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**3<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE  
CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS (AEWA)**  
*23 – 27 October 2005, Dakar, Senegal*

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**REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE AEWA STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE  
3<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF PARTIES**

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Meeting of Parties, held in Bonn, Germany, in September 2002, the decision was taken by Resolution 2.6 to establish a Standing Committee (StC) for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). This means that this is the first time the Committee reports back to the Meeting of the Parties.

In the period 2003-2005 the StC held the following three meetings: StC1 (November 2003); StC2 (November 2004) and StC3 (July 2005), which were all held in Bonn and hosted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. On behalf of the Committee I would like to express our great appreciation for the support given by the German Government to the meetings of the Standing Committee.

At its first meeting members of the Standing Committee elected Tanzania as Chair and the Netherlands as Vice Chair.

From the beginning the meetings of the Standing Committee have been attended by Observers from different Contracting Parties. In addition to these Observers, Wetlands International, Bird Life International, CIC and IUCN were invited by the Chair to attend the meetings as Observers. It is evident that their knowledge and experience in the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats, as well as with ongoing activities in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, are and will continue to be an asset for the Committee.

Many issues were discussed during the meetings. The following is an overview of the main issues that have been discussed, and where applicable of the decisions taken by the StC.

## **Main issues discussed by the StC:**

1. **Draft Communication Strategy for the Agreement.** The consultant working on this assignment informed the Committee of the results of a scanning process undertaken. The StC reviewed these results and comments/remarks were submitted to the Consultant. Based on the feedback received from, amongst others, the StC, the Consultant drafted the Communication Strategy and presented it at the 2<sup>nd</sup> StC meeting. The Committee reviewed the Strategy and gave its comments and remarks; which were implemented. At StC3 it was agreed to submit the final draft of the Communication Strategy to MOP3 for formal adoption.
2. **Recruitment of new Contracting Parties.** At each StC the Depositary reported on the accession/ratification of the Agreement by various Range States. The StC reviewed the progress made and concluded that with the recruitment of 18 new Parties amounting to a total of 51 members as of 1 October 2005, the Agreement was progressing rapidly and to the full satisfaction of the Committee.
3. **Implementation of the Agreement.** At each meeting the StC reviewed the implementation of the AEWA International Implementation Priorities 2003-2007 and also noted that good progress had been made. Of the 41 projects listed, 14 are fully or partially implemented i.e. 34 per cent. The implementation of all these projects is more or less fully dependent on voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties or Partner Organisations. Since the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat in July 2000 a total amount of approximately US\$ 1 million has been accrued in voluntary contributions. The StC is aware that the Executive Secretary has played an important role in accruing voluntary contributions. On behalf of the Standing Committee, I would like to express our gratitude for the support we received by Parties and Partners to implement the Agreement. Many of the projects that have not received support so far are linked to the African-Eurasian Flyway GEF project. It is expected that these projects can be executed during the implementation of the GEF project.

The StC hopes that at this meeting all Contracting Parties will submit their National Reports, which will enable the Secretariat to analyse the status of implementation of the Agreement by the Contracting Parties. Later on the StC will review the outcome of this exercise.

4. **African-Eurasian Flyway GEF project:** The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, which has allocated EURO 1 million to this project, and AEWA are the major donors to the African-Eurasian Flyway GEF project. Therefore, the StC requested that Wetlands International update the Committee on progress with the project at each meeting. The GEF council approved the project at the end of 2004. Currently Wetlands International in

close cooperation with UNEP/GEF is doing its utmost to finalise the numerous documents needed to start the implementation of the project. It is foreseen that the GEF project will be launched before end of 2005. This project is the biggest GEF project developed so far under the CMS family and it is obvious that from a political and strategic point of view, its successful implementation is of extreme importance.

5. **Recruitment of Staff for the Agreements Secretariat.** During the last triennium the posts of Secretary/Assistant and Executive Secretary have been upgraded in accordance with Resolution 2.7. Also the post of Technical Officer has been established as foreseen by the same Resolution. The incumbent of the Secretary/Assistant post resigned in 2003. The recruitment process for the post of Technical Officer and the Administrative Assistant went relatively smoothly. Unfortunately, after upgrading the post of Executive Secretary, it transpired that to comply with new UN Staff Rules and Regulations the position had to be re-advertised. This was done in October 2003 and to date no interviews have taken place. The StC has twice expressed its concern in writing to the Executive Director of UNEP about the progress on recruitment for the post of Executive Secretary. The StC has also expressed its support for the re-appointment of the incumbent Executive Secretary, who has immensely contributed to the successful implementation of the Agreement. It is hoped that this process that has now been going on for two years can be finalized before end of 2005. The StC took note of the successful application from the Agreement Secretariat for a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) - Information Management. The Committee was pleased to learn that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany decided to grant a JPO to AEWA. It was foreseen that the officer will start work as of 1 October 2005. He will play an important role in the implementation of the Communication Strategy and in the development/implementation of the Communication Strategy for the African-Eurasian Flyway GEF project.
6. **Future development of the Agreement.** A major issue at the StC meetings has been the future development of the Agreement with regard to its taxonomic and geographical scope. As requested by MOP2 the Technical Committee (TC) further reviewed the development of the Agreement by inclusion of additional species of wetland birds and species that are traditionally considered to be seabirds. Also they looked at birds of prey, passerines and other taxonomic groups that are using wetlands. The outcome of this was a proposal for the inclusion of some seabird species that merit the criteria set out by the TC, which will be submitted to MOP3 for adoption. The discussion is expected to continue in the next triennium, with the question being raised as to whether there should be three or four bird agreements under the CMS umbrella for the African-Eurasian region or if AEWA should extend its taxonomic scope. Needless to say, such a discussion cannot take place without the involvement of CMS.

The second development that has been discussed at each meeting of the StC is the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Initiative. With support from the Netherlands and in close cooperation with CMS and AEWA, Wetlands International has drafted the CAF Action Plan. The CAF region encompasses 30 Range States of which 16 are located in the AEWA Agreement Area. The workshop *To conclude and endorse the proposed Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to conserve Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats*; was held in New Delhi, India in June 2005. The outcome of this workshop is laid down in the New Delhi Declaration that can be found in document Inf. 3.6. A proposal received from one of the Contracting Parties to extend the Agreement area in such a way that the 14 CAF countries located outside the current AEWA were covered by Agreement area has been discussed thoroughly, without consensus being reached on the way forward. It is important to underline that contribution on the subject by CMS will be vital if this matter has to go back to the negotiation table. This would open doors to the Range States in the area concerned to allow for consolidation of their ideas on the subject before forwarding the need to extend the flyway to the MOP for decision.

7. **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AEWA in 2005.** At the end of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Meeting; which was held from 14-16 June 1995 in The Hague, Netherlands; AEWA was concluded as a fully fledged treaty. This means that in 2005 the Agreement celebrated its tenth anniversary. To mark this anniversary the StC decided to establish the Migratory Waterbirds Day; to take place every year on the second weekend in April. This year it was celebrated in 22 countries, a remarkable success considering this was the first time it had been staged.

At the second meeting of the StC the Committee reviewed different designs for a new AEWA logo and selected the one that is being used today. The new logo and the new AEWA website are part of the activities to mark the tenth anniversary.

Another decision taken by the StC was the establishment of the AEWA Award for an institution and a person that had contributed extraordinarily to the development and/or implementation of the Agreement. A call for nominations was sent out in early 2005 and at its third meeting the StC reviewed the proposals received, and decided to which institution and person should receive the Award. The presentation of the first Award is scheduled for this meeting (MOP3), and the idea is to repeat this triennially at each MOP.

Some other activities to mark the tenth anniversary have been scheduled or have already taken place such as: AEWA exhibition *Impressions of Traveling Birds* in the Museum Koenig in Bonn, opened by Minister Trittin of the Germany Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and the booklet on 10 years AEWA to be launched at MOP3. The StC

attended the opening event of the exhibition and has contributed a text to the booklet.

8. **Cooperation with other bodies and processes.** The StC has reviewed the Joint Work Plan (JWP) between Wetlands International, CMS and AEWA, as well as the JWP between Ramsar, CMS and AEWA. These JWPs were concluded and signed in 2003 and 2004, respectively. The StC has taken note of the ongoing discussion between UNCCD, CMS and AEWA regarding the drafting of a JWP. The StC agreed that the Secretariat could draft a Memorandum of Cooperation with OMPO. Due to lack of human resources this is still pending.
9. **New UN Campus.** The StC has been regularly informed on developments regarding the so-called UN Campus in Bonn. The 19<sup>th</sup> floor of the building called the Langen Eugen has been allocated to the AEWA Secretariat and provides ample space for further growth of the Secretariat in the near future. By offering two buildings to the UN and developing the UN Campus, the German Government has made tremendous efforts to accommodate the UN Agencies based in Bonn. The StC has already expressed to the German Government its great appreciation for the support given to the AEWA Secretariat in this respect.
10. **Administrative and Financial Matters.** The Secretariat reported to each StC meeting on the status of income and expenditures. The StC decided annually how to re-allocate surpluses from the previous year to particular budget lines. The StC also decided how funds accrued through contributions received from new Parties that had acceded to the Agreement since 1 January 2003 should be used in line with Resolution 2.7. Although the budget available for the period 2003-2005 was under pressure due to losses in purchasing power, the StC noted that the Secretariat had taken adequate measures to avoid substantial deficits and had also done its utmost to reduce outstanding contributions from Contracting Parties.

A decision was taken regarding the eligibility of delegates for funding to attend AEWA meetings; this was in line with similar decisions taken by CMS.

At StC2 and StC3 the draft budget proposal for 2006-2008 was thoroughly reviewed and the Secretariat directed to amend the proposal in line with the outcome of these meetings. The final draft was approved for submission to this meeting (MOP3).

11. **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Parties.** The StC reviewed offers received from Contracting Parties to host MOP3, and a decision was taken to give Senegal the honor of hosting the meeting. The StC was regularly informed by the host Government and the Secretariat regarding progress made in respect to logistical arrangements and the preparation of substantial documents. At the

last StC meeting all draft Meeting papers and Resolutions were reviewed and the StC agreed that these could be submitted to MOP3.

On behalf of the StC, I would like to thank the Government of Senegal for their offer to host MOP3. I would also like to thank them for the support given with the organization of this meeting.

Finally I would like to thank all those that have participated at the StC meetings for their input in the various discussions and for the fruitful cooperation. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Secretariat for the tremendous efforts made to prepare the documentation in time for each StC meeting, and also for the logistical arrangements and accommodation for the delegates; which has contributed to the smooth running of all the meetings. I would like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee for their support, without which such fruitful meetings would not have been possible.