

6th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

9-14 November 2015, Bonn, Germany

“Making flyway conservation happen”

RESOLUTION 6.9

IMPROVING THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN SEABIRDS

Aware that seabirds are one of the most threatened groups of birds, and *concerned* that of the 84 seabird species listed by AEWA, many are threatened and/or have declining populations at both regional and global level, including four species listed on the IUCN Global Red List as Endangered, four species listed as Vulnerable, five species as Near Threatened, and 29 species which are listed as Least Concern although with decreasing global population trends,

Noting the findings on threats to seabirds, the current knowledge gaps and recommendations of the *Review of the Status, Threats and Conservation Action Priorities for the Seabird Populations Covered by the Agreement* (document AEWA/MOP6.40), the *Review of potential impacts of marine fisheries on migratory seabirds within the Afro-Tropical Region* (document AEWA/MOP6.39) and the *Multi-species Action Plan for the Conservation of Benguela Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds* (document AEWA/MOP6.30),

Further noting the findings and knowledge gaps in BirdLife International’s 2013 review of gillnet bycatch, *The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global review*¹ on the by-catch susceptibility of many AEWA seabird species, the findings in BirdLife International’s 2011 *Review Global seabird bycatch in longline fisheries*², the findings of the review *“Best practices to mitigate seabird bycatch in longline, trawl and gillnet fisheries – efficiency and practical applicability”*³ and in the work of the Albatross Task Force across Africa which has highlighted regions where knowledge of seabird bycatch by longline fisheries vessels is poor,

Recognising the lack of knowledge on the scale and severity of impact from threats to AEWA seabirds across their life cycle, including from climate change, unsustainable fisheries, legal and illegal hunting in the Arctic, bycatch in fisheries and in particular by gillnets, chronic and episodic pollution events, and marine debris,

Recalling the relevance of Aichi 2020 Biodiversity Target no. 11 related to protected areas, and *further recalling* CMS Resolution 11.25 on the need to advance ecological networks of protected sites for migratory species and Article III 2(c) of the Agreement which requires Parties to *“identify sites and habitats for migratory waterbirds occurring within their territory and encourage the protection, management, rehabilitation and restoration of these sites”*, Article III 2(d) which requires parties to *‘coordinate their efforts to ensure that a network of suitable habitats is maintained or, where appropriate, re-established throughout the entire range of each migratory waterbird species concerned’*, and Article III 2(e) which requires Parties to *‘investigate problems that are posed or are likely to be posed by human activities and endeavour to implement remedial measures’* ...”,

¹ Żydelis, R., Small, C. and French, G. (2013) The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global review. *Biological Conservation* 162: 76–88. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320713000979>

² Anderson, O.R.J., Small, C.J., Croxall, J.P., Dunn, E.K., Sullivan, B.J., Yates, O., Black, A., 2011. Global seabird bycatch in longline fisheries. *Endangered Species Research*, 14, 91–106. <http://www.int-res.com/abstracts/esr/v14/n2/p91-106/>

³ Best practices to mitigate seabird bycatch in longline, trawl and gillnet fisheries – efficiency and practical applicability, Sven Lokkeborg, Fish Capture Division, Institute of Marine Research, 5817 Bergen, Norway, *Marine Ecology Progress series*, Vol. 435, p. 285-303, 2011.

Recalling also CMS Resolutions 10.19 and 11.26, AEWa Resolution 5.13 and AEWa Strategic Plan Objective 1, Target 1.2 on climate change urging Parties to maximise species and habitat resilience to climate change through appropriate design of ecological networks, and acknowledging that this is of particular importance for areas where rapid changes and ecosystem shifts are occurring,

Referring to the 1999 FAO International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds) and *acknowledging* the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy, and its goals to achieve sustainable fisheries across the EU by 2020 and beyond,

Recalling the CMS Resolution 10.14 on bycatch of CMS-listed species in gillnet fisheries and *welcoming* the European Commission's 2012 Action Plan for reducing incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gears, and the existing National Plans of Action implemented by a number of Parties, and *noting* the information presented in the 2015 BirdLife International Workshop Report: *By-catch Mitigation Measures in Gillnet Fisheries*⁴, which highlights urgent priorities for gillnet bycatch mitigation research and identifies major data gaps, particularly in Africa and in the Arctic,

Recalling the resolution 1/6 of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme on marine plastic debris and microplastics that requested the Executive Director, in consultation with other relevant institutions and stakeholders, to undertake a study on marine plastic debris and marine microplastics, building on existing work and taking into account the most up-to-date studies and data and to present the study to the second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,

Aware of potential impacts to migratory seabirds resulting from the ingestion of plastics, microplastics and other forms of marine litter (marine debris) and *recalling* the CMS Resolutions 10.4 and 11.30 on marine debris, requiring Parties to work collectively and with the relevant Regional Seas Conventions on reducing the impacts of marine debris on migratory species,

Recognising the central role and responsibilities of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to minimise catch of non-target species in their fisheries, as established in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and the role of CMS, its other related Agreements and multiple other international actors in addressing these issues,

Noting the lack of AEWa Conservation Guidelines to help implement obligations with respect to minimising effects of fisheries on migratory waterbirds but *aware of* much other relevant guidance,

Highlighting the need for strengthened regional collaboration in responding to both acute and chronic oil pollution and oil spills within the region, particularly where capacity is low to deal with emergency mitigation especially in respect of rapid response measures,

Welcoming the work already being undertaken by many Contracting Parties to reduce the impact on seabirds from introduced predators and invasive alien species especially on breeding islands, but *emphasising* that more work is urgently needed to eliminate these impacts,

Recognising the joint issues of concern and potential linkages and synergies that exist between AEWa and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

The Meeting of the Parties:

1. *Calls upon* Parties and *encourages* non-Party Range States and other relevant international fora to endeavour to identify important sites for AEWa-listed seabirds including areas at sea which are managed to protect such seabirds across all life cycle stages, which contribute to achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target no.11;

⁴ Wiedenfeld, D.A., Crawford, R. & Pott, C.M. (2015). *Workshop Report: Reducing the Bycatch of Seabirds, Sea Turtles, and Marine Mammals in Gillnets*. National Conservation Training Center, USA. 36 pp.
http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/Workshop-Report_Reducing-Bycatch-in-Gillnets_Jan-2015_BirdLife_ABC.pdf

2. *Encourages Parties to implement the recommendations of the Review of the Status, Threats and Conservation Action Priorities for the Seabird Populations Covered by the Agreement notably in respect of the following issues:*

2.1 Strengthen cooperation in providing reliable and quantified reporting of seabird harvest data, including egg harvesting in order to assess the annual legal harvest of seabird populations and provide estimates of illegal catch statistics;

2.2 Strengthen efforts to quantify gillnet fishing effort within the Agreement area, and to work towards quantifying the scale and impacts of bycatch in both small and large scale fisheries;

2.3 In the context of AEWA priorities for International Single Species Action Plans, develop or update plans for priority seabirds, incorporating detailed information and mapping of where threats are occurring, to facilitate coherent regional management of species-specific threats;

2.4 Ensure that national coastal and marine spatial planning initiatives prioritise the collection, collation and integration of seabird data, including marine Important Bird Areas, Marine Protected Areas, temporal/spatial usage and species sensitivity mapping outputs, during the planning process and that human impacts on AEWA listed seabirds is minimised;

2.5 Strengthen national fisheries management processes, and provide adequate capacity for enforcing compliance to regulations, monitoring of catch and surveillance of vessels in relation to protected areas for AEWA listed seabirds;

2.6 Ensure that the collection of seabird bycatch data is integrated into existing bycatch observer programmes on vessels;

2.7 Develop and implement National Plans of Action for seabird bycatch;

2.8 Promote work to understand the long term impacts of marine debris on seabird species;

2.9 Support and contribute to filling knowledge gaps on AEWA-listed seabird species, including by sharing information and facilitating research on relevant threats and priority areas in relation to such species;

2.10 Encourage continued monitoring programmes for assessing and updating the conservation status of AEWA-listed seabird species;

3. *Calls upon Parties, as appropriate, to implement the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds) and comply with all current binding and recommendatory measures aimed at the protection of seabirds, adopted by RFMOs;*

4. *Calls upon relevant Parties to implement the recommendations of the Review of Potential impacts of marine fisheries on migratory seabirds within the Afro-Tropical Region as well as the Multi-species Action Plan for the Conservation of Benguela Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds;*

5. *Determines that in addressing seabird conservation issues, AEWA's priority should be those species, regions, or threats not already the subject of pre-existing international or conservation frameworks, for example - but not restricted to - tropical seabirds or those impacted by small or artisanal fisheries not regulated by RFMOs, and subject to the availability of financial resources, requests the Technical Committee to provide advice on most urgent priorities in this regard;*

6. *Requests the Secretariat, subject to the availability of financial resources, and in consultation with the Technical Committee, to facilitate the development of an implementation process for this resolution focused on the added value that AEWA can bring to addressing priority recommendations of the Review of the status, threats and conservation action priorities for the seabird populations covered by the Agreement and the Review of potential impacts of marine fisheries on migratory seabirds within the Afrotropical region complementarily to the proposed Working Group for the Multi-species Action Plan for the Conservation of Benguela Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds;*

7. *Requests the Technical Committee, subject to the availability of financial resources, in consultation with CMS, ACAP and other relevant bodies (in particular relevant RFMOs) and expertise, to facilitate Parties' implementation of paragraph 4.3.7 of the Action Plan by compiling existing and, where necessary,*

complementing or developing user-friendly conservation guidelines and recommendations based on the priorities identified in paragraph 5 and best available science, and to bring these to the next session of the Meeting of Parties;

8. *Also requests* the Technical Committee, subject to the availability of financial and in-kind resources, in consultation with CMS, to assess any threats posed to migratory seabirds listed by AEWA from the ingestion of plastics, of microplastics and other forms of marine litter (marine debris) and to provide advice on appropriate responses in this regard to the Meeting of Parties.