



SIXTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
16 – 17 June 2010, The Hague, the Netherlands

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN INITIATIVE

Introduction

The African Initiative, adopted at the 4th Meeting of the Parties (MOP4) to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) in September 2008 in Madagascar, was launched in August 2009 through the recruitment of a Coordinator for the initiative based at the AEWA Secretariat in Bonn. The African Initiative is funded by a substantial voluntary contribution received from the French Government in 2009. This report on the activities carried out under the African Initiative, which is coordinated by the AEWA Secretariat, complements the report of the Secretariat (Doc StC 6.6).

To follow up on the negative trends reported for AEWA populations in Africa as stated in the 4th edition of the report on the conservation status of migratory waterbirds in the agreement area, Resolution 4.9¹, the African Initiative was adopted in order to deal with the issues contributing to these negative trends. The focus of this initiative is therefore on boosting the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa.

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. Objectives and activities planned for the African Initiative
2. Activities carried out and outcomes
3. Future activities and conclusion

The current report is based on the activities and outcomes in period from August 2009 to May 2010.

1. Objectives and activities planned for the African Initiative

In order to ensure structured and coordinated follow-up on the status of AEWA populations using the African region, Resolution 4.9 on the African Initiative highlighted key issues to be addressed under this initiative. Furthermore, the AEWA Secretariat identified key activities which required particular attention for the region, in order to boost the implementation of AEWA in the region. This permitted to outline the following principal activities to be executed by the coordinator of the African Initiative, in the framework of the implementation of this initiative:

- To draft a Plan of Action (PoA) for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa, including a proposal for priority areas or activities, to be submitted for adoption to MOP5 in 2012;
- To identify possible synergies and enhance cooperation with other relevant conventions and organizations with regard to AEWA-related activities and projects in Africa;
- To assist with the implementation of the Agreement's Small Grants Fund Programme in Africa;
- To promote and encourage the implementation of the African Initiative;
- To initiate, stimulate and support the implementation of AEWA by African countries and provide advisory services when needed;
- To encourage the accession of non-Contracting Parties (non-CPs) to the Agreement.

¹ Resolution 4.9: http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop4_docs/final_res_pdf/res4_9_conservation_in_africa_final.pdf

2. Activities carried out and outcomes

2.1. Plan of Action (PoA) for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa

Resolution 4.9 “*instructs the Secretariat, resources permitting, in close cooperation with the Technical Committee, to draft a plan of action for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa, including a proposal for priority areas, to be submitted to MOP5*”. As such, this is one of the core tasks of the Coordinator for the African initiative. This aims to identify activities which need to be carried out in order to ensure a more effective and coordinated implementation of AEWA in the region. The initial phase included an assessment of the implementation needs in Africa. So far, necessary existing documents and materials (e.g. the Agreement text, Action Plan, Strategic Plan (2009-2017), International Implementation Tasks (2009-2016), resource documents/ reports and publications from AEWA and partner organisations involved in biodiversity conservation in Africa – e.g. the UNEP regional office in Africa, NEPAD, the African Union, BirdLife International, Wetlands International), have been consulted. This phase has provided background information on the major gaps and urgent needs for the implantation of AEWA in Africa, and is still on-going.

A questionnaire to request further detailed information from the AEWA Ranges States and Partners was prepared. However, following advice from the Technical Committee, this approach was exchanged for direct preparation of a preliminary draft PoA for consultation with the AEWA Range States and Partners. This process is currently on-going and the preliminary draft PoA includes implementation needs in Africa as identified at the previous AEWA MOPs, AEWA-related projects and workshops, consultation with partner organizations working on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa and other sources.

In order to provide further concrete information for consideration in the PoA, the Coordinator for the African Initiative will continue to consult with the coordinator for the UNEP/GEF Wings Over Wetlands Project (WOW) on ensuring the use of the outcomes and lessons learnt from WOW in the framework of the African Initiative. Key partners working in the region would also be visited for further consultation, information exchange and cooperation (e.g. Tour du Valat in May 2010, Wetlands International in June 2010, WCMC office in July 2010, etc.).

The 1st draft of the PoA is expected to be ready by March 2011 for consultation and comments.

2.2. Cooperation with other relevant conventions and organizations

Resolution 4.9 equally “*instructs the AEWA Secretariat to envisage synergies and to enhance cooperation with existing activities of other relevant conventions and organizations in Africa...*” The Coordinator for the African Initiative has assessed activities and projects on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats in Africa, in order to identify and propose opportunities for new for synergy or the possibility of strengthening existing collaborations. The following activities can be highlighted under this objective:

- Participation at the Training of Trainers (ToT) course in Limbe, Cameroon (November 2009)², organised by Wetlands International in the framework of the WOW Project. The Coordinator delivered a presentation on AEWA with emphasis on the African Initiative, thus, throwing more light on the essence of the Flyway modules delivered. She also responded to questions raised on certain crucial aspects of the implementation of AEWA, had meetings with the course organisers to exchange information on carrying on with the WOW outputs through the African Initiative, met with country representatives concerning priorities for their countries/sub-regions and followed up on accession of non-CPs to AEWA;
- Participation at the BirdLife/MAVA Foundation project development workshop in Dakar, Senegal (December 2009)³ aimed at the participative elaboration of a project proposal for the conservation of migratory waterbirds along the coast of West Africa. The Coordinator again delivered a presentation on AEWA and its African Initiative, encouraged the consideration of AEWA issues for the elaboration of the project proposal (particularly for the implementation and development of Single Species Action

² WOW ToT course: http://www.unep-awea.org/news/news_elements/2009/wow_cameroon_tot_workshop_nov2009.htm

³ BirdLife/MAVA workshop: http://www.unep-awea.org/news/news_elements/2009/mava_senegal_workshop_2009.htm

Plans (SSAP)), the consideration of all AEWA Species occurring in the project area and the need to highlight the importance of accession of Non-Contracting Parties). Discussions were held with Non-Contracting Party representatives to follow-up on accession (Sierra Leone) and first hand information was obtained from experts present, on the gaps and priorities for the conservation of migratory waterbirds in West Africa;

- Participation at the regional workshop on the application of the Critical Sites Network Tool (CSN)⁴, organised in the framework of the WetCap Project, in Mehdiya, Kenitra, Morocco (December 2009). A presentation was delivered on AEWA and the status of the WetCap project, information was gathered on progress made on the development of the CSN Tool, hands-on information was obtained on priority species for conservation in North Africa and discussions were held with the AEWA contact persons in Morocco and Mauritania on accession;
- Contact was made with the African team at the Ramsar Secretariat to encourage a cooperative approach for an advisory mission to a Site of Biological Importance and Ramsar Site (SIBE de la Moulouya), under threats from human-induced activities and of importance for many AEWA Species, including the Vulnerable Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) and Near Threatened Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*). A Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) with the participation of AEWA is planned for July 2010. Follow-up was ensured with the Ramsar Secretariat on the participation of the AEWA Secretariat at a RAM organised for the Cayo-Lefoualeba Ramsar Site in Congo, in June 2010;
- The initiation of a collaborative approach with the Secretariats of the Ramsar Convention, CMS and AEWA was ensured, to evaluate information received on threats to the Inner Niger Delta (IND) Ramsar Site in Mali (a Site of prior importance for numerous AEWA species and the livelihood of the riverine populations). A joint letter from these three Secretariats has been prepared and sent to the Government of Mali for follow-up;
- Contact is assured with the Coordinator for the WOW project, in order to identify possibilities for making use of the products and lessons learnt from the WOW project, in the framework of the African Initiative;
- Communication was initiated with the UNEP Regional Office in Africa (UNEP/ROA) for future cooperation in their activities related to education and capacity building in Africa. Suggestions have already been launched for Egypt, Mali, Namibia, Cameroon and Rwanda, for UNEP/ROA activities to mark the World Environment Day;
- New synergies have been initiated with other organisations concerned with the conservation of migratory waterbirds in Africa. In particular, with the International Crane Foundation/Endangered Wildlife Trust Partnership for activities on the Conservation of African Cranes and Wageningen International for possible incorporation of the Flyway component in their well-established annual course for wetlands managers;
- Efforts have been initiated towards establishing a stronger relation between AEWA and the African Union, an important body for policy advocacy in the region;
- The French Government has proposed additional technical support from the “Tour du Valat” research centre, for the implementation of the African Initiative, and discussions have been launched in this regard, with effectiveness from 2012. A visit has been organised to this research centre for May 2010, for information exchange and proposals for future cooperation.

2.3. The Agreement's Small Grants Fund Programme in Africa

The first cycle of the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF) Programme was launched in 2010 and relevant for Africa only, given the limited funds available. The Coordinator contributed to commenting on the operational guidelines for the AEWA SGF programme, prior to its adoption by the Standing Committee (StC) members. Following the launch of the call for proposals in January 2010, contributions were offered for advisory services to project proponents. After the deadline for submission of project proposals (30 April 2010), project proposals received were registered. Assistance will be provided for the evaluation of project proposals and subsequent selection of feasible projects for submission to the AEWA StC (which will decide which final projects to be funded). The Evaluation process is currently on-going. Currently, 31 project proposals were received for the 2010 cycle, of which 16 qualify for the evaluation process. Amongst the 15 which have not yet qualified for the 2010 evaluation phase, six lack endorsement from the respective AEWA

⁴ CSN Tool workshop: http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/news_elements/morocco_workshop.htm

National Focal Point, four requested for implementation assistance in non-CPs, three owe contributions to AEWA in arrears of more than 3 years and 2 were submitted in the wrong format.

2.4. Promote and encourage the implementation of the African Initiative

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the African Initiative, it is essential for the initiative to be well-known, recognised and appreciated by the African countries, AEWA Partners and other possible partners and donors. In this light, the following activities have contributed to ensuring this recognition:

- The preparation, printing and distribution of an information leaflet⁵ for the African Initiative;
- Ensured the establishment of a web-page for the African Initiative⁶ in the framework of AEWA activities;
- Delivered presentations when representing the AEWA Secretariat at meetings and workshops, during which the African Initiative was introduced (e.g. in Cameroon, Senegal and Morocco as mentioned above);
- Assisted with the search for funding for the implementation of AEWA in Africa. For example, with the preparation of project proposals for funding by the Swiss and German Governments (the former being approved), and assisted the Executive Secretary in seeking additional funds from the French Government for the 2010 Cycle of the AEWA SGF programme and the WOW project (which have been equally approved).

2.5. Advisory services for the implementation of AEWA in Africa

To ensure that adequate attention is offered to the requests coming from and/or concerned with the implementation of AEWA in Africa, the Coordinator for the African Initiative responds, on a daily basis, to requests, questions and issues relevant to the region. Some examples to highlight include:

- Assistance was provided to develop a project proposal which yielded funds from the Swiss Government for the elaboration of a SSAP for the Slaty Egret. Assistance is being offered to implement this activity;
- Assistance was offered to follow-up on payment of annual dues by African Contracting Parties (CPs) to the AEWA General Trust Fund. This has resulted in Mali recently paying for the period of 2000 to 2010.

2.6. Accession of Non-Contracting Parties

Given that over 50% of African countries are not yet Contracting Parties to AEWA and that the Strategic Plan highlights the importance of extending the membership of the Agreement, encouraging the accession of Non-Contracting Parties in Africa has been closely followed-up by the Coordinator. To this avail, communication was continued/ re-instated for the 29 non-CPs in Africa to encourage accession. This resulted in updating of contact details for some contact persons, preparation of information on the importance of accession to AEWA for transmission to countries concerned, and/or encouraging the organisation of workshops to promote AEWA. Encouraging responses were received for 23 cases. In summary:

- Ethiopia: which was relatively advanced with the accession process, has now acceded as the 63rd Party to the Agreement. Some steps needed to welcome the new party have been ensured;
- Swaziland: which was equally advanced in the process has been closely followed-up. The Swaziland Government Cabinet has approved the signature of the Ramsar Convention, CMS and AEWA. The Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) continues to follow-up on this, in close collaboration with the AEWA Secretariat;
- Zambia: the dossier for accession has been prepared by the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) and recently presented to the ZAWA Board of Directors for review and consideration. The documents and hopefully the Board's approval, would subsequently be transmitted to the Ministry of Wildlife for review and consideration, and then the Ministry of Justice for Final review and approval;
- Burkina Faso: a workshop to promote their accession to AEWA is being organised by the Department of Wildlife and Hunting, of the Ministry of Environment and Livelihood, in collaboration with the AEWA Secretariat;

⁵ African Initiative leaflet: http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/africaninitiative/publication/african_initiative_leaflet.pdf

⁶ African Initiative webpage: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/africaninitiative.htm>

- Cameroon: The Coordinator met with officials of the Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), including the Minister, Prof. Ngolle Ngolle Elvis, the Secretary General of MINFOF (Mr. Koulagna Denis), amongst others. This aimed to inquire on the status of their accession to AEWA and the CMS Gorilla Agreement. Presentations were made on the importance of Cameroon's accession to these Agreements and the necessary documents transmitted to the officials. The Minister and the Secretary General confirmed the interest of the Country in acceding to these Agreements and promised to ensure that the processes are monitored;
- Gabon: The coordinator met with Director General for Forestry, the Secretary General for Environment and other representatives of the Ministry of Water, Forestry, Environment and Sustainable Development, to promote their accession to AEWA. The importance of Gabon's accession to AEWA was presented and the necessary documents provided. There was a positive impression about the need for their accession to AEWA and the authorities promised to ensure timely completion of the process;
- Cote d'Ivoire and Mauritania: the AEWA contact persons in these countries have been offered advisory services with preparing project proposals for the organisation of workshops to promote their accession to AEWA. Funds would be raised for the implementation of these workshops;
- Botswana, Central African Republic, Liberia, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe: Contact details have been updated/ new contact persons established for these countries and/ or new Government Institutions identified for follow-up with AEWA issues. Positive progress is being made;
- Angola, Burundi, Chad, and Comoros: responses have been received following communication with these countries and the AEWA contact persons promise close follow-up on the accession process.

3. Future activities and conclusion

The development of the PoA for the implementation of AEWA in Africa, for adoption by MOP5 and the subsequent implementation is of prior importance for ensuring significant progress in the implementation of AEWA in Africa. Emphasis would therefore be placed on ensuring that the 1st draft PoA is ready for circulation by March 2011. This activity would be done in close collaboration with the Technical Committee of AEWA.

The additional attention and efforts provided for the implementation of AEWA in Africa have so far proved significantly useful in promoting, encouraging and recognizing AEWA activities in the region. The day to day advisory services offered to African Countries and partners involved in migratory waterbird conservation activities in Africa needs to continue. Emphasis will be placed on encouraging communication and information sharing, which is crucial for effective action in the region. The use of the Flyway Training kit produced under the WOW project will be promoted and a training course for French-speaking African countries on national preparation for, participation in and conduct of multilateral negotiations, will be organised.

The Coordinator will continue to make contact with partners working in the Africa for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.

Currently the funds for the coordination of the African Initiative for a period of 2 years (till 2010) have been assured by the voluntary contribution from the French Government. Additional funding to ensure this coordination up to the period of presenting the PoA at MOP5 (until 2012) is needed. Overall, it has been estimated that an additional 1,000,000 EUR will be required to implement the activities planned until 2012. Furthermore, it is imperative that the funds necessary for the subsequent implementation of the PoA for Africa be secured.