**8th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES** **TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS (AEWA)**

*26 - 30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary*

*“Strengthening Flyway Conservation in a Changing World”*

**Agenda item 7. Opening Statements**

**Africa’s opening statement**

Thank you Mr / Ms President

Eswatini is making this statement on behalf of AEWA’s Contracting Parties from the African region.

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.

Mr/Madam President, 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.

Mr/Madam President, Africa recognizes 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 Organizations 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 mobilization 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 COVID-19 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.

Recognizing the importance of the Secretariat in focusing on priorities and raising funds, and on actively supporting efforts to mobilize 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 prioritize fundraising activities to mobilize 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.

Mr/ Madam President, Contracting Parties from 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.

Mr/ Madam President, 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.

Thank you Mr / Ms President