

24th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
4 July 2024, Virtual Meeting Format

REPORT OF THE 23rd MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
26 – 27 June 2023

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Summary of StC23 Decisions

AGENDA ITEM		DECISION
Agenda item 2	Admission of Observers	All observers present were admitted to the meeting.
Agenda item 3	Adoption of the Agenda	The agenda was adopted as presented in document AEWA/StC 23.2 Rev.2 with two additions and one minor change. A discussion on the 30th Anniversary of AEWA under agenda item 8 was added as well as a general discussion on the destruction of the Dnipro dam and its environmental impacts, under agenda item 13. Agenda item 13 on the IRP was moved to the end of the agenda.
Agenda item 5	Recruitment of Parties	The StC will convene a side event regarding the recruitment of new Parties at CMS COP14.
Agenda item 6b	National Reporting	The proposed partially revised national reporting format described in document AEWA/StC23.6 Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024 was approved by the StC to allow extraction of templates for launching a separate harvest data reporting module. The StC further approved that the harvest data reporting will cover the period 2019/2020-2022/2023 and that the reporting deadline for this module will be in June 2024. The StC also agreed to review and approve by correspondence the fully revised national reporting format for 2021-2024 once the TC has completed the revision and submitted it through the Secretariat.
Agenda item 7	Outputs of the Technical Committee Work Plan 2023-2025	The proposed changes to waterbird population delineations, as described in Document AEWA/StC23.7 Recommendations for the Delineation of Selected Populations Listed on Table 1 of AEWA Annex 3 were approved for further use. Document AEWA/MOP8.36 Rev.2 Opportunities for AEWA to Support the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was approved for further use and dissemination to the Parties.
Agenda item 8	Report on Communications	The IMCA team will work with the SICU Unit to draft a webpage on the IRP process. The Secretariat will summarise the discussions around AEWA's 30th Anniversary and will produce a concept note.
Agenda item 9c	Status of AEWA contributions payments and discussion on reasons why Parties are in arrears and possible solutions to address these	An ad-hoc meeting will be scheduled in Autumn to establish a plan of action regarding arrears of Parties and how to deal with them. A questionnaire will be sent to the Parties in advance of the meeting to find out why they are not paying their arrears and new contributions.
Agenda item 9d	Voluntary funding	The Secretariat will request a loan from UNEP to be able to start recruitment for the Species Officer.
Agenda item 10	Tasks for the AEWA Standing Committee as decided by the 8th	A revised version of the Rules of Procedure for the Sessions of the Meeting of the Parties will

	session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA	be drafted by the Secretariat for the StC's review and for submission to MOP9.
Agenda item 11	Small Grants Fund (SGF)	The StC will develop a proposal regarding the AEWA Small Grant Fund for submission to and approval by MOP9.
Agenda item 12	Date and Venue of the 24 th Meeting of the Standing Committee	The next StC meeting will take place online in May/June 2024.

Agenda item 1. Opening of the Meeting

1. The Standing Committee Chair, United Kingdom, and representative of Europe and Central Asia, Mr Simon Mackown, opened the 23rd Meeting of the Standing Committee (StC) by warmly welcoming all participants. He noted that this would be a relatively short meeting of only two half days.

Agenda item 2. Admission of Observers

2. Mr Mackown welcomed the observers (see Annex I) without further discussion in the absence of comments from the StC members present.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>All observers present were admitted to the meeting.</i>
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Agenda item 3. Adoption of the Agenda

3. Referring to document AEWA/StC 23.2 Rev.2., *Provisional Agenda*, Mr Mackown noted that there would be an additional discussion on the 30th Anniversary of AEWA under agenda item 8 as well as a general discussion on the destruction of the Dnipro dam and its environmental impacts, under agenda item 13.
4. Mr Mackown furthermore proposed to move agenda item 13 on the Implementation Review Process (IRP) to the very end of the agenda since it would be a closed session for StC members only.
5. With that the agenda was adopted.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The agenda was adopted as presented in document AEWA/StC 23.2 Rev.2 with two additions and one minor change. A discussion on the 30th Anniversary of AEWA under agenda item 8 was added as well as a general discussion on the destruction of the Dnipro dam and its environmental impacts, under agenda item 13. Agenda item 13 on the IRP was moved to the end of the agenda.</i>
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Agenda item 4. Reports by

a. Standing Committee Members and Party Observers

6. Mr Mackown pointed out that the level of return from Parties was quite disappointing. Only seven out of the 42 Europe and Central Asia Parties responded to his request for submission of relevant information for the regional report.
7. He went on to highlight the droughts of last year, particularly in Belgium and Hungary, and their impact on breeding populations and on avian influenza as well as some ongoing specific projects like mostly around Eurasian Curlews and Black-tailed Godwits in Belgium, Sweden and the UK. Furthermore, there is an EU LIFE project for the Audouin's Gull in Croatia.

8. Mr Mackown informed everyone that more information could be found in document AEWA/StC23 Inf.10 *Report on Activities Relating to the Implementation of AEWA for the Europe and Central Asia Region*.

9. Next, Ms Humbu Mafumo, South Africa, and representative of Eastern and Southern Africa, gave a brief update on what was happening in the region.

10. Ms Mafumo reported that 6 out of the 15 Parties in the region responded to her request and highlighted a few developments regarding the implementation of AEWA in the region such as the development of a national Grey Crowned Crane Action Plan in Kenya and establishment of a national Working Group for the species in South Africa, as well as the commemoration of the World Migratory Bird Day.

11. Further information could be found in document AEWA/StC 23 Inf.11 *Report on Activities Relating to the Implementation of AEWA for the Eastern and Southern Africa Region*.

12. Mr Kouassi Firmin, Côte d'Ivoire and representative of Western and Central Africa, also reported that only few Parties responded to his request. In addition, the National Focal Point for Côte d'Ivoire got a new position and it was therefore difficult for him to follow the developments and report on them accordingly.

13. The main reported action in the region was the monitoring of waterbirds thanks to Wetlands International and BirdLife International.

14. Continuing, Mr Zouhair Amahouch, Morocco and representative of the Middle East and Northern Africa, gave a brief overview of what has been happening in the region.

15. Mr Amahouch noted that he took the opportunity to discuss AEWA matters with other National Focal Points at the recent CBD meeting and added that a monitoring programme had been undertaken in the region coordinated by La Tour du Valat. Bird counts had been done in Northern Africa and the Middle East, but a report had not yet been received.

16. Furthermore, he reported that some projects had been launched over the past few months, such as a project to protect wetlands or to advance the implementation of the Northern Bald Ibis action plan.

b. Technical Committee

17. Ms Melissa Lewis, Chair of the AEWA Technical Committee, first welcomed the new members to the TC and noted that there was only one vacant position, that of the regional representative for South-western Asia.

18. Ms Lewis continued by reporting that MOP8 had approved the TC's workplan and that the first TC meeting of the triennium took place in Bonn in March 2023 and in-person, which was very valuable. She noted that the bulk of the meeting included the detailed planning of the implementation of the workplan and that the TC members were now proceeding to work on the various tasks.

19. Ms Lewis highlighted that there would be an additional TC meeting in early 2024, which would be virtual and focused on taking stock on how much progress had been made.

20. Finally, Ms Lewis pointed out that given the Secretariat's capacity constraints, TC support had been diminished. She reminded the Contracting Parties present about the call included in resolutions 7.11 and 8.11 to consider providing a JPO specifically for TC support.

c. Depositary

21. Referring to document AEWA/StC23.4 *Report of the Depositary*, Mr Nick Warmelink, representative of the Depositary, The Netherlands, gave a brief update by informing everyone about the two new accessions to AEWA since MOP8 which were Greece and Saudi Arabia. Amendments made to the Agreement at MOP8 had been

circulated to the Parties. Reservations had been received from the EU, Iceland, the UK and the Czech Republic. Amendments entered into force in December 2022. Finally, Mr Warmelink noted that the Depositary found some means to consolidate Russian and Arabic versions of the Agreement, as in force since 29 December 2022.

d. Secretariat

22. Referring to document AEWA/StC 23.5 *Report of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat*, Mr Trouvilliez gave a brief overview on the organisation and staffing of the Secretariat, general management, which included the recruitment of Parties and cooperation with other organisations, Communication, Information Management and Outreach, followed by Science, Implementation and Compliance as well as Capacity-Building.

e. UNEP

23. No report from UNEP was received.

f. Other Observers

24. Mr Cy Griffin, FACE, mentioned that progress had been made on the three Technical Committee tasks related to sustainable harvest for which ToRs were finalised. At the meeting in mid-June of the Technical Committee ad-hoc working group on sustainable harvest it was warged that a staggered approach would be applied in the implementation of these assignments – first the rapid assessment of sustainability of waterbird harvest would be implemented, followed by the compilation of a guidance on methods and tools for waterbird harvest data collection, and finally the assessment of the nature and extent of waterbird harvest and socio-economic importance of waterbirds.

25. No further reports were given from other observers.

Agenda item 5. Recruitment of Parties

26. Mr Trouvilliez explained that one of the Secretariat's priorities was to target Central Asia, more specifically Kazakhstan. He and Mr Dereliev were planning to attend the upcoming CMS COP14 taking place in Uzbekistan in February 2024 and would engage into discussions with Kazakhstan and some other Central Asian countries.

27. The Secretariat's other priority was to target the Arabic peninsula. The Secretariat was already in discussions with the UAE and Oman. Mr Trouvilliez was pleased that the Secretariat was getting the support of Abu Dhabi's CMS Unit in that regard. He added that some African countries, such as Angola and Mozambique were also being targeted for recruitment.

28. Mr Mackown assured Mr Trouvilliez of the StC's support in approaching countries and stressed that all the work should not be pushed on the Secretariat since it was massively understaffed. He said that he would also be at the CMS COP and would be happy to join some of the conversations since it carried a lot of weight if a Contracting Party explained the benefits.

29. Mr Warmelink and Mr Amahouch both said they would also attend the CMS COP and would also be happy to join some of the conversations as well as speak with other National Focal Points.

Furthermore, it was decided that the StC would convene a side event regarding the recruitment of new Parties at CMS COP14.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The StC will convene a side event regarding the recruitment of new Parties at CMS COP14.</i>
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Agenda item 6. 9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA

a. Date and Venue

30. Mr Trouvilliez informed everyone there were currently discussions going on with Botswana about being a potential host country for MOP9.

31. Ms Evelyn Moloko, Head of the African Initiative at the AEWA Secretariat, added that the Secretariat had been negotiating closely with the Government of Botswana and that a request had been submitted to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, while the Secretariat had been working on involving the responsible Ministry.

32. Mr Trouvilliez explained that the alternative would be to have the MOP in Bonn, which might be difficult due to the upcoming renovations planned on the UN Campus during the prospective timing of the MOP. It would, therefore, be important to secure a host country.

33. Mr Trouvilliez added that he may already be retired should MOP9 take place in autumn of 2025 but was trying to find a way to stay involved.

34. Mr Mackown sincerely hoped that Mr Trouvilliez would be able to stay on until MOP9 as it might be challenging having a new Executive Secretary just a few months before the MOP takes place.

b. National Reporting

35. Referring to document AEWA/StC 23.6 *Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024*, Mr Dereliev explained that the proposed format would be used for submission of national reports to MOP9. The initial version had been adopted by MOP8.

36. Furthermore, Mr Dereliev explained that the TC shall assist the StC in reviewing and improving the format. The current draft was a partial revision proposed by the TC and the StC was requested to review and approve this version to allow for the extraction of templates related to harvest data reporting for use as a separate reporting module with an earlier deadline as compared to the general national report. In the next months, the TC will be finalising the revision of the national reporting format, and a complete proposal will be resubmitted to the StC for review and approval.

37. Mr Dereliev added that the Secretariat is aiming at collating harvest data from Contracting Parties as well as non-Party range States by June 2024 so that this dataset can be used for another task mandated by the MOP to the TC on undertaking a rapid assessment of sustainability of harvest. The harvest data templates, contained in the partially revised national reporting format, are final and no further revision is expected by the TC. Thus, with StC's approval of this partial revision of the national reporting format, the work on the online version of the harvest data reporting module would start and the reporting process could hopefully be launched in summer 2023. The TC's proposal was to report data from 2019/2020 until latest 2022/2023. There was no expectation to report on season 2023/2024.

38. The StC agreed to all proposals.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The proposed partially revised national reporting format described in document AEWA/StC23.6 Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024 was approved by the StC to allow extraction of templates for launching a separate harvest data reporting module. The StC further approved that the harvest data reporting will cover the period 2019/2020-2022/2023 and that the reporting deadline for this module will be in June 2024. The StC also agreed to review and approve by correspondence the fully revised national reporting format for 2021-2024 once the TC has completed the revision and submitted it through the Secretariat.</i>
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Agenda item 7. Outputs of the Technical Committee Work Plan 2023-2025

39. Introducing document AEWA/StC 23.7 *Recommendations for the Delineation of Selected Populations Listed on Table 1 of AEWA Annex 3*, Mr Dereliev explained that the StC was requested to review the proposed changes to delineations of the selected seven species.

40. As there were no comments or questions Mr Mackown concluded that the proposed population delineations as described in document AEWA/StC23.7 were approved for further use.

41. Mr Dereliev continued by introducing document AEWA/MOP 8.36 Rev.2 *Opportunities for AEWA to Support the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)*. He explained that the GBF at the time of MOP8 was not finalised and agreed yet, and that the TC had been requested to update the document upon adoption of the GBF. The TC updated the document and finalised it at its 18th meeting in March 2023. The current version of the document is based on the final Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which was adopted in December 2022 by the CBD COP15.

42. The request from the MOP was that the StC should review the revised version of the document and approve it for circulation to the Parties.

43. Mr Mackown thanked everyone for their hard work on the document. With that, the document was approved.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The proposed changes to waterbird population delineations, as described in Document AEWA/StC23.7 Recommendations for the Delineation of Selected Populations Listed on Table 1 of AEWA Annex 3 were approved for further use. Document AEWA/MOP 8.36 Rev.2 Opportunities for AEWA to Support the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was approved for further use and dissemination to the Parties.</i>
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Agenda item 8. Report on Communications

44. Mr Trouvilliez introduced document AEWA/StC 23.9 *Report on the Joint CMS/AEWA Information Management, Communication and Awareness-Raising (IMCA) Unit*, by providing a summary of the main activities carried out by the IMCA Unit in 2022.

45. Mr Mackown thanked Mr Trouvilliez for the introduction and thought it was a very helpful and informative document. However, he wondered whether there was a risk of the deficit towards AEWA increasing due to the upcoming CMS COP, and if so, whether steps were being taken to avoid that. He suggested that IMCA could support AEWA with a side event at COP. He also asked if it was an option to showcase the progress of current IRP cases on the AEWA website, which would make Parties more aware of the consequences of an IRP being raised.

46. Mr Trouvilliez explained that IMCA indeed worked more for one Secretariat than the other in a COP/MOP year, but that it went both ways. The accrued deficit towards AEWA should clearly be reduced in one or another way. The discussion between the two Executive Secretaries had been inconclusive yet and a solution still needed to be found. He also thanked Mr Mackown for his suggestions of an AEWA side event at the COP and making the IRP cases more visible through the AEWA website. He was positive that both could be implemented. Regarding the latter, Mr Trouvilliez said he would ask IMCA to work on setting up a webpage together with the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit (SICU).

47. After further discussions, Mr Mackown concluded that IMCA should investigate what materials they could produce for AEWA for use during the upcoming CMS COP. He thought it was important for people to realise AEWA's national and international importance and promoting AEWA at the CMS COP could foster that.

48. Another issue to be discussed under this agenda item was the celebration of AEWA's 30th anniversary which would coincide with MOP9 in 2025. Mr Mackown opened the floor for an open discussion.

49. Following some discussions and suggestions made by the Secretariat and Parties, such as creating a feature on the AEWA website about people doing the work on the ground, having a joint logo for MOP9 and the Anniversary or producing an online AEWA encyclopaedia, the consensus was that it was important to think about the message to be communicated.

50. Mr Mackown concluded that the Secretariat would summarise the discussions and produce a concept note which would be circulated.

<i>Decisions</i>	<i>The IMCA team will work with the SICU Unit to draft a webpage on the IRP process. The Secretariat will summarise the discussions around AEWA's 30th Anniversary and will produce a concept note.</i>
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Agenda item 9. Financial and Administrative Matters

a. Execution of the 2022 and 2023 budgets

51. Referring to document AEWA/StC 23.10 *Report of the Secretariat on Finance and Administrative Issues*, Mr Trouvilliez started by thanking the Parties for the increased adopted budget for the next triennium and pointed out that there was consequently an increase in the staffing which put the Secretariat in a better position with regards to capacity.

52. Mr Trouvilliez continued by giving an overview of income and expenditures as well as voluntary contributions.

53. Mr Mackown thanked Mr Trouvilliez for the very helpful and informative summary. There were no questions or comments from the floor.

b. Administrative and personnel matters

54. Mr Trouvilliez explained that the post of the African Initiative Coordinator would be increased on the core budget from 50% to 80% as of 1 January 2024.

55. Furthermore, a new EGMP Coordinator would be recruited, as the previous incumbent, Ms Eva Meyers, had left the Secretariat.

56. A Species Officer would also be recruited at the P3 level at 100% - thanks to the voluntary contributions made by UK and The Netherlands - until MOP9 where there would be a new decision made regarding that post. Mr Trouvilliez hoped that this recruitment would help relaunch the coordination of some of the species International Working Groups and importantly to relief the work of the Head of the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit who had taken over several of the Species Officer's tasks.

c. Status of AEWA contributions payments and discussion on reasons why Parties are in arrears and possible solutions to address these

57. Mr Mackown introduced this agenda item by recalling that the MOP had given the StC the task of investigating the reasons for Parties being in arrears. Initial ideas for how this could be explored were discussed and compiled into document AEWA/StC 23.11 *Note for assessing why Parties have arrears and possible solutions*.

58. One key point of interest highlighted by Mr Mackown was that half a million Euros worth of arrears had been accumulated. He explained that there were different reasons for these arrears, such as difficult administrative procedures, which could easily be addressed by the Secretariat. There were, however, several Parties in arrears,

where there was uncertainty about the reasons. Then, there was a handful of Parties that had never paid their contributions since their accession to the Agreement, which was the most challenging to deal with. Finally, there were Parties in extremely difficult political situations.

59. Currently, those Parties that were eligible to receive support to attend meetings (as per the threshold of 0.200 of the UN Scale of Assessment) but are also in arrears of more than three years cannot receive support to attend AEWA meetings (in line with paragraph 14 of Resolution 8.12). Equally they are not eligible for benefiting from the AEWA Small Grants Fund. Mr Mackown thought that these were quite the punitive measures and would have the further risk of preventing achievement of quorum at MOPs. Furthermore, the more these kinds of punitive measures were put in place, the less the Parties would engage, which is what is important and needed.

60. Following an extensive discussion on possible measures/solutions, Mr Mackown concluded that unfortunately some of the issues could probably not be resolved until the next MOP since there were too many open questions. His sense was that it would be good to get as many Parties as possible to MOP9 and to use that opportunity to have discussions with those Parties that were in arrears.

61. Mr Trouvilliez agreed that the punitive measures should not be increased but rather it would be better to emphasise on what the incentives were for Parties which paid their arrears.

62. It was agreed to have an additional ad-hoc meeting to set up a plan of action.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>An ad-hoc meeting will be scheduled in Autumn 2023 to establish a plan of action regarding arrears of Parties and how to deal with them. A questionnaire will be sent to the Parties in advance of the meeting to find out why they are not paying their arrears and new contributions.</i>
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d. Voluntary funding

63. Mr Mackown reminded everyone that Mr Trouvilliez had already provided a summary regarding voluntary funding under *Execution of the 2022 and 2023 budgets*.

64. Mr Trouvilliez asked the StC whether it agreed to the Secretariat requesting a loan from UNEP to be able to start recruitment for the Species Officer as there was still a deficit to reach 100%.

65. There was agreement from all StC members.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The Secretariat will request a loan from UNEP to be able to start recruitment for the Species Officer.</i>
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Agenda item 10. Tasks for the AEWA Standing Committee as decided by the 8th session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA

66. Mr Trouvilliez introduced this agenda item referring to and summarising document AEWA/StC 23.12 *Tasks for the AEWA Standing Committee as decided by MOP8*.

67. Mr Mackown thought there was not much discussion needed on the document but flagged the issue regarding the Parties in arrears mentioned under Resolution 8.12 *Financial and administrative matters*. He raised the issue of having almost not reached quorum at MOP8 and that the Rules of Procedure might have to be changed in that regard. Proper representation of European vs. African countries also needed to be ensured.

68. Mr Trouvilliez said that a revised version of the MOP Rules of Procedure would be drafted by the Secretariat for the StC's review and for submission to MOP9.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>A revised version of the Rules of Procedure for the Sessions of the Meeting of the Parties will be drafted by the Secretariat for the StC's review and for submission to MOP9.</i>
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Agenda item 11. Small Grants Funds (SGF)

69. Mr Mackown introduced this agenda item explaining that currently the SGF entirely relied on voluntary contributions from which Parties could then draw support. However, there had not been any funding in the SGF available for many years now. From the UK's perspective Mr Mackown explained that they had not made contributions to the SGF because they were not sure how it worked, as well as due to the difficult financial administration in the UK.

70. Mr Mackown proposed that the StC initiate a survey to gather views from Parties to understand the barriers towards contributing to the SGF. Such a survey could result in getting some solutions on how to make the SGF more functional. Making the SGF operational again could be another incentive for the Parties in arrears to pay their contributions to the Agreement.

71. After sharing some experiences about the SGF and some discussions it was agreed that the StC would develop a proposal regarding the SGF for submission to and approval by MOP9.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The StC will develop a proposal regarding the AEWA Small Grant Fund for submission to and approval by MOP9.</i>
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Agenda item 12. Date and Venue of the 24th Meeting of the Standing Committee

72. Mr Mackown informed everyone that the 24th Meeting of the Standing Committee would take place in May/June 2024 and that it would be an online meeting again.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The next StC meeting will take place online in May/June 2024.</i>
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Agenda item 13. Implementation Review Process (IRP)

-CLOSED SESSION-

Agenda item 14. Any Other Business

73. Mr Mackown informed everyone that Mr Volodymyr Domashlinets wanted to make a statement on behalf of Ukraine but would provide that statement in writing after the meeting since he was not able to attend the meeting that morning.

74. Mr Trouvilliez added that he had attended a virtual meeting on 9 June with the Minister of Environment of Ukraine together with the Ramsar Secretariat, the Bern Convention as well as other conventions in which the ecological damages were discussed.

75. The Minister had asked the attendees to participate in an assessment of the current ecological damage in Ukraine.

Agenda item 15. Closure of the Meeting

76. Mr Mackown thanked everyone for their engagement and participation, particularly on the discussions relating to the SGF and contribution arrears and hoped to be able to move forward on some of the issues.

77. Mr Trouvilliez thanked all participants and StC members for their active engagement as well as Ms Lewis for representing the TC. He also thanked all Parties and observers and thought it was a fruitful meeting with good discussions.

78. With that the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Annex I – List of Participants

Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee / Président du Comité permanent de l'AEWA

Region of Europe and Central Asia (1)

Mr Simon Mackown

Head of Species Recovery

National Biodiversity

DEFRA

Deanery Road

BS1 5EH Bristol

United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni

Tel: +44 (0) 2080266900

E-mail: simon.mackown@defra.gov.uk

Regional Representative of the AEWA Standing Committee / Représentant régional
du Comité permanent de l'AEWA

Region of Eastern and Southern Africa

Ms Humbu Mafumo

Deputy Director

Biodiversity and Conservation

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment 473

Steve Biko Street, Arcadia

0083 Pretoria

South Africa / Afrique du Sud

Tel: +271 23999586

E-mail: hmafumo@dffe.gov.za

Region of Europe and Central Asia (2)

Dr Volodymyr Domashlinets

Head of Biological Diversity Conservation and Biosafety Division
Department of Nature Protection Fund and Biodiversity
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine
Mytropolyta Vasylya Lypkivskogo str., 35
03035 Kyiv
Ukraine / Ukraine
Tel: +380442063127
E-mail: vdomashlinets@yahoo.com

Region of The Middle East and Northern Africa

Mr Zouhair Amhaouch

Chef de Département
Département des Parcs Nationaux et des Aires Protégées
Agence Nationale des Eaux et Forêts
n3 Rue Haroun Errachid Agdal
10000 Rabat
Morocco / Maroc
Tel: +212 661047483
E-mail: zouhairamhaouch@yahoo.fr

Region of Western and Central Africa

Ms Kouassi Firmin Kouame

Chef de Cantonnement des Eaux et Forêts de Transua
Direction Régionale des Eaux et Forêts de Bondoukou
Ministère des Eaux et Forêts
BP 178 Abidjan 01
225 Transua
Côte d'Ivoire / Côte d'Ivoire
Tel: +225 0707443390
E-mail: firkouame@yahoo.com

Mr Nick Warmelink
Policy Officer International species conservation
Directorate-General for Nature and Fisheries
Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
20401 / Bezuidenhoutseweg 73
2500 EK The Hague
Netherlands / Pays-Bas
Tel: +31 629636059
E-mail: n.g.warmelink@minlnv.nl

Contracting Party (Observer) / Partie contractante (observateur)

Botswana

Mr Kenosi Nkape
Principal Wildlife
Officer
Department of Wildlife and National Parks
Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism
P.O.Box 131
Plot 13064 Gaborone
Botswana / Botswana
Tel: +267 3996588
E-mail: knkape@gmail.com

Côte d'Ivoire

Mr Kouassi Felix Ouassa
Chef de Service Faune
Direction de la Faune et des Ressources Cynégétiques
Ministère des Eaux et Forêts
Cité Administrative du plateau
20 BP 650 Abidjan 20 Abidjan
Côte d'Ivoire / Côte d'Ivoire
Tel: 2722289272
E-mail: edouassafelix@gmail.com

European Union

Ms Iva Obretenova
Policy Officer
DG ENV, Unit D.3
European Commission
Rue Breydel 2-10
1040 Brussels
Belgium / Belgique
Tel: +32 493378924
E-mail: iva.obretenova@ec.europa.eu

Germany

Dr Berit Gewert
Scientific
Officer
International Species Conservation, Wildlife Trade
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer
Protection
Robert-Schuman-Platz 3
53175 Bonn
Germany /
Allemagne
Tel: +49 228 99 305 2632
E-mail: berit.gewert@bmu.v.bund.de

Sweden

Mr Jorgen Eriksson
Desk Officer
Natural Environment Department
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Virkesvagen 2
10648 Stockholm
Sweden / Suède
Tel: +46735614882
E-mail: jorgen.eriksson@naturvardsverket.se

Switzerland

Ms Sabine Herzog

Senior Policy Advisor

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Federal Office for the Environment

P.O.Box

3003 Bern

Switzerland / Suisse

Tel: +41 58 463 03 40

E-mail: sabine.herzog@bafu.admin.ch

Zimbabwe

Ms Kundai Ropafadzo Dube

Ecologist- Acting National TFCA Coordinator

Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA) 1

Sandringham Drive, Corner Borrowdale Road, Alexandra Park

PO BOX CY140 Harare

Zimbabwe / Zimbabwe

Tel: + 263 774015513

E-mail: kdube@zimparks.org.zw

Ms Nothando Rosslyn Moyo

Acting National TFCA Coordinator

Parks & Wildlife Management Authority

1 Sandringham Drive, Corner Borrowdale Road, Alexandra Park

PO BOX CY140 Harare

Zimbabwe / Zimbabwe

Tel: +263774015513

E-mail: nrmoyo@zimparks.org.zw

Chair of the AEWA Technical Committee / Président du Comité Technique de l'AEWA

Dr Melissa Lewis

Policy and Advocacy Programme Manager

Conservation Division

BirdLife South Africa

17 Hume Road

2196 Johannesburg

South Africa / Afrique du Sud

Tel: +27 661111970

E-mail: melissa.lewis@birdlife.org.za

Ms Nicola Crockford

Principal Policy Officer

RSPB / BirdLife International

18 The Green

IP28 6Sd BURY ST. EDMUNDS

United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni

Tel: +44 7718116994

E-mail: nicola.crockford@rspb.org.uk

Mr Alexander Griffin

Senior Conservation Manager

Conservation team

FACE - European Federation for Hunting and Conservation

Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée, 1-5

1040 Brussels

Belgium / Belgique

Tel: +32 2 4161619

E-mail: cy.griffin@face.eu

Dr Szabolcs Nagy

Biodiversity Manager/European Association

Wetlands International

P.O. Box 471

6700AL Wageningen

Netherlands / Pays-Bas

Tel: +31 628554823

E-mail: szabolcs.nagy@wetlands.org

UNEP/AEWA Secretariat / Secrétariat PNUE/AEWA

Mr Sergey Dereliev

Head of Science Implementation and Compliance

SICU UNIT

UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1

53113 Bonn

Germany / Allemagne

Tel: +49 228 815 2415

E-mail: sergey.dereliev@un.org

Ms Jeannine Dicken
Programme Management Assistant
SICU Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
Campus d'ONU
53113 53113 Bonn
Germany / Allemagne
Tel: +492288152413
E-mail: jeannine.dicken@un.org

Mr Florian Keil
Information Officer
IMCA Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus, Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany / Allemagne
Tel: +49 228 8152451
E-mail: florian.keil@un.org

Ms Catherine Lehmann
Executive Management Support Officer
Executive Management Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany / Allemagne
Tel: +49 228 815 2450
E-mail: catherine.lehmann@un.org

Ms Evelyn Moloko
Coordinator for the AEWA African Initiative
African Initiative Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany / Allemagne
Tel: +49 228 8152479
E-mail: evelyn.moloko@un.org

Dr Jacques Trouvilliez
Executive
Secretary
Executive
Management Unit
UNEP/AEWA
Secretariat
Platz der Vereinten
Nationen 1 53113
Bonn
Germany / Allemagne
Tel: +49 228 8152414
E-mail: jacques.trouvilliez@un.org