastics and Waterbirds: Incidence and Impacts” (document AEWA/MOP 7.28),

Further welcoming the development of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), which is one of the most threatened AEWA-listed seabirds (document AEWA/MOP 7.23),

Concerned that since its adoption by the 6th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP6) to AEWA in 2015, the International Multi-species Action Plan for Benguela Current Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds, which addresses priorities for nine species, five of which are Globally Threatened, has not been implemented;

Noting CMS Resolution 12.20 on the management of marine debris, as well as the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions 1/6 on Marine Plastic Debris and Micro Plastics (2014), Resolution 2/11 on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics (2016) and Resolution 3/7 on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics (2017),

Recognizing that as outlined in the “Assessment on Plastics and Waterbirds: Incidence and Impacts”, although many waterbirds interact with plastics through ingestion, entanglement or use of plastics in nest construction, there is currently no evidence of population-level impacts for AEWA-listed species,

Noting the relevance of Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Target no. 11 related to protected areas, and *further noting* CMS Resolution 12.7 on the need to advance ecological networks of protected sites for migratory species and Article III 2(c) of the Agreement which requires Parties to “*identify sites and habitats for migratory waterbirds occurring within their territory and encourage the protection, management, rehabilitation and restoration of these sites*”, Article III 2(d) which requires parties to “*coordinate their efforts to ensure that a network of suitable habitats is maintained or, where appropriate, re-established throughout the entire range of each migratory waterbird species concerned*”, and Article III 2(e) which requires Parties to “*investigate problems that are posed or are likely to be posed by human activities and endeavour to implement remedial measures*” ...”,

Recalling the AEWA Action Plan which urges Parties to “*take appropriate actions nationally or through the framework of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and relevant international organisations to minimise the impact of fisheries on migratory waterbirds, and where possible cooperate within these forums, in order to decrease the mortality in areas within and beyond national jurisdiction; appropriate measures shall especially address incidental killing and bycatch in fishing gear including the use of gill nets, longlines and trawling*” in paragraph 4.3.7, and to “*take appropriate actions nationally or through the framework of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and relevant international organisations to minimise the impact of fisheries on migratory waterbirds resulting in particular from unsustainable fishing that causes depletion of food resources for migratory waterbirds*” in paragraph 4.3.8, as well as CMS Resolution 12.22 on bycatch of CMS-listed species, *noting* the relevance of Aichi Target no. 6 related to fisheries and their impacts on threatened species and *welcoming* the European Commission’s 2012 Action Plan for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gears, and the existing National Plans of Action implemented by a number of Parties,

Recognising the central role and responsibilities of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to minimise catch of non-target species in their fisheries, as established in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and the role of CMS, its other related Agreements and other multiple international actors in addressing these issues,

Recalling the CMS Resolution 12.15 on aquatic wild meat including seabirds, and the establishment of a Thematic Working Group on Aquatic Wild Meat under the CMS Scientific Council,

Recalling Article III.2(b) of the Agreement in accordance with which Parties shall “*ensure that any use of migratory waterbirds is based on an assessment of the best available knowledge of their ecology and is sustainable for the species as well as for the ecological systems that support them*”,

Further recalling paragraphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 of the AEWa Action Plan, whereby Parties with populations listed in Table 1 shall regulate the taking of birds and eggs of all populations listed in Column B of Table 1, and by way of exemption for those populations listed in Categories 2 and 3 in Column A and which are marked by an asterisk, and those populations listed in Category 4 in Column A, in order to maintain or restore these populations at a favourable conservation status by ensuring that any taking or other use is sustainable,

Recalling Article III. 2 (f) of the Agreement by which Parties shall “*cooperate in emergency situations requiring international concerted action...*” and *highlighting* the need for strengthened regional collaboration in responding to both acute and chronic oil pollution and oil spills within the AEWa area, particularly where capacity is low to deal with emergency mitigation especially in respect of rapid response measures, as outlined in CMS Resolution 7.3. (Rev COP12) on Oil Pollution and Migratory Species,

Recalling paragraphs 2.5.3 and 4.3.10 of the AEWa Action Plan by which Parties “*shall take measures to the extent feasible and appropriate, including taking, to ensure that when non-native species or hybrids thereof have already been introduced into their territory, those species or their hybrids do not pose a potential hazard to the populations listed in Table 1*” and “*shall establish appropriate measures, ideally to eliminate or otherwise to mitigate the threat from non-native terrestrial predators to breeding migratory waterbirds on islands and islets. Measures should refer to contingency planning to prevent invasion, emergency responses to remove introduced predators, and restoration programmes for islands where predator populations are already established*” and *welcoming* the work already being undertaken by many Contracting Parties to reduce the impact on seabirds from introduced predators and invasive alien species especially on breeding islands, but *emphasising* that more work is urgently needed to eliminate these impacts,

Recognising the joint issues of concern and potential linkages and synergies that exist between AEWa and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) as well as HELCOM, OSPAR, CAFF, the European Union and other regional legal frameworks dealing with the conservation of seabirds,

Recognising the preparation of the Guide to Guidance to reduce the Impact of Fisheries on AEWa Seabird Species (document AEWa/MOP 7.30),

Recalling Article IV paragraph 4 of the Agreement, and paragraph 7.3 of the Agreement’s Action Plan, which require the development and review of conservation guidelines in order to assist Contracting Parties with their implementation of the Agreement,

Further recalling Resolutions 1.10, 2.3, 4.13, 5.10 and 6.5, which adopted conservation guidelines focusing on various aspects of waterbird conservation practice,

Noting that these conservation guidelines, although legally non-binding, provide 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 recommended guidance, whilst having regard to their international obligations and commitments,

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Approves* the following preliminary priorities for seabird conservation action under the Agreement, for application by Parties as appropriate:
 - 1.1. Address bycatch in fishing gear by filling seabird bycatch data gaps throughout the AEWA range, through existing regional frameworks and projects; assess the extent and impact of bycatch by artisanal fisheries to AEWA-listed seabirds; and by feeding bycatch data into a flyway assessment of the cumulative impact of seabird mortality (e.g. from harvesting, illegal killing and taking and bycatch) to inform national and regional decision-making on the sustainable use of seabirds;
 - 1.2. Address human impacts on prey by assessing the impact of artisanal/recreational fisheries on prey; and ensuring regular representation on selected priority Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) through a collaborative approach with other conservation frameworks;
 - 1.3. Assess the extent and impact of artisanal fisheries on AEWA-listed seabirds ; assess hunting and egg harvesting (both legal and illegal) by gathering data on the harvest of AEWA-listed seabird species throughout the AEWA range; and feed into a flyway-level assessment of the cumulative impact of seabird mortality (e.g. from harvesting, illegal killing and taking and bycatch) to inform national and regional decision-making on the sustainable use of seabirds;
 - 1.4. Address the impact of invasive non-native species, specifically predation, by identifying those seabird colonies at risk from such impacts and prioritize them for action;
 - 1.5. Address mortality from oil spills and contaminants by identifying the key coastal and at-sea areas where responses to oil spills would be most urgently required within the AEWA region in relation to the presence of AEWA-listed seabirds, including the identification of relevant frameworks tasked with oil spill response; and liaise with identified relevant frameworks to ensure that AEWA seabirds and seabird sites are adequately represented within existing regional oil spill plans;
 - 1.6. Address impacts of offshore wind farms on AEWA seabird species in the North Sea and Baltic Sea, by undertaking a program of data-collection by AEWA Parties to validate models of population level impacts and promotion of a pilot project on the North Sea and Baltic Sea within the CMS Energy Task Force;
 - 1.7. Identify priority sites by filling gaps in the critical site network for seabirds (breeding, non-breeding, pelagic and coastal areas); and protect and manage identified critical sites;
2. *Requests* the Technical Committee, resources permitting, to further refine these priorities during the next triennium, including identifying appropriate approaches through which Parties, non-Party Range States and other relevant stakeholders can deliver on the priorities above and to consider the need for further prioritization and/or broadening of the scope of seabird-related priorities under the Agreement, as appropriate;
3. *Requests* Parties, resources permitting, to also treat as priority a pilot assessment of the implications of reduced prey availability for seabirds within the Benguela region, including the impact of prey scarcity on the conservation status of seabirds as well as the feasibility of introducing mitigation measures and thresholds to improve the availability of food for seabirds as appropriate;
4. *Encourages* relevant Parties and non-Party Range States as well as other stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the *Assessment on Plastics and Waterbirds: Incidence and Impacts* (document

AEWA/MOP 7.28), including:

- 4.1 Reducing the risk of plastic ingestion by supporting broad-scale programmes to reduce the amounts of plastic waste entering the environment;
 - 4.2 Reducing entanglement by banning high-risk applications (such as sets of connected plastic rings that are used in multi-packs of beverages, i.e. six-pack rings) where other alternatives are available, by discouraging the use of high-risk items (such as balloons on strings) and educating users not to discard particularly risky materials (such as waste fishing gear) in the marine environment;
5. *Further calls upon* Parties to implement relevant actions in relation to marine plastic debris and microplastics as identified by decisions taken under CMS and UNEA, as relevant and appropriate;
 6. *Calls upon* relevant Parties and non-Party Range States as well as other stakeholders to implement the *International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Velvet Scoter* (document AEWA/MOP 7.23) and the *International Multi-species Action Plan for Benguela Current Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds adopted by MOP6*;
 7. *Adopts* the *Guide to Guidance to reduce the Impact of Fisheries on AEWA Seabird Species* (document AEWA/MOP 7.30), and *encourages* relevant Parties and non-Party Range States as well as other stakeholders to use this guidance which although legally non-binding provides a common framework for action, when addressing seabird bycatch as well as illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, mitigating indirect impacts of fishing; *requests* the Secretariat to disseminate this guidance and *further requests* the Technical Committee to update this document on a rolling basis as new solutions and guidance become available;
 8. *Requests* the Secretariat, resources permitting, to increase the engagement and collaboration of AEWA with relevant international fora and actors, in order to increase synergies with regard to seabird conservation, particularly in relation to the priorities identified above in paragraph 1.