



AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF  
AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS



5<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES  
14 – 18 May 2012, La Rochelle, France

*“Migratory waterbirds and people - sharing wetlands”*

RESOLUTION 5.7

**ADOPTION OF AMENDMENTS AND NEW GUIDANCE FOR INTERPRETATION OF  
TERMS USED IN THE CONTEXT OF TABLE 1 OF THE AEWA ACTION PLAN**

*Recalling* Resolution 3.3 that adopted guidance on the interpretation of the term “*significant long-term decline*” in the context of Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan and the call of the Meeting of the Parties to the Technical Committee to develop guidance for the interpretation of the other three criteria used in Table 1,

*Recalling* Resolution 4.12 that adopted definitions of criteria used in the context of Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan related to *concentration onto a small number of sites at any stage of its annual cycle and dependence (of a waterbird population) on a habitat type which is under severe threat* and requested the Technical Committee to develop guidance for interpretation of the term “*extreme fluctuations in population size or trend*”,

*Thanking* the Technical Committee for its work over the past quadrennium on developing guidance on the interpretation of the term “*extreme fluctuations in population size or trend*” and on revisiting the earlier adopted guidance on the interpretation of the term “*significant long-term decline*”,

*Referring to* the proposed amendments and new definition presented in documents AEWA/MOP 5.21 and AEWA/MOP 5.22, respectively,

*Noting* the amendment of the wording of the term “*extreme fluctuations*” to “*large fluctuations*” used in the context of Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan (categories A3d and B2d) as approved by Resolution 5.6,

*Recognising* the benefits of ensuring that definitions adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA to aid interpretation of the Agreement are easily accessible to all.

*The Meeting of the Parties:*

1. *Adopts* the following definition of the term “*large fluctuations in population size or trend*” used in the context of Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan:

Large fluctuations can be said to occur where population size or distribution area varies widely, rapidly and frequently, typically with a variation greater than a factor of two (i.e., doubling or halving) within a short period of time (typically three years or one generation, whichever is longer);

2. *Adopts* the definition of and guidance for interpretation of the term “*significant long-term decline*” as set out in Appendix 1 to this resolution to replace the definition and guidance previously adopted by Resolution 3.3;

3. *Requests* the Secretariat to compile into a single document all definitions adopted by the Meeting of the Parties since its first Session in Cape Town in 1999 and to make this available on the AEWA website.

## **Definition of and Guidance for interpretation of the term “*significant long-term decline*” of waterbird populations**

### **Definition**

A population in 'significant long-term decline' is one where the best available data, information or assessments indicate that it has declined by at least 25% in numbers or range over a period of 25 years or 7.5 generations, whichever is the longer or when similar decline can be predicted based on at least 10 years of the most recent data.

### **Guidance for the application of this definition**

1. Where there are only poor quantitative assessments of trends at the international scale, international trends should be assessed on the basis of best expert knowledge and other available information bearing in mind the scale of decline indicated in the definition above.
2. Where one biogeographical population shows different trends in different countries, a decline of at least 25% in numbers or range over a period of 25 years or 7.5 generations in over half the countries for which information is available; this indicates that the population is in significant long-term decline. If for certain populations information is available for a period of more than 25 years, this would be preferred.
3. Trend information for biogeographical populations at international scales is not always available over 25 year periods or 7.5 generations. In such situations, equivalent rates of decline may be used over shorter periods, but not shorter than 11 years, and based on a sustained decline at an annual rate that would produce 25% decline over the above mentioned period.
4. The delimitation of decline rates resulting from natural fluctuations should be based on the best expert knowledge, including information on the availability of suitable habitats.
5. Care is needed in applying this definition to monitoring data uncritically. There may be instances where a change of a population's range or distribution results in a decrease in numbers of a population counted, as a consequence of a greater proportion of the population now occurring in areas where there is less monitoring. Lower thresholds may be appropriate for decreasing range where it is accompanied by population decrease. Raw count data will always need expert interpretation.
6. The geometric mean of population size ranges should generally be taken as the basis of population trend calculations. Following IUCN Red List criteria definitions, generation length is the average generation length of parents of the current population. Each significant long-term decline revealed by the above-mentioned calculations will be examined, analysed and approved by the Technical Committee.

Where the size of a population is known to be low (<100,000), expert judgments as to trend status should be undertaken on a precautionary basis. This is especially important given recent findings of a low genetic variation of a number of waterbird populations - the implication being that the effective population size is much (possibly by a factor of 10) smaller than the observed population size. In these cases, a population may become unviable in the long-term (owing to vulnerability to changing environmental events) at a higher population size than previously thought.