

8th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

26 – 30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary

“Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World”

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.3

STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF AEW AND ITS STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2027

Recalling Article II of the Agreement which establishes its Fundamental Principles and objective to “maintain or to restore migratory waterbird species and their populations at a favourable status throughout their flyways” and Article III which establishes the General Conservation Measures to be undertaken by Parties individually and collectively, and *Further Recalling*, the mechanisms established by Parties to establish implementation priorities and inform themselves as to progress towards their goal, namely:

- a Strategic Plan, and Plan of Action for Africa (POAA) (most recently, ambitious Plans adopted by Parties at MOP7 for the period 2019-2027 through Resolution 7.1) to guide and advance the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats through the establishment of targets and actions; and
- a process of triennial national reporting to inform on national implementation;

Recalling also the Preamble to the Agreement which acknowledged "that effective implementation of such an Agreement will require assistance to be provided to some Range States for research, training and monitoring of migratory waterbird species and their habitats, for the management of those habitats as well as for the establishment or improvement of scientific and administrative institutions for the implementation of th[e] Agreement", and *Acknowledging* that such need for assistance continues to the present;

Considering that regular assessment of the state of the Agreement's implementation is fundamental to ensure its effectiveness and to allow appropriate national and international responses according to progress and/or changed conditions;

Noting with concern the conclusions of the 2019 *Global Assessment Report on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*¹ from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Convention on Biological Diversity's assessment of the delivery of the Aichi Targets within its 2020 *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*², and the 2021 update of the Ramsar Convention's *Global Wetland*

¹ IPBES 2019. *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 56 pp.

² Convention on Biological Diversity 2020. *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*. CBD, Montreal, Canada.

*Outlook*³, all of which indicate that pressures on waterbirds, wetlands and their surrounding catchments, and the marine environment grow ever greater, through, *inter alia*, the impacts of unsustainable development, exploitation and resource extraction, wide-scale activities to provide for human needs, urbanisation, and climate change; *and accordingly* a step-change in both national and international responses is needed;

Taking into account the conclusions of the 8th edition of the AEWA Conservation Status Report (CSR8, Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.19) demonstrating that relatively more AEWA waterbird populations are in unfavourable conservation status and show declining trends, and that the status of AEWA populations is poorer in the eastern and southern parts of the Agreement area;

AEWA National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA for the Triennium 2018-2020 and Reports on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa for the Period 2019-2020

Emphasising that effective monitoring of the implementation of the Agreement, the Strategic Plan and the POAA, and of progress towards achieving their targets and objectives is dependent on timely and comprehensive reporting by each Contracting Party;

Noting that National Reports, as well informing directly on Agreement implementation, also provide information on the relevance of AEWA for other MEAs and international targets, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030 (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.37), the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.35), the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.36), the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 and the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, amongst others;

Welcoming UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre's *Analysis of the AEWA National Reports for the triennium 2018-2020* (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.13) summarising reports of 53 Parties⁴, a 67% submission rate, and contributing to a benchmark assessment for the period 2019-2027 of the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan;

Noting that lack of resources has not permitted a bespoke progress report on the implementation of the POAA for the period 2019-2020 but welcoming UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre's *Analysis of the reports on the implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa for the period 2019-2020* (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.15) which summarises 20 national reports from the 38 African Parties (a 53% submission rate) and which has allowed an assessment of early progress towards the PoAA's implementation, as well as identifying areas where further work and resources need to be invested for expected results to be fulfilled during POAA's term;

Thanking all those Parties who submitted National Reports by the deadline, however *Noting* that several Parties have repeatedly been unable to submit their National Reports over several reporting cycles

³ Convention on Wetlands 2021. *Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021*. Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, Gland, Switzerland. 53 pp.

⁴ Submitted by the extended cut-off date of 3 May 2021 for inclusion into the analysis; the formal deadline was 8 April 2021. Germany, Hungary, and the United Kingdom submitted their national reports after the cut-off date.

thus constraining the ability to assess the Agreement's progress;

Noting key conclusions from national reports, namely that:

- Parties have continued to promote and integrate relevance of migratory waterbird priorities into cross-cutting national biodiversity processes, including strategy and action plans, delivery of targets under other frameworks and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
- While large areas of national and international importance for AEWA-listed waterbird populations are designated as protected areas, more work is needed to improve the effectiveness of these sites by implementing management plans, as well as to continue to identify and protect the network of all important sites across the flyway;
- Relevant waterbird monitoring data inform national level implementation in many Parties with public awareness-raising and engagement campaigns implemented;
- However, integration of waterbird habitats and related ecosystem services into broader decision-making processes, such as water- and land-use planning, is more limited;
- Ensuring the delivery of Strategic Plan targets relating to legal protections for waterbirds, and regulation to ensure use of relevant AEWA-listed populations is sustainable, remains a significant implementation gap;
- Conservation efforts for some species would benefit from further development and implementation of Single Species Action Plans;
- Parties have made encouraging steps to develop waterbird-related ecotourism initiatives;
- Assessments of Party resource needs and capacity gaps for Strategic Plan delivery and overall AEWA implementation, and national action plans to deliver these, are needed as priority; and
- Cooperation, capacity building and resource mobilisation to support Parties in meeting their commitments will be key to continued progress towards the objectives of the Strategic Plan and the overall aim of the Agreement;

Noting also key conclusions from 20 national reports of African Parties with respect to implementation of the POAA (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.15), namely that:

- Most relative progress has been made towards completing actions aiming to ensure that sufficient quantity and quality of habitat in the wider environment for achieving and maintaining favourable conservation status for migratory waterbird populations (POAA Objective 4);
- Moderate progress has been made in achieving actions toward establishing and sustaining a coherent and comprehensive flyway network of protected areas for AEWA waterbird populations (Objective 3), and in ensuring and strengthening knowledge, capacity, recognition, awareness, and resources required to achieve AEWA's conservation objectives (Objective 5);
- Least progress has been made to strengthen species conservation and recovery, and reduce

causes of unnecessary mortality (Objective 1) and ensure that any use and management of migratory waterbird populations is sustainable across their flyways (Objective 2) and that a general focus on helping Parties address these two Objectives should be prioritised;

- Additionally, help is needed to facilitate national processes related to relevant domestic legislation enforcement, and building capacity for Parties to review whether their legislation is aligned with relevant AEWA provisions (including MoP-adopted revisions), as well as building capacity for, and/or facilitating the development of, national PoAA implementation plans;

Noting also the need to increase the quantity and improve the quality of National Reports, including through training of National Focal Points and Designated National Respondents;

Progress report on the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027

Noting that the *Progress report on the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027* (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.11) is the first assessment of the current Strategic Plan adopted by MOP7 and thus establishes an important benchmark, and *Further noting* its conclusions, *inter alia* that:

- the overall Strategic Plan implementation is assessed as limited with overall implementation scoring two out of five, and four of the five objectives being considered as having limited implementation progress and one (on the conservation of habitats in the wider environment) showing no progress at all;
- the overall progress towards attainment of the Strategic Plan purpose (improvement of the status of AEWA populations by 2027) is negative, and waterbird status has deteriorated compared to the 2018 baseline (distance to target increased by 4% points), with only one indicator positively changed compared to 2018⁵ and one showing no change⁶ which demonstrates that active implementation of international single or multi species action plans and single species management plans delivers results, while one indicator remains unassessed; however three indicators are showing negative change, relating to i) the overall trend of all waterbird populations with known trend, ii) the trend of populations dependent on site networks, and iii) the trend in populations of dispersed species dependent on habitats in the wider environment, which points at lack of sufficient impact or delivery against conservation priorities for the site flyway network and habitats in the wider environment;
- of 27 Strategic Plan targets, progress towards more than half (52%) is limited, with one target tentatively reached and another with no progress to date (4% each); further, two targets fall into each of the three categories – significant progress, good progress and not assessed (7% each); and 19% of targets have been postponed since they relate to later stages of Plan implementation;
- out of the 66 indicators, the highest number (22; 33%) are postponed as related to a later

⁵ populations with unfavourable conservation status in 2018 showing a stable or increasing trend (some populations are subjects of international single or multi species action plans or single species management plans).

⁶ ‘priority’ populations (as established in 2018) showing stable or increasing trend (just over half of the priority populations are subjects of international single or multi species action plans).

stage of Strategic Plan implementation to be assessed in future, whilst the second highest number (17; 26%) has been scored as having limited progress followed by those demonstrating good progress (12; 18%); data and information could not be sourced for 12% of indicators (n=8) and they were not assessed. Three indicators (5%) have been assessed as showing significant progress while only two have been achieved (3%);

Noting that a number of target-level indicators and one purpose-level indicator were not assessed, or their assessment would benefit from additional or improved data;

Recognising the positive contribution of the AEWA Strategic Plan in guiding and advancing the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the African-Eurasian flyways, especially where plans, projects and actions are effectively implemented, funded and co-ordinated, and delivered in a regional context through the POAA;

Expressing sincere appreciation to those Parties and organisations which have provided financial, in-kind and other support towards the co-ordination and implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and the POAA at international level over the period of 2019-2022;

Resource needs for international-level coordination and delivery of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027

Recalling Action 5.6(a) of the Strategic Plan 2019-2027, which requested the AEWA Secretariat, in close consultation with the Standing Committee and Technical Committee, to assess the resource requirements for international coordination and delivery of the 2019–2027 AEWA Strategic Plan and develop a corresponding resource mobilisation plan, and *Welcoming* Doc. AEWA/MOP8.43 which provides this assessment and notes on resource mobilisation;

Noting that resource needs have been identified for international level AEWA delivery with respect to multiple fields of activity⁷ and that the inter-linkage of these means that enhanced funding could deliver diverse outcomes;

Recognising that significant resource mobilisation, fundraising and capacity strengthening activities will be required to deliver international-level activities defined in the Strategic Plan focused on two key strategic objectives:

- *enhancing the security of long-term funding* especially for ongoing staffing elements presented in Doc. AEWA/MOP8.43, and for regularly occurring items such as waterbird monitoring, and meetings of the Parties and other Agreement bodies; and
- *broadening the donor/resource partner base* so that resourcing is not over-dependent on a small number of supporters, and hence becoming less vulnerable to fluctuating external factors;

Recognising the potential for financial support from non-state actors for implementation activities,

⁷ *inter alia* scientific and technical assessments; policy initiatives; capacity and resources; information, data, knowledge and experience sharing; production of case studies and guidance material; development of Action Plans; implementation of specific projects; monitoring and review; case specific advice to Parties; partnership and recruitment of Parties; and organisation of meetings.

but *Noting* that the development of large project proposals attractive to donors itself has a significant staff-time cost to the Secretariat and others involved which needs to be resourced;

Acknowledging the need to continue mobilizing significant financial and other resources for the effective and coordinated conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the African-Eurasian flyways, and particularly the need for dedicated support for advancing the implementation of AEWA in the African region due to the limited financial, human, and material resources available for migratory waterbird conservation;

Conscious that all communication and awareness activities which raise the general visibility and profile of the Agreement will help to support efforts to increase resource provision;

[*Noting* the core budget of the Agreement for the period 2023-2025 established in Resolution 8.12;]

Capacity for implementing the Agreement – identifying next priorities at the international level

Recognising the importance of human as well as resource capacity⁸ for the effective implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and POAA, and *Welcoming* Doc. AEWA/MOP8.44 which provides an assessment of international level needs based on questionnaire surveys undertaken largely in 2021;

Thanking the 86 Parties, organisations and other stakeholders listed in Doc. AEWA/MOP8.44 for their inputs to that assessment which provide a rich resource for further application;

Aware that, notwithstanding the budgetary provision from Parties, resources for the effective national and international implementation of the Agreement and its processes, such as Action Plans, the Strategic Plan provisions, the POAA and other processes and tools such as the Small Grants Fund have been less than required for full implementation, as reflected by previous assessments of delivery;

Recalling the key findings of Doc. AEWA/MOP8.44 including that:

- the most frequently cited weaknesses in capacity concerned awareness, knowledge and general understanding about migratory waterbirds and their conservation, mechanisms for international cooperative action, and continuity of engagement by the individuals and institutions involved in implementing the Agreement, as well as in some instances, lack of political will; and that
- the consequences of such weaknesses include AEWA objectives failing to impact sufficiently on policy making and decision making, actions remaining nationally focused rather than delivering a shared international agenda, and waterbird conservation generally being eclipsed by the priorities of other sectors;

Small Grants Fund

Recalling also that the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF), established in 1999 through Resolution

⁸ Capacity is used as a general term that encompasses human, scientific, technological, material, organisational and institutional capabilities, all of which are relevant to the successful implementation of AEWA

1.7, is the only dedicated financing mechanism to assist eligible developing countries and countries with economies in transition for the practical implementation of the Agreement and its Strategic Plan, including the POAA, and yet *Concerned* that since the 2015 SGF cycle the initiative remains dormant due to the unavailability of either voluntary and/or core budget funding to support the programme;

The Meeting of the Parties:

AEWA Small Grants Fund

1. *Requests* Parties and other donors to consider, as a matter of urgency, providing voluntary contributions to the AEWA Small Grants Fund to allow its reactivation as an effective means of funding valuable programmes and projects supportive of AEWA's aims and objectives.

AEWA National Reports

2. *Urges* all Parties to submit, in a timely manner, comprehensive and thorough national reports on their progress towards the implementation of the Agreement, including its Strategic Plan, and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027, to each ordinary session of the AEWA MOP, and *Strongly Urges* that special efforts be made by those Parties unable to submit a national report⁹ or report on the POAA implementation¹⁰ in either the most recent or earlier reporting periods.

3. *Requests* the Secretariat, resources permitting, to provide training in advance of launching national reporting cycles to National Focal Points and Designated National Respondents from prioritised regions and countries and *Calls* on donor Parties and other funders to provide the resources to enable this;

4. *Adopts* the format for national reports on the implementation of AEWA for the period 2021-2024 as presented in document AEWA/MOP 8.14.

5. *Adopts* the format for national reports on POAA implementation for the period 2021-2024 as presented in document AEWA/MOP 8.16.

6. *Decides* that the deadline for submission of the national reports by Contracting Parties to MOP9 shall be 180 days before the opening date of MOP9, while the module on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa not later than 240 days before the opening date of MOP9.

⁹ The Gambia (7), Equatorial Guinea (7), Guinea (7), Ireland (5), Congo (4), Burkina Faso (3), Chad (3), Gabon (3), Lithuania (3), Monaco (3), Madagascar (2), Mauritania (2), Montenegro (2), Benin, Burundi, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, Libya, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Sudan and Tunisia. Parentheses are number of consecutive MOPs to which no National Reports were submitted.

¹⁰ Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, The Gambia and Tunisia.

7. *Requests* the Technical Committee to develop proposals for the formats of the national report on the implementation of AEWA and the national report on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa for the period 2025-2027 for submission to MOP9 for consideration.

Implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027 and resourcing needs for delivering international-level deliverables

8. *Urges* Parties to implement comprehensively the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and the related Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027, and in particular, as relevant, to focus on the recommendations made in the *Progress report on the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027* (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.11) to better deliver the Strategic Plan and POAA namely, through (i) transposing into domestic legislation necessary legal measures from the AEWA Action Plan; (ii) strengthening national implementation of species action plans and supporting their international coordination; (iii) completing the process of review and confirmation of inventories of sites of international and national importance for migratory waterbirds submitting these to the Secretariat as early as possible after MOP8; (iv) increasing the coverage of the flyway network sites national or international protected area designations, actively implementing management plans, and enhancing the effectiveness of all conservation management measures at flyway network sites; (v) supporting the assessment of the status of principal waterbird habitats in the wider environment and the compilation of a resulting action plan; and (vi) assessing the resource requirements at national level and effectively implementing resource mobilisation plans required for the implementation of the Strategic Plan nationally and for supporting its international-level coordination.

9. *Requests* the Standing Committee, working with the Technical Committee and the Secretariat, resources permitting, to improve the monitoring of implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and progress towards achieving its objectives and purpose by undertaking advance planning for the assessment of the 22 postponed target-level indicators and those target-level indicators that were not assessed so far or where the need of additional or improved data has been identified, as well as purpose-level indicator P4.

10. *Urges* all Parties to report to the Secretariat as early as possible after MOP8 on the list of their huntable species to enable the assessment of purpose-level indicator P4.

11. *Requests* the Standing Committee, working with the Technical Committee and the Secretariat, resources permitting, to prioritise the compilation of a progress report on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027 for submission to MOP9.

12. *Urges* all AEWA Contracting Parties and invites non-Party Range States, other governments, donors, and financial institutions to allocate adequate and timely financial and other resources for the systematic and punctual implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027, prioritising support to developing countries, countries with economies in transition and Small Island Developing States for the implementation of associated work plans, as well as to respond to the resource needs, as identified in Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.43, for enabling and strengthening the international-level coordination and delivery of the Strategic Plan.

13. *Requests* partner organisations to consider engaging and contributing through in-kind support to the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027 as well as through working with and assisting the Secretariat and relevant donor Parties and financial institutions in the development of new funding streams that will help to deliver the resources required to address needs identified in Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.43.

14. *Calls on* the AEWA Contracting Parties to strongly consider allocating additional resources to the AEWA core budget, as described in Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.43, to support the effective coordination and implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027.

15. *Mandates* the Secretariat to advance a resource mobilisation plan and to convene an advisory Resource Mobilisation Working Group, meeting regularly but virtually, to develop additional ideas for raising resources, broker new contacts with financial expertise, and stimulate progress towards the fund-raising objectives outlined in Doc. AEWA/MOP8.43, at the same time learning from related fund-raising experiences of other multilateral environment agreements especially the Convention of Migratory Species and the Ramsar Convention.

16. *Requests* the Technical Committee, in the context of implementation of the Agreement, in particular paragraph 2.1.2 of Annex 3 (Action Plan), to develop and propose a definition of the term “livelihood” for consideration by MOP9.

Capacity for implementing the Agreement – identifying next priorities at the international level

17. *Urges* Parties and *Requests* others to implement recommendations arising from the assessment of capacity needs (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.44) and to report progress – as appropriate – to MOP9, in particular:

- in fulfilment of AEWA Strategic Plan Action 5.3(c), to cooperate in launching regional initiatives, particularly in Africa, to address the implementation of capacity priorities, linking to the African Initiative, including scientific collaboration as well as a “younger generations” component, and including provision for actions to be further informed through country-specific needs assessments;
- undertake or update national assessments of capacity needs for implementing the Agreement, develop and implement action plans to address significant identified capacity gaps;
- to establish procedures for ensuring continuity of succession and transfer of knowledge and skills, when there are changes in personnel responsible for AEWA national implementation;
- to make core budget provision for holding regional or sub-regional preparatory meetings before each ordinary session of the MOP, in particular for African Range States, and for such meetings to include an enhanced capacity-building component targeting priority needs identified by the Parties concerned;
- for the Secretariat, resources permitting, together with the Technical Committee (TC) and partner organisations, to make good use of the raw data collated from the 2021 capacity

survey when considering the support or other inputs they can offer to capacity-strengthening efforts at international, regional or flyway level;

- for the Secretariat, assisted by Parties, partner organisations and other stakeholders, and subject to receiving financial support for this purpose, to compile a simple project concept portfolio or other initiatives that address the capacity gaps and needs identified in this report, to be maintained and/or updated as appropriate, and which will serve as a tool to assist in seeking external financial and other resources/ support for improving capacity for implementation of the Agreement, in Africa in particular;
- for AEWA National Focal Points in the European Union (EU) to cooperate with African National Focal Points, partner organisations and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for incorporating aspects of AEWA implementation capacity support in relevant existing projects and programmes in Africa, including the EU-funded NaturAfrica initiative and the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial/EU-funded RESSOURCE sub-Saharan Africa project; and
- for the TC to review the current National Report formats on the implementation of AEWA and POAA that address priority capacity gaps and capacity needs; to propose potential enhancements of those questions to generate information specifically addressing the international priorities identified, including information on initiatives addressing these priorities, as well as on national-level assessments of gaps and needs; and to consider options for a simple form of “traffic light”-coded qualitative self-assessment by Parties of perceived general levels of relevant national knowledge and capacity, and to bring submit their recommendations to MOP9.