



9th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
18 – 19 September 2013, Trondheim, Norway

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

INTRODUCTION

The current report covers the work of the AEWA Secretariat for the period between June 2012 and July 2013.

This report is divided into five sections:

1. General management, which includes recruitment of Parties and cooperation with other organisations; issues relating to administration and finance are dealt with in document StC 9.20;
2. Information management;
3. Implementation and compliance;
4. Project development;
5. Other activities and outputs.

Activities reported in detail in other documents for the meeting are only mentioned in this report, with a reference to the relevant substantive document for more information.

The day-to-day work of the Agreement Secretariat, which includes responding to incoming mails, maintaining the Secretariat's extensive network, internal meetings with CMS, UNEP and/or UN Head of Agencies etc. are not specifically mentioned in this report.

1. GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Recruitment of Parties

Zimbabwe became a Contracting Party as of 1 June 2012. Gabon and Morocco became Contracting Parties as of 1 December 2012. Swaziland became a Contracting Party as of 1 January 2013. Côte d'Ivoire and Iceland became Contracting Parties as of 1 June 2013. Burkina Faso deposited its instruments of accession on 1 July 2013; it will become a Contracting Party as of 1 October 2013.

The Ministry of National Resources of the Russian Federation convened an International Seminar on the accession of the Russian Federation to AEWA. The seminar took place on 21 August 2013 in Moscow, at the premises of the Ministry of National Resources. A few international participants from AEWA bodies or Parties attended the meeting, including Mr Sergey Dereliev (AEWA Secretariat), Ms Melissa Lewis (Expert of Environmental Law in the AEWA Technical Committee), Mr Alexandre Czajkowski (OMPO), Ms' Marianne Courouble (France) and Mr Reinhard Schnidrig (Switzerland). The purpose of the seminar was to examine in detail the conditions for, and implications of the Russian Federation's accession to AEWA, and define next steps in the accession process. A resolution synthesizing the main outcomes of the seminar is being prepared by the conveners.

An AEWA accession workshop is being organized in Botswana, aimed at facilitating the accession of the country to AEWA. Significant progress was also registered for process of accession in other African countries. Details on this are provided in section 2.3(a) of Doc StC 9.10 on the progress in the implementation of the African Initiative.

Strategic cooperation with other Organizations

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)

A Resolution of Cooperation (ROC) between the CAFF and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariats was signed on the occasion of the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on 12 July 2012 in Bucharest, Romania. The purpose of this ROC is to provide a framework of cooperation and understanding and to facilitate collaboration between the Parties to further their shared goals and objectives with regard to the conservation of migratory arctic birds and their habitats. Particularly the work of the CBird working group (Circumpolar Seabird Group) is of interest for AEWA. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is represented in the working group by the AEWA Technical Officer. Following the signing of a similar ROC between the CAFF and UNEP/CMS Secretariats, a trilateral joint work programme CAFF/CMS/AEWA has been developed. As a first practical initiative to initiate their cooperation, the organizations have been fundraising for a proposed project to develop an Arctic Breeding Migratory Bird Analysis based on the Arctic Species Trend Index (ASTI). The project aims to analyse existing trend data of Arctic breeding migratory bird populations from several sources to better elucidate the patterns of decline and thus enable to identify regions, taxa and habitats at most imminent threat and prioritize conservation efforts. The UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats have been successful in securing funding from UNEP, and at the time of writing the analysis is being contracted. The UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats have also submitted a joint statement to the meeting of the CAFF working group, which took place in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada 10-12th September, 2013.

Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats

The Flyway Partnership between BirdLife International, Wetlands International, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat was formed following the conclusion of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project in 2010. Its aim is to build on the effective institutional partnerships which were forged in the context of the GEF sponsored project and to try to translate the achievements made under WOW into a long-term, collaborative, flyway-scale programme for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the wise use of wetlands along the African-Eurasian Flyways. Since the first Partnership meeting in February 2011, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has taken on the role of Secretariat for the Flyway Partnership. Within the fulfilment of this role, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is in the process of developing a Flyway Partnership website which will help facilitate the work of the partnership and act as a one-stop-shop for information related to the work of the partnership (further information can be found in doc. StC 9.14). An informal face-to-face meeting of the Flyway Partnership took place in November 2012 in Bonn hosted by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. Options are being explored for the convening of a formal meeting that should inter alia re-state the functions of the partnership, clarify the role of members, the chair and the Secretariat, and define a short-term work plan.

BirdLife International / Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

In May 2013, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat had a number of strategic meetings in the United Kingdom including with BirdLife International and with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The meetings covered a wide range of topics, including the further development of the Online Reporting System (ORS), BirdLife International's role in the AEWA Governing Bodies, cooperation with regard to activities on seabirds, power lines and renewable energy impacts, agrochemicals, poisoning, lead shot, bird taxonomy, streamlining the conservation status review, AEWA Single Species Action Plans, Communication and World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD). The series of meetings were attended by both AEWA's Technical Officer and Information Officer, who also used the occasion to give two lunch time presentations about AEWA to assembled staff from BirdLife International and RSPB. During the one-day visit to RSPB's main office, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between AEWA and RSPB to work together to compile an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Eurasian Curlew (see also document StC 9.16).

2. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

A summary of some of the key communication-related activities and developments, which have taken place and/or have been carried out by the Secretariat since MOP5, can be found in Document StC 9.14 “*Report on the Implementation and Revision of the Communication Strategy*”. The activities included in Part/Chapter II of the mentioned document represent those activities which the Secretariat feels are the most relevant and important activities to report on to the 9th Meeting of the Standing Committee.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

Following MOP5, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been working on the implementation and development of AEWA International Single Species Action and Management Plans. For a full overview of the current status of SSAPs/SSMPs, please see StC doc. 9.16.

Minor progress was made on the opened Implementation Review Process cases in Syria, Montenegro and Bulgaria. For a full overview of actions taken and the current status of each case, please see StC doc. 9.12.

Work has also progressed on some of the international reviews to be submitted to MOP6. The Secretariat has received a quote from Wetlands International for the 6th Edition of the Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area and is now in the process raising extra funds to complement the core budget allocation in order to be able to commission the report. The Secretariat is waiting for a quote from Wetlands International for the finalisation of the draft Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement Area (submitted to MOP5 in 2012), for which there is also currently no funding available. The production of a Review of the Implementation of AEWA International Single Species Action and Management Plans has been given a lower priority in comparison with the two aforementioned reviews due to the general lack of funding. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is exploring options to undertake such a review in cooperation with the European Commission and the Bern Convention due to the fact that some of the plans are jointly adopted. There are, however, no concrete developments to that effect yet. The envisaged Review on Non-native Species will be covered by the National Reports submitted for MOP6 on the basis of which the Secretariat will produce a short update within the framework of the analysis of national reports.

For the implementation of the Powerline Resolution 5.16 adopted at MOP5, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been facilitating discussions on the options to establish an intergovernmental working group on the energy sector under CMS, which would cover the African-Eurasian region and also involve, for example, the CMS Raptors MOU as well as other MEAs such as the Bern Convention.

A review and guidelines on the impact of renewable energy developments on migratory species is being commissioned as a joint project between CMS, AEWA, The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and BirdLife International. The report and subsequent guidelines are expected to cover all migratory species and all renewable energy sources. Both report and guidelines are foreseen to be ready by CMS COP11 in 2014. The implementation of the prospective resolutions under CMS and AEWA are to be dealt with by the energy sector working group if and when convened.

In addition, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been involved in the re-launch of the Wetlands International Waterbird Harvest Specialist Group (WHSG), which took place on 28 August 2013 at a special session on waterbird management at the 31st Congress of the International Union of Game Biologists (Brussels, Belgium, 27 – 29 August 2013). This included assisting with the development of the new WHSG Terms of Reference and the general concept for the group. Re-activating the group is a response - in part - to an increase in activities related to the sustainable management of waterbirds within the AEWA region. The group will in particular aim to promote science-based knowledge and to act as scientific advisors in national and international processes where harvest is an issue for conservation or management of waterbird species and species populations. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is a member of the WHSG Board.

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continues to contribute to the Waterbird Monitoring Partnership hosted by Wetlands International, which was established in response to the call by Resolution 3.6 (MOP3, 2005). The Secretariat, in particular, attends meetings of the Partnership’s Strategic and Policy Group.

The Secretariat is also a member of the CMS Scientific Council Working Group on Bird Poisoning and took part in a workshop organized by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in May 2013 in Tunisia. In this context, the Secretariat has, in particular, been leading on the issue of lead poisoning. In addition, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been involved in the Bern Convention process on the illegal killing of birds and also took part in a subsequent meeting organized by the Bern Convention in Tunisia in May 2013. In this context, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has put forward the idea to establish an inter-governmental Task Force to eradicate illegal killing, trapping and unsustainable use of birds in the Pan-Mediterranean region.

The AEWA African Initiative

Efforts have been made by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat towards advancing the implementation of the Agreement in the African region, particularly with regard to the implementation of Resolution 5.9 on the implementation of the African Initiative, and its annexed AEWA Plan of Action for Africa. Details can be found in the report on the implementation of the African Initiative, submitted to the meeting as document StC 9.10.

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Project on “Effective Implementation of CMS, AEWA and other CMS-Family instruments across various regions and languages through capacity building”

Addressing the need for improving the capacity of institutions responsible for implementing CMS and AEWA (as laid down in the CMS Strategic Plan 2012-2014, CMS COP10 Capacity Building Work Plan for 2012-2014 and the AEWA Action Plan and Strategic Plan 2009-2017), the UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats developed and submitted a project proposal which was approved for a € 500,000 grant under the Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy (ENRTP) Strategic Cooperation Agreement (SCA) between the European Commission - DG Environment and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The project is currently being implemented by the UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats and focuses on the African region.

The project has four major components which aim at addressing the overall objective of strengthening the institutional capacity to implement CMS, AEWA and other CMS instruments:

- Supporting the organisation of the African preparatory workshop for the AEWA MOP5, aimed at finalising the draft Plan of Action for Africa which was approved by the meeting, and enhancing the participation of the African region at the MOP (accomplished in May 2012).
- Training National Focal Points (NFP) of CMS, AEWA and other CMS instruments in their roles and responsibilities with the support of a designed and developed manual, e-learning tool and associated workshops. Progress in the accomplishment of this component is reported in section 2.3 c) of document StC 9.10.
- Improving knowledge on waterbird and wetland conservation and improved capacity for training at the national level in Africa, through two Training of Trainers sessions using the WOW Flyway Training Kit (for Anglophone countries in Southern and Eastern Africa and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa). Progress in the accomplishment of this component is reported in section 2.3 d) of document StC 9.10.
- Enhancing the participation of NFPs from the Africa and Latin America regions in the CMS COP 11 and AEWA MOP6. This component is scheduled to be implemented in 2014, and foresees the convening of COP-preparatory regional meetings for Africa and Latin America. For the African meeting, the participation of AEWA NFPs is foreseen in addition to CMS NFPs, with a view to giving input to the substantive preparation of AEWA MOP6. In connection with this component, the UNEP/AEWA and UNEP/CMS Secretariats have developed a proposal for some complementary activities to be implemented under Phase 2 of the project “Capacity building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in ACP¹ countries (ACP/MEAs 2)”, which include the convening of a dedicated AEWA Pre-MOP workshop for National Focal Points (NFPs) of the Africa region. A decision about the acceptance of this activity is expected shortly.

¹ Africa, Caribbean and Pacific

The UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats have recently been informed of the possibility of some additional funding to strengthen ongoing projects funded under the ENRTP SCA. The Secretariats are currently working on the development of proposals.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

11th Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee

The meeting was held in Accra, Ghana, on 27-30 August 2012, at the kind invitation of the Forestry Commission of Ghana (Wildlife Division). Information about the meeting is available from the AEWA website at the URL:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/tc_meetings/tc11/tc11.htm

Policy-related developments

Some policy-related developments are taking place within the AEWA region, which are of potential significant interest for the future of the Agreement:

Central Asian Flyway (CAF)

At MOP5, the UNEP/CMS Secretariat reported on progress on the development of the CAF Action Plan, and on options for an institutional and legal framework for the implementation of the Plan, one of these being the extension of AEWA to cover the CAF. The AEWA Parties welcomed progress regarding the CAF Action Plan, noting that the final decision on a possible extension of AEWA could only be taken at MOP6 in 2015.

In December 2012 a meeting to negotiate the Legal and Institutional Framework for the Central Asian Flyway for Migratory Waterbirds was hosted by the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi. The main outcome of this meeting (outlined in a Final Declaration²) was the decision that the *'preferred way forward to ensure the effective implementation of the CAF Waterbird Action Plan is through its incorporation into AEWA and the expansion of the geographical area of the Agreement to encompass the entire CAF region'*. The meeting also requested the AEWA Contracting Parties to consider at MOP6 the extension of AEWA so as to encompass the CAF region and to incorporate the CAF Action Plan. The AEWA Standing Committee was also requested, in consultation with the UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats, to consider how to take forward this matter with the view to presenting a proposal to MOP6 for decision.

With this in mind, the UNEP/CMS Secretariat drew up terms of reference, in consultation with the Chairs of the AEWA Standing and Technical Committees and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and contracted the *Analysis of the Implications of an Extension of the Scope of AEWA to Incorporate the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to Conserve Migratory Waterbirds and Their Habitats* to Mr David Pritchard, an independent consultant. This analysis was kindly funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and their Program on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Central Asia. The preliminary results of the analysis have been transmitted to the members of the Standing Committee, with a view to being discussed at this meeting.

Working Group on Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region

The working Group has been established under the CMS Scientific Council, with the purpose of steering the production and subsequent implementation of an Action Plan to Improve the Conservation Status of Migratory Landbirds in the African Eurasian Region. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is represented in the Working Group by the AEWA Technical Officer. The UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats have also closely collaborated in the organization of the workshop "Improving the Conservation Status of Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region" which was held in Accra, Ghana, on 31 August – 2 September 2012, back-to-back with the 11th Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee.

² http://www.cms.int/species/CAF/AbuDhabi_Mtg/rpt_&_outcomes/caf_declaration_e.pdf

Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been closely following the development within the framework of CMS of the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023. This included participation as observer in the 1st meeting of the Strategic Plan Working Group (Bonn, 5-6 November 2012), and providing comments to reviews and draft versions of the Strategic Plan. Further information on the process and its relevance to AEWA are provided in document StC 9.19.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been following the process of the establishment and operationalization of IPBES. The Secretariat obtained observer status to the IPBES Plenary, and attended the first meeting of the Plenary (IPBES-1), held in Bonn, Germany, 21-26 January 2013. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat represents AEWA in other bodies of the Platform.

Pursuant to IPBES-1, the IPBES Interim Secretariat called for the submission of requests to IPBES on scientific and technical matters that require the Platform's attention. In response to this call for submissions, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat collaborated with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat and the secretariats of other CMS Agreements in the drafting of proposals for scientific assessments to be considered by the Platform for inclusion in its programme of work.