



**8<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES**  
26-30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary

*“Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World”*

**REPORT OF THE 8<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES (MOP8)  
TO THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRD AGREEMENT (AEWA),  
26–30 SEPTEMBER 2022, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY**

**PLENARY**  
**27 SEPTEMBER 2022 (09:00h to 16:30h)**

**Agenda item 1. Opening of the Meeting**

1. **Ms Flora Mokgohloa, South Africa, Chair of MOP7 (Durban, South Africa, 2018)** acted as Chair until the Chair and Vice-Chair of MOP8 had been elected. She congratulated the Government of Hungary for hosting MOP8 and recalled the 14 Resolutions that had been approved at MOP7 under the theme *Beyond 2020: Shaping flyway conservation for the future beyond 2020*, including adoption and implementation of the 2019-2027 AEWA Strategic Plan and the Plan of Action for Africa. She highlighted efforts being made by South Africa and Ethiopia to conserve the Critically Endangered White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*), as well as the partnership between AEWA and the Benguela Current Convention.

2. **Dr Zsolt Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary**, expressed delight in hosting AEWA MOP8, noting that the conservation of waterbirds was a priority for Hungary. He referred to the historical role of Hungary in conserving the last-remaining population of Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*) in Europe and noted that this species had since become a symbol of nature conservation in Hungary. He also highlighted the creation in 2021 of the Mura-Dráva-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, covering almost one million hectares, by Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia. Migratory waterbirds faced significant threats, and the availability of protected undisturbed areas along their flyways was our common responsibility.

3. **Ms Amy Fraenkel, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)** noted that AEWA’s policy and technical work contributed to the implementation of CMS, as well as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). She highlighted the many areas of cooperation between AEWA and CMS, including on lead poisoning and avian influenza, and in delivery of successful World Migratory Bird Day campaigns. At a practical level, AEWA and CMS had invested in a joint communications unit, amongst other areas of synergy.

4. **Ms Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme**, in a video message, praised AEWA’s strong track record of conserving wetlands and habitats, highlighting the need to address flyway conservation from the Arctic to South Africa, and underlining the importance of the ecosystem approach to conservation. AEWA had an important role to play in addressing the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.

5. **Dr Jacques Trouvilliez, Executive Secretary of AEWA**, thanked the Government of Hungary for hosting MOP8, in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He also thanked

members of the AEWA Standing Committee (StC) for supporting and guiding the Secretariat in preparing the meeting. He emphasised that whilst implementation of AEWA contributed significantly to meeting key priorities under other MEAs, including the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, additional resources were required to support implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and Plan of Action for Africa. The Secretariat could only work efficiently if states cooperated and if civil society understood the challenges, so communication was essential. The condensed format of MOP8 would bring additional challenges but enthusiasm and commitment would ensure adoption of a strong set of Resolutions at the conclusion of the meeting.

6. The **Chair** thanked all speakers for their opening remarks, following which a video showcasing Common Cranes (*Grus grus*) in Hungary was screened.

## **Agenda item 2. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure**

7. The **Chair** referred the meeting to Document AEWA/MOP 8.2 *Rules of Procedure* and opened the floor to comments or proposed amendments.

8. There being no such requests from the floor, the **MOP** adopted the Rules of Procedure without amendment.

## **Agenda item 3. Election of Officers**

9. **South Africa, as Chair of MOP7**, recalled that, in accordance with Rule 21 of the Rules of Procedure, a Chair and one or more Vice-Chairs of MOP8 were to be elected. She noted that the **Bureau of MOP8** had proposed Hungary as Chair. She opened the floor for possible additional nominations, but none was proposed.

10. The **MOP** elected by acclamation Hungary as Chair.

11. Taking his place on the podium, the **representative of Hungary, Mr Levente Kőrösi, Ministry of Agriculture**, thanked the meeting for electing Hungary as Chair of MOP8. He paid tribute to the work of Mr Zoltán Czirák, former AEWA National Focal Point of Hungary, who had sadly passed away in March 2021, and who had been deeply involved in preparation of the present meeting.

12. The Chair noted that the **Bureau of MOP8** had proposed South Africa as Vice-Chair. He opened the floor for possible additional nominations, but none was proposed.

13. The **MOP** elected by acclamation South Africa as Vice-Chair.

## **Agenda item 4. Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme**

14. The **Chair** referred participants to Documents AEWA/MOP 8.3 *Provisional Agenda* and AEWA/MOP 8.4 Rev.2 *Provisional Annotated Agenda and Meeting Schedule*. He opened the floor to comments and proposed amendments on the Provisional Agenda and invited participants to indicate if they wished to raise any matters under agenda item 34. Any Other Business.

15. **BirdLife International** indicated its wish to present an update to the MOP on the findings of the latest State of the World's Birds report.

16. The **MOP** adopted the Provisional Agenda contained in Document AEWA/MOP 8.3 and took note of the request of BirdLife International.

17. The **Secretariat** (Sergey Dereliev, Head of Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit) presented further details of the proposed MOP8 schedule, which included a dedicated day of side events, and the in-session document workflow.

#### **Agenda item 5. Establishment of Credentials Committee and Sessional Committees**

18. The **Chair** recalled that establishment of a Credentials Committee was a requirement of Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure. He invited nominations from the floor and noted that the work of the Committee would be supported by the Secretariat.

19. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, nominated the Czech Republic and France as members of the Credentials Committee, whilst **Eswatini, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group**, nominated Madagascar, Morocco and Zimbabwe. No other nominations were submitted.

20. The **MOP** approved by consensus the establishment of a Credentials Committee composed of the Czech Republic, France, Madagascar, Morocco and Zimbabwe, supported by the Secretariat.

21. The **Chair** recalled that it was usual AEWA MOP practice to establish two Sessional Working Groups: one (WG1) dealing with Scientific and Technical matters; the other (WG2) dealing with Financial and Administrative matters. He proposed to establish such Working Groups at this 8<sup>th</sup> session of the MOP.

22. The **MOP** approved establishment of the two Working Groups.

23. The **MOP** elected the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the two Working Groups as follows: Chair of the Working Group on Financial and Administrative matters – United Kingdom, represented by Mr Simon Mackown, with Uganda serving as Vice-Chair; Chair of the Working Group on Scientific and Technical matters – Hungary, represented by Mr Andras Schmidt, with Egypt serving as Vice-Chair. These Parties had previously indicated to the Bureau of MOP8 their interest in serving. No other nominations had been received.

#### **Agenda item 6. Admission of Observers**

24. The **Chair** introduced Document AEWA/MOP 8.5 *Admission of Observers*. This listed non-Party Range States, Intergovernmental Organisations, International NGOs, National NGOs and Other Observers. He invited interventions from the floor.

25. There being no such interventions, and in accordance with Rules 6 & 7 of the Rules of Procedure, the **MOP** decided by consensus to admit as Observers all those countries and organisations listed in document AEWA/MOP 8.5.

#### **Agenda item 7. Opening Statements**

26. The **Chair** noted that written opening statements from Contracting Parties, non-Party Range States, intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations would be posted on the MOP8 webpage and also appear in the proceedings of the meeting.

27. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“First of all, we would like to welcome the accession to the Agreement by the Republic of Cameroon and the announcement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the intention to join

the Agreement. We would like to thank the Government of Hungary for its generosity and hospitality in hosting this meeting and for the very warm welcome we have all received from the local authorities and the people of the beautiful city of Budapest. At the same time, we would like to express our thanks and congratulations to the Secretariat, the Technical Committee and the Standing Committee for their excellent work on preparation of this meeting.

We are meeting in a difficult time - the COVID pandemic has affected our entire planet, affecting not only individual regions and countries, but also the lives of each one of us. We are witnessing that globalisation can also bring challenges. On the other hand, it has become clear that international cooperation is crucial for solving crisis situations in various areas of human activity. We continue to believe that international cooperation is also crucial for nature conservation, including the protection of habitats, species and entire ecosystems. The protection of nature and natural resources should be an inherent part of state policy, it should be a regular part of education and a regular part of people's lives, not some superstructure that only comes into play in a crisis.

For the protection of waterbirds, which are the subject of the AEWA agreement, the conservation of their habitats - i.e. wetlands - is essential. Unfortunately, we see continuation of negative trends in many areas, wetlands are still decreasing, and the global state of biodiversity is deteriorating. The representatives of the EU Member States present in this meeting are committed to ensure the future of migratory waterbirds, a group of animals whose existence is directly dependent on international cooperation. Waterbirds are an integral part of the planet's biodiversity; their migration routes connect our countries and remind us of our shared responsibilities.

Let's use this week to discuss and approve measures that will help. We as the EU Member States commit ourselves to a constructive discussion this week that will help to ensure the future of waterbirds, their conservation and sustainable use.”

**28. Eswatini, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group**, made the following statement:

“Africa congratulates the Government of Hungary and its people for their hospitality and hosting of MOP8 and appreciates South Africa for successfully hosting MOP7 in 2018. As a region, Africa looks forward to working closely with the government of Hungary as the host and President of AEWA MOP8; and recognises with appreciation the intersessional work of the AEWA Standing Committee, Technical Committee and Secretariat in preparation for this meeting.

The Contracting Parties are meeting at MOP8 under a clearly thought out and timely theme: *strengthening flyway conservation in a changing world*. In the next four days of the meeting, Contracting Parties from the African region will be collectively and individually making recommendations for the consideration of the MOP, based on what they consider would be the best approaches to ensuring that the integrity of habitats and flyways is protected for AEWA species and their conservation strengthened. Achieving this end requires collective and individual efforts by the Contracting Parties.

Africa recognises the significance of AEWA and its contribution in the conservation and protection of migratory waterbirds and their habitats, especially those of global concern. Furthermore, the cooperation and partnership between Contracting Parties and regions, with the support of the AEWA Secretariat, has proven to be effective, though in need of strengthening and enhancement. Africa also appreciates the support and contribution of Non-

Governmental Organisations and Partners in advancing the objectives and implementation of AEWA.

It is of the utmost importance that all Contracting Parties are able to effectively implement the Agreement and its related activities at the national level. Africa therefore reiterates the need for mobilisation of adequate financial resources for this purpose, as agreed in the previous MOPs. We note with concern that a substantial gap still exists in financing the activities of the Agreement.

Africa and other regions are aware of the economic situations facing both developed and developing countries, particularly as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. However, the implementation of this Agreement can be made more effective through the provision of assistance to some Range States for training and capacity building, improved partnership, implementation, research and monitoring of migratory waterbird species and their habitats, for the protection and management of those habitats as well as for the establishment or improvement of scientific and administrative institutions for the implementation of this Agreement. We also acknowledge the role of the core budget as being a critical component for promoting the overall implementation of the Agreement. To this end, Africa considers it crucial that the core budget make appropriate provision for implementation support – including by ensuring that the AEWA Secretariat is adequately capacitated to support implementation efforts of the Contracting Parties.

Recognising the importance of the Secretariat in focusing on priorities and raising funds, and on actively supporting efforts to mobilise financial resources in support of the successful implementation of the Agreement, Africa is of the view that the Secretariat should be actively involved in fundraising activities, with dedicated staff within the Secretariat to perform this function. We therefore:

- Request the Executive Secretary to prioritise fundraising activities to mobilise funding to enable especially the developing country Parties, the majority of which are from Africa, to implement the Agreement at the national level, and to identify potential partnerships that will contribute to the implementation of the Agreement at the national level, and to make this information available to Parties, including the amount of funds that were raised and the mechanisms for accessing such funding;
- Further request the Executive Secretary to strengthen synergies with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements such as the CBD, Ramsar Convention and UNFCCC with a view to enhance sharing of technical and financial resources to implement the Agreement, thereby avoiding duplication of effort and increasing visibility and recognition of the Agreement;
- Encourage developed Contracting Parties and other Parties in a position to do so, and invite other governments, financial institutions and other partners to increase their contributions to financing the implementation of the activities of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027 at the national level by developing countries, including by building capacity to enhance implementation.

Contracting Parties from the African region encourage Parties to consider incorporating their AEWA priority activities into their revised/updated national biodiversity strategies and action plans as part of the process to facilitate obtaining financial support through available global financing mechanisms.

The Contracting Parties from the African region are committed to enhanced implementation of the AEWA Agreement and look forward to the leadership of the Government of Hungary

and active participation of the delegations present for a very successful 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties.”

29. **Ukraine** made the following statement:

“Thank you for giving me an opportunity to address you at this Meeting of the Parties to AEWA. Today there is ongoing full-scale unprovoked and unjustified war launched by Russia against Ukraine. As it has been repeatedly stated, Russia’s ongoing attack on Ukraine is also an attack on the environment. As a result of the foreign invasion, our natural heritage is being progressively damaged. Russia continues destroying natural habitats – the source of biodiversity despite its membership in the Convention on Biological Diversity and other biodiversity related international treaties. It will take many years to restore them, including for rare and endangered species.

As of today, more than half of the Ramsar sites in Ukraine have been affected by the hostilities committed by the Russian armed force, including the sites located at the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov as well as lower parts of the Dnipro and Danube rivers. More than 20 nature and biosphere reserves and national parks have suffered losses due to the Russian aggression. Ramsar sites are well known places that supports quite a number of waterbird species.

As per estimations, territory of about 900 protected area objects with an area of more than 1 million hectares has been affected due to war. 200 Emerald Network sites in Ukraine with an area of 2.9 million hectares, established according to the Bern Convention, and which provide important habitats for waterbirds have also been suffered from or threatened by the war. This ongoing war on the European Continent poses an existential threat to the world and brings unprecedented and long-lasting challenges to the environment and human habitat.

In accordance with the UN GA Resolution "Aggression against Ukraine" adopted by the UN member-states, our delegation calls for the continuation of our joint efforts with a view to putting an end to this aggression so that the whole world could feel safer, and that wildlife and waterbirds could be better preserved for us and for future generations.

Despite the war, Ukraine continues to be committed to implement AEWA and other biodiversity related international treaties.”

30. The **Chair** noted that requests to make short statements had been received from two observer non-Party Range States, Cameroon (which had recently acceded to AEWA, so that the Agreement would be entering into force on 1 October 2022, immediately after the closure of MOP8) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

31. **His Excellency Mr Jules Doret Ndong, Minister of Forestry and Wildlife of Cameroon (Cameroon)** expressed his sincere gratitude for admitting Cameroon as a Contracting Party of AEWA. The process of accession was the result of hard work by many actors. Cameroon had a large network of protected areas, and 64 sites where waterbirds were monitored; birds were an excellent indicator for the health of the environment and also an important resource for tourism in Cameroon. AEWA offered Cameroon an opportunity to improve the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the country.

32. **Mohammed Shobrak, representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** updated the MOP concerning the Kingdom’s forthcoming accession to AEWA. The Wildlife Authority in Saudi Arabia already worked closely with the AEWA Secretariat on the conservation of AEWA species, and approval of the Agreement was already in place for imminent accession. Hunting legislation was

implemented to a high standard, with a unique hunting bag system. Legislation had resulted in a no hunting zone along the entire coastline, extending to 20 km inland. Saudi Arabia had an extensive and expanding network of protected areas, including Marine Protected Areas, and aimed to mitigate threats to AEWA species, including through minimising the impact of power lines.

## **Agenda item 9. Reports**

### **a. Standing Committee**

33. The **Chair of the Standing Committee, United Kingdom**, represented by Mr Simon Mackown, presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.6 *Report of the Standing Committee*.

34. The **MOP** took note of the report; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

### **b. Technical Committee**

35. The **Chair of the Technical Committee**, Dr Ruth Cromie, presented Document UNEP/AEWA/MOP 8.7 *Report of the Technical Committee* which outlined the Committee's activities in the triennium since MOP 7.

36. The **MOP** took note of the report; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

37. The **Chair** thanked Dr Cromie, as the outgoing Chair of TC, for her effective and fruitful work.

### **c. Depositary**

38. **The Netherlands**, represented by the AEWA Focal Point, Mr Nick Warmelink, introduced Document UNEP/AEWA/MOP 8.8 *Report of the Depositary*.

39. The **MOP** took note of the report; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

### **d. Secretariat**

40. The **Executive Secretary** (Dr Jacques Trouvilliez) presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.9 *Report of the Secretariat*.

41. The **MOP** took note of the report; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

### **e. UNEP**

42. **The Chair** referred participants to Document AEWA/MOP 8.10 *Report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of Parties* and informed the meeting that this report would not be presented orally.

43. The **MOP** took note of the written report; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

## **Agenda item 10. Report on the Implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019 – 2027**

44. On behalf of the **Standing Committee**, the **Secretariat** (Mr Sergey Dereliev, Head of Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit) presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.11 *Progress of Implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027*.

45. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following

statement:

“The EU and its Member States take note of the report and support the adoption of the relevant parts of the resolution. Considering the important implementation gap and limited progress in achieving the targets of the Strategic Plan, the EU and its Member States strongly support the recommendations on advancing the implementation of the Strategic Plan, contained in the *Progress report on the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.11)*.

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the relevant part of the Draft Resolution and propose to include a reference to the conclusions and recommendations of Document AEWA/MOP 8.11 in the relevant part of the Resolution 8.3.”

46. There being no further comments or questions from the floor, the **MOP** took note of the document and presentation.

#### **Agenda item 11. Report on the Implementation of the African Initiative and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019 – 2027**

47. The **Secretariat** (Ms Evelyn Moloko, Coordinator for the African Initiative) presented an update on implementation of the *AEWA African Initiative and AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027*.

48. **Ms Clémence Deschamps, Project Leader, Technical Support Unit (TSU) of the AEWA African Initiative** presented complementary information on the work of the TSU, which is based at Tour du Valat, France, and supported by the Ministry of Ecological Transition, France.

49. The **MOP** took note of the document and presentations; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

#### **Agenda item 12. Analysis and Synthesis of National Reports**

50. **Ms Aude Caromel, Programme Officer, Species Programme, UNEP-WCMC**, presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.13 *Analysis of the AEWA National Reports for the triennium 2018-2020*.

51. It was noted by the **Chair** that Document AEWA/MOP 8.14 *Draft Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024* would be considered by the Scientific and Technical Working Group.

52. The **MOP** took note of the analysis; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

#### **Agenda item 13. Analysis and Synthesis of the reports on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA)**

53. **Ms. Ciara Safford, Programme Officer, Species Programme, UNEP-WCMC**, presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.15 *Analysis of the National Reports on the Implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for African for the Period 2019-2020*.

54. It was noted by the **Chair** that Document AEWA/MOP 8.16 *Draft Format for National Reporting Module on the Implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2021-2024* would be considered by the Scientific and Technical Working Group.

55. The **MOP** took note of the analysis; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

#### **Agenda item 14. Report on Communications**

56. **Mr Aydin Bahramlouian, Coordinator, Joint CMS/AEWA Information Management, Communication and Awareness-raising (IMCA) Unit**, presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.18 *Report on the Joint CMS/AEWA Information Management, Communication and Awareness-raising Unit*.

57. **Mr Florian Keil, Information Officer, IMCA Unit**, presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.17 *Report on the Implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy*.

58. The **MOP** took note of both documents and presentations; there were no questions or comments from the floor.

#### **Agenda item 15. Conservation Status Report, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (CSR8)**

59. **Dr Szabolcs Nagy, Wetlands International, lead compiler of the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Conservation Status Report (CSR8)** presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.19 *Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area - 8<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

60. **Dr Nagy** closed by drawing the attention of the meeting to the attractively presented summary of CSR8 that had been included in the MOP8 delegate registration pack.

61. The **Chair** invited comments or questions from the floor.

62. **Mauritius** noted that CSR8 highlighted implementation gaps in East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands and wished to record its thanks to the Secretariat for supporting the organisation of a capacity building workshop to be held in the region in February 2023. This would enable the ‘training of trainers’ on the topic of flyway conservation, focusing on Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles, and hosted by the Government of Mauritius. It was anticipated that the workshop would significantly enhance capacity of the technical network for AEWA implementation across the Indian Ocean islands.

63. The **MOP** took note of the document and presentation.

#### **Agenda item 16. Implementation Review Process (IRP)**

64. The **Secretariat** (Mr Sergey Dereliev, Head of Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit) presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.20 *Report on the Implementation Review Process to the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties*.

65. In addition to the information presented in the document, **Mr Dereliev** noted that the AEWA Secretariat had recently undertaken a joint on-the-spot appraisal mission to Albania, together with the Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats. Two other case files for which missions were being planned included those for Kenya and Tunisia. The Government of Portugal had declined to engage with the StC with regard to the case file on the airport development in the Tagus Estuary. He highlighted the very limited capacity of the Secretariat to support the StC sufficiently with regard to the IRP but noted that one of the budget scenarios for the forthcoming triennium included provision for a Compliance Officer position that would fill this capacity gap.

66. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments and questions.

67. **Germany** underlined that it had drawn to the attention of the Secretariat, more than a year previously, that Germany took the case file relating to Bewick's Swan very seriously and had already invested some EUR 1.8 million in a corresponding project, with the close involvement of NABU, one of the most important German NGOs for bird and nature conservation. This would ensure an independent contribution to the further assessment of the case. Further information was available via the following website:

<https://biologischevielfalt.bfn.de/bundesprogramm/projekte/projektbeschreibungen/zwergschwan.html>

68. **France** thanked the Secretariat for the efforts made for the translation of documents. Nevertheless, contrary to the Rules of Procedure, one-third of documents had unfortunately not yet been translated into French. In the view of France this was prejudicial to the work of the MOP. France also wished to provide information on the IRP case file relating to a proposed windfarm in Arjuzanx. There was no longer an active proposal of this nature. Furthermore, France was pleased to inform Parties of the establishment of the réserve nationale d'Arjuzanx, which would enable strengthened protection of the site, especially with regard to the wintering population of Common Crane.

69. With regard to translation, the **Executive Secretary** noted that for more than ten years AEWA had experienced a zero-growth budget evolution. This had required reductions in a number of items of expenditure, including translation services. Additional support for MOP8 had enabled the Secretariat to translate as much as possible but did not cover the costs of translating all documents, as required under the Rules of Procedure. He offered to work alongside the Government of France with the aim of securing the funding required for this situation to improve.

70. The **MOP** took note of the document and presentation.

## **Agenda item 28. Institutional Arrangements**

### **a. Standing Committee**

71. The **Executive Secretary** briefly introduced Draft Resolution 8.10 *Institutional Arrangements: Standing Committee* including the current composition of the StC and recalled that nominations for membership of the StC during the 2023–2025 triennium would be requested during the plenary discussion of Draft Resolution 8.10 on 30 September, and that the respective sub-regions should consult on their representatives for the next triennium.

72. The **Chair** noted that detailed discussion of this item should take place in the Financial and Administrative Working Group but that the floor was open for general comments. In the absence of any such comments, the information provided by the Executive Secretary was noted.

## **Agenda item 29. Financial and Administrative Matters**

### **a. Report of the Secretariat on Finance and Administrative Issues in 2019-2022 (Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.38 Rev.1)**

73. The **Executive Secretary** presented Document AEWA/MOP 8.38 Rev.1 *Report of the Secretariat on Finance and Administrative Issues in 2019-2022*. He concluded by thanking the eight Parties and one NGO that had contributed additional voluntary contributions for general activities, specifically Croatia, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the Hellenic Ornithological Society.

**b. Draft budget proposal and Secretariat’s Programme of Work for the 2023-2025 triennium**

74. The **Executive Secretary** presented Document AEW/MOP 8.39 Corr.1 *Draft Budget Proposal and Secretariat’s Programme of Work for the 2023-2025 Triennium*. He summarised each of the four potential budget scenarios contained in the document. In brief, these could be characterised as:

- Scenario 1 – zero nominal growth
- Scenario 2 – zero real growth
- Scenario 3 – applying the UN rules and securing the African Officer position
- Scenario 4 – providing the Secretariat with the resources required to fulfil its mandate

75. The **Executive Secretary** further noted that the document set out the method of calculation of Parties’ contributions and showed exactly what these would be under each scenario. In addition, the document linked the budget clearly with the draft Programme of Work of the Secretariat for 2023–2025.

76. There being no questions or comments from the floor, the **MOP** took note of the document and presentation.

77. The **Chair** confirmed that the plenary would adjourn until the morning of Friday 30 September. Following a break, the two established sessional committees – the Finance & Administration Working Group and the Scientific & Technical Working Group – would convene for their first sessions from 16:30 to 18:00. The Working Groups would continue their business on Wednesday 28 September during the entire day, concluding by 18:00, or deciding to continue to work without interpretation beyond that time.

<p><b>WORKING GROUP 1 ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL MATTERS</b> <b>27 SEPTEMBER 2022 (16:30h to 18:00h) &amp; 28 SEPTEMBER 2022 (09:00h to 18:00h)</b></p>
--

78. The Working Group met from 16:30 to 18:00 on 27 September and between 09:00 and 18:00 on 28 September. It was chaired by Hungary, represented by Mr Andras Schmidt, with Egypt serving as Vice-Chair, and was supported by Secretariat staff.

**AEWA MOP8 DR.1 Procedure for Submission of Proposals for Amendments to the Agreement**

79. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

80. The **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“The EU and its Member States welcome Draft Resolution 8.1 and recognise the positive impact the additional step and consultation of the Technical Committee can have on the quality of the amendment proposals submitted by Parties. It can furthermore ensure the proper implementation of the Agreement obligations that will arise for given species populations. The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Draft Resolution 8.1 with some amendments.”

81. The **Chair** opened the floor to proposed amendments to the DR.

82. Proposed amendments were tabled by the **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States** – with a supporting intervention from **Germany** – and by **South Africa**.

83. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.1, incorporating the amendments tabled, for consideration and adoption by plenary.

#### **AEWA MOP8 DR.2 Adoption of Amendments to the AEWA Annexes**

84. The **Secretariat** provided an overview of proposals for amendments received.

85. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

86. The **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, supported DR.2 but requested clarification on the modalities of application of the data deficient category 3(f).

87. The **United Kingdom** was concerned by the significant threats posed by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) to waterbirds and seabirds and its potential impact on the conservation status of affected populations. Noting the need for timely preparation of possible amendments to the AEWA Annexes, Parties should intensify monitoring of affected species and populations, and ensure that data was available for the population status assessment submitted for consideration at MOP9.

88. The **United Kingdom** proposed to add an asterisk to the 3(e) listing of the Icelandic breeding population of Greylag Goose.

89. The United Kingdom proposal was supported by the **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, and **Iceland**.

90. **Wetlands International** acknowledged that there was an error in the new Table 1, concerning the North-west and Central Europe population of Red-breasted Merganser, which should be listed as category 2c in Column B.

91. The **Working Group** confirmed this correction.

92. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.2, incorporating the amendments tabled, for consideration and adoption by plenary.

**AEWA MOP8 DR.3 – State of Implementation of AEWA and its Strategic Plan 2019-2027.**  
Documents for adoption: AEWA/MOP 8.14 *Draft format for national reports on the implementation of AEWA 2021-2024*; 8.16 *Draft format for the national reporting module on the implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa*.

93. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

94. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, expressed general support for DR.3 and strongly supported the recommendation to advance the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

95. The **Chair** opened the floor for specific comments on documents AEWA/MOP 8.14 and 8.16.

96. There being no requests from the floor, the **Chair** requested the Secretariat to forward both documents to plenary, without amendment.

97. The **Chair** opened the floor for specific proposed amendments to the DR itself.

98. Amendments related to capacity and resource mobilisation were tabled by the **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, and **Egypt, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group**. Following bilateral discussions, mutually acceptable text was agreed and communicated to the Secretariat.

99. **Mauritius** highlighted difficulties, due largely to technical capacity constraints, in submitting national reports to AEWA and other MEAs.

100. Noting that the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF) had remained dormant since 2015, **Tanzania** proposed an amendment to facilitate funding support through the SGF.

101. The **Secretariat** observed that implementation of the SGF was subject to capacity of the Secretariat, as well as availability of additional voluntary contributions replenishing the Fund.

102. Further amendments on other topics were tabled by the **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, by **Uganda**, and by **Wetlands International** (seconded by the EU).

103. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.3, incorporating the agreed amendments, for consideration and adoption by plenary.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.4 – Adoption, Revision, Retirement, Extension and Implementation of International Species Action and Management Plans.** Documents for adoption: AEWA/MOP 8.23 *Draft revised format and guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multi-Species Action Plans*; 8.24 *Draft format and guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multi-Species Management Plans*; 8.25 *Draft AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Common Eider*.

104. The **Chair** opened the floor for general comments.

105. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, stated:

“Species Action and Management Plans embody the quintessence of AEWA and the flyway approach, fostering coordinated conservation and management of prioritised populations across their range. We would like to thank the Technical Committee, Secretariat and wide range of experts that have been involved in producing the various documents we have before us today as well as the wider AEWA community involved in the implementation of these Plans throughout the flyway”.

106. The **Chair** opened the floor for specific comments on documents AEWA/MOP 8.23, 8.24 and 8.25.

107. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States** proposed amendments to documents AEWA/MOP 8.23 and 8.25, and noted in relation to 8.23 that the proposal to include favourable reference values as a mandatory part of all action plans was useful for measuring conservation action, but would be challenging to achieve within the first ten years of action plan implementation. In relation to AEWA/MOP 8.25 (the new SSAP for Common Eider) the proposal was to add a footnote to paragraph 1.3.2 of the Action Framework, concerning the foreseen Adaptive Harvest Management Programme (AHMP)

108. **Wetlands International** indicated that the CMS definition of favourable conservation status should be applied in the context of AEWA implementation, noting that this differed from the definition in the EU Habitats Directive and might affect the proposal tabled by the EU.

109. The **EU** confirmed that it would hold bilateral consultations with Wetlands International and communicate any agreed further amendment to the Secretariat.

110. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to forward documents 8.23 and 8.25 to plenary for adoption, subject to inclusion of agreed amendments, whilst document 8.24 could be forwarded to plenary without amendment.

111. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments and proposed amendments to the text of DR4 itself.

112. **South Africa** proposed an amendment calling on the Range States of the Benguela Current Coastal Seabirds Multi-Species Action Plan to prioritise and allocate resources for the conservation of seabirds.

113. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, tabled proposed amendments that had been posted on the MOP8 website. These included the following statement:

“Regarding the Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose, the Technical Committee recommends in document AEWA/MOP 8.22 that it be extended for another three years to allow for its revision and subsequent adoption at MOP9 (reflected in the current operative paragraph 11 of the Draft Resolution).

The EU and its Member States propose that the Action Plan instead be retired, as it is unlikely that an agreement amongst all Range States can be reached on the revision of the Plan.

Range States and other relevant actors should, however, still be encouraged to continue funding and implementing conservation efforts for this globally threatened species at flyway level, despite the absence of an AEWA International Action Plan and attached international conservation coordination mechanism. A conservation note developed by the Technical Committee during the next triennium could be useful for guiding and encouraging continued action within the Western Palearctic.

We therefore propose to delete operative paragraph 11 and replace it with a new operative paragraph 7), as follows:

*Retires the International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Anser erythropus) Western Palearctic population, but calls on all Range States, relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations including the European Commission to continue the implementation of urgent conservation action and provision of funds for this globally threatened species and requests the AEWA Technical Committee to produce a conservation guidance note for the Lesser White-fronted Goose during the next triennium.”*

114. Responding to the proposal tabled by the EU in relation to the ISSAP for Lesser White-fronted Goose, **Norway** made the following statement:

“Norway finds that it is very unfortunate that an ISSAP is retired due to different views on management between parties. We think this sends a very negative signal in a time where the environmental challenges are greater than ever before – and where the need for fruitful international collaboration on migrating species is more important than ever before.

We sincerely hope that the generally good cooperation along the flyway for the endangered Fennoscandian population will continue, in spite of the weaker commitment a guidance note will entail for the Parties.

Given the situation, we support the EU text proposal, which may help secure stronger commitments for the urgent conservation actions ahead.”

115. **Wetlands International** made the following statement in response to the statements of the EU and Norway concerning the ISSAP for Lesser White-fronted Goose:

“International species action plans are to facilitate that Range States and other stakeholders reach agreement on the best course of conservation action and coordinate their actions of the whole flyway. The AEWA/EU International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose has been revolutionary in the history of AEWA because it was the first plan with an AEWA International Species Working Group bringing together governments and experts. It was the first and so far the only plan with a dedicated coordinator at the AEWA Secretariat. That capacity has proven to be crucial to elevate the species action planning work at AEWA to a completely new level. The existence of this action plan has not only put the Norwegian breeding population (which is about 2/3 of the EU population) of the Lesser White-fronted Goose on a recovery path, but it has also helped the 28,000 – 40,000 birds in the Western Main Population and served as an entry card of AEWA to countries like Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia, of which only one, Uzbekistan, is a party to AEWA, whilst Turkmenistan will join as a result of the existence of the plan.

On the other hand, it is regrettable that European countries have failed to reach an agreement on how to deal with the birds breeding in Sweden, representing less than a third of the EU wintering population and less than 1% of all Lesser White-fronted Geese in the Agreement Area. Wetlands International is deeply disappointed that this failure has resulted in terminating a plan for all AEWA populations, in spite of the recommendation of the AEWA Technical Committee which is reflected in the original text. Wetlands International further fears that replacing an AEWA action plan with a far less prestigious conservation guidance instrument, without a coordination mechanism and capacity in the Western Main Population will result in a setback also in that population representing 97% of the birds in the Agreement Area. This is what is called *throwing out the baby with the bath water.*”

116. A proposed amendment to paragraph 17 was tabled by **South Africa**.

117. The **Ramsar Convention Secretariat** and **Wetlands International** supported retaining the original language for paragraph 19 of the DR, rather than the corresponding amendment included in the EU’s proposals.

118. The **Secretariat** observed that the guidance referred to in paragraph 18 was developed in response to Strategic Plan Target 1.3 and suggested an alternative text to the one proposed by the EU in order to match the wording of the Strategic Plan. The **EU** supported this suggestion.

119. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.4, incorporating the agreed amendments, for consideration and adoption by plenary.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.5 – Further Development and Strengthening of Monitoring of Migratory Waterbirds.** Documents for adoption: AEWA/MOP 8.27 *Draft monitoring priorities for waterbird species and populations of AEWA*; AEWA/MOP 8.28 *Draft waterbird monitoring synergies with other frameworks.*

120. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

121. The **Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“The EU and its Member States underline the importance of waterbird monitoring as an essential tool for the implementation of the agreement. Though progress is made in the number of populations whose status can be assessed based on monitoring, more support is needed to reach the target of two-thirds of the populations set by the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019–2027. The EU and its Member States highlight the interconnectedness between developing and strengthening waterbird monitoring in general and the development of monitoring under the AEWA Site-Network (AEWA/MOP8 DR.6), amongst others on the monitoring of pressures.

The EU and its Member States welcome the “*Report on the Development of Waterbird Monitoring along the African-Eurasian Flyways*” (AEWA/MOP 8.26) and value the presented overview of achievements and challenges in the field of waterbird monitoring. We underline the importance of implementing and strengthening national monitoring schemes throughout the Agreement Area, and of the potential value of increased contributions to the Waterbird Fund, as a tool for achieving AEWA monitoring targets.

The EU and its Member States adopt the priorities and recommendations outlined in document AEWA/MOP 8.27 to guide the further development and strengthening of the monitoring of AEWA waterbird populations and drivers of their trends. In this context, we propose to highlight the importance of working towards demographic monitoring and the monitoring of drivers to analyse the possible causes of these trends.

The EU and its Member States endorse the possible synergies of waterbird monitoring with other frameworks and processes as outlined in document AEWA/MOP 8.28 and adopt the recommendations for strengthening those synergies.”

122. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments on documents AEWA/MOP 8.27 and 8.28. There were no further requests to speak; both documents were therefore forwarded to plenary for adoption, without amendment.

123. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments and proposed amendments to the text of DR.5 itself.

124. Proposed amendments were tabled by **The Netherlands on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, and **South Africa**. There were no objections to these proposals.

125. Additional minor amendments were tabled by the **Ramsar Convention Secretariat** and **OMPO**. There were no objections from Parties to the inclusion of these amendments.

126. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.5, incorporating the amendments tabled, for consideration and adoption by plenary.

127. Subsequently, the **Working Group** reviewed DR.5 Rev.1, as prepared by the Secretariat.

128. **The Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, tabled a further minor amendment that had been agreed with South Africa. There were no objections to this additional amendment.

129. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a further revision of DR.5, incorporating agreed amendments, to be forwarded to plenary for adoption

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.6 – Inventory and Monitoring of the AEWA Flyway Site Network** Document for adoption AEWA/MOP 8.29 *Draft monitoring framework for the AEWA flyway site network*.

130. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

131. The **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“The EU and its Member States support the development of an effectively managed and monitored site network under the Agreement, which is a prerequisite for ensuring a coherent flyway level protection for all migratory species’ populations. We welcome the fact that the EU Natura 2000 Network Standard Data Format (SDF) is identified as the international framework that provides all the necessary information for an assessment of the indicators for state, pressure and response of the AEWA Flyway Network sites.

The EU and its Member States stress that for some EU countries, delivering on the monitoring obligations will require investments in both human and financial resources. However, the AEWA Flyway Site Network will only work properly if the required data is gathered throughout the Agreement area. Therefore, the EU and its Member States call for matching efforts in this area both in EU countries and Contracting Parties elsewhere in the Agreement area. If and where necessary, support by the AEWA bodies (Secretariat and Technical Committee), in particular to African countries, should be ensured. This might have consequences in terms of action prioritisation and budget and should be taken into account in the relevant discussions on DR.8.

The EU and its Member States consider that the existing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified pursuant to Art. 4 of the Birds Directive are sufficient to guarantee the protection of all birds falling under AEWA Annex III & Table 1 in these areas. The requirements under the EU legislation are that all species referred to in Article 4 of the Birds Directive that are present on a site need to be listed in the site’s SDF and no conservation objectives and measures are to be established for non-significant occurrences on a given site.

The EU and its Member States consider that it is important to ensure the process and tools which will be used for the data submission are as integrated as possible with other existing frameworks. This will avoid any unnecessary additional burden on Parties for example with manual data entry of parts of information from the relevant SDF fields.”

132. The **Secretariat and Wetlands International** responded to the requests for technical clarifications requested by the **European Commission on behalf of the EU and its Member States**.

133. The **Chair** opened the floor to further comments on document AEWA/MOP 8.29. There were no requests to speak, and the document was therefore forwarded to plenary, without amendment.

134. The **Chair** opened the floor to specific proposals for amendment of the DR itself.

135. Proposed amendments were tabled by the **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**. There were no objections from Parties to these proposals.

136. **Wetlands International** suggested adjustments to some of the text tabled by the European Commission.

137. Following consultations, the **European Commission, on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, tabled modified language to take account of the suggestions of Wetlands International.

138. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of DR.6, incorporating the agreed amendments, to be forwarded for consideration by plenary.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.15 – International Synergies in Addressing Causes of Waterbird Mortality.** Document that DR wording was based on AEWA/MOP 8.40. *Opportunities for addressing causes of waterbird mortality.*

139. The **Chair** opened the floor for general comments.

140. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“There is a clear need for increased synergies both within the biodiversity and environment cluster as well as for better collaboration with other relevant sectors to address human-induced causes of waterbird mortality. Such synergies are vital to the efforts of implementing the AEWA Strategic Plan and will also serve as AEWA’s contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors. The seeking of synergies on national, regional and flyway level is particularly pertinent in light of the challenges of influencing cross-sectoral policies but also considering the limited resources available. Collaboration should also be sought across taxonomic groups (for example ASCOBANS), where relevant, to facilitate implementation at national level avoiding parallel processes.”

141. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, welcomed document AEWA/MOP 8.40.

142. The **Secretariat** proposed to delete the text in square brackets in the title of document so that the title now read ‘Addressing causes of waterbird mortality’.

143. The **Chair** opened the floor to proposed amendments to the text of DR.15 itself.

144. Proposed amendments, as posted on the MOP8 website, were tabled by **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**.

145. Further proposals, some of these suggesting adjustment to elements of the EU’s amendments, were tabled by **Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe** and **OMPO**. Where applicable, delegations were requested to resolve differences through informal consultations and to communicate agreed text to the Secretariat.

146. The **Working Group** subsequently considered DR.15 Rev.1, reflecting amendments that had been sent to the Secretariat.

147. Further interventions were made by **Egypt, Finland on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, the **United Kingdom**, and **OMPO**.

148. Agreed amendments were incorporated by the Secretariat into DR.15 Rev.2.

149. Following further discussion, the **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare DR.15 Rev.3 for plenary consideration, including the final amendments tabled by **Egypt** (in consultation with the EU), and **South Africa**.

#### **AEWA/MOP8 DR.16 – Ecotourism and Waterbird Conservation**

150. Noting that this DR did not involve the adoption of any additional document, the **Chair** opened the floor to general comments on DR.16. There were no requests to speak.

151. The **Chair** opened the floor to specific proposals for amendment of the text of the DR.

152. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, supported adoption of DR.16, subject to inclusion of an amendment in the preamble. There was no objection to this proposal.

153. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.16, incorporating the EU amendment, to be forwarded for consideration by plenary.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.7 – Improving the Base Knowledge for Effective Waterbird Conservation and Management.** Document for adoption AEWA/MOP 8.30 *Draft overview of knowledge gaps and needs relevant for AEWA implementation: priority needs in 2021.*

154. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments.

155. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, made the following statement:

“The EU and its Member States welcome the Draft Overview of Knowledge Gaps and Needs Relevant for the Implementation of AEWA: Priority Needs in 2021 prepared by the Technical Committee and can support the adoption of document AEWA/MOP 8.30 as an assessment of priority needs for information to underpin the implementation of the Agreement.

As outlined in both the background document and Draft Resolution 8.7, the EU and its Member States highlight the need for synergies and close collaboration with other relevant international organisations and processes when striving to bridge knowledge gaps. This is of particular relevance in relation to seabirds as well as the proposed establishment of strategic guidance related to the potential for wetland restoration, which should be developed in close collaboration with other ongoing work including under Ramsar and UNEP.

In this context, it is important to highlight not only the role of the global biodiversity conventions, but also relevant regional environmental treaties and processes such as Bern, HELCOM, OSPAR, the Barcelona Convention, the Nairobi Convention and the Arctic Council Biodiversity Working Group CAFF. There are many other examples within the AEWA region.”

156. The **Chair** opened the floor to specific comments relating to document AEWA/MOP 8.30. There were no requests for the floor and the document was therefore forwarded to plenary, without amendment.

157. The **Chair** opened the floor to proposed amendments to the DR itself.

158. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States, South Africa, and United Kingdom**, as well as by **BirdLife International, OMPO and Wetlands International**.

159. The **Chair** recalled that proposals from observers had to be seconded by at least one Party. He asked interested Parties to consult with each other and with observer delegations and to send the wording of agreed amendments to the Secretariat so that a revised version of the DR could be produced.

160. Subsequently, the **Working Group** reviewed DR.7 Rev.1 as prepared by the Secretariat.

161. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States** pointed out a minor typographical error, which the Secretariat undertook to correct.

162. There being no further requests for the floor, the **Chair** requested the Secretariat to forward DR.7 Rev.1 (including correction of the typographical error) to plenary for its consideration and adoption.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.8 – Revision and Adoption of Conservation Guidance.** Documents for adoption: AEWA/MOP 8.31 *Draft revised AEWA Conservation Guidelines no. 1: guidelines on the preparation of national Species Action Plans for migratory waterbirds*; AEWA/MOP 8.32 *Managing waterbird disturbance: a short guide for wetland managers [draft]*; AEWA/MOP 8.33 *Draft initial guidance on ecosystem services in relation to migratory waterbirds*; AEWA/MOP 8.34 *Draft Guidance on addressing the risk of accidental shooting of look-alike species of waterbirds in the Agreement Area*; AEWA/MOP 8.42 *Complementary guidelines on climate change adaptation measures for waterbirds*.

163. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments, followed by comments on the documents tabled for adoption through this DR.

164. There were no requests for the floor in relation to documents AEWA/MOP 8.31, 8.33 or 8.42.

165. **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, tabled minor amendments to documents AEWA/MOP 8.32 and 8.34.

166. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to incorporate the amendments tabled for documents AEWA/MOP 8.32 and 8.34 and to present revised versions to plenary for consideration and adoption. Documents AEWA/MOP 8.32, 8.33 and 8.42 could be forwarded to plenary without amendment.

167. The **Chair** opened the floor to proposed amendments to DR.8 itself.

168. The **United Kingdom** tabled an amendment on adaptive harvest management guidance. This proposal was supported by **Finland, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**.

169. The **Working Group** subsequently reviewed DR.8 Rev.1, prepared by the Secretariat to reflect the amendments tabled. There being no further interventions, the **Chair** requested the Secretariat to forward DR.8 Rev.1 to plenary for consideration and adoption.

**AEWA/MOP8 DR.9 – AEWA’s Past Contribution to Delivering the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Targets and its Future Relevance to the Post-2020 Process.** Documents for adoption: AEWA/MOP 8.35 *AEWA’s contribution to the Aichi Targets 2011-2020*; [8.36 *Opportunities for AEWA to support the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*]; 8.37 *The relevance of AEWA to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals*.

170. The **Secretariat** noted that document 8.36 appeared in square brackets as the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework had not yet been adopted and proposed that the current draft document be adopted on an interim basis and forwarded to the StC for finalisation, once the new framework had been adopted by the CBD.

171. The **Chair** opened the floor to general comments and interventions on the documents to be adopted through this DR.

172. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, supported documents AEWA/MOP 8.35 and 8.37 but considered that the current version of document 8.36 did not seem to take account of recent developments during 2022.

173. **South Africa** raised concerns about the nature and extent of ‘AEWA guidance’ referred to in document AEWA/MOP 8.36 and the proposed alternative text.

174. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, and supported by the **United Kingdom**, suggested adjustments to the wording tabled by South Africa. These adjustments were acceptable to **South Africa**.

175. There being no interventions relating to documents AEWA/MOP 8.35 or 8.37 the **Working Group** forwarded both documents to plenary, without amendment.

176. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to incorporate the agreed amendments to Document AEWA/MOP 8.36 prior to forwarding for plenary consideration.

177. The **Chair** opened the floor to proposed amendments to the DR itself.

178. The **Czech Republic on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, tabled proposed amendments and one factual correction to DR.9, as posted on the MOP8 website.

179. **BirdLife International** proposed an addition to the reference list in DR.9.

180. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised text of DR.9 to reflect the agreed amendments.

181. The **Working Group** subsequently reviewed DR.9 Rev.1.

182. Further minor amendments were tabled by the **Czech Republic on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, supported by **South Africa**.

183. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to incorporate these further amendments and to forward the text to plenary for consideration and adoption.

#### **AEWA/MOP8 DR.11 – Institutional Arrangements: Technical Committee**

184. The **Chair** noted that there was no separate document to be adopted under this DR. He requested the **Secretariat** to introduce the DR.

185. The **Secretariat** noted that DR.11 concerned both the work plan and composition of the TC during the forthcoming intersessional period. Prior to consideration during the concluding plenary session on 30 September, the work plan would be updated by the Secretariat to reflect all modifications arising from other DRs submitted to plenary for adoption.

186. With regard to composition of the TC, the **Secretariat** noted that DR.11 showed vacancies to be filled for the coming triennium. Two calls for nominations had been launched by the Secretariat and a small advisory group (composed of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of StC and TC, together with two senior members of the Secretariat) had reviewed all of the nominations received.

187. The **Secretariat** read out the names and a brief biography for each of the nominees being recommended by the advisory group to fill the sub-regional vacancies in Africa and Europe, as well as the two vacancies for electable thematic experts, as follows:

## Africa

Northern Africa: Hichem Azafzaf (Tunisia) as TC member, with Mohamed Ibraheem Habib (Egypt) as alternate.

Southern Africa: Melissa Lewis (South Africa) as TC member, with Douglas Harebottle (South Africa) as alternate.

Central Africa: Yves Davy Omon Souangbi (Central African Republic) as TC member. There was no recommended alternate, as no further nominations had been received for the sub-region.

## Europe

Eastern Europe: Zurab Javakhishvili (Georgia) as TC member, with Vasyliy Kostiushyn (Ukraine) as alternate.

North & Southwestern Europe: Maria Dias (Portugal) as TC member, with Matthew Parsons (United Kingdom) as alternate.

Southwestern Asia: No nominations had been received. The position remained vacant, but according to the *modus operandi* of the TC, the Chair of TC could identify and appoint a member, on an interim basis, until the next MOP.

## Electable Thematic Experts

Game management: Jesper Madsen (Denmark)

Rural economics: Nils Bunnefeld (German national, based in United Kingdom)

189. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments on the DR and on the nominations recommended by the advisory group, as read out by the Secretariat.

190. There being no requests for the floor, the **Chair** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of DR11, populating the table of vacancies in the composition of the TC with the nominations recommended by the advisory group and updating the TC work plan as previously explained by the Secretariat.

## **Concluding remarks**

191. The **Chair** congratulated the Working Group for completing its agenda on time and thanked delegates for their constructive participation. He also thanked the Secretariat and interpretation team for their effective support.

<b>WORKING GROUP 2 ON FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS</b> <b>27 SEPTEMBER 2022 (16:30h to 18:05h)<sup>1</sup></b>
---

192. The Working Group met from 16:30 to 18:05 on 27 September. It was chaired by the United Kingdom, represented by Mr Simon Mackown, with Uganda serving as Vice-Chair, and was

---

<sup>1</sup> This report reflects only the session of Working Group 2 on 27 September 2022 which involved initial statements by Contracting Parties on the proposed budget scenarios. The next session of Working Group 2 on 28 September 2022 that involved in-dept negotiations on the budget is not reflected in this report.

supported by the Executive Secretary and the Administrative Officer of the Administrative and Fund Management Unit – UNEP/CMS Family.

193. At the invitation of the **Chair**, Parties confirmed that the Working Group would meet in open session, with the attendance of observers.

194. The **Chair** proposed that this first session be limited to initial statements and indications of Parties' positions relating to the range of budget scenarios contained in Document AEWA/MOP 8.39 Corr. 1 *Draft Budget Proposal for 2023 – 2025*. He noted that these scenarios had already been introduced in plenary by the Executive Secretary.

195. The **Chair** observed that the Secretariat was already under significant pressure, and it would not be sustainable for the Secretariat to deliver the conservation outcomes Parties wished to see during the next triennium without increased resources. The demands on the Secretariat and Technical Committee were high and there currently seemed to be a disconnect between ambitions on one hand and the reality of what could be delivered on the other. He recalled that MOP7 had decided to move towards application of the UN scale of assessment with effect from MOP8 and hoped that the Working Group could abide by the commitments made at MOP7 and avoid reopening discussion of that issue. He opened the floor to comments.

196. The **United Kingdom** indicated its support for a minimum of Scenario 3, and probably somewhere between Scenarios 3 & 4.

197. **Germany** recalled its long-standing support for AEWA and fully understood the difficult position AEWA was in. Germany was nevertheless operating under budgetary constraints and, although there would be a possibility to support an increased budget, this would not necessarily be according to any of the scenarios presented, but rather a combination of items from various scenarios. It would be helpful, as at past MOPs, to have a baseline scenario that provided for continuation of the work of the Secretariat along present lines, plus the inflation increase agreed at MOP7, so Parties knew the starting position. To this could be added specific priorities agreed by Parties, on the basis of negotiation, that they wished to support. A priority for Germany would be to find the resources, through savings, if possible, for the position of Species Officer at the Secretariat.

199. The **Executive Secretary** confirmed that it was not necessary for Parties to select any of the four specific scenarios presented in the document. The Working Group could request the preparation of alternative scenarios, and the Secretariat would ensure that the corresponding recalculations were made available.

200. **Switzerland** firmly believed that the Secretariat was currently understaffed and would be able to support Scenario 4 but was also open to an alternative mix. Switzerland's priority was to avoid a situation where a significant amount of Secretariat time had to be devoted to securing resources for positions that were not yet fully funded.

201. **France** requested additional information concerning the impact of exchange rate fluctuations during the past four years and asked for clarification regarding AEWA's application of the UN scale of assessment. A budgetary priority for France would be to secure funding for the full translation of MOP documentation, as foreseen under the Rules of Procedure.

202. The **Executive Secretary** explained that the current UN scale of assessment 2022-2024 had been applied using the criteria mentioned in the document. With regard to document translation, he noted that it was much easier to secure additional voluntary contributions for items such as translation, than for staff costs.

203. **Finland** expressed concern about the capacity of the Secretariat and stated that its top priority was to secure an improvement in that situation. Finland could support an overall increase to a level around Scenario 3, but not with the exact items currently included in that scenario. As for Germany, funding the position of Species Officer was a clear priority for Finland.

204. **Uganda** (Vice-Chair) thanked Parties that had already contributed generously to efforts for the conservation of migratory waterbirds. The statements made so far showed clearly that there was still good will among Parties to continue supporting the cause despite difficult economic times. The capacity of Parties in Africa to contribute financially was quite limited, yet their active participation in implementing the Agreement was critical. There seemed to be a pointer roughly towards the level of Scenario 3, which the African region deeply appreciated, but there were also indications that the specifics contained in that scenario should be adapted. There was a need to discuss and find a workable position. It seemed that Scenario 1 could not deliver the change that the Agreement deserved and so might be considered for withdrawal. The emphasis should be on a forward-looking proposition.

205. **Norway** thanked the Secretariat for its hard work and efforts in implementing the Agreement. Scenario 1 was untenable, and Scenario 2 was considered to be a minimum. In terms of priorities, Norway viewed increased Secretariat capacity as important, but there was room for flexibility.

206. **Italy** thanked the Secretariat for presenting the four scenarios and indicated willingness to consider limited increases over Scenario 1, but these should be related exclusively to specific activities. Italy therefore suggested beginning negotiations on the basis of Scenario 1, gradually adding the priorities identified by Parties.

207. The **Chair** recalled that Scenario 1 represented a real-terms cut, so adding activities to Scenario 1 would only move the budget towards parity with the current situation. AEWA might not progress far under such a situation. Nevertheless, there seemed to be an appetite in the room for establishing a baseline budget to which specific items could be added.

208. **The Netherlands** saw the need for an increase to support the work of the Secretariat and agreed that discussions should proceed from a given baseline. However, that baseline should probably be Scenario 2, or AEWA would go backwards. The Netherlands could consider supporting an increase around the level of Scenario 3.

209. The **Executive Secretary** summarised impacts on the work of the Secretariat under the proposed Scenario 1. These included a two-thirds reduction in travel budget, a significant cut to internet services, and a reduction in the translation budget. Budget lines for MOP9 and for TC meetings would be set at zero. Whilst the Agreement could function with virtual meetings of the StC, the nature of the issues addressed by the TC meant that one or two in-person meetings were required within each triennium.

210. **Sweden** supported the intervention of The Netherlands and welcomed the additional information provided by the Executive Secretary concerning the implications of Scenario 1. Sweden favoured starting with a Scenario 2 baseline, with the possibility to go up to Scenario 3, and cautioned that Parties should avoid micro-managing the Secretariat.

211. **Denmark** saw a need to acknowledge the workload and under-funding of the Secretariat. This meant that Scenario 3 should be the baseline option. Denmark was open to discussing Scenario 2 but fully supported Scenario 4. Parties had to consider their past decisions; resources were required for implementation – otherwise they were on paper only.

212. **South Africa** supported a fully functioning Secretariat but was uncomfortable with supporting Scenario 4 in its entirety. Parties should focus on how best their priorities could be covered; for South Africa these would include full funding of the African Coordinator position.

213. **Belgium** considered that the core budget should cover the core work. Upgrades of the P staff in the Secretariat had already been discussed at MOP7. If UNEP recommended that such upgrades were required to comply with UN rules, Belgium could support the upgrades.

214. **France** was concerned by one of the budgetary principles outlined by the Executive Secretary during plenary, namely that no Party's annual contribution should decrease. It was hard to see how this could be the case. France favoured a baseline of Scenario 1 or Scenario 1+ (including only an adjustment for inflation).

215. In response to questions from France and Germany, the **Executive Secretary** provided additional information on how cost of living adjustments had been applied to the budgeted scenarios for each year of the coming triennium. He recalled that during discussions at MOP7, it had been decided to set a 'no decreased contributions' criterion and to use resulting savings to avoid overly steep increases for Parties.

216. The **Czech Republic** indicated general support for the positions expressed by Switzerland, Finland, Sweden and The Netherlands, and noted the gap between the budget and the level of Parties' ambition. The Czech Republic therefore supported a budgetary increase, up to a level around Scenario 3.

217. The **Chair** felt that there was some confusion around what appeared to be additional staff costs under Scenario 2. Rather than choosing to increase P staff salaries, P staff had been held at the same level as previous years, with the increase instead allocated to more junior part-time staff. The overall salary costs hadn't changed, it was simply a question of precisely where resources for staff time had been allocated.

218. **France** observed that even under Scenario 1 there would be an increase in its contributions.

219. The **Executive Secretary**, referring to document AEWA/MOP 8.39 Corr. 1 annex 1, noted that the contributions for France were the same for MOP7 and for MOP8 proposed Scenario 1.

220. The **Chair** recalled that this was a consequence of the decision taken by MOP7 to move towards applying the UN scale of assessment. The latter was based on ability to pay and could therefore mean an increase for some Parties under all budget scenarios.

221. The **Executive Secretary** provided clarification on how the UN scale had been applied in the context of AEWA, in conformity with the decision taken at MOP7, and committed to providing additional information in response to the specific concerns raised by France. He recalled that African Parties had committed to a EUR 2,000 minimum threshold for national contributions as an important sign of solidarity with the aims of the Agreement.

222. **Germany** suggested that it would be helpful to work on a common absolute baseline, representing basic legal requirements, a 2% per annum increment, plus a minimum required amount for organisation of MOP9. Parties' 'wish list' of priorities could then be added to this baseline. Germany further suggested a non-linear increase over the course of the triennium, such as that decided at MOP7, through which the overall increase for 2018-2021 was allocated at 30%, 33% and 37% across the triennium.

223. The **Executive Secretary** undertook to prepare a series of new budget scenarios in time for the Working Group to consider on 28 September. These would show clearly the costs to each Party of (a) the baseline components suggested by Germany, (b) the additional costs that would be incurred by inclusion of a P3 Species Officer, (c) the additional costs that would be incurred by inclusion of a P2 Species Officer and (d) the additional costs for inclusion of a full-time African Coordinator. The revised scenarios would not include the positions of Compliance Officer and TC Support Officer provided for in current Scenario 4.

224. The **United Kingdom** considered that the baseline should build in recognition by MOP7 that AEWA Secretariat staff were being underpaid according to the rules of UNEP. It was not right to expect people to work above their grade but not be paid accordingly for a further three years.

225. The **Executive Secretary** noted that current budget Scenario 3 proposed an upgrade of all P staff. This could perhaps be done in two steps.

226. **France** indicated its readiness to begin the discussion on the basis of current Scenario 2. The priorities for France were fully funding the African Coordinator position and translation of documents.

227. **Germany** understood that there was a good argument to be made for upgrading P positions in line with UNEP rules, but there was also a need to understand that this could impede opportunities to create new positions. Germany preferred a baseline that treated the upgrading as an add-on, noting that AEWA needed to be considered in the context of the wider CMS Family.

228. The **European Commission** requested clarification as to why some proposed new positions were graded at P2 and others at P3.

229. The **Executive Secretary** confirmed that this had been done on the advice of UNEP, following an initial assessment of the degree of autonomy and senior external contacts anticipated for each position.

230. The **Chair** concluded the current session of the Working Group, thanking Parties for a really constructive discussion. There had been a need for a set of initial scenarios to enable Parties to see the implications of various options and to assist negotiations. However, it was now possible to develop amended scenarios reflecting concerns and priorities expressed. The Secretariat would prepare these for the Working Group to consider during its session on 28 September, beginning at 09:00.

## **PLENARY**

**30 SEPTEMBER 2022 (09:15 to 13:00)**

231. The **Chair (Levente Kőrösi, Hungary)**: Greeted the Ambassador of Tunisia to Hungary (His Excellency Abdelkarim Hermi) and welcomed participants to the final day of MOP8. He confirmed that the Sessional Working Groups had fulfilled their mandates and that all amended documents had been made available to Parties and observers. He was glad to have seen the strong attendance at side events held on 29 September, which had resulted in many interesting and important discussions. He briefly outlined the agenda for this concluding session of plenary.

### **Agenda item 8. Award Ceremony**

232. The **Chair** requested the Secretariat to introduce this item.

233. The **Secretariat (Sergey Dereliev, Head of Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit)** acted as moderator for the Award Ceremony, beginning with a brief introduction to the AEWA Awards and expressing pleasure in recognising the achievements of individuals and organisations that had made considerable contributions to implementing the Agreement and conserving migratory waterbirds. He recalled that laureates were recognised, by decision of the StC, in two categories, Individual and Institutional.

#### 8.1 Individual Category

234. **Mr Dereliev** announced the winner: Hichem Azafzaf, Tunisia, Coordinator of the Scientific Programme of the *Association les Amis des Oiseaux* (AAO), Tunisia, and previously an AEWA Technical Committee regional representative for Northern Africa, in recognition of more than three decades of dedication to waterbird and wetland conservation, education and capacity building efforts in Tunisia and more widely in Africa.

235. **Mr Azafzaf** was invited to the stage to be presented with his award by the Chair of the Standing Committee (Simon Mackown, United Kingdom) and the Executive Secretary (Jacques Trouvilliez) in the presence of the Tunisian Ambassador.

236. In his acceptance speech, **Mr Azafzaf** expressed his delight in receiving the award and wished to recognise the many people with whom he had collaborated, and who had helped him significantly. He shared three initiatives in which he had been closely involved – filling knowledge gaps in Libya, culminating in production of the waterbird atlas of Libya 2005-2010; contribution to formation of the North African waterbird network; and collaboration with colleagues under the RESSOURCE project for the designation of a new Ramsar site in Sudan – the Khor Abu Habil Inner Delta. He also remarked on the great joy that birds had given him throughout his life as an observer and a photographer, and of the awe in which he held migratory birds.

#### 8.2 Institutional Category

237. **Mr Dereliev** announced the winner: BirdLife South Africa, in recognition of BirdLife South Africa's achievements in the conservation of the White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*), including through coordination of the AEWA International Working Group since 2015 and championing implementation of the AEWA Single Species Action Plan since 2018.

238. The **representative of BirdLife South Africa, Melissa Lewis**, was invited to the podium to receive the award, presented by the Chair of the Standing Committee and the Executive Secretary, in the presence of a representative of the Government of South Africa.

239. **Ms Lewis** was thrilled to receive the award on behalf of BirdLife South Africa, especially colleagues who had played such central roles in researching and conserving the White-winged Flufftail. Key conservation activities and successes in recent years had included the recording of the first breeding record for this species in the southern hemisphere, at Middelpunt Wetland, and the confirmation of its call, which was then verified at Berga wetland in Ethiopia. BirdLife South Africa had recognised the crucial ecosystem services that White-winged Flufftail habitat provided for surrounding human communities and planned to develop a community conservation project at Ntsikeni Nature Reserve.

#### 8.3 Migratory Species Champion

240. **Mr Dereliev** briefly introduced the Migratory Species Champions Programme. Launched in 2014, this aimed to promote specific CMS Family initiatives and to secure medium- and long-term

resource commitments to support their implementation. Champions could be governments, companies, organisations, or individuals that made financial commitments of at least three years for one or more such initiatives.

241. **Mr Dereliev** announced that the status of ‘Champion Plus’ was being conferred on the European Commission, in recognition of its generous support and commitment towards the AEWA African Initiative for the period 2021–2023. This support had enabled AEWA to focus on the conservation of iconic species such as the Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus ermita*) and the Slaty Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*), as well as to promote effective flyway conservation in Small Island Developing States in the Agreement Area.

242. The **representative of the European Commission, Joseph van der Stegen (Nature Unit, Directorate General for Environment, European Commission)**, was invited to the stage to be presented with a certificate of recognition, presented by the Executive Secretary.

243. **Mr van der Stegen** confirmed his pleasure in accepting the award on behalf of the European Commission, but underlined that much work remained to be done, for which partnership would continue to be essential. Three key fields of action – good protection and management of key sites; good governance to ensure the protection, sustainable use, and monitoring of birds; and capacity-building to ensure implementation of these measures – had been key to the Commission’s financial support for AEWA and its actions in Africa since 2012.

244. Before concluding the ceremony, **Mr Dereliev** encouraged those participants in a position to do so to consider becoming Migratory Species Champions for AEWA. Further information on opportunities and priorities for support could be found at [www.migratoryspecies.org/champion](http://www.migratoryspecies.org/champion).

### **Agenda item 30. Reports of Sessional Committees**

#### Credentials Committee

245. The **Chair of the Credentials Committee, Mr Vojtěch Brlík, Czech Republic**, presented the Committee’s report. The Credentials Committee for MOP8, composed of Czech Republic, France, Madagascar, Morocco and Zimbabwe, and supported by the Secretariat, had met daily from 27 to 30 September 2022 to review and deliberate on the credentials submitted to it by 41 of the 46 Contracting Parties present at MOP8. Following examination, the Committee had validated the credentials of 37 Parties, taking into account the requirements stipulated in Rules 16 to 18 of the Rules of Procedure. The Committee had been unable to validate the credentials submitted by four Parties. In all four cases, copies had been submitted; receipt of original credentials, as required under the Rules of Procedure, remained pending for these Parties.

246. There were no questions or comments from the floor.

247. The **MOP** approved the Report of the Credentials Committee.

#### Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters (WG1)

248. The **Chair (Levente Kőrösi, Hungary)** invited the **Chair of the Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters, (András Schmidt, Hungary)**, to present the WG’s report.

249. The **Chair of WG1** thanked all those experts that had compiled the documents that the WG had reviewed, in addition to Parties, the Technical Committee, Secretariat, and partners. The group had worked in a very constructive spirit to accomplish its agenda. He also wanted to highlight the effective background work of regional coordination by the EU and its Member States, and by the Africa Group

– this had really helped to work efficiently. WG1 had considered 12 Draft Resolutions (DRs), nine of which had to be slightly revised. Only two had to be revised for a second or third time. In addition to the DRs themselves, the WG had reviewed 20 associated MOP8 documents, 15 of which were recommended for adoption without amendment; only five had been revised. He briefly summarised a few highlights of the key points relating to amendments proposed by the WG in specific DRs and other MOP documents that would be tabled for adoption under the next item of the plenary’s agenda.

250. The **Chair** opened the floor for comments or questions.

251. There being no requests to speak, the **MOP** noted the Report of the Scientific and Technical Working Group.

#### Working Group on Financial & Administrative matters (WG2)

252. The **Chair** invited the **Chair of the Working Group on Financial & Administrative matters (Simon Mackown, United Kingdom)** to present the WG’s report.

253. The **Chair of WG2** thanked the Secretariat for its pre-MOP preparations and support during the WG’s deliberations, including provision of multiple budget recalculations. Thanks were also due to Parties for approaching what could sometimes be a sensitive and difficult topic in a very constructive and good-humoured way. The first day’s deliberations of the WG had been devoted to gathering initial position indications from Parties. This showed a strong appetite to see strengthening of the Secretariat, though it was clear that some Parties had budgetary constraints, in spite of the level of their ambitions. During discussion of the initial four scenarios presented in plenary, it was emphasised that Parties were free to set a new baseline – one that all Parties were content with – to which selected ‘optional extras’ could be added. Agreement was reached on a baseline that took account of three criteria: a 2% per annum salary increase for staff, a 4.4% increase for the triennium for all other budget lines to allow for inflation, and a minimum budget for organising MOP9. The WG came back on its second day to discuss what the options over and above this agreed baseline might be. Parties ruled out upgrading P staff positions quite early on, deferring this for decision at MOP9. They focused instead on increasing core-budget support for the Africa Coordinator position towards full time and adding a Species Officer. There was extensive discussion of how these aims could best be achieved. The final budget proposal (as contained in DR.12 Rev.1) provided for a 30% uplift to the Africa Coordinator position to 80% core-budget funding, plus 50% core-budget funding for a Species Officer at P2 level. The WG Chair invited Parties to consider if they could provide additional voluntary contributions to bring funding for these two positions to 100%. To accommodate increases within Parties’ budgetary constraints, the budget line for travel had been slightly reduced and recruitment of the Species Officer was deferred by six months. All participating Parties had agreed to the WG outcomes, and the corresponding budget proposal would be presented to plenary under item 31.

254. The **Chair** opened the floor for comments or questions.

255. There being no requests to speak, the **MOP** noted the Report of the Financial and Administrative Working Group.

#### **Agenda item 31. Adoption of the Resolutions and Amendments to the Annexes of the Agreement**

256. The **Chair** observed that the current item was one of the most important on the MOP’s agenda. He proposed to go through 15 of the 16 Draft Resolutions of MOP8 under this item, in numerical sequence. Only DR.13, concerning the arrangements for MOP9, would be considered separately, under agenda item 32. He noted that in view of the positive and constructive discussions during the Working Groups, he was not anticipating the reopening of general discussion, but rather brief

interventions to address any technical points that might either have been inadvertently omitted or have emerged since the Working Groups had concluded their work. He recalled that any amendments suggested by observers needed to be supported by at least one Party. To facilitate the process, the Secretariat would display the English text of each Draft Resolution to be considered for adoption and would enter the wording of any amendment proposed and/or supported by Parties.

257. For each Draft Resolution, the Chair opened the floor to comments or proposed final amendments. Following discussion and agreement on any amendment to be made, the Chair asked the meeting if there was any objection to adopting the Draft Resolution as amended (if applicable), or in the form tabled for plenary consideration if no final amendments were being proposed. The Chair then confirmed that the Resolution had been adopted and closed, confirming this by gavelling. In each case, adoption and closure were followed by applause. The following is a summary of the outcome for each Draft Resolution.

#### **DR.1 Rev.1 *Procedure for the submission of proposals for amendments to the Agreement***

258. There were no requests from the floor.

259. The **MOP** adopted DR.1 Rev.1 without amendment.

#### **DR.2 Corr.1 Rev.1 *Adoption of amendments to the AEWA Annexes***

160. There were no requests from the floor.

261. The **MOP** adopted DR.2 Corr.1 Rev.1 without amendment.

#### **DR.3 Rev.1 *State of implementation of AEWA and its Strategic Plan 2019–2027***

262. There were no requests from the floor.

263. The **MOP** adopted DR.3 Rev.1 without amendment.

#### **DR.4 Rev.1 *Adoption, revision, retirement, extension and implementation of International Species Action and Management Plans***

264. The **Chair** noted that two of the associated documents to be adopted under this DR had been amended by the Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters, namely documents AEWA/MOP 8.23 Rev.1 *Draft revised format and guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multi-species Action Plans* and 8.25 Rev.1 *Draft AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Common Eider*. He opened the floor for comments on the revised versions of these documents.

265. There were no requests for the floor.

266. The Chair opened the floor to comments on the text of DR.4 Rev.1 itself.

267. **South Africa** noted that some proposed amendments to DR.4 that it had tabled during the Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters were not reflected in the text submitted for adoption.

268. The **Secretariat** confirmed that this was indeed the case and apologised for the oversight. The amendments requested by South Africa were projected on screen, read out, and agreed to by the meeting.

269. The **MOP** adopted DR.4 Rev.1, subject to inclusion of the amendments tabled by South Africa.

**DR.5 Rev.2 *Further development and strengthening of monitoring of migratory waterbirds***

270. There were no requests from the floor.

271. The **MOP** adopted DR.5 Rev.2 without amendment.

**DR.6 Rev.1 *Inventory and monitoring of the AEWA Site Flyway Network***

272. There were no requests from the floor.

273. The **MOP** adopted DR.6 Rev.1 without amendment.

**DR.7 Rev.2 *Improving the base of knowledge for effective waterbirds conservation and management***

274. There were no requests from the floor.

275. The **MOP** adopted DR.7 Rev.2 without amendment.

**DR.8 Rev.1 *Revision and adoption of conservation guidance***

276. The **Chair** noted that two of the associated documents to be adopted under this DR had been amended by the Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters, namely documents AEWA/MOP 8.32 Rev.1 *Managing Waterbird disturbance: a short guide for wetland managers (draft)* and 8.34 Rev.1 *Draft Guidance on addressing the risk of accidental shooting of look-alike species of waterbirds in the Agreement Area*. He opened the floor for comments on the revised versions of these documents.

277. There were no requests for the floor.

278. With regard to the text of DR.8 Rev.1 itself, the **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**, tabled an amendment to the final operative paragraph. There were no objections to this proposal.

279. The **MOP** adopted DR.8 Rev.1, subject to inclusion of the amendments tabled by the European Commission on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

**DR.9 Rev.2 *AEWA's past contribution to delivering the Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Targets and its future relevance to the Post-2020 process and to the Sustainable Development Goals***

280. The **Chair** noted that one of the documents associated with this DR had been amended by the Working Group on Scientific & Technical matters, namely document AEWA/MOP 8.36 Rev.2 *Opportunities for AEWA to support the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*. He opened the floor to comments on the revised version of the document.

281. There were no requests for the floor.

282. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments on DR.9 Rev.2 itself.

283. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**, tabled minor amendments to the fifth preambular paragraph. There were no objections to these proposals.

284. The **MOP** adopted DR.9 Rev.2, subject to inclusion of the amendments tabled by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

**DR.10 (original text) *Institutional arrangements: Standing Committee***

285. The **Chair** recalled that during the opening session of plenary, held on 27 September, Parties had been invited to prepare nominations for the Standing Committee to be made formally under the present item.

286. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU & its Member States**, and following consultation with non-EU countries in the region, proposed that the current members and alternates for the Europe and Central Asia region should have their mandates renewed for the coming intersessional period, i.e., United Kingdom as StC member, with alternate Luxembourg; and Ukraine as StC member, with alternate Republic of Moldova.

287. **Morocco** confirmed that Parties from the Middle East & North Africa sub-region had met and had chosen to nominate Morocco as their StC member, with Lebanon as alternate.

288. **Côte d'Ivoire** confirmed that Parties from the Western & Central Africa sub-region were nominating Côte d'Ivoire as their StC member, with Central African Republic as alternate.

289. **Eswatini** confirmed that Parties from the Eastern & Southern Africa sub-region were nominating South Africa as their StC member, with Ethiopia as alternate.

290. The **Chair** read out the names of the Parties nominated to serve as StC members and alternates. These nominations were also projected on the plenary screens. There were no objections or other requests for the floor.

291. The **MOP** adopted the original text of DR.10, with the inclusion of those Parties nominated to serve as StC members and alternates during the forthcoming intersessional period.

**DR.11 Rev.1 *Institutional arrangements: Technical Committee***

292. There were no requests for the floor.

293. The **MOP** adopted DR.11 Rev.1 without amendment.

**DR.12 Rev.1 *Financial and administrative matters***

294. The **United Kingdom** proposed minor changes to the sequence of wording at the end of operative paragraph 18 to make it read more smoothly.

295. **South Africa** tabled amendments to operative paragraphs 10 and 11.

296. The **Czech Republic** made a comment to be recorded in the report of the meeting, noting its concern that the budget line for the Technical Committee was set at zero. The Czech Republic underlined its view that it would be important for the TC to meet in person at least once during the forthcoming intersessional period and asked the StC to consider funding such a meeting from the available balance of the Trust Fund.

297. The **MOP** adopted DR.12 Rev.1, subject to inclusion of the amendments tabled by the **United Kingdom** and **South Africa**.

**DR.14 Rev.1 *Tribute to the organisers***

298. The **MOP** adopted DR.14 Rev.1 without amendment.

**DR.15 Rev.3 *Addressing causes of waterbird mortality***

299. The **United Kingdom** tabled amendments to the fifteenth paragraph of the preambular text and a minor editorial amendment to operative paragraph 9.

300. The **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States** tabled amendments to operative paragraph 2.3.

301. **South Africa** pointed out an editorial correction required in the fifth preambular paragraph and tabled an amendment to operative paragraph 4.

302. The **MOP** adopted DR.15 Rev.3, subject to inclusion of the amendments and correction tabled by the **United Kingdom, Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, and South Africa**.

**DR16. Rev.1 *Ecotourism and waterbird conservation***

303. There were no requests for the floor.

304. The **MOP** adopted DR.16 Rev.1 without amendment.

305. The **Chair** confirmed that the MOP had now considered an adopted all draft resolutions, except one, which would be taken up under the next agenda item.

**Agenda item 32. Date and Venue of the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties**

306. The **Chair** referred the meeting to the last-remaining draft resolution to be considered, namely DR.13 Corr.1 Rev.1 *Date, Venue and Funding of the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA*, which he invited the Executive Secretary to introduce.

307. The **Executive Secretary** confirmed that the Secretariat had not yet received any invitation for MOP9. He asked potential host Parties to communicate their initial interest to the Secretariat within the coming six months. The Secretariat would then work closely with such Parties to ensure that they were able to take a fully informed decision prior to announcing any formal invitation.

308. The **Chair** proposed that the established three-year cycle should be retained and that MOP9 should therefore be organised in 2025. He requested the Secretariat to add a sentence to this effect to the text of DR.13 Corr.1 Rev.1 and to display this on screens in the plenary hall.

309. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments, noting that he would be particularly pleased to receive offers to host MOP9. There were no requests for the floor.

310. The **MOP** adopted DR.13 Corr.1 Rev.1 as amended to confirm retention of the three-year cycle, with MOP9 being convened in 2025.

### **Agenda item 33. Adoption of the Report of the Meeting**

311. The **Chair** requested a mandate from the MOP for him to finalise the report of the current plenary session, with the assistance of the Secretariat. There was no objection from the floor to granting this request.

312. The meeting proceeded to review, on a page-by-page basis, the following draft reports that had been made available in English and French on the MOP8 webpage:

- Draft Report of Plenary (Day 1, 27 September)
- Draft Report of Working Group 1 on Scientific & Technical Matters
- Draft Report of Working Group 2 on Financial and Administrative Matters

313. The **MOP** adopted the Report of Plenary (Day 1, 27 September) without amendment.

314. The **MOP** adopted the Report of Working Group 1 on Scientific & Technical Matters subject to minor corrections to paragraphs 3 & 9 tabled by the **Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**, and an addition to paragraph 30 concerning the new Species Action Plan for Common Eider, tabled by the **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**.

315. **Uganda** sought clarification as to why the Draft Report of Working Group 2 on Financial and Administrative Matters covered only the first day of the WG's deliberations.

316. The **Secretariat** explained that the compressed, four-day structure of MOP8, as opposed to the usual five-day duration of a MOP, had required a slightly modified approach to reporting. During a five-day MOP, there was time for all substantive agenda items to be tabled in plenary, with an opportunity for Parties to state their positions and priorities accordingly. At previous MOPs, reporting had therefore been restricted to plenary sessions only, and it was not usual practice to report on working group sessions. At MOP8, the restricted timeframe had meant that some key issues had not been tabled in plenary prior to discussion in the working groups. For this reason, it had been decided to prepare summary reports of the working groups, focused on recording statements of Parties' main positions and proposals. In the case of WG2, the budget had been the principal item considered and the report covered the positions taken by Parties during the group's first session on 27 September. The second session, on 28 September had proceeded to detailed negotiations and these were not reported on, given that such deliberations were usually lengthy and somewhat convoluted in nature. However, the Report of the Chair of the Working Group, as delivered to the current plenary session under agenda item 30, would be included in the Report of the Meeting. The final outcomes agreed by Parties in WG2 were, of course, also reflected in the text of DR.12 Rev.1 *Financial and administrative matters* that had just been adopted by the MOP. The report for WG1 was structured differently, as that working group had opened discussion of entirely new issues on both 27 & 28 September.

317. The **MOP** took note of the explanation given by the Secretariat and adopted the Report of Working Group 2 on Financial and Administrative Matters without amendment.

### **Agenda item 34. Any Other Business**

318. **BirdLife International** drew attention to the fifth edition of its flagship *State of the World's Birds* report launched a few days previously. This had set out the most concerning picture yet about the future of avian species and, by extension, of all life on earth. Worldwide, 49% of bird species showed declining populations; the great majority of these declines driven by human actions. The challenges were escalating, time was running out, and the next decade would be critical. There were positives, however, and more was known than ever before on how to turn things around; all that was

needed was political will and financial commitment. AEWA could play an important role, but only if “*fine words are turned into birds*”, for example by integrating actions for waterbirds into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The BirdLife Partnership pledged its ongoing support to the AEWA family in helping to deliver such action. Finally, the full State of The World’s Birds was available to consult at the following address: <https://www.birdlife.org/state-of-the-worlds-birds/>

319. There were no requests for the floor. The **MOP** took note of the statement by BirdLife International.

### **Agenda item 35. Closure of the Meeting**

320. The **Chair** opened the floor to closing statements by Parties.

321. The **European Commission, speaking on behalf of the EU & its Member States** expressed its gratitude to the Government of Hungary for the excellent hosting arrangements made in Budapest, making possible the long-overdue meeting of the AEWA family in a face-to-face format. At the start of the meeting, it had been clear that the tight schedule would be challenging. The efforts, dedication and hard work of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the plenary and working groups, and the whole AEWA Secretariat, had been key to making the meeting a success. The EU and its Member States had been content to note that implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) had kicked off after MOP7 but added: “*Nevertheless we remain and want to stress again that the overall implementation of the Strategic Plan is assessed as limited and waterbird status has actually deteriorated compared to the 2018 baseline.*” Challenges clearly remained and were even increasing. Efforts in respective positions and functions needed to be accelerated to catch up on accumulated delays in reaching the targets Parties had set for themselves. The EU and its Member States also wished to underline the importance of cooperation with other conventions, in particular the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. One of the key tasks at MOP8 had been to strengthen the Secretariat to promote implementation of the Agreement. It was important to reinforce cooperation and action beyond the EU, particularly in the Sahel and in other regions where engagement with the Agreement was lacking. The budget settlement agreed by the MOP, though limited, was very welcome and would help to strengthen the PoAA and implementation of Species Action Plans – both key delivery mechanisms of the Agreement. The EU and its Member States remained ready to support and cooperate with AEWA, especially in relation to further strengthening of the Site Flyway Network, concluding: “*Let’s keep up the work, double our efforts to advance conservation action for the benefit of migratory waterbirds, nature and people.*”

322. **Eswatini, speaking on behalf of African Parties**, thanked the Government of Hungary and all delegates for their hard work in making MOP8 a success. Africa called upon Parties and delegates to carry forward MOP8 Resolutions to the series of key upcoming intergovernmental meetings to ensure that AEWA interests, targets and goals were mainstreamed within the UN Conventions on Biological Diversity, Climate Change, and Migratory Species, as well as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and to ensure adequate consideration of the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats in developing a robust, ambitious, and inclusive Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Whilst concerned by slow progress in implementing the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Africa hoped that the MOP8 outcomes would help raise awareness at all levels. Noting past limited capacity and resources, Africa was encouraged that, during the 2023-2025 triennium, core budget support for the Africa Initiative Officer had been increased to 80%, whilst 50% core funding had been allocated to recruitment of a Species Officer, enabling progress on Species Action and Management Plans. It was hoped that these measures would accelerate achievement of the Strategic Plan and PoAA. Africa was especially grateful to Parties whose annual assessed contributions represented a significant part of AEWA’s budget, and to those who had voluntarily contributed resources, both financial and technical, and welcomed commitments to enhance financial contributions during the forthcoming triennium to support implementation of the Agreement. Wishing participants safe homeward

journeys, the representative of the Africa Group concluded: *“Let us remember and do all that we can within our means to ‘Strengthen Flyway Conservation in a Changing World’ to enable migratory water birds also to live and travel safely throughout their ranges.”*

323. The **Chair** opened the floor to closing statements by observers.

#### Closing statements from observers

324. **Wetlands International** (WI) reiterated the thanks of previous speakers to the Hungarian hosts and gratitude to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Working Groups, as well as to Technical Committee colleagues. WI was very glad that the MOP had agreed to adopt the Resolutions that partners had contributed to. WI was committed to following up on the Climate Resilient Flyways project and, in the run-up to the forthcoming Conference of Parties to the CBD, was promoting a strengthened specific target focusing on wetlands. AEWA Parties were requested to note and support this initiative, which would also contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

325. The **Chair** invited the Executive Secretary to make his closing remarks.

326. The **Executive Secretary** added his thanks to the host Government of Hungary, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He expressed sincere gratitude to the Deputy Prime Minister for opening MOP8 and asked the Chair of the MOP to convey his personal thanks. Additional thanks were due to the One With Nature team, to the City of Budapest for its warm welcome, and to CIC and Dallas Safari Club for hosting the welcome reception. He was grateful to delegates for their diligence in performing daily Covid-19 antigen tests and wearing face-masks in the meeting venues. Although, a very small number of colleagues had nevertheless tested positive, the collective efforts made, meant that the great majority of delegates had been able to participate throughout the meeting. MOP8 had worked hard to shed light on the slogan ‘Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World’ though many challenges still remained. He congratulated Parties for adopting the Resolutions and associated documents earlier in the morning, including approval of a budgetary increase – albeit limited – for the first time in 14 years. This would enable the Secretariat to recruit a Species Officer and to strengthen implementation of the African Initiative. All additional voluntary contributions would be welcome: *“Every penny counts!”* The Executive Secretary invited five individuals, without whom MOP8 would not have happened, to join him on the podium to receive tokens of appreciation, namely, the Chair and Vice-Chair of MOP8, the Chair of the Credentials Committee, and the Chairs of the two Working Groups. After customary thanks to the interpreters, translators, report-writers, technical and logistical teams, and the staff of the Corinthia Hotel, it was with great emotion that the Executive Secretary thanked *“very, very warmly the whole team of the AEWA Secretariat and the staff provided by the CMS Secretariat”*. His final words of gratitude were, *“To you: delegates, observers and dear friends. Thanks for the constructive working atmosphere. Take away with you the spirit of AEWA and share it”*.

327. Finally, **speaking on behalf of the host country, the Chair** said that it had been a pleasure to host the MOP in Hungary. He introduced a short video montage of highlights from the past four days, compiled by CIC. The agenda of MOP8 had been completed, but this could not have happened without a constructive spirit, good collaboration and careful preparation of the meeting documents. The MOP had reviewed the status of implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and Plan of Action for Africa, and it was crystal clear that much remained to be done to reach the 2027 targets. The modest budget increase would enable recruitment of a Species Officer and showed the commitment of Parties. However, the real task lay ahead, and all Parties and partners would have to work actively to implement the MOP Resolutions. He extended his thanks to the Chairs of the Credentials Committee and Working Groups, and to all those who had made the meeting a success. Special thanks were due to the One With Nature team, as well as to his own team in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Lastly, he thanked the Executive Secretary, the Head of the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit and the whole AEWA Secretariat, who had worked day and night with a very small team, many of them behind the scenes. He wished all participants a safe trip home and declared MOP8 closed.