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FIRST DRAFT OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In the International Implementation Priorities (IIP) 2003-2007 for AEWA, the development of a communication strategy for the Agreement was listed as a priority. The IIP further indicates that *'This should plan to communicate the objectives and requirements of the Agreement to appropriate target audiences (decision-makers, conservation professionals, those living around or using key sites, donors). The strategy will be most effective if it can facilitate communications activities at national and local level. Particular attention will need to be given to disseminating materials in appropriate local languages, and at the appropriate level. A top priority will be to translate and disseminate the Conservation Guidelines in Arabic and Russian language versions. The strategy should result in a clear set of costed actions.'*

In preparation, desk research on AEWA, its background and related documentation was conducted by the consultancy. In order to obtain a clearer picture as to what were the expectations of the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties and as to what benefits will derive from the Agreement a quick scan was conducted in 2003. The results of this quick scan can be found in doc: TC/ Inf. 5.4.

The results of the quick scan are used for the further development of the communication strategy for the Agreement. A first draft of this strategy is attached hereto.

During the Global Flyway Conference a workshop will be organised to discuss the first draft of the communication strategy with some invited representatives of the TC, Standing Committee and international NGOs/ IGOs.

PROPOSAL OF THE SECRETARIAT

The communication strategy is of importance not only for the Secretariat but also for all subsidiary bodies of the Agreement. Therefore the TC members are requested to review the strategy and to discuss this in plenary at the TC5 meeting. Later this year this strategy will be discussed in the AEWA Standing Committee (StC). So the TC is invited to make a recommendation regarding this strategy to the StC.

Development of a Communication Strategy for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

AEWA Communication Strategy

DRAFT 1

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. Background	4
1.2 Institutional Context	4
1.3. Where are we now	4
2. ASSESSMENT PHASE	6
2.1. Desk research	6
2.2. Quick Scan	6
2.3. Communication Capacity	6
3. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR AEWA	8
3.1. Introduction	8
3.2. Players	10
3.3. Communication objectives	11
3.4. Desired results & activities	12
4. COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN	15

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement is the first international agreement that deals with the conservation of migratory bird species at a flyway level. As such, AEWA fills a niche among other international conventions that deal with conservation related issues limited to a specific habitat, species or limited region.

Flyway conservation can be achieved only through transboundary cooperation and therefore requires intensive partnership building between countries and regions.

The geographical area of AEWA covers Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia and as such consists of 117 range states. The agreement covers 235 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle, including many species of pelicans, storks, flamingos, swans, geese, ducks, waders, gulls and terns.

1.2 Institutional Context

AEWA is a Multilateral Environmental Agreement under the Convention for Migratory Species. The CMS is an umbrella convention under the United Nations that develops Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding to support its implementation. Aside from AEWA, other Multilateral Environmental Agreements have been developed under CMS, such as EUROBATS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS.

AEWA entered into force on the 1st of November 1999 after the required number of 7 ratifications from Africa and 7 from Eurasia was achieved. The Netherlands has taken the lead to develop AEWA. At the Negotiation Meeting to adopt the text of the Agreement and Action Plan the Netherlands offered to host the first Meeting of Parties (MOP1), to be the depositary and to provide an Interim Secretariat free of charge until the Agreement would enter into force.

At MOP1, in South Africa in November 1999, it was decided to establish a permanent Secretariat and to integrate this into UNEP. On 17th of July 2000 the permanent Secretariat was established in Bonn and is hosted by the Federal Republic of Germany. For administrative and cost-sharing purposes the Secretariat shares offices at the UN office with the Secretariat of its mother convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, and its two sister Agreements: EUROBATS and ASCOBANS. As such, the AEWA Secretariat is administered by UNEP and is reporting to UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.

The daily implementation of AEWA is managed by its permanent Secretariat. At the first Meeting of Parties (MOP1) in 1999, it was decided that a Technical Committee that convenes once yearly manages the implementation of the Agreement.

At MOP 2, in 2002, the Parties decided that aside from the Technical Committee, the need had arisen to establish a *Standing Committee*, which would focus on policy, planning and budgetary matters. This Standing Committee convenes towards the end of each year and had its first meeting in November 2003. The Standing Committee consists of 7 permanent members and has invited the depositary and major NGOs as observers.

1.3. Where are we now

AEWA has concluded its 2nd Meeting of Parties in September 2002. To date, focus of the Secretariat has been on recruitment of new countries to become Contracting Parties to the Agreement. It has been very successful in this respect: AEWA has evolved rapidly since its conception and is recognized as a practical, relevant Agreement along the entire flyway. At the moment of writing (February 2004), 46 of the 117 range states are Contracting Parties and many others have progressed in the accession progress.

Future focus

On its way towards MOP3, to be held in 2005, the Secretariat sees its focus to be still on stimulating growth of the Agreement. As it considers AEWA to be a young agreement, the Secretariat at this moment sees visibility of the Agreement as a priority, aiming to achieve two main objectives:

- “ 1. Recruitment of Range States to become Contracting Party to AEWA*
- 2. Acknowledgement of the role of AEWA in the conservation of Migratory Waterbird Populations, its unique position among other biodiversity related conventions and its unique approach per species at flyway level”*

The Secretariat expects a shift in focus from promotion of the Agreement itself, towards actual implementation after 50 % of the 117 Range States have become Contracting Party. It is expected that this could be achieved just before MOP3.

At the same time, the quick scan conducted in preparation of this strategy has shown that not all Contracting Parties and partners of AEWA share this vision of future direction. It is felt by a majority that the Secretariat should focus either on implementation of the Agreement or on a combination of recruitment and implementation. It is expected that other Range States will be motivated to join through strategic promotion of the successes achieved. Recruitment will then follow as a natural consequence.

Role of Communication

A supporting communication strategy for the AEWA Secretariat can help answering these questions, increasing understanding of the different interests and managing expectations among the different players; ultimately increasing the effectiveness of the Agreement itself.

Such strategy will help put the current communication effort undertaken by the Secretariat into context and will help strategise the limited resources; both financial and human, the Secretariat has available for this task. The set up of the strategy is therefore centred on clearly communicating the Secretariat's role of a process facilitator, and the implications this role has for the contracting parties and other partners.

2. Assessment Phase

A communication strategy advises on approaches and activities to undertake to achieve the most effective and efficient communication to support the management of AEWA. In order to give such advice, it needs to be based on sound background information with regards to past and current communication activities, capacity for communication, perceptions, levels of knowledge and attitude, obstacles and opportunities.

2.1. Desk research

In preparation, desk research on AEWA, its background and related documentation was conducted. The Secretariat of AEWA in Bonn was visited, and discussions were held with its staff, as well as staff of CMS, and with staff of EUROBATS and ASCOBANS. Wetland International was consulted in relation to the GEF Flyway project, the draft proposal of which was made available as well.

Among the documents consulted, the following were of special relevance for the preparation of this communication strategy, and/or will be for its implementation: the GEF Flyway Project Proposal documents, the CMS Communication Strategy (draft 2003), the CMS report on the development of regional agreements (2001), and the UNEP Guidelines for websites and the UNEP publication strategy.

2.2. Quick Scan

The Secretariat and the Contracting Parties have expectations of the benefits the Agreement will bring them. Are these expectations in line with each other? Are the results and approaches communicated clearly and effectively? To find answers to these questions and intended as input to a communication strategy for the Agreement, a quick scan was conducted in 2003 among Contracting Parties, range states and relevant organisations, into the perception of AEWA, its functions and benefits, obstacles in its implementation, and its communications approach. The results of this quick scan have been presented to the AEWA Standing Committee meeting in Bonn in November 2003, to incorporate feedback of that body.

The quick scan was conducted using a combination of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Two types of questionnaires were developed. The version for Contracting Parties (CPs) was sent to the AEWA Focal points in 471 countries and focussed on topics around accession to the Agreement, the Implementation of AEWA and Communication. The other version was sent to representatives of the remainder of 70 Range States that are Non-Contracting Parties (NCPs), and dealt with accession and communication. In addition to the questionnaires, a selection of representatives of Range States as well as relevant organisations was interviewed to obtain more in-depth information. These interviews were conducted in person or through telephone, and were semi-structured. The full report of this quick scan can be found on the AEWA website: www.unep-aewa.org.

2.3. Communication Capacity

The capacity for communication will determine the extent to which the communication strategy can be implemented. Capacity can be assessed in terms of human resources, technical expertise and financial resources.

Technical expertise

There is sufficient awareness and understanding of the need of communications to make AEWA function effectively. A substantial part of the yearly budget is allocated for communication activities and the time input into communication is considerable. This is not only driven by the Secretariat but is also appreciated and perceived as important by the Parties.

Communications seems to be perceived as supplying information on AEWA and its progress to relevant players. Current communication takes place in the form of disseminating information in a sender-receiver set up which leaves little room for feedback and interaction. It is centred around printed mate-

¹ For the purpose of this quick scan, the - at that time - 43 Contracting Parties and the 4 signatories were pooled together, as their process for ratification was advanced.

rials (newsletter, posters, a brochure, and minutes of meetings).

Human resources

The Secretariat currently consists of one technical staff (the Executive Secretary) and one Assistant. A procedure is currently on its way to recruit one additional Technical Officer and one JPO who should function as information officer. In the past several short contracts have been granted for the development of specific information materials, such as the special issues of newsletters and the exhibition. At the moment, there is limited structural capacity within the Secretariat to produce and subsequently manage communication materials, and limited capacity to have the Agreement represented at relevant meetings and fora.

Considerable expertise is available in partner institutions. Currently little use is made of such organisations in a more structural way. UNEP has several divisions that could support the AEWA Secretariat in its communications work. Ramsar has a network and website that could be used to assist AEWA as well. The upcoming GEF Flyway project envisions communication work that involves AEWA as well and can be seen as an important partner in the coming years when it comes to the implementation of communication activities.

Financial resources

The current information materials are being financed through the incoming budget, which is approved by the MOP. The development of the communication strategy and preparatory research has been funded through a voluntary contribution by one of the Contracting Parties. Implementation of the strategy will be subject to approval by MOP3.

3. Communication Strategy for AEWA

3.1. Introduction

At the core of flyway conservation is collaboration and cooperation between practitioners along these flyways. Be it bilateral cooperation to conserve a specific habitat, cooperation focusing on parts of flyways used by a single species, or international policy agreements between a larger number of countries, a key element of successful cooperation is that information, resources and experiences can be relatively easily shared and exchanged and feed into management and planning.

Cooperation is not only needed between countries along the African-Eurasian flyways. It is also a key requirement of a well-functioning, effective implementation of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). The AEWA formal bodies: the Secretariat in Bonn, the Standing Committee, and the Technical Committee, together form the mechanism and structure that is specifically designed to facilitate flyway conservation through cooperation between the range states.

This communication strategy has been formulated to support the AEWA Secretariat in its communication both within its formal structures and between its member states. It is designed to be one of the instruments for *the Secretariat to effectively perform its facilitating role in bringing partners together to cooperate effectively towards the common goal of waterbird conservation along the African-Eurasian flyways.*

What this strategy will not do

AEWA is a relatively young International Agreement that has known fast growth in its initial years. It has a small, understaffed Secretariat, and limited room for budgetary manoeuvre. At the same time it is embedded in an international context where several parties and partners are active in communication for wetland and waterbird conservation (Box 1).

This strategy will not replicate what others are doing or planning to work on in the coming years. This communication strategy will set priorities for the AEWA Secretariat, will identify which part of the AEWA communication wish-list is already covered by others, and for which parts the Secretariat could possibly facilitate or support initiatives to be carried out by others.

Priority focus

In line with the above, this communication strategy will guide the AEWA Secretariat towards a focus on *process facilitation*, to redefine its role as a spider in the web of flyway conservation. It urges the Secretariat to identify partners, cherish the AEWA ambassadors among them, reach out through intermediaries, and delegate tasks to those who are at the appropriate place to carry them out.

The communication strategy aims for the AEWA Secretariat to initiate, facilitate and to support communication through improved cooperation between its formal bodies and its contracting parties in their effort to implement the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

BOX 1: PARTNERS IN COMMUNICATION

The CMS

The Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn, 1979) affects the global conservation of migratory species. Annex 2 of the convention lists those species for which coordinated action is needed to maintain populations. This is achieved through International Agreements between states, of which AEWA is the largest example. As the mother convention to AEWA, CMS shares goals and objectives as well as infrastructure. CMS and AEWA divide representation at important functions and regularly join efforts in communication.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention (1971) on Wetlands is one of the oldest international environmental conventions. At the core of its programme is the concept of wise use of wetlands, and therefore the relationships of people with wetlands and wetland functioning. The convention introduced the term CEPA: Communication, Education and Public Awareness. Ramsar works with a network of CEPA Focal Points, both in governments and NGO's, and has an interactive, well-esteemed website through which it offers to cooperate more strongly with AEWA.

Wetlands International

Gerard Boere of Wetland International (WI), one of the founding fathers of AEWA, describes the Convention paradox: conventions are concluded by government organisations but usually become operational through NGO's. WI is an important partner in the implementation of AEWA, including work on communication. In the coming years it will implement the *GEF flyway project* which, through its communication component, will focus on demonstration projects to show best practice (1), on mechanisms for communications for governments and NGO's (2), and on mechanisms for exchange between and within sub-regions along the flyway (3). In addition, it aims to improve understanding and implementation for wise use of migratory waterbirds and wetlands by stakeholders (4).

Birdlife International

Birdlife International is one of the oldest NGO's working on bird conservation and is a major implementing partner in the GEF Flyway project. Birdlife has a strong network of partners and offices in the regions.

The United Nations

As a UN Agreement, AEWA can coordinate with the different relevant UN units for communication: UNEP Nairobi, where the Division of Communication and Public Information hosts UNEP's website (with a recently renewed website strategy and publication strategy) and UNEP/DEC Information Unit on Conventions (Geneva) for work on websites, press releases, leaflets, design and management.

CIC

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Organisation (CIC) through its commission on migratory birds carries out its own research or supports relevant projects of organizations with the same aims, like WI or IUCN. CIC is represented in the boards of these organizations as well as in the Technical Committee of AEWA, and CMS.

OMPO

The organisation "Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental" (OMPO: Migratory Birds of the Western Palaearctic) is a France –based organisation active in migratory bird conservation.. OMPO is communicating AEWA strongly in e.g. Baltic States. The Secretariat has identified OMPO as an Ambassador for AEWA in that region.

The Contracting Parties

A convention is as active as its Parties. Especially an International Agreement with the scale of AEWA, regional differences require regional initiatives and regional communication and exchange flows. The AEWA Secretariat can provide tools and guidance; the countries should work on implementation of communication for AEWA at the national and regional level.

Messages

Through its communication strategy, the AEWA Secretariat would like to get the following messages across:

“AEWA is unique in its integral approach of migratory bird conservation along the international, trans-boundary flyways.”

“The AEWA Secretariat has the role of facilitating the AEWA Contracting Parties to come together and develop (regional) partnerships in conservation of migratory birds.”

“The more range states are member of AEWA, the more effective the Agreement will become. The recruitment of new Parties remains a core activity of the AEWA Secretariat, and will require active assistance in the regions which are underrepresented. The Secretariat cherishes the ambassadorship of partners assisting to promote AEWA.”

“AEWA is an international agreement that gets its strength through cooperation and partnerships. AEWA is as active as its Parties are. Effective implementation of the Agreement can be achieved through active initiatives from the AEWA Contracting Parties facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat.”

“Although structural and effective implementation of communication support requires structural funding, it will increase effective management and is therefore a worthwhile investment for AEWA to pursue and for the MOP to support.”

3.2. Players

As can be derived from the above, the focus of the AEWA Communication strategy will be not just on the dissemination of information but on strategic cooperation and partnership building: among AEWA governing bodies, among Contracting Parties, between Contracting Parties & AEWA governing bodies, between AEWA & related conventions, between AEWA and UNEP, and among relevant players within Contracting Parties, including NGO's (see also Box 1).

Roles

The focus on cooperation has consequences for the different roles parties can play at different moments. Depending on the circumstances, requirements and objectives, one and the same party can alternatively play the role of full partner, of AEWA ambassador, or as intermediary to the Secretariat. In other circumstances, this same party can be a target group for the Secretariat, or an executor of a certain activity.

Consequently, for each activity the role of each player will have to be determined and agreed upon.

Key players are the AEWA formal bodies: the Secretariat, the Technical Committee, and the Standing Committee. Key players are also the AEWA Contracting Parties, their appointed Focal Points, and the responsible Ministries in the countries. In addition international NGO's and related Conventions play a key role in the implementation of AEWA. Another groups that is important for the implementation of AEWA are possible donors, be it large or small, permanent or ad-hoc donors. These could be among the players mentioned above, and the Secretariat will continue to call for their role of sources of funding in relation to this strategy.

All the above players can take the role of partner, AEWA ambassador, or even intermediary. They can also act as executors of activities and could be target groups for AEWA Communication as well.

Key target groups consist of the range states that at this point are not yet contracting parties. AEWA aims to enlist these range states and recruitment as such remains a major goal in the coming years.

In the countries, other players are relevant to the execution of AEWA related activities and obligations.

These could be civil servants other than the appointed Focal Point, other Ministries, national NGO's or local groups of end users. These groups could be target groups, executors and even partners as well, but from the position of the Secretariat, always through other partners that act as intermediaries for the Secretariat.

3.3. Communication objectives

The communication objectives have been formulated after consultation with the client and stakeholders. The main findings relevant for the communication approach pointed in four directions:

1. Internal communication between the formal governing bodies of AEWA can be improved
2. The possibility for international cooperation for waterbird conservation needs to be better explored and funding secured, and the AEWA Secretariat should facilitate this
3. The capacity for communication needs to be strengthened, if the Secretariat wishes to motivate contracting parties to take stronger action
4. AEWA, its added value, and its objectives need to be better known and understood

The results of that consultation have been described in the AEWA report: "Development of a Communication Strategy for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) – results of a quick scan" (Jan 2004).

Objective 1: to stimulate and increase the effectiveness of the communication and exchange between formal governing bodies of AEWA

The quick scan revealed an expressed need to look into how the Secretariat could improve the functioning of the Agreement's formal decision-making bodies, by improving communication and exchange between them. Continuous exchange between members in-between meetings is limited, and the regional representation is not considered to be effective. Through communication support, the Secretariat could facilitate exchange between the Secretariat, the Technical Committee, the Standing Committee, and the Focal Points, to feed into each other for more exchange in-between meetings and to effect true representation of regions in these meetings (MOPs, TC meetings, etc).

The Secretariat is also called for to focus more on the implementation of the Agreement, after years of working mainly on the recruitment of new states to become members of AEWA. It is felt that this accession process can continue through natural recruitment which will take place when the implementation of AEWA will start to yield tangible results, which will convince other nations to join. For effective implementation and effective communication about its results, smooth communication and exchange between the formal bodies is a prerequisite.

Objective 2: to strengthen existing, and develop and support new mechanisms for active cooperation between and involvement of diverse stakeholders in role of partners, intermediaries and ambassadors in AEWA communication

A highly valued benefit and important reason to join AEWA is the opportunities it gives countries to internationally cooperate in the field of waterbird conservation. Respondents to the quick scan feel that this cooperation could be enhanced and in order to maximise the benefits of cooperation, regional, for example species oriented initiatives could be developed between countries that share similar habitats or together provide important resources for certain species. It is felt that the Secretariat could facilitate such exchange and cooperation, and communicate its results, more effectively.

A second rationale behind this objective is the need to make use of the fact that the Secretariat is not alone when it comes to implementing the Agreement and communicate about it. The Secretariat is small and has a limited capacity for communication, especially given the context of working in a huge range with a diversity of regions, issues, constraints and opportunities. The Secretariat can enhance its capacity for communication by sharing tasks with its range states and partner organisations, by cooper-

ating more with other secretariats, by making more use of outsourcing, and by enlisting the help of volunteers.

Structural and operational capacity for communication depends on funding as much as initiative. Targeting possible funding partners and feed them with information is expected if communication is to become a structural part of AEWA implementation.

Objective 3: to build capacity for communication

The decision to strengthen the role of the Secretariat as a facilitator has the implication that a more active involvement in the implementation of communication activities is expected from the contracting parties, and others. In order to support this, strengthening of the capacity for communication among those contracting parties is required. As the Secretariat does not have the resources for a full-blown capacity building programme, it is proposed to implement a series of regional Train-the Trainer programmes. In every region, one 5-day training will be conducted for a group of country representatives. After the training, they will be able to:

- Prepare a communication strategy
- Plan, manage and implement a communication activity or project
- Train others in their country in these skills, resulting in a national group of communicators

Objective 4: to increase knowledge and awareness of AEWA, its added value and its objectives

The Secretariat, as well as the Contracting Parties, encounter difficulties in the implementation of AEWA related to the understanding of AEWA and its underlying concepts. Countries indicate that they did (do) not have enough insight in what AEWA exactly stands for, what its objectives are, and what its achievements are. Although the current communication materials are developed to address these issues, the results of the quick scan show that there is a role to play for communication to increase knowledge and understanding about AEWA.

Range states indicate in the quick scan that there are obstacles delaying or preventing their accession to AEWA that could be dealt with through communication. In addition to limited knowledge, “convention exhaustion” is a hurdle to cross. In the international convention arena, some countries perceive AEWA as “yet another agreement”, and do not see enough benefit in joining. There is another communication challenge to promote the added value of AEWA more clearly, and to promote AEWA’s achieved successes more strongly. In addition, clearer guidelines and guidance in the accession process is considered needed.

3.4. Desired results & activities

Result 1: increased quality and frequency of the communication and exchange between formal governing bodies of AEWA

Activity 1.1: increase interactivity of meetings

The quality of the discussion during official meetings, the involvement of participants in the discussions, and the commitment of these participants to follow through on outcomes of the meeting, all will be enhanced when the interactivity of the meetings will be increased.

Without compensating the formal regulations by which the meetings of Parties, of the Standing committee and the Technical committee are conducted, measures to enhance interactivity can be implemented.

- Engage a professional facilitator to lead discussions and actively invite all present to participate
- Organise thematic or regional break-out sessions, that report back to the plenary. The topics discussed in these sessions may evolve and differ per meeting. The topics should not be only technical but should also talk about issues relating to communication, exchange and cooperation.

- Report back on these discussions to the plenary and on the website.
- Develop a discussion paper on AEWA functioning as an input for discussion among the Parties, inviting Parties to think along on how to motivate critical learning leading to improved AEWA functioning.

Activity 1.2. Increase interactivity in-between meetings

The momentum that is achieved during meetings often diminishes in between meetings when participants go back to their respective countries. This means that information is not effectively shared within the region, while developments in the countries are not fed back to the participants to the meetings. People arrive at meetings ill-prepared and valuable time is lost at meetings bringing people up to date before informed decisions can be made.

- Report back on meetings on the website, including on discussions held during the thematic break-out sessions (see activity 1.1.)
- Allow for thematic/regional discussion groups on the website (see activity 4.1. and 4.3.)
- Organise a yearly coordination meeting of the Executive Secretary, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and the Technical Committee (5 participants), in between the StC and TC meetings, and reporting back to the Parties on website and in the newsletter

Activity 1.3. Evaluation of regional representation in AEWA formal bodies

AEWA works with a form of regional representation in its bodies. The true function of representation, envisioned as functioning as the voice of a region, being aware of developments, reporting those to the meeting and being able to feed the meeting outputs back to the region, is currently not being met. Improvement would have a significant impact on overall AEWA functioning.

- The Secretariat is to evaluate the current system of regional representation, looking into possible rotation systems and setting up a recurring evaluation scheme
- Develop terms of reference for regional focal points
- Develop guidelines for regional focal points
- Based on the outcome of the evaluation, increase consultation effectiveness in the regions by, among others, selecting new focal points where needed, by creating web-based feedback mechanisms (see activity 4.1 and 4.3) and by initiating a regional meeting (see activity 2.1.)

Result 2: Mechanisms for active cooperation between and involvement of diverse stakeholders in role of partners, intermediaries and ambassadors in AEWA communication are operational

Activity 2.1: Regional meeting of parties

Many participants in the quick scan indicated the need for regional processes of exchange and cooperation to make AEWA implementation truly effective. The Secretariat could help to get these processes started, after which the parties involved could take over the initiative.

- The Secretariat is to initiate and organise a workshop/meeting of regional AEWA focal points, especially in those regions where lack of resources/experience has led to a weak institutional basis for AEWA implementation (to be determined, but expected priorities: African regions, Middle East, Central Asia).
- The meeting will be a working session that produces a regional action plan for cooperation, with at least 1 specific project and which may include bilateral or sub-regional agreements on cooperation.
- The meeting will also select communication focal points and produce an action plan for communication activities (see activities 3.1. and 3.2.).
- As a result, the meeting will decide upon follow-up activities to be initiated in and by the region, including (yearly) regional meetings. The Secretariat's role will be minimized from that moment onwards as the initiative will be taken over by the region.
- An important agenda item will be funding of activities in the region. Regional partners are to be sought for this purpose as well as structural international sources.
- The Secretariat may use the gathering to interview people and conduct a quick scan on evolving issues (feedback to be given on web site and in newsletter)

Activity 2.2. Funding strategy

So far, funding for communication is partly secured through the budget available through membership contributions paid by the Contracting Parties. With the development of this Communication Strategy, these Parties have acknowledged the importance of communication. The Secretariat will need to look into ways to fund the implementation of the strategy.

- Secure structural funding through the membership contributions
- Look into possibilities for funding from the region, among others at the regional meetings (see Activity 2.1)
- Look into possibilities with current contributors and resources sharers (among Contracting Parties, related conventions, international NGO's) how these relations can be expanded or stabilised for a longer period of time

Result 3: Regional capacity for communication strengthened

Activity 3.1: Train the Trainers at the regional level

This Train-the Trainer (ToT) approach envisions the active role of the Secretariat in providing the ToT resulting in regional core groups of communicators. Thereupon, each trainer should be capable of conducting the training in his or her own country.

- Engage a consultant to conduct the training in every region

Activity 3.2: Facilitate follow-up on ToT at the national level

To facilitate follow-up the newly trained trainers should be provided with the tools to conduct the training themselves and with the tools to stay touch with their fellow participants in order to exchange experience and become an active network of communication professionals.

- Engage the consultant to prepare a users manual for the participants
- Initiate an e-working group on CEPA on the AEWA website, consisting of the participants

Also at this point joint action planning with the GEF Flyway project is advisable.

Result 4: increased knowledge and awareness of AEWA, its added value and its objectives

Activity 4.1: Improve and maintain the AEWA Website

For AEWA, an agreement with an enormous scope and a limited capacity to serve the entire range, a functional, attractive website is a prerequisite. At this moment the site does not live up to the high expectations that people have for this tool. It is difficult to find and not easy to navigate. The website should be made more attractive, more user-friendly, more up-to-date, and more interactive. A good website needs not only to be designed, but needs to be maintained. Strong emphasis needs to be put on its management and maintenance. Similar activities have been proposed under the GEF Flyway project and partners such as WI and Ramsar Bureau will be consulted as well to seek advice and to come to joint action planning in order to avoid duplication.

- Contract consultant to re-design website.
- Develop a strategy for its management
- Appoint web manager
- Daily uploading to be done by Secretariat

Activity 4.2: Regular publication of an AEWA newsletter

People need to be kept informed. Not everyone in the AEWA working range has easy access to internet and email. The current newsletter is highly appreciated and has proven its value. Its regularity can be improved, as well as the regional inputs and languages used. For practical reasons, the frequency of the newsletter will not be increased, but will be complemented by an electronic monthly update that will not appear in hard copy. This will also increase responsiveness to emerging issues relevant to flyway conservation.

- Regular issues in current form twice a year, both in hard copy and as PDF on website
- Monthly news flashes as PDF on website and email list

- Special issues on technical issues once a year
- Include sections in the main languages: Arabic and Russian, etc.

Activity 4.3: Initiate and provide the infrastructure for e-discussion

As with Activity 4.1, similar activities have been proposed under the GEF Flyway project. Consultation with the GEF project leader will lead to joint action planning in order to avoid duplication.

- Establish an email list
- Use it for news flashes and to notify members on changes on the website
- Include discussion forum on the website
- Initiate a discussion on the need for regional/thematic working groups

Activity 4.4: Develop guidelines for accession

Both Contracting Parties and Range States considering to become Party have indicated that the procedures for accession to AEWA are not only lengthy but also complicated.

- Develop guidelines to the accession procedures (in English, French, Russian and Arabic) and distribute these among those Range States that are not yet Contracting Party to AEWA

Activity 4.5: Develop a set of resource materials for awareness raising at the national level

The AEWA Secretariat wishes to provide contracting parties with materials tools to increase awareness among different stakeholders in the range states. It does not have the capacity nor the knowledge, however, to do so for all different countries, issues and cultural settings. Within its capacity the Secretariat can develop a toolkit with AEWA information materials and make this available to interested Parties in electronic form for reproduction, allowing for translation and adaptation according to local insight. For the development of this toolkit, during action planning AEWA will look into existing AEWA materials and will also consult Ramsar and the GEF Flyway project to seek guidance and to avoid duplication of efforts. The toolkit could be flexible in composition and could contain:

- AEWA brochure
- AEWA poster
- AEWA sticker
- PowerPoint presentation on AEWA
- The Agreement text
- Guidelines for Accession

4. Communication Action Plan

The current document is a first draft of the AEWA Communication Strategy. The Secretariat has chosen for a step-by step process of consultation. After wider consultation in the coming months among AEWA interested parties, this strategy will evolve and an action plan will be added for its implementation. In this action plan, responsible parties, possible partners, a time frame and required budget will be identified for each activity, as in the table below.

Result 1: increased quality and frequency of the communication and exchange between formal governing bodies of AEWA					
Activity	Lead	Partners	When & Where	Required budget	Possible source
Activity 1:					

The strategy and action plan will be discussed and refined during a workshop organised as a side-event to the Flyway Conference in Edinburgh in April 2004. The final strategy and action plan will be presented to the Standing Committee in November 2004.