



AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF
AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS

20th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
2 March 2022, Virtual Conference Format

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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Summary of StC20 Decisions

AGENDA ITEM		DECISION
Agenda item 2	Adoption of the Agenda	The agenda was adopted with one minor change.
Agenda item 3	Adoption of the Report of the 19 th Meeting of the Standing Committee	The report of the 19 th Meeting of the Standing Committee was adopted.
Agenda item 4	Update on the Preparation of MOP8 and Discussion on the Format of the Meeting	In-person MOP to be prepared including facilities for delegates prevented to travel by national regulation to join online. For MOP8 documents that are either new or will be revised and which are not ready by the next StC meeting for review and approval, the StC will consider whether to approve them by correspondence or to convene another short meeting in July.
Agenda item 9	Date and Venue of the 21 st Meeting of the Standing Committee	StC21 will take place online between 31 May and 2 June 2022. An exact date will be confirmed through a doodle poll.

Agenda item 1. Opening of the Meeting

1. The Standing Committee Chair, United Kingdom, and representative of Europe and Central Asia, Mr Simon Mackown, opened the 20th Meeting of the Standing Committee (StC) by warmly welcoming all participants. He especially welcomed Mr Volodymyr Domashlinets, Ukraine, and representative of Europe and Central Asia, who was attending under the extreme circumstances of the war in the Ukraine and hoped that he and his family were safe.

Agenda item 2. Adoption of the Agenda

2. Referring to document AEWA/StC20.1, *Provisional Agenda*, Mr Mackown noted that it was a light agenda and was hopeful to get through it during the morning rather than the whole day.

3. Mr Sergey Dereliev, Head of the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit at the AEWA Secretariat, reminded everyone that agenda item 8 *Update on the open cases under the AEWA Implementation Review Process* would be a closed session for the StC members only and would be moved to the end of the agenda.

4. With that the agenda was adopted.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The agenda was adopted with one minor change.</i>
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Agenda item 3. Adoption of the Report of the 19th Meeting of the Standing Committee

5. As there were no comments, the report of the 19th Meeting of the Standing Committee was adopted.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The report of the 19th Meeting of the Standing Committee was adopted.</i>
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Agenda item 4. Update on the Preparation of MOP8 and Discussion on the Format of the Meeting

6. Mr Jacques Trouvilliez, AEWAs Executive Secretary, gave a brief update on the preparation of MOP8.

7. He informed everyone that the Host Government Agreement has been amended and was now with the Hungarian Government for approval. The venue was still under scrutiny but could possibly be the HungExpo.

8. Regarding the format of the meeting, Mr Trouvilliez reminded everyone that it was previously agreed not to have a hybrid meeting, due to inclusiveness issues. He explained, however, that although there was quite some optimism for an in-person meeting, there could still be some governments not allowing their delegates to travel should COVID cases increase. Therefore, hybrid facilities at the venue should be considered.

9. Mr Gabor Magyar, representative of the Host Country of MOP8, confirmed that hybrid meetings have been held at the HungExpo, hence, the facilities were available. He added that logistical preparations for MOP8 were already underway.

10. Mr Mackown thought that the hybrid option seemed sensible. However, he insisted that there needed to be strict criteria regarding eligibility for joining the meeting online. Delegates would have to prove that their government would not allow them to travel rather than saying that they simply did not want to travel.

11. Furthermore, Mr Mackown pointed out that some of the elements of the UN COVID guidance would probably change as the situation developed, but that some would still apply, such as the vaccination guidance. There needed to be clarity on what the expectations were so that participants could organise themselves accordingly.

12. Mr Trouvilliez stated that the AEWAs Secretariat would emphasise the need for all MOP8 participants to disclose their vaccination status at the time of registration.

13. Mr Mackown wondered about the procedure for finalising MOP8 documents since many documents had been approved previously and some were still pending approval. Would that be done in another meeting or through written correspondence?

14. Mr Trouvilliez explained that the AEWAs Secretariat would compile a list of documents that have already been cleared. If there were no changes to those documents, they would need no further review. In addition, there would also be a list of documents that would be revised and one list of new documents. There would then be another StC meeting at the end of May or early June to review all the revised and new documents. For those documents that were not ready by then there could be a written consultation.

<i>Decisions</i>	<i>In-person MOP to be prepared including facilities for delegates prevented to travel by national regulation to join online. For MOP8 documents that are either new or will be revised and which are not ready by the next StC meeting for review and approval, the StC will consider whether to approve them by correspondence or to convene another short meeting in July.</i>
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Agenda item 5. Update on the 17th Meeting of the Technical Committee held on 8 February 2022

15. Ms Ruth Cromie, Chair of the AEWA Technical Committee (TC) briefly updated all participants on the 17th Meeting of the Technical Committee (TC17).

16. Ms Cromie said that the delay of MOP8 provided the opportunity for the TC to continue its workplan. She noted that the majority of the meeting was spent on going through the tasks of the workplan that had been completed, which tasks were pending and could still be completed by MOP8 and on which tasks work could already begin for the next triennium. Following the meeting a summary of the tasks to be undertaken by MOP8 was produced.

17. Ms Cromie highlighted some of the work for the next triennium that had already started. The first meeting of the ad-hoc working group on sustainable harvest would take place the following week. The seabird work was also in development. Finally, she thanked the AEWA Secretariat for its continued professionalism.

18. Mr Dereliev added that the outcome of TC17 was straightforward and that there was now a clear overview of tasks to be completed by MOP8.

Agenda item 6. Overview of Tasks Implemented by the Secretariat in 2022

19. Referring to document AEWA/StC20.2 *Overview of Tasks Implemented by the Secretariat in 2022*, Mr Mackown noted that this document was requested specifically by Germany and the Netherlands.

20. Mr Trouvilliez explained that there was no template yet for the programme of work, but that the AEWA Secretariat had agreed to provide an overview. The tasks were divided between the four units of the Secretariat and the priority for 2022 was to focus on preparations for MOP8.

21. Mr Nick Warmelink, representing the Netherlands and the Depositary, thanked the AEWA Secretariat for drafting the overview despite its limited resources. He noted that Germany and the Netherlands felt it was an important procedural step to compile a workplan in this special transition year. When the Netherlands learned in December 2021 that the AEWA Secretariat did not intend to establish a workplan for 2022 because it was not mandated to do so, they wrote a joint letter with Germany to the StC Chair requesting for the mandate. The Netherlands was very pleased that the AEWA Secretariat took the time to compile such an extensive list of tasks but would have ideally liked to see it be linked to the budget. This would allow the StC to provide better guidance on priorities and contemplate on activities that could be postponed possibly releasing some pressure on the AEWA Secretariat.

22. Mr Oliver Schall, representative of Germany, echoed what Mr Warmelink said. He emphasised that the intention was not to get a list of tasks, but the EUR amounts against each of them. He added

that Germany was disappointed about the Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) situation. There was an EU meeting where the situation was discussed, and all EU parties underlined without a doubt the priority for SSAPs. Therefore, Germany would have liked to see that the AEWA Secretariat gave more attention and priority to the issue.

23. Mr Schall continued to explain that it was not possible to hold the meeting of the European Seaduck working group because the support of the AEWA Secretariat was lacking. He had also learned that it was difficult to get Germany's voluntary contribution spent on the realisation of the joint Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew meeting because the AEWA Secretariat still argued that it did not have the substantial support, whereby only the Finance Officer was concerned and not the Programme Officer formally encumbered by Nina Mikander. Mr Schall said that it was a shame that the work concerning the SSAPs had been completely put on ice. He thought that everyone felt there was a real necessity to keep working on those issues.

24. Mr Schall furthermore noted that time was available for work on eco-friendly tourism and was therefore doubtful whether the AEWA Secretariat was setting the right priorities. A workplan with a budget put against the tasks would have therefore been helpful for the StC to make decisions regarding the priorities of the Secretariat.

25. Reflecting on Mr Schall's and Mr Warmelink's interventions, Mr Mackown thought it was important to take into consideration the amount of time the AEWA Secretariat would invest on this requested detailed costed workplan and that it created even more pressure on the Secretariat. Also, he thought that the issue was not money but staff availability and time.

26. Mr Mackown did agree though with the Netherlands and Germany that one could not work that out from the document the AEWA Secretariat had compiled. It was not clear where exactly the time pressures were and why it was not possible to support the mentioned working group meetings.

27. Mr Trouvilliez reminded everyone that the AEWA Secretariat was clearly understaffed, even when the position funded by Norway was still encumbered. He was happy to see that all EU member states agreed that the SSAPs were useful, which was one of the Agreement's best tools to improve the conservation status of many species. He called upon the EU member states and the European Commission to raise the funding to restore the position dealing with SSAPs and to even consider having two officers dealing with these important issues. Finally, Mr Trouvilliez emphasised that it was time to stop increasing the tasks of the AEWA Secretariat without increasing the number of staff.

28. Mr Dereliev explained that there was very little staff time within the units of the AEWA Secretariat that were listed in the workplan and pointed out that the entire Secretariat essentially had only 1.5 positions under the core budget dealing with substantive matters. With that capacity all mandates in terms of substantive delivery needed to be implemented. He urged Parties to bear that in mind when assigning tasks to the Secretariat.

29. He went on to inform everyone that staff had been working 10-12 hours a day, which was extremely challenging. The Secretariat did not want to end up in a situation where staff were not able to work anymore because of health hazards.

30. With respect to the SSPAs situation and the reaction it had provoked from Germany and the Netherlands, Mr Dereliev said that the facts needed to be set straight. It was incorrect that the Secretariat had suspended the work on the coordination of the SSAPs. The Secretariat had to adjust its workplan in that respect and in view of the reduced capacity in the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit (SICU). The Secretariat was currently involved in the coordination of 8 SSAPs,

which was way beyond the existing capacity. Some of the work therefore needed to be done in the staff's private time, which was not appreciated by the Parties. If staff had to strictly work within the 8-hour contractual arrangements, they would be working on much less action plans and on much less areas of work.

31. Mr Dereliev said he would appreciate if this was made clear to all Parties for them to realise that the Secretariat had been doing much more over the years than what it had capacity for. He reminded everyone that the Secretariat has not had an increase in the core budget since 2008. Despite of that, the Secretariat was assigned more and more tasks with every MOP. Even when the position of the Species Officer was encumbered, the Secretariat was still not able to coordinate all SSAPs, let alone to fulfil all the mandates that the Secretariat had been tasked with. The Secretariat had been given the trust and liberty to prioritise dynamically to be able to fulfil the most urgent and important tasks. It has been a very intense process which led to most of the staff routinely working overtime.

32. Mr Dereliev repeated that this was a challenging situation for most staff and that it created health hazards, which had to be considered. There needed to be a clear match between mandates and available capacity so that there would be no expectation that the Secretariat would be working beyond the call of duty consistently as staff had been doing over the past decade. When adjustments needed to be made due to lack of capacity negative feedback was received.

33. Referring the Mr Schall's example of the work on eco-tourism, Mr Dereliev clarified that that was a TC task. And because the Secretariat had been tasked to support the TC and funding has been received for implementing that task it had to be implemented against the contractual arrangements the Secretariat had with the donor.

34. Finally, Mr Dereliev assured everyone that the Secretariat was doing its best to work with all the priorities that had been set by the Parties and to fulfil as many mandates as possible despite the decreasing resources in the Secretariat.

35. Mr Mackown thanked Mr Dereliev for his detailed explanations and appreciated the additional work the Secretariat staff had been doing.

36. Mr de Barsac, representative of France, currently chairing the EU, clarified that Germany and the Netherland spoke only on their own behalf as there was no common view at the last EU meeting in December. Of course, all member states found a Programme of Work very useful but at the last MOP, when Parties adopted the budget and the resolutions, the Secretariat was put in an unusual situation again as the Secretariat did not have the necessary resources to do what was requested by Parties. The new template should allow better discussions and decisions.

37. Mr Warmelink thanked Mr Trouvilliez and Mr Dereliev for their clarifications. He stressed that the workplan was not requested to increase the amount of work as the pressure the Secretariat was under was well understood. He thought that the current situation underlined the need for having such a workplan to see whether certain activities could be postponed lightening the burden of the Secretariat.

38. Mr Mackown could see the value in having a workplan for 2022 but wondered how pragmatic it was. If there was a desire to work further on the document, Mr Mackown could not see the value in it considering the next StC meeting would be end of May/early June when the priority clearly was to plan for MOP8. He questioned the usefulness of going into the depth of it now. If there were tasks the Parties would like to see prioritised there could possibly be specific discussions around the feasibility of working on those.

39. Mr Schall pointed out that Germany did not only question the prioritisation, but also the postponement of certain tasks benefiting the work on the SSAPs. Germany fully appreciated the difficult situation of the Secretariat. Mr Schall did however reiterate his request to spend the German voluntary contribution on the Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew meeting still in 2022.

40. Mr Warmelink agreed with what Mr Mackown said in that there was no use in returning to the workplan at the next StC meeting but hoped there could be a discussion at this meeting about which tasks could be postponed.

41. Mr Dereliev reminded everyone that his was the only position that currently dealt with SSAPs and explained that his agenda for the year was full still having to deliver several major documents to the upcoming MOP. He hoped that the Parties appreciated that that was currently the highest priority. In addition, there was ongoing TC work that he supported. He personally did not see any opportunity for postponing any of the tasks on his workplan for 2022. Mr Dereliev said that he was in touch with the coordinators of the Seaducks, Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit working groups regularly conferring with them on matters to be discussed with the Secretariat.

42. With respect to the Seaducks, it was understood that it was going to be an online meeting in April. With respect to the funding received from Germany for the Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit meeting, Mr Dereliev was not sure what the issue was, because the Secretariat had communicated that it was possible to outsource the work. The Secretariat had never declined the option of disbursing the funding to RSPB or Sovon, that are the two coordinating organisations for the two action plans concerned.

43. Mr Dereliev furthermore clarified that it was not only the Finance Officer involved in spending the funds, which is what Mr Schall had stated, but also the Programme Officer and Programme Management Assistant. He therefore suggested that in future countries disburse funding in support of such activities directly to the third party. This would save the Secretariat an immense amount of time.

44. Referring to what Mr Dereliev said regarding different Officers being involved in spending voluntary contributions, Mr Trouvilliez emphasised the burden of the administrative work that has been put on the Secretariat staff over the past years with the introduction of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System called UMOJA. This would have to be mentioned to the Parties during MOP8.

45. Mr Warmelink thanked Mr Dereliev once again for his further clarifications and thought that he now had the answer in that no tasks could be postponed in 2022. He was furthermore pleased to hear that there had obviously been a misunderstanding regarding the spending of funds for the Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit meeting and hoped the meeting could still take place in 2022.

46. Mr Joseph van der Stegen, representative of the European Commission, thought it would be worth having a discussion on how to spend donor funds more efficiently in the future.

47. In conclusion, Mr Mackown thought the discussion had been useful and that there were a lot of lessons to be learned. It was clear that the Secretariat had more on its plate that it could cope with. He suggested that if there were areas across the Secretariat that staff would like to see postponed but felt they could not, they could provide those in writing for the StC to provide guidance. Other than that, Mr Mackown did not feel there was a need for any further follow up at the next StC meeting. Everyone agreed with that.

Agenda item 7. Secretariat Plan of Work 2023-2025

48. Referring to document AEWA/StC20.3 *Template for AEWA Secretariat Programme of Work 2023-2025*, Mr Trouvilliez noted that the discussions during the previous agenda item showed that it would be useful to have such a template for the next triennium.

49. Mr Trouvilliez explained that the StC was now requested to review the template the Secretariat proposed and briefly outlined the structure of the document. Depending on the outcome of the budget discussions at the next StC meeting the document may perhaps need to be somewhat reshaped.

50. Mr Mackown thought the tables including the percentages of staff time and costs of tasks in the document were very useful and helped in taking decisions and in prioritising. He assumed that the next step would be for the Secretariat to populate the document more once the budget scenarios were worked out, which Mr Trouvilliez confirmed.

51. Ms Iva Obretenova, representative of the European Commission, agreed that the document was very useful and wondered if the tasks that would be subject to fundraising activities could be made clearer. She also wondered if it was possible to show the annual costs rather than for the whole triennium.

52. Mr Trouvilliez confirmed that the amounts for fundraising could be indicated and what impact it could have on the staffing. Regarding Ms Obretenova's second point, Mr Trouvilliez said that it could be explained how the workflow was organised throughout the triennium, but that splitting the calculations into three years would take a lot of time.

53. Mr Mackown agreed that an annual breakdown might be useful but was cautious about going into too much detail as it could potentially become just too much.

Agenda item 8. Update on the Open Cases Under the AEWA Implementation Review Process

-CLOSED SESSION-

Agenda item 9. Date and Venue of the 21st Meeting of the Standing Committee

54. Mr Trouvilliez noted that the next meeting of the StC was planned to take place for one day online between 31 May and 2 June 2022. The AEWA Secretariat would send a doodle poll to all StC members to confirm a date. If it turned out that an additional meeting was needed, it could take place in the week of 4 July 2022.

Decision

StC21 will take place online between 31 May and 2 June 2022. An exact date will be confirmed through a doodle poll.

Agenda item 10. Any Other Business

55. Mr Domashlinets said that the current military action happening in the Ukraine had a huge impact on migratory species and hoped that the war would end soon. He expressed his gratitude for the support from all around the world and from the AEWA Secretariat and the StC in particular.

56. Mr Mackown reiterated what he said at the beginning of the meeting, sharing his heartfelt sympathies and hoping for a quick conclusion between Ukraine and Russia.

57. Mr Trouvilliez echoed what Mr Mackown said and sincerely thanked Mr Domashlinets for attending the meeting despite the situation his country was in.

Agenda item 11. Closure of the Meeting

58. Mr Trouvilliez thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He assured that the AEWA Secretariat would work on the Secretariat Programme of Work linking it to the different budget scenarios. A revised document should be ready by the end of April. He requested that further comments or ideas were welcome and to be sent to the AEWA Secretariat via email copying the StC Chair. Finally, Mr Trouvilliez thanked Mr Mackown for his efficient chairing as always.

59. Mr Mackown thanked everyone for their active participation in the meeting and looked forward to the next meeting of the StC at the end of May/early June.

60. With that the Chair declared the Meeting closed.