



13th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
14 – 17 March 2016, Israel

AEWA INTERNATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TASKS (IIT) FOR 2016-2018

(As adopted by MOP6)

Introduction

1. The following list of priority activities has been established to assist Contracting Parties, donors and other stakeholders to further the international implementation of the Action Plan of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds during the period 2016-2018.
2. Since the first Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Agreement, which took place in November 1999 in Cape Town (South Africa), when the International Implementation Priorities (IIP) for 2000-2004 were adopted in Resolution 1.4, priorities have been revised and updated by each MOP. The current proposal for IIT 2016-2018 represents a revised list of activities based on the MOP5-approved IITs 2012-2015.

Order and format of presentation

3. As in the previous versions, the presentation of the tasks in the present document follows the headings of the Action Plan to the Agreement. The number(s) in parentheses after each task title refer(s) to the relevant paragraph of the Agreement's Action Plan.
4. The order of presentation does not reflect any order of priority.
5. Each section starts with a brief outline of relevant high priority projects, followed by a list of other relevant projects; further information on these is available from the Secretariat, upon request.
6. For each task, an indicative budget and timescale is presented for guidance, along with the types of activity involved. It should be noted that the budgets are only indicative. Detailed project proposals and budgets to meet each task will be required at a later stage and should be the basis for the final fund-raising.
7. The tasks include only those requiring international cooperation, and are not intended to reflect national implementation priorities, which must be determined by each Contracting Party and could include more on-the-ground conservation activities. A number of the proposals underlined the importance of such activities. Five types of international cooperation will be appropriate in addressing these priorities:
 - (a) Exchange/transfer of information;
 - (b) Research, surveys and monitoring;
 - (c) Exchange/transfer of expertise;
 - (d) Financial assistance; and
 - (e) Transboundary drafting and implementation of action plans.

Collaboration

8. A number of Implementation Tasks, especially where these relate to reviews of data and information and for the production of guidance, could and should be undertaken collaboratively with other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and international organisations. In particular, these should include the Ramsar Convention (and its Scientific and Technical Review Panel) as noted by Resolution XII.3 of Ramsar Convention COP 12 and AEWAs Resolution 5.19, the Convention on Migratory Species (including its Scientific Council) and other CMS instruments, regional conventions related to marine areas and fisheries management, such as OSPAR, HELCOM, Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions, and the European Union.

The benefits of such joint and harmonised working include potential cost-sharing, wider inputs to technical work and greater outreach to a wider range of interested parties and stakeholders. In planning the implementation of each IIT, active collaboration with other relevant MEAs will be sought as appropriate and possible.

A. Species Conservation

1. **Implement existing international species action and management plans (AP 2.2.1, 7.4)**

Prior to the entry into force of the Agreement, a number of international single species action plans relevant to Paragraph 2.2.1 of the Agreement's Action Plan had already been developed (by BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the International Crane Foundation). These include action plans for: *Microcarbo pygmaeus*, *Pelecanus crispus*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, *Polysticta stellerii*, *Leucogeranus*, *Fulica cristata*, *Numenius tenuirostris*, *Larus audouinii*, and *Sterna dougallii*. (NB: Several of these action plans cover the European part of the range of the species only, and a priority is to extend them to cover their full range within the Agreement area (see next item)). More than 20 international single species action plans and one multi-species action plan were also adopted by the MOP, as well as a Species Management Plan for *Anser brachyrhynchus* (Svalbard population). Whilst many of the actions identified for these species will have to be undertaken and financed at national or local level, a budget is required for international coordination and promotion, and to provide small grants for national and local initiatives.

Indicative budget: € 60,000 min./species/year (for coordination/grants)
Duration: Annual, ongoing
Activities: Coordination, small grants, evaluation, reporting

2. **Develop new International Species Action and Management Plans (AP 2.2.1, 7.4)**

New International Single Species Action Plans need to be developed as a priority for the populations listed in category 1, column A, Table 1 to the Agreement Action Plan, and for those species listed with an asterisk in column A of Table 1. Production and format of the action plans should follow the recommendations given in the MOP-approved guidelines. Following the example of the first multi-species action plan under AEWA for Benguela upwelling system coastal seabirds further multi-species action plans can be considered for development where deemed feasible and appropriate. With the successful pilot management plan for the Svalbard population of the Pink-footed Goose other species/populations will be prioritised for planning of management actions. As soon as the new action and management plans are completed, implementation should begin. It is recommended that individual Range States agree to take the lead on development of individual action and management plans (as an in-kind contribution to the Agreement), in close cooperation with the other Range States of each species (coordination of plan development including workshops, drafting, consultation and publication of each plan). Plans should be submitted to the Technical Committee in draft form for consultation, to ensure harmonisation and quality control.

Indicative budget: € 50,000 max. /per species for action plan preparation
Duration: 12 months per plan
Activities: Coordination, workshop, planning, publication

B. Habitat Conservation

3. Maintain overview of the sites of international importance for AEWA species (AP 3.1.2, 7.4)

A vital piece of information for the conservation of any migratory species is an understanding of the network of key sites required to sustain their populations throughout the year. The Critical Site Network Tool web-portal, developed under the framework of the Wings Over Wetlands – African-Eurasian Flyway Project, has brought together the already existing information concerning key sites for migratory waterbirds that meet recognised criteria of being internationally important building primarily on the data collected through the International Waterbird Census of Wetlands International and through the Important Bird Areas programme of BirdLife International. The web-portal already provides access to information on site networks by species and populations and highlights the internationally important populations of any internationally important sites. The members of the WOW Partnership (*i.e.* the AEWA and Ramsar Secretariats, BirdLife International and Wetlands International) have committed themselves to continue updating the parent datasets and making the information accessible through the CSN Tool. However, the CSN Tool in its current form is getting technologically obsolete seven years after its launch. It will be necessary to redevelop the portal focusing on improving interoperability between individual datasets and enabling – in future – routine updating of relevant data to ensure that the data presented is always the most recent available..

Indicative budget: € 150,000
Duration: 2 years
Activities: Redevelopment, database update and maintenance, web site maintenance

4. Identification of important sites vulnerable to climate change (AP 3.2, 7.4)

Climate change vulnerability is an important element of the assessment of the sufficiency of the international network of sites for the protection of migratory waterbirds. While the first edition of the AEWA International Site Review, as required by the AEWA Action Plan paragraph 7.4, submitted to MOP5 have assessed the protection and management status of the internationally important sites identified by the Critical Site Network Tool, the climate change vulnerability of the network has not been estimated. Such an assessment can be undertaken through a flyway-scale approach using the available CSN data and other existing information and overlaying spatial data to identify the vulnerability of individual sites. Despite some limitations, such an exercise will be a useful guidance on the priority sites for climate adaptation action.

Indicative budget: € 350,000
Duration: 3 years
Activities: Desk study

C. Management of Human Activities

5. Increase the knowledge on waterbird harvests in the Agreement area (AP 4.1, 5.7)

Waterbirds are harvested widely throughout the Agreement area for recreation, trade and livelihoods. Little is known of the scale of such harvesting, nor of the impacts that such harvesting has on waterbird populations. The development of a programme aiming at accurately evaluating the harvest of waterbirds at the scale of the AEWA range is a huge task that would require a consequent amount of financial resources and would also require setting up a mechanism for regular monitoring of waterbird harvest. It will be critical to work with and through organisations and networks which have involvement with this issue including Wetland International's Hunting Specialist Group and relevant representative organisations. It is therefore proposed to run a series of sub-regional projects, which amongst other things should:

- gather and analyse existing information on harvest data within the AEWA range;
- assess sustainability of the harvest according to the AEWA provisions;
- establish links with organisations gathering this type of information;
- suggest appropriate methodology; and
- convene working groups involving partners involved or interested in harvest monitoring and set up monitoring schemes.

Indicative budget: € 100,000 per sub-region
Duration: 1-2 years per sub-region
Activities: Reviews, research, survey, publications

6. Evaluation of socio-economic values of waterbirds (AP 4.2.2)

In line with the developments brought about through the process of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) process there is a need to evaluate the consumptive and non-consumptive use of waterbirds. These values have the potential to contribute substantially to sustainable rural development throughout the Agreement area. Yet very little is known of these values in different regions and their potential contribution to species and habitat conservation. Given the enormous scope of this work and the need for generating resource efficiency, it is proposed that this work is conducted through offering placements to students studying for masters or PhD degrees, supported by an active Technical Committee expert on rural development and economics. The results should be presented as case studies at appropriate workshops (e.g. IUGB, EAERE etc.) and published to advise future sustainable rural development initiatives. The work should be conducted in line with methodologies developed by the TEEB process and thus feed into policy decisions.

Indicative budget: €20,000 p/a
Duration: Ongoing
Activities: Research, socio-economic surveys, workshop, publication

D. RESEARCH AND MONITORING

INTEGRATED WATERBIRD MONITORING

7. International Waterbird Census – regional coordination and support surveys in developing countries(AP 5.2, 5.3, 7.4)

The International Waterbird Census, organised by Wetlands International, and conducted in most countries within the Agreement area, is one of the key tools for monitoring the conservation status of the populations covered by AEWA. It is based on annual non-breeding season surveys at a sample of sites, by an extensive network of, mainly, volunteer counters. Unfortunately, the financial and technical capacity to coordinate and to implement the national surveys is very unevenly distributed across the Agreement area. Experience shows that most developing countries in the Agreement area are not able to regularly cover the key sites without some basic support to cover travel costs. These constraints present a major limitation to understanding the conservation status of AEWA populations.

Indicative budget: €66,000 p.a. regional coordination + € 80,000 p.a. for January counts
Duration: Annual
Activities: Coordination, field surveys, publication of national totals annually

8. Special non-breeding waterbird counts (AP 5.2, 5.3, 7.4)

Although the International Waterbird Census can cover a significant proportion of the waterbird populations, the adequate monitoring of certain species would require special counts to cover their specific habitats which are usually not well covered during the regular IWC counts. These groups include geese and swans, seaducks, non-wetland waders and the poorly covered large tidal wetlands in Africa and South-west Asia.

Indicative budget: Goose and swan counts: € 50,000 p.a.
Seaduck counts: € 14,000 p.a. + € 85,000 p. 3 years to cover the Black Sea and Caspian Sea
Tidal wetlands in Africa and South-west Asia: € 93,000 p. 3 years
Non-wetland waders: € 10,000 p. 3 years
Duration: 3 years with annual activities
Activities: Coordination, field surveys, publication of results

9. Monitoring of colonial waterbirds (AP 3.1.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5)

A large proportion of the migratory water- and seabird species covered by the Agreement nest in colonies (particularly of the families: *Spheniscidae*, *Phaethontidae*, *Pelecanidae*, *Sulidae*, *Phalacrocoracidae*, *Fregatidae*, *Ardeidae*, *Ciconiidae*, *Threskiornithidae*, *Phoenicopteridae*, *Laridae*, *Sternidae*, *Alcidae*). Colonial waterbirds can be best monitored during the breeding season because a very significant proportion of the population of a species may be concentrating on a few localities at one time. In the meantime, many of these species are not adequately covered by the existing International Waterbird Census, which is based on non-breeding season surveys partly because they are widely distributed in areas that are difficult to access such as open sea. Good information about the colonies is also fundamental to identify and address factors that may threaten their populations. Although some national programmes already exist and even some international coordination takes place in certain subregions of the Agreement area, the Conservation Status Report has highlighted the need for more adequate international coordination of the monitoring of colonial water- and seabirds. Therefore, a desk study shall produce an overview of on-going initiatives, explore options, priorities and costing for coordinated international monitoring of colonial waterbirds during the breeding season.

Indicative budget: € 25,000 (monitoring study)
Duration: 2 years
Activities: Review, analysis, consultation, recommendations

10. Pilot demographic monitoring of waterbird populations (AP 3.1.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5)

Indicative budget: € 50,000
Duration: per year
Activities: Review, analysis, consultation, publication

RESEARCH

11. Survey work in poorly-known areas (AP 5.1)

Indicative budget: €50,000 p.a. (€ 2-10,000 per survey depending on location, size, accessibility)
Duration: Ongoing
Activities: Field survey, training, publication.

E. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

12. Improving survey and monitoring capacity for migratory waterbirds (AP 6.2)

Indicative budget: €40,000 p.a. for small grants to support national capacity building schemes
Duration: 5 years in total, 2-3 years per country, depending on the needs
Activities: Fieldwork, training, supply of equipment (first year)

13. Regional training programmes in Africa and Eurasia for implementation of the Agreement (AP 6.1, 6.2)

Indicative budget: € 175,000 per year, per regional programme
Duration: 5 years
Activities: Coordination, training courses, materials, follow-up

14. Training programme for National Implementation Agencies for AEWA in the Contracting Parties (AP 6.1, 6.2)

Indicative budget: €100,000 for training per workshop (two workshops in Africa and two in Eurasia)
Duration: 5 years
Activities: Coordination, training courses, materials, follow-up

15. Training course on the flyway approach to the conservation and wise use of waterbirds and wetlands (AP 6.1)

Indicative budget: € 35,000 per group (average)
Duration: 1 year
Activities: Training

16. Regional workshops for the promotion of the Agreement (AP 6.3)

Indicative budget: € 75,000 per regional workshop
Duration: 1 per year
Activities: Regional workshop and follow-up

17. Making guidance more accessible (AP 6.3)

Indicative budget: €5,000 per guidance document/language
Duration: ongoing
Activities: Translation and dissemination of documents