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

AEWA Communication Strategy

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1. Background	3
1.2 Institutional Context	3
1.3. Where are we now	3
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. Objectives, desired results & activities	10
4. FUNDING STRATEGY	19
5. REVIEW PROCEDURE	19
6. COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN	20
7. LIST OF ACRONYMS	21

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) is one of the first international agreements 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, a (group of) 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 an independent international treaty that was developed as a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) under the Convention for Migratory Species (CMS). The CMS is an umbrella convention that develops MEAs and Memoranda of Understanding to support its implementation. Aside from AEWA, other MEAs have been developed under CMS, such as EUROBATS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS¹.

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 depository 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. As such, the AEWA Secretariat is administered by UNEP and is reporting to UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. For administrative and cost-sharing purposes the Secretariat is co-located at the UN headquarters in Bonn with the Secretariat of its mother convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, and its two sister Agreements: EUROBATS and ASCOBANS. On 17th of July 2000 the permanent Secretariat was established at the UN headquarters in Bonn where it is hosted by the Federal Republic of Germany.

The day-to-day implementation of AEWA is directed by its permanent Secretariat in Bonn. At the first Meeting of Parties (MOP1) in 1999, it was decided that a *Technical Committee*, convening annually, oversees the general 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 administrative 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 members and has invited 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 Range States as Contracting Parties to the Agreement. It has been very successful

¹ EUROBATS: the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of the European Bats (entered into force in 1994), ASCOBANS: the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (1994), and ACCOBAMS: the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (2001).

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 (November 2004), 48 of the 117 range states are Contracting Parties and many others are presently undertaking the necessary accession procedures.

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 as Contracting Party to AEWA*
- 2. Recognition 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 approximately 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.

Common ground can be found in redirecting focus towards a combination of recruitment and implementation, which is therefore the basis of this strategy for the coming years.

Role of Communication

The AEWA Agreement Text² mentions in Article III : General Conservation Measures, paragraph 2.j., that in order to conserve migratory waterbirds, the Parties shall: *“(j) develop and maintain programmes to raise awareness and understanding of migratory waterbird conservation issues in general and of the particular objectives and provisions of this Agreement.”*

Furthermore, an Action Plan is appended as Annex 3 to the Agreement. Chapter 6 Education and Information of this action plan states:

“6.1 Parties shall, where necessary, arrange for training programmes to ensure that personnel responsible for the implementation of this Action Plan have an adequate knowledge to implement it effectively.

6.2 Parties shall cooperate with each other and the Agreement secretariat with a view to developing training programmes and exchanging resource materials.

6.3 Parties shall endeavour to develop programmes, information materials and mechanisms to improve the level of awareness of the general public with regard to the objectives, provisions and contents of this Action Plan. In this regard, particular attention shall be given to those people living in and around important wetlands, to users of these wetlands (hunters, fishermen, tourists, etc.) and to local authorities and other decision makers.

6.4 Parties shall endeavour to undertake specific public awareness campaigns for the conservation of the populations listed in Table 1.”

² The full Agreement Text can be found on the website: www.unep-aewa.org/eng/agree.htm

A communication strategy for the AEWA Secretariat can help address the above described issues, increasing understanding of the different interests and managing expectations among the different players; ultimately increasing the effectiveness of the Agreement itself. Effective communication can also support the Secretariat in making the above proposed shift in focus.

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 strategy is therefore centred on clearly communicating the Secretariat's role of a process facilitator (the 'spider in the web'), 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 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 back ground 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 back ground 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 that accession to, and consequently implementation of 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 47³ 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 remaining 70 Range States that are still 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.org⁴.

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. Although limited in extent, a structural part of the yearly budget is allocated for communication activities. As the foreseen professional staff position for information / communication has not yet been filled, the Secretariat also provides substantial time input into communication. This is not only driven by the Secretariat but is also appreciated and perceived as important by the Parties. However, with the growth of the Agreement and the related increase in communication activities, the technical skills and expertise requirements have increased to an extent where this capacity is no longer sufficient.

³ 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.

⁴ The full report of this quick scan has been made available to the Technical Committee in document TC/Inf. 5.4 (2004) and can be found at <http://www.unep-aewa.org/eng/TC%20MEETINGS/TC5docs/TC5.htm>.

Current communication centres around supplying information on AEWA and its progress to relevant players. Communication takes place mainly 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 materials (newsletter, posters, a brochure, and minutes of meetings).

Human resources

The Secretariat currently consists of one Professional Staff member (the Executive Secretary) and one General Staff member (the Administrative Assistant). As of 16 August 2004 an additional Professional Staff member (Associate Technical Officer) will enter on duty. A procedure is currently on its way to find funding for 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, although this would have financial consequences that are currently not supported by (sufficient) budget allocations. 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 stakeholders 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 for the well-functioning of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and its effective implementation. 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: spider in the web

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

AEWA, as a convention, knows many parties and partners in flyway conservation. Although not exhaustive, several main partners have been listed in Box 1. A short description of the (possible) role of each partner in AEWA communication can be found in Annex 1.

The Convention on Migratory Species
The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
The Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES
The Bern Convention
The Convention on Arctic Flora and Fauna
The United Nations
The European Union
The Council of Europe
Wetlands International
Birdlife International
CIC
OMPO
IUCN
The Contracting Parties

Messages

Through its communication strategy, the AEWA Secretariat would like to get the following messages across (*primary target audience between brackets*):

“Migratory waterbirds are part of global biodiversity. Their conservation is dependent on international cooperation, requiring intensive partnership building between organisations, countries and regions.”

(Range States and Contracting Parties, partner organisations; general public)

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

(Range States)

“The more range states are member of AEWA, the more effective the Agreement will become. Conservation results provide convincing evidence for countries to become and remain active Parties. The core activity of the AEWA Secretariat combines recruitment of new Parties with implementation of the Agreement.”

(Range States and Contracting Parties)

“An Agreement is as strong as its weakest link. AEWA is an international agreement that gets its strength through cooperation and partnerships. AEWA is as active as its Parties are.”

(Contracting Parties)

“The AEWA Secretariat functions as a ‘spider in the web’, as it has the role of facilitating the AEWA Contracting Parties to come together and develop (regional) partnerships in conservation of migratory birds. The Secretariat cherishes the ambassadorship of partners assisting to promote AEWA.”

(Contracting Parties)

“Structural and effective implementation of communication support will increase effective management and is therefore a worthwhile investment for AEWA to pursue and for the MOP to support. Structural funding is required for the communication of AEWA.”

(Contracting Parties, donors)

BOX 2: AEWA MESSAGES IN KEY WORDS

In short, AEWA can be characterised by the following key words and sentences. These key words will form the core of AEWA communication messages:

1. International Cooperation
2. Unique in its integral approach
3. The more range states, the more effective AEWA is. The core activity combines recruitment with implementation
4. AEWA is as active as its Parties are
5. 'Spider in the web'
6. Communication: a worthwhile investment

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 group that is important for the implementation of AEWA consists of the possible donors, be it large or small, permanent or ad-hoc donors. Past and present financial support has also come from among the partners mentioned in Box 1, and the Secretariat will continue to call for their support 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 to become conservation partners for AEWA. Recruitment as such therefore 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, grass root organisations and local 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. Objectives, desired results & activities

The communication objectives have been formulated after consultation with the client and stakeholders⁵. The main findings relevant for the communication approach pointed in four directions:

⁵ 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). This report can be found on the AEWA website: www.unep-aewa.org.

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 by improving its external communication
3. The capacity for communication (among and between the contracting parties, as well as between the Secretariat, the AEWA formal bodies and the contracting parties) 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

These four directions have been translated directly into four communication objectives for AEWA. To achieve these objectives, desired results and activities have been described, linked and elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Objective 1: to stimulate and increase the effective internal communication and exchange among the formal governing bodies of AEWA

This objective

focuses on *the internal communication processes* among the formal bodies of the AEWA Agreement.

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).

This objective is a prerequisite to respond effectively to the focus on a combination of recruitment and implementation of the Agreement (see 1.3). After years of working mainly on the recruitment of additional range states to become members of AEWA, it is felt that more range states will be encouraged to join AEWA when the implementation of AEWA will start to yield tangible results. Effective communication of these implementation results between the formal bodies of AEWA will further facilitate this process of recruitment.

Desired Result 1: increased quality and frequency of the internal communication and exchange among the 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 decisions taken, on future meetings and 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

It is not feasible for the AEWA Secretariat to communicate with all Parties separately on a regular basis. An important function of the internal communication between the Secretariat and the AEWA formal bodies therefore is for these bodies to function as intermediaries between the Secretariat and the Parties.

For this reason, AEWA works with a form of regional representation in its bodies. Regional TC and StC members are expected to prepare regional reports and present them to their respective meetings. However 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 internal AEWA communication and 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.)*

Objective 2: to strengthen and/or develop mechanisms for effective external communication & cooperation between and among the AEWA stakeholders and the AEWA Secretariat

In contrast to

objective 1, this objective focuses on *the external communication processes* among the Contracting Parties, Range States and other AEWA Stakeholders, as well as between them and the AEWA Secretariat. These stakeholders could increasingly play the role of partners, intermediaries and ambassadors in AEWA communication, and as such improve cooperation.

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 cooperating 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.

Desired Result 2: Mechanisms for effective external communication and cooperation between and among AEWA stakeholders and the AEWA Secretariat 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.: Exchange centres for AEWA

Aside from regional Meetings of Parties, regional centres for the exchange of information on AEWA would facilitate and even encourage Parties, other Range States and organisations to contact each other

and as such would facilitate cooperation. Such centres could take the form of physical centres or virtual (web-based) centres, depending on the needs and the possibilities of each particular region.

- The Secretariat, with the assistance of the regional representatives, is to explore the feasibility of the establishments of AEWA Exchange Centres.
- Contracting Parties may volunteer to host the AEWA Exchange centre for their region.
- The Centres could play a role in the follow-up of activity 2.1.
- The Centres could assist the regional representatives to fulfil their function in the internal communication between AEWA formal bodies (activity 1.3).

Activity 2.3.: Engage ambassadors to stimulate other Range states to become Contracting Parties

To target those range states that are not yet contacting parties, the Secretariat has started in recent years to enlist the help of AEWA Ambassadors: organisations that help in the recruitment of new Contracting Parties. More intensive use of ambassadors could be made, and they could be sought not only among organisations but also among Contracting Parties that are willing, that have the capacity and the credibility to convince other (neighbouring) Range States to accede. This has the added advantage of increasing involvement of Contracting Parties in AEWA affairs. In addition, countries may be especially sensitive to a neighbour asking them to accede.

- The Secretariat is to identify those among the Contracting Parties and partner organisations that could function as ambassadors to AEWA
- A budget is to be reserved for travel costs related to ambassadorship for those countries who are willing but cannot afford to make additional financial contributions

Objective 3: to build regional capacity for communication

The decision to

strengthen the role of the Secretariat as a facilitator, as 'spider in the web', has the implication that a more active role is expected from the contracting parties, and others, in the implementation of communication activities in the regions. 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*
- The national groups of communicators can work on awareness raising for AEWA on a national level*

Desired Result 3: Regional capacity for communication strengthened

Activity 3.1:

Training of Trainers at the regional level

This Training of 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*
- Development of a training manual / toolkit for participants*

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

The aim of the regional Training of Trainers approach is to capacitate participants to conduct similar trainings at the national level, in order to create national groups of trained communicators. To facilitate this follow-up at the national level, the newly trained trainers should be provided with the tools to conduct the training themselves and with the tools to stay in touch with their fellow participants in other countries in order to exchange experiences and to 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 and linked to the regional exchange centres' websites (activity 2.2), consisting of the participants*

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

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.

Desired 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. Specific improvements can be made on its primary document delivery system, its archive function and its awareness raising characteristics. 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.

- Develop a strategy for web site management
- Contract consultant to re-design website.
- 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, Russian,...

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:

- Prepare a toolkit, flexible in composition and adaptable by the users, containing:
 - o AEWA brochure
 - o AEWA poster
 - o AEWA sticker
 - o PowerPoint presentation on AEWA
 - o The Agreement text
 - o *Guidelines for Accession*
- Prepare a distribution strategy for the toolkit, identifying:
 - o Planning for distribution
 - o Regional assistance to ensure national & local distribution
 - o Tactics on how to market AEWA through other organisations “in your country”
 - o Draft press releases and strategy for their release

4. Funding strategy

A small part of the funding for communication is 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. However, a more strategic and structural approach in communication also requires a more structural and more substantially secured funding. The Secretariat will need to look into ways to fund the implementation of the strategy.

- Secure and increase structural funding through the membership contributions to support the three-year Action Plan
- Include (parts of) the Action Plan in the International Implementation Priorities AEWA 2006-2009 in order to motivate Contracting Parties to make additional voluntary contributions in support of AEWA communication
- Look into possibilities for funding from the region, among others at the regional meetings, to support implementation of the projected regional communication action plans (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
- Specifically further explore and substantiate on the identified possibilities for shared organisation of activities with the GEF Flyway project in order to economise on the implementation

5. Review Procedure

The effectiveness of implementation of the communication strategy will need to be reviewed on a regular basis. The Secretariat will need to refine the review procedure to fit its capacity and planning sequences. Ideally this review be done at different levels:

- The incumbent JPO, in coordination with the AEWA Executive Secretary, monitors the implementation of the strategy twice yearly, and reports annually to the StC on its progress
- In addition, a mid term and a final evaluation of the 3-year Action Plan is prepared for the StC
- The regional representatives, in coordination with the AEWA regional communication focal points, evaluate the implementation of the regional communication action plan (produced under activity 2.1), and report yearly to the StC on its progress.

6. Communication Action Plan

The current document is a final version of the AEWA Communication Strategy. The Secretariat has chosen for a step-by step process of consultation. The strategy has been discussed and refined during a workshop organised as a side-event to the Flyway Conference in Edinburgh in April 2004. After wider consultation among AEWA interested parties in the months following the conference, this strategy has evolved.

A 4 -year action plan and budget have been added for its implementation. This action plan has been presented in a separate document to increase its flexibility in use.

The final strategy and action plan have been presented to the AEWA Standing Committee in November 2004. This meeting approved the documents and decided to present it for adoption to the Meeting of Parties in Dakar, Senegal, in November 2005.

The AEWA Secretariat wishes to thank all contributors for their valuable time and comments, which helped greatly to improve this strategy.

7. List of Acronyms

ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area
AEWA	Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
ASCOBANS	Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas
BI	Birdlife International
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CIC	International Council for Game and Wildlife Organisation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CP	Contracting Party
EU	European Union
EUROBATS	Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe
FP	Focal Point
GEF	Global Environment Facility
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCP)	Non Contracting Party
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OMPO	Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental
StC	Standing Committee
TC	Technical Committee
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WI	Wetlands International

ANNEX 1

ANNEX 1: PARTNERS IN COMMUNICATION

AEWA, as a convention, knows many parties and partners in flyway conservation. Although not exhaustive, several main partners have been listed in this annex, including a short description of each partner and the possible link with AEWa communication.

The Convention on Migratory Species

CMS, the Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn, 1979), deals with the global conservation of migratory species. Annex 2 of CMS 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 AEWa's mother convention, 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.

The Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) deals with all ecosystems around the globe. CBD has entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation and concluded an Joint Work Programme with CMS, the mother convention of AEWa. In addition, the Convention of Parties of CBD has asked its Executive Secretariat to develop a proposal on how migratory species could be integrated into the CBD work programme. Following the Ramsar Convention, CBD adopted the term CEPA in its Convention text in 2001.

CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between Governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Similar to flyway conservation, the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, requiring international cooperation to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation. Like CMS, CITES is administered by UNEP.

The Bern Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats - also known as the Bern Convention - aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those whose conservation requires the co-operation of several States, and to promote such co-operation. In relation to CMS and AEWa, particular emphasis is given to endangered and vulnerable species, including endangered and vulnerable migratory species.

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) is a Working Group of the Arctic Council. It's mission is to conserve Arctic biodiversity and to ensure that the use of Arctic living resources is sustainable. CAFF serves as a forum of Arctic professionals, indigenous peoples representatives, and observer countries and organisations, to discuss and address circumpolar Arctic conservation issues. Since 1992, CAFF has sponsored several projects, including assessments of the conservation status of Arctic migratory birds.

The United Nations

Being administered by UNEP, 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.

The European Union

The main challenge for the EU is to protect the environment in combination with continuing economic growth in a way which is sustainable over the long term. The Action Programme Environment 2001 - 2010: Our Future, Our Choice, lists the four thematic priorities: (1) tackling climate change and global warming; (2) protecting the natural habitat and wildlife; (3) addressing environment and health issues; and (4) preserving natural resources and managing waste.

The Council of the European Union

The Council is the main decision-making body of the European Union, in which the ministers of the member states meet. In the environment meetings of the Council of Europe, Environment Ministers of the EU member states develop policy agreements and decide on directives, such as for example the bird and habitats directives. The Council is also responsible for coordination and, on behalf of the Community and the Union, concludes international agreements between the EU and one or more states or international organisations.

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. BI is a semi-permanent observer at the AEWA TC and StC Meetings. BI has a strong network of partners and offices, through which the accession to AEWA is also advocated.

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.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union

IUCN's mission is "to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable." IUCN is a union that brings together over 1000 states and organisations. In six commissions, thousands of professional volunteers contribute to policy and technical advice, monitoring

and much more. The IUCN Commission on Education and Communication champions CEPA among conventions and provides expertise for capacity development in this field.

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.