

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

RESOLUTION 5.2

**ADDRESSING GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE OF AND CONSERVATION ACTION FOR
WATERBIRD POPULATIONS AND SITES IMPORTANT FOR THEM**

Recalling Resolution 4.2 “Responding to the need to improve knowledge of the status of and factors causing declines of some waterbird populations”,

Taking full account of documents AEWA/MOP 5.14 “Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area – 5th edition” (aka CSR5) and AEWA/MOP 5.15 preliminary “Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement Area – 1st edition”,

Aware that no improvement of the knowledge of population sizes, neither with regard to quantity nor quality, has been achieved since the 4th edition of the CSR (CSR4), with 2% of populations still lacking size estimates, only 5% of size estimates based on census data, and the remaining being either “best guess” (20%) or expert opinion (73%),

Further aware that the assessment of population trends using the methodology developed by the International Wader Study Group has resulted in 37% of populations lacking any trend estimates, the majority of the available estimates being poor (45%), only 11% reasonable and just 7% of good quality,

Concerned that a high proportion (38%) of populations with known trends continue to show declines compared to the 27% of populations which are increasing,

Noting that the International Waterbird Census (IWC) and the related schemes could provide a good basis for estimating population size and trends for 32% and 52% of the waterbird populations in the Agreement area respectively, provided that the coverage of these schemes is improved,

Further noting that the population size and trends estimates could be based on colonial breeding bird schemes in the Agreement area in the case of 32% and 27% of the populations, provided a comprehensive scheme covering the region existed,

Noting that the species with the least exhaustive or non-existent population size and trend estimates are usually those which cannot be covered by generic monitoring schemes, such as the IWC,

Further noting that the West and Central Asian regions, alongside the Afrotropical region, have the least exhaustive population size estimates, population trend estimates and highest proportion of declining populations,

Acknowledging that in CSR5, the increase of populations whose status is assessed on the basis of regular monitoring data is only 5% compared to CSR4, as opposed to the Strategic Plan target of 50%,

Recalling that the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017 aims to undertake conservation measures so as to improve or maintain the conservation status of waterbird species and their populations through, *inter alia*, a comprehensive and coherent flyway network of protected and managed sites, and other adequately managed sites, of international and national importance for waterbirds, which are established and maintained, while taking into account the existing networks and climate change,

Recalling the Ramsar Convention's *Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the Development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, which urges its Parties to undertake a strategic approach to the identification and designation of a national network of protected wetlands, *inter alia* for waterbird conservation, and which provides guidance and targets to that end,

Aware that in 2012, half of the critical sites, as defined by the Critical Site Network Tool, for migratory waterbirds in the Agreement area have only some, little or none of their area covered by protected areas (international and/or national) or their protection status is unknown, despite the fact that these sites all meet either Criterion 2 or Criterion 6 for identifying Wetlands of International Importance which are both internationally accepted criteria of importance mentioned in the context of Paragraph 3.2.2 of the AEWA Action Plan,

Also aware that, according to the available information, only 3% of the critical sites have comprehensive and appropriate management plans that aim to maintain or improve the populations of qualifying species, a further 5% have some plan but it is out of date or not comprehensive and in the case of 2%, it has been reported that the management planning has started, while for the remaining 90% of the sites there is either no management plan or there is no information available concerning management planning,

Further aware that comprehensive and effective implementation of conservation measures at critical sites were reported in the preliminary Site Network Report for 1% of them; in 5% of the sites, it was reported that substantive conservation measures were being implemented and for another 5% some limited conservation measures were reported, however for the majority (89%) there is either very little conservation action or it has not been reported,

Noting that the average estimated size of the AEWA populations covered by protected area networks is only 55% of the coverage provided by the Critical Site Network,

Also noting that 19 populations (4% of all AEWA populations reflected in the CSN Tool), covered by the Critical Site Network in significant numbers (i.e. over 10% of their populations), are not covered by the existing protected area network,

Noting that for only 61% of the AEWA populations, internationally important sites, both in breeding and non-breeding seasons have been identified because many of the populations are not sufficiently congregatory throughout the year,

Noting that the regions with the most significant gaps in site designation and management are West and Central Asia,

Further noting that only five Range States in West and Central Asia have acceded to the Agreement,

Also noting the low reporting rate by Contracting Parties during the process of elaboration of document AEWA/MOP 5.15 "*Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement Area*" and that the report is largely based on information collected by NGOs rather than official data provided by Parties,

Mindful that the most frequently recorded threats to species are climate change, albeit with unknown impacts at population level, unsustainable biological resource use, such as hunting, trapping, logging and harvesting of aquatic resources, as well as natural system modifications, including various water management activities, such as dam construction and water abstraction, while agriculture and aquaculture affect fewer species, but their impacts tend to be stronger,

Further noting the lack of international seabird- and colonial breeding bird colony databases and monitoring schemes at appropriate scale in large parts of the flyway,

Taking into account the conclusions and recommendations of the Standing Committee report to MOP5 on the progress of implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017 (AEWA/MOP 5.11).

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Calls upon* Parties to ensure that all AEWA populations are covered by international monitoring schemes which are appropriate both in their scopes and methods to produce reliable international population size and trend estimates;
2. *Requests* the Secretariat and the Technical Committee, in collaboration with the relevant international organisations, to provide additional guidance to the Parties in this respect, by MOP6, including monitoring of seabirds and colonial breeding waterbirds;
3. *Urges* Parties to develop individual monitoring programmes which are appropriate in their scope and methods to obtain reliable estimates of population sizes and trends of waterbird populations breeding or wintering in their territories while striving towards a harmonised methodology in line with the new AEWA conservation guidelines to be developed by the Technical Committee;
4. *Requests* the Technical Committee to identify priorities for the systematic development of waterbird monitoring, in order to reach the target of a 50% increase by 2017 in the number of populations whose status is assessed on the basis of regular monitoring data, as per the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017, taking into account the conservation status of the populations, their geographic representativeness and other factors;
5. *Invites* Parties with more technical and financial capacity to support other Parties and Range States, particularly in West and Central Asia and in the Afrotropical region in the framework of the African Initiative, in designing appropriate monitoring schemes and developing their capacity to collect reliable data;
6. *Encourages* Parties, Range States and other stakeholders to use the AEWA Conservation Guidelines and the monitoring training programme developed under the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project¹;
7. *Invites* the Secretariat and *Calls on* Parties to increase their activities in order to recruit more Parties in West and Central Asia;
8. *Instructs* the Secretariat, funding permitting, to coordinate the development of a Plan of Action for the implementation of AEWA in West and Central Asia in collaboration with the Parties and the Technical Committee, building on the experience of the Plan of Action for Africa process;
9. *Requests* the Secretariat and the Technical Committee to develop a module for the national report format on the designation and management of important sites to be used for informing the next editions of the *Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement Area*;
10. *Requests* the Technical Committee, working closely with Contracting Parties, to continue to develop the “*Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement area*” so as to better reflect information on the management and conservation status of key sites, to further develop ways of summarising this information accessibly, and to bring a revised and updated version of this report to the 6th Meeting of the Parties;
11. *Urges* Parties to develop and implement national action plans for filling gaps in designation and/or management of internationally and nationally important sites to establish a comprehensive and coherent flyway network by 2017, building as appropriate on the prioritised country profiles presented in Annex 2 of

¹ <http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/>

the Report on the Site Network for Waterbirds in the Agreement Area, the Critical Site Network Tool, available wetland inventories, and other appropriate resources and to provide a report on progress to this end to MOP6;

12. *Encourages* Parties, Range States and other stakeholders to conduct gap-filling surveys in poorly known areas, in particular those identified during the sub-regional consultations conducted under the Wings Over Wetlands and WetCap projects, in order to assess their international importance;

13. *Instructs* the Secretariat, funding permitting, to coordinate the development of habitat action plans in Africa and West and Central Asia to address the conservation requirements of AEWA populations during those life cycle stages when site-based approaches to conservation are ineffective, requiring management of their habitats in the wider countryside;

14. *Urges* Parties to take more effective measures to reduce the impacts of various forms of unsustainable biological resource use by quantifying their population level impacts and developing mitigation measures; furthermore it urges Parties to coordinate the sustainable use of shared populations especially the ones with declining trends *inter alia* through developing coordinated harvest management schemes;

15. *Calls upon* Parties to take more concerted actions to reduce the impacts of water management activities in accordance with paragraph 3.2 of the AEWA Action Plan;

16. *Urges* Parties, acting as donors in international development cooperation, to take into consideration the AEWA requirements in the implementation of their external aid policies to address the negative impacts of water management, agriculture and aquaculture developments, hunting tourism and fishing and to provide assistance to the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent flyway network of protected and managed sites and other adequately managed sites that fulfil the joint objectives of AEWA, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and other international treaties;

17. *Requests* the Secretariat, *urges* the Parties and *invites* the Secretariats of other MEAs, such as the Convention on Migratory Species and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and other stakeholders to promote more favourable conditions for flyway-scale, multi-country projects for migratory species by international biodiversity funding mechanisms, such as the Global Environmental Facility² and LIFE+³, through adopting conducive eligibility criteria and funding allocations to multi-country projects;

18. *Urges* Parties, the Standing and Technical Committees, and the Secretariat to provide for the implementation of the recommendations of the Standing Committee report to MOP5 on the “*Progress of implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2009-2017*” (AEWA/MOP 5.11), as necessary.

² <http://www.thegef.org/gef/>

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm>