



16th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
25 - 29 January 2021, Virtual conference format

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN INITIATIVE

Introduction

This report covers the activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat regarding the coordination and implementation of the AEWA African Initiative (AI) and related AEWA Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) 2019-2027 for the period of December 2018 to December 2020.

Daily routine activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat which contribute towards the implementation of the African Initiative are not specifically mentioned in this report. Fundraising efforts relating to the AI and collaboration with partners are described in each relevant section below, rather than in separate sections.

1. Coordination of the AEWA African Initiative

1.1. AEWA African Initiative Unit

The AEWA African Initiative Unit based within the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat consists of one Associate Programme Officer (P-2 Officer) and one Programme Assistant (G5) and is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the AEWA African Initiative. As per Resolution 7.12, the AEWA core budget 2019-2021 allocates 50% of the funding required for both positions while an additional 50% (P-2) and 30% (G-5) are to be provided through voluntary financial contributions, in order to be able to maintain the two AI positions at the required minimum level of 100% full-time (P2) and 80% part-time (G5).

During the current reporting period, providing the two AI positions at this minimum operational level (i.e. 100% P2 and 80% G5) has, however, proved challenging, but was made possible thanks to the generous voluntary financial contributions received from the European Commission (in 2018 and 2020) and from the Governments of Luxembourg (in 2019), Germany (in 2019), Switzerland (in 2019) and United Kingdom (2019). These contributed to supplementing both positions up to the current level of functioning. In addition, a reversal of funding from the AEWA 2020 core travel budget line to the staff budget line for both AI positions, was approved by the AEWA Standing Committee in August 2020, as this was required to supplement both positions during that period. The Secretariat however still faced a funding gap for these positions and requires additional voluntary financial contributions in order maintained them at the current level of functioning for the year 2021. In this light, a funding pledge from the Government of the United Kingdom, is expected to contribute to alleviating the required funding gap for both positions in the period of 2021

1.2. Technical Support Unit

The Technical Support Unit (TSU), a multi-disciplinary team of experts offered by the Government of France, continues to provide technical support to the African Range States in various areas of

waterbird conservation. A video released by the TSU in 2019 entitled, “Waterbird Monitoring in Africa: The Chad Experience¹”, was promoted on the AEWA website. In June 2020, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat participated in the 4th Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the RESSOURCE Project. The project is a joint initiative of several institutions (including the TSU) and funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) and the European Union (EU) through the SWM Programme, among others and aims to improve the management of natural resources, especially waterbirds, in some major Sahelian wetlands in Africa (Chad, Egypt, Mali, Senegal and Sudan). Section 2.6 of the current report details some follow-up actions related to this PSC meeting.

1.3. Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators

Based on the revised Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the AEWA Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators (SRFPCs) in Africa², adopted through Resolution 7.1, new SRFPCs have been confirmed and are in place for four of the five sub-regions in Africa since MOP7 (i.e. Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa). As per the revised ToRs, the nominated AEWA Standing Committee (StC) regional representatives for these four regions by default assumed the role of SRFPC. For the Central African sub-region which has no National Focal Point (NFP) representative on the AEWA Standing Committee, the Secretariat has been in close contact with the NFPs sub-region to guide and facilitate the process of nominating a SRFPC. Feedback is still awaited from the sub-region in this regard.

2. Implementation of the AEWA African Initiative and Plan of Action for Africa

2.1. Reporting on the implementation of the AEWA PoAA 2019-2027

Resolution 7.1 of MOP7 instructed the Standing Committee, working with the Technical Committee and the Secretariat, to establish a module on the implementation of the AEWA PoAA 2019-2027 in the national report format and to integrate the module in time for the reporting cycle to MOP8. The draft template for the AEWA PoAA reporting module for the period of 2019-2020 (for the purpose of reporting to MOP8) was prepared by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. It was then reviewed by the AEWA Technical Committee in September 2020, as well as by the AEWA Standing Committee in October 2020, with the latter approving the development of the online PoAA module for reporting to AEWA MOP8 based on the approved PoAA reporting template. The online module was developed rolled out in December 2020 for the purpose of reporting MOP8.

2.2. Species conservation and monitoring

In the framework of a project funded under the European Commission (EC) Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Thematic Programme Cooperation Agreement with UNEP (valid for the period of 2015-2020 and recently extended to 2021), the Secretariat, in collaboration with BirdLife South Africa and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), has been conducting activities to promote Community-based conservation and sustainable use of the Berga wetland in Ethiopia as well as its designation as a Protected Area under national legislation. To this end, a site visit and meetings with community leaders and stakeholders took place in September 2019 with the outcomes discussed and reviewed in the framework of the 3rd Meeting of the AEWA White-winged Flufftail International Working Group (IWG) which took place in November 2019 in Dullstroom, South Africa. A supplementary assessment of the upper Berga Floodplain as recommended by the IWG, permitted the development of a draft Community Based Management Framework Document, with input from key partners. It aims to guide the sustainable use and management of the Upper Berga

¹ <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/new-film-waterbird-monitoring-africa-chad-experience>

² AEWA SRFPCs: http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/activities/african_initiative/poa_for_africa_ai/srfp_coordinators

Floodplain with the involvement of the local communities, while contributing to safeguarding the site as a suitable breeding habitat for the White-winged Flufftail. Furthermore, activities aimed at promoting the designation of the Berga Wetland as a Protected Area under were initiated by EWCA in March 2020 but met with limited progress due to the COVID-19 related restrictions.

Also under the EC GPGC funding 2015-2021 project and with co-funding by the Uganda Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, in collaboration with the African Crane Conservation Programme (ACCP), organized the first Meeting of the AEWA International Working Group for the Grey Crowned-crane (GCC IWG), from 24 to 26 July 2019 in Entebbe, Uganda. The meeting brought together governmental representatives and experts from the ten principal range states for the species as well as other key partners. It resulted in a draft implementation plan covering the period up to 2022, with specific national activities complementing wider regional and international tasks³.

In the framework of a recently approved EC-GPGC funded project for the period of 2020-2023, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has initiated activities to organise the first meeting of the AEWA Slaty Egret International Working Group, which is scheduled to take place in end 2021. The Government of Botswana (working in close collaboration with BirdLife Botswana), has confirmed hosting of this meeting. The Slaty Egret IWG meeting will be accompanied by two seed-grant funded projects aimed at implementing the Slaty Egret International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) in key range states.

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been collaborating with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) in the framework of their Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI), to support the transfer of knowledge and expertise to local experts in Senegal and Mauritania on satellite tagging and ringing of Lesser Flamingos, and subsequent monitoring of their spatial and temporal distribution in breeding and non-breeding sites. The project is being implemented in collaboration with Senegal's Directorate of National Parks (DPN) and the French-based research institute Tour du Valat. Under this project, four satellite transmitters have been acquired. Meanwhile, the theoretical training and field expedition for capturing and tagging of the birds which was initially scheduled for December 2020 has been rescheduled for February 2021, due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

2.3. Operation of the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF)

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat monitored and provided guidance towards the implementation of the last ongoing SGF projects from the 2014 and 2015 project cycles, as well as provided support towards all required administrative and technical processes. In 2019, three SGF projects from the 2015 cycle were completed (in Kenya⁴, Nigeria and Zimbabwe) as well as one from the 2014 project cycle (in Côte d'Ivoire). At the end of 2018, the 2015 cycle project from Mauritania⁵ was completed, thus bringing a successful completion to all AEWA SGF projects.

With no funding earmarked in the AEWA Core Budget towards SGF projects since 2016 and no voluntary contributions received to this end, no additional SGF project cycle have been operated by the Secretariat during the current reporting period.

2.4. Expanding membership to AEWA in Africa

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continued to promote the accession of new Contracting Parties, with a focus on the Central and Southern African regions, as well as on Portuguese-speaking African countries, where major gaps in membership to AEWA in Africa have been identified.

³ <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/further-progress-made-planning-conservation-action-grey-crowned-crane>

⁴ <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-sgf-contributes-increased-capacity-conservation-rift-valley-lakes-kenya>

⁵ AEWA SGF – Mauritania: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/capacity-waterbird-monitoring-reinforced-mauritania>

During the current reporting period, Central African Republic joined AEWA on 1 January 2019⁶ while Malawi became Party no. 80 to AEWA on 1 September 2019⁷.

The Secretariat worked closely with other non-Party African Range States to support and facilitate accession, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Zambia, while significant progress registered in the following:

- **Cameroon:** where the decree on accession was signed by the President in July 2019 and the instrument of accession deposited for his signature in November 2019;
- **Angola:** where the request for accession to AEWA was submitted to the National Assembly in October 2019.

2.5. Capacity-Building and CEPA in Africa

Training

Target 5.3.c of the PoAA recommends to “organise and deliver appropriate training of trainers at the regional or flyway level, making use of existing and adaptable tools”. In this regard, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat organized a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on flyway conservation, jointly with the Directorate General of Water, Forests and Hunting (DGEFC) of Benin, and in cooperation with the Ramsar Secretariat and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI). The training took place from 6 to 10 May 2019 in Benin. It was made possible thanks to financial and in-kind support from the EC GPGC, the WSFI and the Government of Benin⁸.

Forty-four technical experts were trained from 18 Francophone West and Central Africa range states as well as from four relevant regional wildlife-related training institutions in these countries. The main training tool was the Flyway Training Kit (FTK) developed under the UNEP/GEF African-Eurasian Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Flyway Project, complemented by the toolkit on bird identification and counting developed by the French National Agency for Hunting and Wildlife (ONCFS). During the training, each participating country developed project concepts for the future design and delivery of national courses on flyway conservation, as a basis for fundraising in this regard. Based on these, seven countries have designed and organized follow-up national training courses, one of which benefited from financial and in-kind support from the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative. Meanwhile other countries have conducted report-back information sessions, awareness-raising campaigns, field activities or incorporated flyway conservation in educational curricula.

In the framework of the 2020-2023 EC GPGC project, the AEWA Secretariat has initiated preparations for a similar flyway ToT course, targeting experts from the African Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Madagascar and scheduled for the second quarter of 2022. Under the same project, the Secretariat will deliver dedicated training on National Reporting for some African Contracting Parties in 2023, in view of reporting to AEWA MOP9.

Communication

In response to the request from the African Contracting Parties for a professional and vibrant layout for the Plan of Action for Africa in order to make it appealing and user-friendly for the wide range of stakeholders involved in its implementation, the Secretariat produced a new [layout⁹ for the PoAA 2019-2027](#), which was published in June 2020. A generous financial contribution was received from

⁶ Accession of Central African Republic to AEWA: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/central-african-republic-accedes-aewa-party-no-78>

⁷ Accession of Malawi to AEWA: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/malawi-%E2%80%93-party-no-80-aewa>

⁸ AEWA flyway ToT workshop, Benin: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/training-trainers-flyway-conservation>

⁹ New PoAA layout: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/fresh-layout-aewa-plan-action-africa>

the government of Germany in November 2020 to support printing of this document, which is currently underway.

Furthermore, to better communicate to the wide range of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the AEWA African Initiative, the content and layout of the [AEWA African Initiative web pages](#)¹⁰ were updated in July 2020.

Public awareness

The AEWA Executive Secretary and the Coordinator for the AEWA African Initiative (AI Coordinator), took part in a Webinar organized by BirdLife International to commemorate World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2020 along the East Atlantic Flyway. The Webinar, entitled “[Birds connect people along the East Atlantic Flyway](#)”¹¹ brought together a number of national BirdLife partners from across the flyway, and attracted over 100 participants.

Also, in relation to the 2020 WMBD celebration, the AI Coordinator attended a Webinar organised by the Association “Les Amies des Oiseaux” in Tunisia, in collaboration with the Forestry Department, which permitted sharing information on the country’s achievements in relation to the conservation of critical sites for migratory waterbirds for the benefit of a wide range of participants.

2.6. Partnership

In November 2019, the AWEA AI Coordinator participated at the CMS African Pre-COP13 session which took place in Bonn, Germany. During the Pre-COP13, side meetings were held with African representatives to discuss various AEWA-related issues and promote accession in the case of non-Party range states, e.g. Angola, Benin, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. This also served as an opportunity to distribute AEWA MOP8 proceedings to these countries.

In December 2019, the AEWA AI Coordinator represented the Secretariat at workshop aimed at developing an application to be submitted to the International Climate Initiative (IKI) for a project entitled “Climate Resilience for Critical Sites for Migratory Birds and People along the East Atlantic Flyway” (in short, “Climate Resilient East Atlantic Flyway”). The workshop was organized by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, in collaboration with Vogelbescherming (the Dutch BirdLife Partner). The AEWA Secretariat was retained as a key political project partner, taking into account its unique intergovernmental framework and mandate for migratory waterbird conservation as well as its established network of Focal Points, experts and partners in the flyway. Delivering priorities of the AEWA PoAA in the framework of such a project were prioritised, with emphasis on providing support to key African countries along the East Atlantic Flyway. In December 2020, the project outline was selected by IKI for the second phase of the concept development.

In January 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator participated at the 8th Programme Steering Committee Meeting for the EC GPGC/ENRTP¹² corporation agreements with UNEP. This resulted in the formal confirmation of funding for the AEWA GPGC funded project which will span over the period of 2020-2023 and includes capacity building activities (training on National Reporting and SIDS flyway ToT course) and species conservation activities (supporting the implementation of the Slaty Egret and Northern Bald Ibis ISSAPs).

¹⁰ Updated AEWA African Initiative web pages: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/activities/africaninitiative>

¹¹ WMBD webinar: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/east-atlantic-flyway-webinar-held-mark-world-migratory-bird-day>

¹² Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy

In June 2020, the AEWA Executive Secretary and AI Coordinator participated at the virtual 4th Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for the RESSOURCE Project. This permitted taking stock of the project outputs and planning activities for the rest of the project implementation, which had been extended up to December 2021. In follow up from the PSC meeting, the AI Coordinator attended a July 2020 briefing session on an information service portal developed for the Senegal River Delta waterbird observatory. The tool combines various data types and sources (e.g. from waterbird monitoring, global observatory systems, land use and land allocation in wetlands, etc.) from different institutions which agree to bring the data together for common/shared goals. Recommendations were provided to make the data available to a wider range of stakeholders as well as consider input/sharing of data with existing waterbird-related data portals such as the Critical Sites Network Tool and Globe Wetlands Africa Toolbox. Also, in follow-up to the PSC meeting, input was provided for the further development of the compliance-related component of the RESSOURCE project, to better reflect AEWA-related compliance indicators aimed at assessing compliance at national level.

In November 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator undertook an interview in view of contributing towards the development and organisation of an [online training course on Multilateral Environmental Agreements](#). This was organized by the UNEP Law Division team at the Centre for Governance and Sustainability of the University of Massachusetts Boston. In December 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator also attended one of the online MEA course sessions, partaking in a panel discussion with representatives from some MEA Secretariats, to respond to questions from the course participants.