



8th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES
26-30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary

“Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World”

RESOLUTION 8.16

ECOTOURISM AND WATERBIRD CONSERVATION

Aware that the development of ecotourism based on spectacular concentrations of migratory waterbirds and/or species that are rare, peculiar and desirable to see, or on the wetland areas that support them, can not only increase support amongst public for waterbird conservation, but can also provide a valuable source of income for local communities,

However, conscious that without careful management, ecotourism can harm wildlife, habitats and local communities through environmental, cultural, and other impacts, both directly at a site, and/or more widely, for example through encouragement of unsustainable land and water use,

Yet also conscious that there is now much experience and guidance to demonstrate how ecotourism - as a nature-focused element of tourism that is environmentally sustainable - can be conducted in responsible ways which are positive not only for conservation but also for local communities, including reduction of dependencies on non-sustainable land-uses,

Recalling the provisions of the Agreement's Action Plan requiring, *inter alia*, that:

- "4.2.1. *Parties shall encourage, where appropriate but not in the case of core zones of protected areas, the elaboration of cooperative programmes between all concerned to develop sensitive and appropriate eco-tourism at wetlands holding concentrations of populations listed in Table 1;*
- 4.2.2. *Parties, in cooperation with competent international organisations, shall endeavour to evaluate the costs, benefits and other consequences that can result from eco-tourism at selected wetlands with concentrations of populations listed in Table 1. They shall communicate the results of any such evaluations to the Agreement secretariat" ,*

Recalling also that Paragraph 7.3 of the *Action Plan* requires that Conservation Guidelines be developed, *inter alia*, in relation to tourism, and to that end *Guidelines on the development of ecotourism at wetlands* were first adopted at MOP1 (Resolution 1.10),

Recalling Target 2.5 of AEWA's *Strategic Plan 2019-2027* which seeks that "Waterbird related ecotourism is promoted in at least half of the Contracting Parties following the model/example of at least three ecotourism pilots focusing on migratory waterbirds that exemplify benefits to local communities as well as for the conservation status of AEWA populations and their habitats", and that delivery of this target requires collation of case studies, identification of strategic partners and development of pilot projects,

Noting also that the *Strategic Plan* envisages that by MOP9, at least three pilot ecotourism-related initiatives in different parts of the Agreement Area are planned to be conceived and launched, and that by MOP10, Parties should integrate wetland- and waterbird-related ecotourism into national tourism development strategies or other relevant national strategies, as well as to promote the sharing of experience, know-how, best practice and lessons learned,

Aware of relevant guidance from other international actors, including the World Tourism Organisation¹; Ramsar Convention² and Convention on Migratory Species³,

Aware in particular of the consideration of ecotourism by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018⁴ which noted that ecotourism can contribute to sustainable development, in particular the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, can improve the well-being of indigenous peoples and local communities, and which encouraged Member States to use sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, to foster *inter alia* economic growth, social development and environmental protection, including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; through support for measures to build capacity, provide training, produce guidelines and strengthen partnerships,

Noting Document AEWA/MOP 8.41 “*Ecotourism: Case examples and options for AEWA strategic engagement*” which was compiled in response to Action 2.5(a) of the Strategic Plan and which summarises key findings from many relevant reviews and studies, and also presents 29 case examples drawn from across the Agreement area which demonstrate approaches combining high quality visitor experiences with benefits for the conservation of AEWA species and their habitats, and simultaneously for the livelihoods of local communities, and which makes six action recommendations, namely that:

1. Individual waterbird-related ecotourism operators and initiatives should increase their efforts to capture and make available information on the lessons learnt from their activities (positive and negative) that may contribute to wider knowledge and improved practices in the ecotourism field;
2. Options should be explored for undertaking further overview research on lessons emerging from waterbird-related ecotourism ventures, to assist in building a robust evidence base for the development of enhanced policy and guidance on opportunities and good practices;
3. Relevant ecotourism operators should verify that their operations conform to the AEWA ecotourism guidelines and other international best practice standards identified in this report, including careful assessment and minimisation of risks to migratory waterbirds and their habitats, and seeking to benefit both conservation and local community interests while providing high quality visitor experiences;

¹ *Destination Wetlands: Supporting sustainable tourism.*

http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/ramsar_unwto_tourism_en.pdf

² Ramsar Convention (2012). *Issues for stakeholders to address in achieving sustainable tourism and recreation in and around wetlands* (Annex 2 to Resolution XI.7 adopted at COP11).

<https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res07-e.pdf>

³ UNEP-CMS Secretariat (2006). [Wildlife watching and tourism: a study on the benefits and risks of a fast growing tourism activity and its impacts on species](#). UNEP-CMS Secretariat, Bonn, Germany.

Convention on Migratory Species (2017). [Sustainable tourism and migratory species](#). Resolution 12.23 adopted by the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Manila, Philippines, 23-28 October 2017.

⁴ UN General Assembly (2018). [Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection](#). Resolution 73/245 adopted by the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, 20 December 2018.

4. The AEWA Guidelines on the development of ecotourism at wetlands (Conservation Guidelines No. 7, 2005)⁵ should be revised and updated, and enhanced content should be added in particular concerning the issue of local community benefit;
5. The AEWA Secretariat should invite individual discussions with each of the “strategic partners” suggested in this report, to explore the scope for collaborating on ecotourism-related issues of shared interest, including the suggested “pilot initiatives”;
6. The AEWA Secretariat, together with the Technical Committee and with input from selected strategic partners as appropriate, should develop detailed proposals for taking forward (or adapting as necessary) the “pilot initiatives” suggested in this report.

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. Welcomes Document AEWA/MOP 8.41 “*Ecotourism: Case examples and options for AEWA strategic engagement*” as a key resource to support delivery of Strategic Plan Target 2.5.
2. Requests the Secretariat, further to Strategic Plan Target 2.5 and resources permitting, to engage with strategic partners, and then to jointly develop and seek funding for project proposals, with the aim to launch three pilot initiatives at MOP9:
 - i. **“Destination Flyways” revisited** (*Key sites in a flyway context; management planning to integrate tourism, conservation and livelihoods; international knowledge-exchange network; awareness and advocacy*);
 - ii. **International avitourism development support** (*Training, advice, networking and other support for a wide range of tourism sector operators to develop a growing market for waterbird-based tourism, in ways which exemplify responsible approaches and positive impacts for conservation and local communities*); and
 - iii. **Strengthening institutional and policy capacity for ecotourism in internationally designated coastal protected areas** (*Strengthening institutional, policy and management capacity and related frameworks for internationally designated protected areas that support ecotourism serving AEWA’s objectives*);
3. Urges the governments of the Contracting Parties within which pilot projects are proposed to pro-actively engage with their planning, development and implementation, noting that such official support will be essential for their successful implementation and *further requests* donor Contracting Parties to consider providing resources for such pilot projects including through their development aid funding;
4. Requests the Technical Committee, resources permitting, to prioritize reviewing and updating Conservation Guideline No.7 in the light of developments since its original drafting and in particular considering issues of local community benefit in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international targets, and further considering how this guidance may be presented and disseminated to relevant but different audiences;
5. Encourages Contracting Parties in their national reports to provide information on effective ecotourism initiatives within their territories that advance the objectives of the Agreement and on the integration of wetland-

⁵ AEWA Conservation Guidelines No. 7: Guidelines on the development of ecotourism at wetlands https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/publication/cg_7new_0.pdf

and waterbird-related ecotourism into national tourism development strategies or other relevant national strategies and further, to endeavour to evaluate the costs, benefits and other consequences of eco-tourism at sites important for migratory waterbirds and communicate the results of any such evaluations to the Secretariat;

6. *Requests* Parties to encourage individual waterbird-related ecotourism operators and initiatives to increase their efforts to capture and make available information on the lessons learnt from their activities (positive and negative) that may contribute to wider knowledge and improved practices in the ecotourism field;

7. *Further requests* Parties to encourage relevant ecotourism operators to verify that their operations conform to the AEWAs ecotourism guidelines and other international best practice standards, including careful assessment and minimisation of risks to migratory waterbirds and their habitats, and that they seek to benefit both conservation and local community interests while providing high quality visitor experiences.