



FORMAT FOR REPORTS

OF THE PARTIES

**AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY
WATERBIRDS (The Hague, 1995)**

Implementation during the period 2005 - 2008

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1. Overview of Action Plan implementation

Summary of progress to date

1.2 Outline of planned actions for national implementation over the next three years

1.3 Outline of priorities for international co-operation over the next three years

2. Species conservation

Legal measures

2.1 Has a national policy/strategy or legislation to protect and conserve species covered by the Agreement (Table 1: column A; column B) and their supporting important areas been developed? If so:

a. What are the main features of the policy/legislation?

The Constitution of 1995. Article 3(r) of the Constitution gives “higher State bodies” exclusive competence over legislation concerning “land, sub-soil, and natural resources.” This places regulation of wildlife and hunting in the competence of the central government.

Since 2004 Georgia has been included in the European Neighbourhood Policy and agreed on the Action Plan with the European Union (EU) in 2006. Implementation of the Action Plan will imply among the others, the approximation of Georgian legislation, norms and standards to those of the European Union.

Article 37 of the Constitution concerns health and the environment. Every citizen has a right to a healthy environment, as well as a duty to protect the “natural and cultural” environment. Every citizen has a right to access information on the environment.

The Constitution has general provisions regarding the creation, prosecution and punishment of crimes that would apply to wildlife crimes.

According to the Criminal Code, Article 301 makes illegal hunting a crime, Article 302 makes disruption of Red Book – listed species habitats a crime and Article 305 makes violation of the regimes of protected area a crime.

The Administrative Violations Code of 1984 provides for enforcement of laws through the levy of administrative fines. Chapter VII of the Code establishes fines for violation of environmental and nature protection laws.

- Article 67¹: Violating rules governing regeneration and improvement of natural resources in protected areas.
- Articles 85 to 85⁵: Violating various rules protecting wild animals, including red-listed species.
- Article 86: Violating hunting and fishing rules.
- Articles 89 to 89³: Violating rules governing management of protected areas, including rules restricting possession of hunting weapons.

The Law on the System of Protected Areas of 1996. The Law on the System of Protected Areas sets up a system of classifying, creating, and managing protected areas. Although some classes of protected area have strict limits on use, the law allows hunting and fishing in less strictly protected areas.

The Law on Environmental Protection of 1996 sets out general objectives for protection of the environment in Georgia (Articles 3 and 5) and general rights and obligations of citizens (Articles 6 and 7). Article 11 repeats the constitutional requirement that only the higher bodies of government may regulate the use of natural resources.

Article 25 requires licenses for the use of natural resources, and Articles 35 and 37 require permits for activities that affect the environment, along with environmental impact assessments. A separate Law on Environmental Permits of 1996 expressly requires a permit for establishment of hunting farms and sets out general procedures for granting environmental permits. The more recently passed Law on Licenses and Permits of 2005, has superseded these permit requirements.

The Wildlife Act of 1996. The Wildlife Act (also translated as the “Law on Animal World” or “The Law on Wildlife”) is central to wildlife conservation, including regulation of hunting. Article 6 makes all wildlife the property of the state.

Article 15 of the Act calls for long-term hunting management plans. Article 19 prohibits hunting in highly protected areas, such as national parks (although hunting is allowed in other protected areas, such as managed reserves). Article 20 prohibits capture of red-listed species, except as part of a species conservation effort. Article 25 requires a license for most “uses” of wildlife, including hunting.

Article 28 sets out the basic framework for regulating hunting. Except for hunting for migratory birds, hunting is limited to designated hunting farms. Only amateur, recreational hunting is allowed. Hunters may not use explosives or cause suffering to animals. The details of which animals may be hunted, how many, and when, are left to regulations.

Article 29 concerns licensing and operation of hunting farms. At present, the Ministry only initiates the licensing process in response to a request to license a particular area. The Ministry must evaluate the area and get consent of any landowners before granting a license. The license holder then has authority to permit individuals to hunt on the farm.

Article 37 requires all hunters to be 18 or more years of age and to have a license for a weapon. Article 40 gives traditional users priority in the “use” of animals, including for hunting. It also gives traditional hunters priority in locating and licensing hunting farms. Article 47 allows the Ministry to set seasons for hunting. Article 63 provides penalties for violation of the Act, including hunting-related violations.

According to the analysis of the Wildlife Act in Georgia’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the Wildlife Act calls for the Ministry to produce 33 regulations to implement the Act. The Ministry has issued some orders and decrees on hunting. For example, Order No. 512 of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia (7 December 2005) is entitled “On the Approval of Regulations on the Animal Objects, the Rules of their Hunting According to the Species, Terms and a List of Weapons and Equipment Permitted for their Hunting.” However, many of the regulations called for in the Act are still not written.

The Forest Code of 1999. Much of the suitable habitat for game is on forested land in Georgia, so it is no surprise that the Forest Code also contains provisions regarding hunting. Article 27 calls for forest planning, which may include location of hunting areas. Article 51 allows establishment of hunting farms on state forest lands. Articles 86 and 87 deal with contracts for establishing hunting farms.

The Law on Red List and Red Book of 2003. This is the central law for the listing and protection of endangered species in Georgia. It restricts the taking of listed species.

A new Red List and Red Book of Georgia are developed and adopted in May of 2006 by Presidential Decree N303. The new Red List contains all species, which were listed in previous Red List of Georgia and all species listed in Column A of the Annex. Some species from the column B depending on their population state are also included in the New Red List. However, taking of and trade with all species, except the species listed in the special “List of Hunting Species”, is prohibited.

The Law on Permits and Licenses of 2005. The Law on Permits and Licenses of 2005 was a general reform law aimed at creating a simple and transparent system for issuing permits and licenses in Georgia. It does not name which specific licensing provisions of earlier laws that the new law repeals, but Article 1 of the law declares the new law “determines the exhaustive list of types of licenses and permits”. Article 7 of this law recognizes three kinds of licenses for forest use: a special license to establish a hunting farm, a special license to harvest timber, and a general license for forest use, which would allow timber harvest and uses, including managed hunting. The government awards these licenses through auctions. Article 24 provides for individual permits, including for hunting.

The Organic Law on Local Self-Government of 2005. The key provision of the Organic Law on Local Self-Government regarding land use is in Article 47. This Article gives local self-government units ownership of forests of local importance. The Decree of the Government of Georgia No. 105 (May 23 2007), “On the order of the determination of the forests of local significance”, sets out standards and procedures for determining which forests are owned by local self-government units. The process of assigning ownership is ongoing.

Ongoing legal reform projects:

The Ministry is trying to revise both the Forest Code and the Wildlife Law. The Ministry had produced a draft of a new wildlife law but the process is still detained.

A new Protected Area. Javakheti – is a special region (South Georgia) in terms of migratory waterbirds habitats. This is a plateau with a number of lakes, which are presenting sites for many species of migratory waterbirds. Those lakes were suffering from human related activities, such as artificial desiccation, attempts of artificial breeding of different fish species, etc. Now it is decided to create a Protected Area of Javakheti. This project is being already implemented. This initiative would stop habitat degradation and, besides that, the regular monitoring will be conducted.

b. Which organisations are responsible for implementation?

Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia

c. How does it relate to other national initiatives (e.g. national Biodiversity Action Plans)?

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of 2005. The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is a policy document produced to comply with the Convention on Biological Diversity and approved by the Georgian Cabinet of Ministers. The Strategy identified eleven specific problems regarding hunting and fishing, many of which focus on the legal framework. Quoting from the Strategy—

1. Gaps exist in current legislation relating to hunting and fishing.
2. The Law on Wild Fauna is not adequately enforced, due to lack of regulations and enforcement mechanisms.
3. Control mechanisms for poaching are ineffective.
4. Experience in the creation and management of private hunting reserves is limited.
5. The current licensing scheme does not distinguish between trophy and non-trophy hunting, leading to bias in individuals killed within the populations.
6. The capture of birds of prey for falconry purposes is not regulated.
7. There is no training facility for the appropriate governmental officers or private hunting farm personnel.
8. The awareness of hunting regulations (quotas, season, etc.) is extremely low among Georgian hunters.
9. There is much uncertainty about the maintenance of traditional hunting.
10. The recovery of certain economically important fish species will require specific restoration efforts.
11. Specific mechanisms for fish stock restoration and protection have not been put in place.

On matters of legal and institutional reform for biodiversity protection, the Strategy identified eight general points. Quoting -

1. There is not yet any legislation on plant protection.
2. The legal basis for agrobiodiversity and biosafety is poor.
3. There is no legislation on biodiversity monitoring.
4. The legal basis for economic incentives for sustainable use of biodiversity is weak.
5. A number of regulations are yet to be developed, as specified in recently adopted laws related to environmental protection.
6. There are discrepancies between national legislation and international obligations under inter-governmental treaties and conventions.
7. Some Georgian laws have been developed on the basis of foreign legislation and have not been adequately adapted to the national situation.

8. There [is] no permanent structure in place with the responsibility to assess the conservation status of species in Georgia.

The Strategy does not contain detailed directions on the course of reform. Its adoption at the highest level of government does indicate a willingness to improve biodiversity laws and their implementation.

However, the National Biodiversity Action Plan indicates the necessity of:

- 1) Improving of the licensing procedure for hunting of migratory birds;
- 2) Prepare an Conservation Action Plan for waterbirds and initiate its implementation;
- 3) Identify biodiversity hotspots located outside of protected areas and define tools for their conservation;
- 4) Collect data necessary for valuation of biodiversity;
- 5) Defining hunting quotas for migratory birds and conduct studies for hunting (to identify sites where wildfowling will be permitted and those where all hunting should be banned, based on birds counts on these sites.)
- 6) Restore the former Agency of Hunting Control and set up public inspection schemes;
- 7) Publish leaflets and /or brochures that explain hunting seasons and quotas with special emphases on rare game species.

2.2 What legal measures or practices has your country developed to prohibit or regulate for the following (refer also to section 4 on hunting):

a. Taking of, and trade in birds listed in Column A and B of Table 1 (where utilization or trade contravenes the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1 (a) and 2.1.2 of the Action Plan)?

In 2006 the new “Law of Georgia on Licenses and Permits” entered into force. Part IV of this Law contained a list of permits, among which until 2007, the “Hunting Permit” was also presented. In 2007 the Law was modified and Hunting Permit was removed from the general list of permits. It should be additionally noted, that Article 4 of this Law defines prohibition on any additional kinds of permits.

Taking into account the above mentioned, the Regulation on “Taking, Methods and Time allowed for taking of the listed species of Wildlife” was correspondingly amended and a part dedicated to hunting permits was completely removed.

Until 2007, the Permit Form was designed in the way that each particular permit contained information on:

- 1). Species allowed for hunting,
- 2). number of specimens, permitted for hunting;
- 3). dates allowed for hunting for each particular species;
- 4). place of hunting;
- 5). validity of the Hunting Permit.

Now the situation is quite uncertain. A hunting permit is not needed by legislation any more.

However the Ministerial Order on “Dates for Hunting and Fishing” (2002) is still in force, where particular dates and particular place for each particular hunting species are indicated. But, taking into account, that a hunter does not have at hands a paper, where species, including the limiting number of the specimens, places and dates, allowed for hunting are indicated, and it is only understood, that he knows the Ministerial Order and consequently, the allowed hunting conditions, it seems not to be sufficient. He must have only a check, justifying that he paid the certain sum in a bank, which is actually his “permit” for hunting and which he should show to the Environmental Inspection officer, in case of meeting him while hunting. Of course, the Environmental Inspection officer would fine him for violating the allowed hunting conditions, and this can be considered as a kind of preventive mechanism.

The actual reason for abolition of hunting permits is - removing of it from the list of permits and licenses in the Law of Georgia on Licenses and Permits. After that, the Statute of Government (August, 2005) on Rules and Procedures for Issuing of Licenses and Permits for Using of Objects of Wildlife, was also amended and finally, the hunting permits were abolished. From the other hand, the procedure of issuing of hunting permits was quite complicated. Issuing of a hunting permit should have been based on a separate Ministerial Order. It took a lot of time and should be somehow simplified (but not abolished). Even permits, issued by local authorities in regions, were based on ministerial orders from Tbilisi. The Department of Integrated Environmental Management and Biodiversity now is working on preparation of new draft regulations for filling in this gap and which will specify all above mentioned necessary information.

Besides that, a new Draft Law on Wildlife and a new Draft Law on Red List and Red Book are being developed for the time being. It is considered to make special amendments to fill in and cover the existing above mentioned gaps.

List of Hunting Species:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Anser anser</i> | Table 1 Column B 1 |
| 2. <i>Anas penelope</i> | Table 1 Column B 2c |
| 3. <i>Anas strepera</i> | Table 1 Column B 2c |
| 4. <i>Anas crecca</i> | Table 1 Column C 1 |
| 5. <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | Table 1 Column B 2c |
| 6. <i>Anas acuta</i> | (Not estimated for the BS region, but for SW Asia as C 1) |
| 7. <i>Anas querquedula</i> | (Not estimated for the BS region, but for SW Asia as C 1) |
| 8. <i>Anas clypeata</i> | (Not estimated for the BS region, but for SW Asia as B 2c) |
| 9. <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | |
| 10. <i>Alectoris graeca</i> | |
| 11. <i>Coturnix coturnix</i> | |
| 12. <i>Fulica atra</i> | Table 1 Column C 1 |
| 13. <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> | (Not estimated for the BS region, but for SW Asia as C 1) |
| 14. <i>Limnocryptes minimus</i> | |
| 15. <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> | (Not estimated for the BS region, but for SW Asia as C 1) |

b. Methods of taking?

Methods of taking are regulated by Normative Act on "Taking, methods and time allowed for taking of the listed species of wildlife".

c. Setting of taking limits and monitoring these limits?

For the time being, setting of taking limits is not provided by regulations, because, as it was noted above, the hunting limits, which used to be set yearly by ministerial order "on Hunting Permits", is now annulled. The Department of Integrated Environmental Management and Biodiversity is elaborating a new regulation, which should include comprehensive information on all allowed and prohibited hunting conditions.

d. Sustainable hunting of species listed in Categories 2 and 3 (and marked by an asterisk) in Column A only?

Hunting on species, which are not included into the List of Hunting Species is prohibited. No species of the Column A are listed in the List.

e. Exemptions to the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3?

Single Species Action Plans

2.3 Of the species covered by the Agreement (species listed in Table 1: column A), which spend part or all of their life history in your country, which have formal international (Category 1, species marked with an asterisk) or national (column A) Single Species Action Plans:

a. Proposed?

b. In preparation?

The Regional Single Species Action Plans for the South Caucasus are under development for the following species:

Dalmatian pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
Lesser white-fronted goose	<i>Anser erithropus</i>
Red-breasted goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>
Marbled teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>
Whit-headed duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>

These Action Plans are developed in the frame of the project - "Development of an IBA Caretaker Network in the Priority Corridors" funded by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

c. Being implemented?

Please append a list of species and their action plan status. (For international plans indicate which other countries are involved in plan development/implementation.)

Emergency measures

2.4 Describe any bilateral or multilateral co-operative action that your country has undertaken to develop and implement emergency measures to conserve species in response to unfavourable or endangering conditions occurring in the Agreement area.

No bilateral or multilateral co-operative actions are undertaken since 2005 in Georgia to develop and implement emergency measures to conserve species. The Agreement between Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, mentioned in our previous National Report, which envisages cooperation in providing joint measures to protect migratory species and their migration routes, is still in force, but there is nothing to be mentioned in that field.

Re-establishments

2.5 Has a policy on species re-establishments been developed in your country? If yes, please outline the main features of the policy and give details of any re-establishment programmes for species covered by the Agreement.

No species re-establishment programs for species covered by AEWA are developed.

Introductions

2.6 Has your country developed and implemented legal measures to prohibit the introduction of nonnative species? Please provide details, particularly describing measures to control the release or introduction of non-native species (please indicate which species and their status).

Nothing is changed in legislation since 2005. This issue is regulated by the Convention on Biodiversity and Act of Georgia on Wildlife.

3. Habitat conservation

Habitat inventories

3.1 Has your country developed and published inventories of important habitats for species covered by the Agreement? If yes, please provide details, including any provisions to maintain or update these inventories.

The Black Sea Environmental Programme (BSEP) was prepared under the auspices of Global Environmental Facility (GEF), with the Phare and Tacis programmes, as major partners. It was coordinated by the UNDP/BSEP Programme Implementation Unit in Istanbul.

The task of coordinating the Programme was shared with the six Black Sea countries by the creation of six thematic Regional Activity Centres.

As it was mentioned in our previous report, the Black Sea Regional Activity Center for Biodiversity Conservation undertook a pilot study on development of a common methodology for preparation of a Black Sea Habitats Red Data Book. It was carried out with assistance from the Europe Aid Black Sea Environmental Program project (implemented by ARCADIS Euroconsult).

3.2 Has your country undertaken a strategic review of sites to develop a national network of important sites or areas for species covered by the Agreement? Please append a list of identified sites of international importance.

As it was mentioned in the previous report (2005), existing information made possible to identify two important sites in Georgia for migratory water birds: 1. Kolkheti wetlands and 2. Javakheti Plateau Lakes

Kolkheti wetlands are designated as Ramsar sites since 1997.

Javakheti Plateau Lakes (Lakes Khanchali, Madatapa and Bugdasheni) are identified as potential Ramsar sites. Besides that the Javakheti Protected Area is under development.

Conservation of areas

3.3 Describe the legal frameworks and other measures through which sites (including transfrontier sites) including of international importance gain practical protection. (Please append a list of internationally important protected sites.)

Kolkheti wetlands were designated as a Ramsar site because of a high number of wintering waterbirds. Establishing of the national park (Kolkheti National Park) could not prevent hunting of waterfowl during migration and wintering. Therefore it is of high importance to monitor the population of wintering waterbirds together with hunting disturbances. A proper monitoring would usually include several counts per season in order to mitigate singular events, such as unfavorable weather conditions or disturbance by hunters. As a minimum effort, the Project Georgia Integrated Coastal Management decided to at least count

wintering waterbirds and hunting pressure once a year between 1 January and 15 February. First survey (inventory) was conducted in 2003, and the second in 2005.

In Kolkheti National Park a baseline winter survey was carried out for waterfowls at Kolkheti National Park (and Ramsar site) in February, 2003. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Conduct a baseline mid-winter waterbird census according to Wetlands International waterbird Census (IWC) compatible methods, of the Kolkheti National Park, Kolkheti Ramsar site and adjoining wetland areas.
- Assist with training of ornithologists and the Park staff in bird surveying techniques and conducting an IWC.

Besides that, the Birdlife International European Division developed a regional project on Network of Important Bird Area Caretakers. The project was implemented in Georgia, Armenis, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Implementation began in 2006 and finished in 2008. From Georgian side the project was implemented by the NGO GCCW (Georgian Center for Conservation of Wildlife).

3.4 Has your country developed a management planning process for protected sites? If yes, please outline the types of management plans and organisations responsible for development and implementation.

Kolkheti Protected Areas Management Plans are developed (within Georgian ICZM Project). The Management Plans are developed according to the Ramsar guidelines. Every year a separate Action Plan is developed in accordance with the general management plan.

Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia is responsible for implementation of the Plans.

3.5 How many protected sites have formal management plans (please append a list of sites and their management planning status):

- a. Proposed?*
- b. In preparation?*

Management Plan for the Javakheti Protected Area is being developed for this momet.

- c. Being implemented?*

1. Kolkheti National Park
2. Kobuleti Natural Reserve

3.6 What measures does your country have in place to ensure the wise use of wetland habitats and to prevent habitat degradation e.g. pollution control and managing water resources? Please provide examples of best practice initiatives particularly involving cross-

sectoral co-operation or public participation.

Ramsar sites are protected from one hand by Ramsar Convention and from the other hand by the Law of Georgia on Protected Areas. The Ramsar sites have the management plans. Protected Areas have Administration unit – Park Administration - which develops annual operational plans, including large number of public participation and awareness raising activities.

There also exist the Advisory Council, which overseeing the implementation of Park objectives. National legislation for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (draft, intergovernmental consultation to be lodged) will provide the framework for meeting Park's conservation objectives without compromising development of objectives along the coast.

A Kolkheti National Park public Awareness working Group (PAWG) was established within the frame of Georgia Integrated Coastal Management Project in order to strategize and facilitate implementation of public awareness activities. PAWG helped to organize an impressive array of activities, including the establishment of a website for the KNP (www.KNP.ge), development of a video documentary on the KNP.

Rehabilitation and restoration

3.7 Does your country have a policy for the identification, rehabilitation and restoration of wetlands important for species covered by the Agreement? Please provide examples of rehabilitation and restoration projects and initiatives undertaken.

4. Management of human activities

Hunting

4.1 Outline the main features of legislation or legal measures in your country to control hunting of the species covered by the Agreement (e.g. use of lead shot and poisoned baits, and to eliminate illegal taking).

Please see 2.2 of the present report.

As regards the lead shot, public awareness is very low in this field. Generally hunting is conducted with the leaded bullets, and except environmental NGO-s nobody knows about any alternatives.

Poisoned baits are prohibited by the Act of Georgia on Wildlife.

4.2 Does your country monitor hunting levels? If so, how is this information collated and reported?

As it was mentioned before, hunting is allowed only in the Hunting Farms except the migratory water birds. Taking into account that the hunting permits are annulled, this field is under less control for this very time. However, the Department of Integrated Environmental Management and Biodiversity is going to elaborate a regulation, which would specify all necessary terms. Presumably, it would be a Minister's Order (for the first time, at least, to fill the gap rapidly).

The information on hunting levels related to the waterbirds is not complete, because the only mechanism of controlling the hunting levels is the Environmental Inspectorate, which cannot collect the information all over the country. It has information in case of meeting the hunters in the field. The hunting system has lost control over who hunts and where. The State issues hunting farm licenses by auction. The winner of the auction gets the license, regardless of the person's qualifications to manage the land. The strict auction system has reduced opportunities for corruption in the assignment of licenses. As a consequence, however, areas are chosen for hunting farms based on their economic potential, not on their value as habitat. There is no national plan for development of the most important areas for game. Rural people, who know the land best, may be at a disadvantage in getting licenses because of lack of investment capital

4.3 Describe action undertaken by hunting clubs and organisations to manage hunting activity e.g. cooperative action, issuing of licences and proficiency testing of individual members.

Before independence, hunters needed to be members of the Hunters Union, and the Hunters Union had over 80,000 members. Some were fishermen, but most were hunters. Now people can hunt without being members of the Union, and its membership has fallen. Hunting farm managers control permission to hunt in their license areas. Anyone with a weapons permit can pay a fee at a bank and legally hunt migratory birds, with very little (real) control over where this hunting takes place. (And indications are that tens of thousands of people continue to hunt mammals and non-migratory species illegally).

Hand in hand with this situation is the problem of the number of guns in people's hands, the historical tradition of widespread gun ownership, and the ability of people to get a gun permit without any training or examination. Absence of control and training has resulted in an increase in the number of hunting accidents.

The character of hunters is changing as well. The number of hunters, for whom hunting is a tradition of knowledge and protection of game has decreased, but the number of hunters for whom hunting is a modern sport has increased. These hunters consider hunting as a kind of a recreational activity, and nothing more.

Proficiency testing is not conducted at all. The permit for possession of fire-guns is to be issued by Ministry of Internal Affairs. A person, who is wishing to hunt, should have such permit and, as it was described in 2.2, a check from the bank, justifying that he paid a certain

sum. The only obstacle, which a hunter can encounter on his way, is the Environmental Inspectorate. Violating the allowed methods, places and dates will be fined by the Inspection officer. The old Hunting Union conducted such testing earlier.

4.4 What is the status of eco-tourism programmes or initiatives in your country? Please provide examples of projects with an indication of the significant outcomes.

The IUCN Programme Office for the Southern Caucasus, with funding from the *Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, is currently implementing the action programme *the Halting the Loss of Biodiversity in the Southern Caucasus* - Regional implementation of the Countdown 2010 initiative. One of the objectives of the programme is ecotourism promotion in the Southern Caucasus.

The major aim of the project is to document eco-tourism potentials in three Caucasus countries and to identify needs for its realization. The experts have been involved to make assessment of Eco-Tourism Potentialities in Armenian, Azerbaijan and Georgia and to point out unrealized development potentials and the needed tools for the eco-tourism sector development within the overall tourism industry.

The comprehensive studies include overview modern policy and implementation concept of eco-tourism globally and the analysis of the international experience of the ecotourism development; describes biodiversity value of Caucasus region and Caucasus countries; presents the current situation and the actions in progress, overall pros and cons on related activities of eco-tourism as an integral part of tourism development; includes the review of situation with Protected Areas in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and define focus areas and current statistics for eco-tourism development; describe key stakeholders and cooperation efforts for integrated management and recommendations to be considered for successful development for public, private and other relevant stakeholders.

The following activities are planned to be implemented:

- the publications of study “Potentials of Regional Ecotourism” in English will be printed;
- high-profile website will be established.

As a result the study will contribute to a better appreciation of the economic value of biodiversity throughout the region by stressing on protection of nature, cultural highlights it will improve the basis for ecotourism planning and development and raise awareness of the economic potential of ecotourism and the value of nature as a resource for the tourism industry.

4.5 What social and economic benefits accrue to the local communities from the conservation of important waterbird sites?

Other human activities

4.6 Does your country carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of activities potentially affecting protected sites or areas important for species covered by the Agreement? If yes, briefly describe the main features of your EIA policy and procedures.

For the time being the new laws are adopted. Those are: A Law on Ecological Expertise and a Law on Environmental Impact Permit, which regulate the permit issuing procedures of the Law on Environmental Permits and the Law on State Ecological Expertise (earlier it was Environmental Permit, now it is Environmental Impact Permit) in the new way. A list of activities demanding to obtain the Environmental Impact Permit in the Law on Environmental Impact Permit is quite short-cut. The list includes only those activities, which can threaten human health and life. (In the old law the activities were divided into 4 categories according to the scale of environmental impact and the procedures of issuing of permits were correspondingly different. This is not active any more). It does not contain and consider any more the plans and projects on development, use of natural resources as the subjects to permit (which were defined as types of activities in the old law).

If some activity is taken place at a Ramsar site, the Ramsar requirements should be met.

In 2008, according to the legislative changes, a function of issuing of licenses for use of natural resources is given to the Ministry of Economic Development in agreement with and participation of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources.

4.7 Please describe the main features of your planning policy and provide examples of practical implementation (e.g. activities to minimising disturbance of species populations or limit the impact of species populations on crops or fisheries). Please summarize any land-use conflicts especially emphasising successful solutions to problems encountered in promoting the wise-use of waterbirds and their habitats.

5. Research and monitoring

Status of research and monitoring programmes for species

5.1 How are priorities for research identified in your country? Please briefly describe your country's research programmes, including any bilateral or multilateral co-operative action, for wetland habitats and for species covered by the Agreement (e.g. studies into species population, ecology and migratory patterns). Please append a list of research activities initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years.

Research programs are conducted by separately and independently by different scientifically oriented NGOs. Not having the unified monitoring system, we do not have the complete database and comprehensive monitoring system.

5.2 What monitoring activities does your country undertake, including any bilateral or multilateral cooperative action, of wetland areas and species covered by the Agreement (e.g. national monitoring schemes, International Waterfowl Census)? Please append a list of

monitoring activities or programmes initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years

For the time being a National Biodiversity Monitoring System is under development at the Ministry (at the initial stage).

6. Education and information

Training and development programmes

6.1 Describe the status of training and development programmes which support waterbird conservation and implement the AEWA Action Plan.

The ministry is considering to join **The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project** (the full title as “Enhancing conservation of the critical network of sites required by Migratory Waterbirds on the African-Eurasian Flyways”), aiming at improving of the conservation status of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds, by enhancing and coordinating the measures taken by GEF-eligible countries to conserve key critical wetland areas that these birds require to complete their annual cycle, including their stop-over sites during migration and their stay in wintering or non-breeding grounds. The project serves as a catalyst for integrating best practices into conservation efforts throughout the flyway; using existing coordinating mechanisms and commitments, it combines a high proportion of regional activities, aimed at all the GEF-eligible countries along the flyway (particularly training, exchange of know-how/best practices, and communications activities), with a number of national and site-based demonstration actions. The geographical remit of the project embraces the region covered by the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), stretching from Europe to Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

The overall outcome of the project will be the enhanced conservation of migratory waterbirds and their critical sites in the African-Eurasian flyways. The project is divided into the following three components with associated outputs that together form the foundations of a strategic and catalytic approach to Flyway scale conservation concept conservation:

A key focus of the WOW project is Training and Awareness creation through the provision and coordination of information sharing, expertise and resources to address priority gaps and needs at a Flyway scale conservation concept. The project will also entail the implementation of demonstration projects in 12 countries within the AEWA region, as well as the provision of know-how and support for regional training centres. These initiatives aim to demonstrate the advantages of the implementation of the AEWA and will also facilitate the dissemination of best practice and management activities at key sites in the AEWA region.

6.2 What bilateral or multilateral co-operative action is your country undertaking to develop training programmes and share examples of good practice?

Raising public awareness

6.3 Describe activities to raise public awareness of the objectives of the AEWA Action Plan. Please outline any particular successes generating public interest in, and securing support for, waterbird and wetland conservation (e.g. campaigns, information notes or other initiatives)?

7. Final comments

7.1 General comments on the implementation of the AEWA Action Plan

7.2 Observations concerning the functions and services of the various AEWA bodies

- a. The Agreement Secretariat*
- b. International organisations*
- c. AEWA NGO partners*

7.3 How might the Action Plan be further developed as a practical aid for national and international conservation of migratory waterbirds?

8. Progress to implement Resolutions and Recommendations of the Meeting of the Parties

Please summarize progress to implement decisions of previous Meetings of the Parties.

9. OPTIONAL SECTION – Planned and future actions

Contracting Parties are invited to outline below any further information regarding the aims of the Agreement, for example, planned actions or other informative examples.

1. Species conservation
2. Habitat conservation
3. Management of human activities
4. Research and monitoring
5. Education and information

List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

References

Appendices

Appendix 1: Status of Single Species Action Plans

Dalmatian pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	under development
Lesser white-fronted goose	<i>Anser erithropus</i>	under development
Red-breasted goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	under development
Marbled teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	under development
Whit-headed duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	under development

Appendix 2: List of sites of international importance

1. Kolkheti National Park
2. Kobuleti Natural Reserve
3. Javakheti Plateau Lakes:
 - a) Madatafa lake
 - b) Bugdasheni lake
 - c) Kartsakhi lake
 - d) Khanchali lake
4. Alazani river valley
5. Iori river valley
6. Low Kura valley
7. Jandara lake
8. Tabatskuri lake

Appendix 3: Status of management plans for sites of international importance

1. Kolkheti National Park developed
2. Kobuleti Natural Reserve developed
3. Javakheti Plateau Lakes: under development
 - a) Madatafa lake
 - b) Bugdasheni lake
 - c) Kartsakhi lake
 - d) Khanchali lake
4. Chorokhi delta under development

Appendix 4: List of research and monitoring programmes and projects

NGO - Birdlife Georgia (GCCW) since 1995 implements a research, monitoring and conservation of more than 20 vulnerable species of global level and more than 100 vulnerable species at the European level.

Birdlife Georgia (GCCW) is implementing the project ``*Development of an IBA Caretaker Network in the Priority Corridors*`` funded by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

Birdlife Georgia has conducted the project Integrated Wetland Management in Javakheti.

Birdlife Georgia is also implementing Inventory of Important Bird Areas, which covers 31 internationally recognized sites.

WWF Caucasus is implementing a Fresh Water Ecosystems Inventory Program.

NGO NACRES has implemented the project Conservation of Javakheti Plateau Wetlands in Southern Georgia, focused on inventory and monitoring of the species, creating a data base, monitoring of water resources and quality and main threats to Javakheti wetlands.

WB/GEF, Ministry of Environment of Georgia has implemented the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project.

WB/GEF and Ministry of Environment of Georgia are implementing Protected Areas Development program.

Birdlife International and Birdlife Georgia are implementing the project Monitoring of Migratory Flyway

Black Sea Regional Activity Center for Biodiversity Conservation has implemented a pilot project **Georgian Coastal Habitats Red Data Book**

Appendix 5: List of national institutions involved in migratory waterbird conservation

1. NGO - Birdlife Georgia (GCCW)
2. WWF Caucasus
3. Black Sea Regional Activity Center for Biodiversity Conservation (Batumi)

Appendix 6: List of relevant World Wide Web addresses for national institutions involved in migratory waterbird conservation

WWF Caucasus: www.panda.org/caucasus

Birdlife Georgia: www.gccw.org

KolxeTi National Park: www.knp.ge

Appendix 7: List of relevant migratory waterbird and habitat conservation projects initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years

Completed:

1. Integrated Coastal Zone Management project (WB/GEF)

Ongoing:

1. Establishment of Chorokhi Delta Protected Areas
2. Monitoring of Migratory Flyway Project (Birdlife International and Birdlife Georgia)
3. Conservation of Khanchali Lake (Birdlife Georgia)
4. Caucasus IBA (Important Bird Areas) Program
5. Protected Areas Development program (WB/GEF and Ministry of Environment of Georgia)

Initiated

1. Establishment of Protected Areas in Javakheti (WWF)
2. Javakheti Plateau National Park – WWF Caucasus office is to implement it with financial support of KfW.
3. Wetland Inventory in Georgia (Birdlife Georgia)