

Since its launch in 2010, it has benefited both governmental and non-governmental organizations by funding a wide range of projects. Activities relate, for example, to the conservation of individual AEWA species and their habitats, the provision of optical and other technical equipment to support survey and monitoring of species and their habitats, training and awareness-raising for different target groups, and livelihood-related activities for the benefit of local communities. The AEWA Small Grants Fund has also contributed to strengthening the network of organizations concerned with the implementation of AEWA at the national level.



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So far, the Small Grants Fund has focused solely on the African region, in the framework of the African Initiative. By 2014, eleven projects from eleven African countries had been funded for a total of 200,000 Euro. Examples include a Lesser Flamingo conservation project in Uganda as well as awareness-raising and capacity building activities in the Gambia focusing on the sustainable management of the Bijol Islands and their avifauna.



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This AEWA scheme continues to depend largely on voluntary contributions from AEWA Parties, partners and other donors. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat encourages and is grateful for all donations towards the Fund in order to sustain this scheme.

The AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF) runs in parallel with the CMS Small Grants Programme (SGP), which facilitates the implementation of the convention at the grass-roots level, particularly in developing countries.

Accession of New Contracting Parties from Africa

The effective conservation of migratory waterbirds is only possible through close international cooperation along their entire flyway. This is why expanding membership of AEWA is vital. Since the launch of the African Initiative, AEWA has welcomed eleven new Parties from Africa (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Mauritania, Morocco, Rwanda, Swaziland and Zimbabwe)² and several more are close to

² As at October 2015

completing the accession process. However, gaps in membership still exist, particularly in Central and Southern Africa. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has joined efforts with its UNEP/CMS counterpart, as well as the Secretariat for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, in order to promote accession, for example through joint workshops for relevant stakeholders in non-Party Range States.

The Future of the African Initiative

Since its launch in 2009, the African Initiative has achieved significant progress in boosting the implementation of AEWA in Africa. It is now crucial to build on the foundations that have been laid in order to sustain and strengthen long-term effective conservation of migratory waterbird populations in the region. Implementing the activities set out in the Plan of Action for Africa requires substantial financial investment and commitment on the part of all stakeholders.

The generosity and dedication of partner organizations and donors plays an absolutely vital role for this Initiative. Their contributions are benefiting key activities which strengthen the conservation of migratory waterbirds in Africa. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat would like to thank all partners and donors who have supported the African Initiative, and hopes that they can continue providing support. We would also like to encourage new donors to invest in the future of this important scheme.



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Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

THE AFRICAN INITIATIVE

For Migratory Waterbirds and People



Introduction

Africa is of crucial importance for millions of migratory waterbirds such as herons, storks, ibises, flamingos, ducks, geese, cranes and numerous other species which depend on the continent's wetlands for breeding, feeding, resting and nesting. The survival of many waterbird populations is, however, at risk. Particularly the Afro-tropical region has seen a – sometimes dramatic - decline, and it holds the largest number of AEWA populations on the IUCN Red List of globally threatened species.



The **AEWA African Initiative** (in full: African Initiative for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and Their Habitats in Africa) is a package of support which aims to promote the implementation of AEWA in Africa and thus help conserve migratory waterbird populations under threat. The Initiative was adopted at the 4th Session of the Meeting of AEWA Parties (Resolution 4.9) and became operational in 2009.

The AEWA Plan of Action for Africa

The **AEWA Plan of Action for Africa** is the operational guideline for the implementation of the African Initiative. The plan, developed in a highly consultative process and adopted at the 5th Session of the Meeting of AEWA Parties in 2012, identifies a variety of concrete actions to translate the objectives of the **AEWA Strategic Plan** into tangible results on the ground.

The measures included in the Plan cover the key activity areas of the Agreement, such as developing and implementing Species Action Plans, identifying and establishing a network of well-managed and protected sites of national and international importance for waterbirds, capacity-building for waterbird conservation and increasing the membership of the Agreement in Africa.



The Plan of Action for Africa places particular emphasis on enhanced national capacity for the implementation of AEWA in Africa. Another priority is the involvement of local communities in waterbird conservation - an approach promoted through pilot projects that are aimed at strengthening local livelihoods at the same time as conservation efforts.

Responsibility for the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa lies with the AEWA Contracting Parties in Africa. The Plan can only be effective if the African Range States mainstream the proposed activities into appropriate national action plans, strategies, policies and other implementation tools, and allocate financial and human resources for implementation at the national level. AEWA Range States from other regions, partner organizations and the private sector can also make an important contribution, for example by providing additional financial or material support towards the implementation of activities in the Plan.



The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat provides guidance on the overall implementation of the African Initiative, including the Plan of Action for Africa. At the sub-regional level, specific guidance is provided by five Sub-regional Focal Point Coordinators, nominated from among the AEWA National Focal Points. Additional technical support is provided by a Technical Support Unit (TSU), offered by the Governments of France and Senegal. The TSU is made up of experts from the Senegal Department of National Parks, the French Department of Water and Biodiversity (DEB), the Tour du Valat Research Centre and the French Hunting and Wildlife Agency (ONCFS).

Capacity-Building

Compared to other regions, the level of implementation of both AEWA and its mother treaty, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), is relatively low in Africa. A major key to boosting implementation is strong capacity in the region. Building and strengthening capacity is therefore an important focus of the Plan of Action for Africa to be achieved, in particular, through targeted training courses.

Such courses bring together a variety of stakeholders, including government representatives and scientific experts, and cover a wide range of AEWA-relevant aspects such as the flyway approach to the conservation and wise use of waterbirds and wetlands, improved skills for the negotiation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the roles and responsibilities for effective implementation of the Agreement.

Examples of successful courses include two flyway-approach Training of Trainers courses for technical experts, one for Eastern and Southern Africa in 2013, and another for Portuguese-speaking African countries in 2014. In addition, training workshops were convened in order to strengthen the involvement of the African Contracting Parties in,



and improve their effective preparation for Meetings of the Parties (MOPs), at the same time as providing an opportunity for African Parties to consolidate regional interests.

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has collaborated with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat on a number of its capacity-building activities, for example in the framework of a major European Commission-funded ENRTP¹ project.



International Species Action Plans



International Single and Multi-Species Action Plans (ISSAPs/IMSAPs) are the key instrument developed under AEWA to stimulate and guide coordinated measures for the effective conservation of migratory waterbird populations across their entire range.

A number of ISSAPs have been developed under the African Initiative, including for the Slaty Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*), the Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*) and the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*).

Other AEWA species of high priority for the development of ISSAPs in Africa include the Bank Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax neglectus*), Wattled Crane (*Grus carunculatus*), Madagascar Pratincole (*Glareola ocularis*), African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), Cape Gannet (*Sula (Morus) capensis*), Blue Crane (*Grus paradisea*) and White-backed Duck (*Thalassornis leuconotus*). Three of these species were included in the first IMSAP recently developed under the Agreement, for coastal seabirds of the Benguela upwelling system.



The Small Grants Fund - Supporting Conservation Action on the Ground

The AEWA Small Grants Fund is a source of financial support promoting AEWA implementation in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

¹ ENRTP - Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, including Energy