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**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AEWA AFRICAN INITIATIVE
AND AEWA PLAN OF ACTION FOR AFRICA**

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat regarding the coordination and implementation of the AEWA African Initiative and related AEWA Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) 2012-2018 for the period of February 2016 to February 2018.

Daily routine activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat which contribute towards the implementation of the African Initiative, such as internal meetings with CMS, UNEP and/or UN Head of Agencies or carrying out AI-related mailings etc. are not specifically mentioned in this report. Fundraising efforts in connection with the African Initiative are described in each relevant section below, rather than in a separate section.

1. COORDINATION OF THE AEWA AFRICAN INITIATIVE

As per Resolution 5.9, the coordination of the AEWA African Initiative and PoAA has been maintained at the level of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, strengthened by Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators (SRFPCs) who are responsible for guiding implementation at the sub-regional level, and with further support from the Technical Support Unit (TSU).

1.1 AEWA African Initiative Unit

The coordination within the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been led by the African Initiative Unit, which consists of the Coordinator for the African Initiative supported by a Programme Assistant. The AEWA core budget has allocated 50% of the funding required for both positions, and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat was requested to seek additional voluntary contributions to extend both positions beyond 50% (Resolutions 5.21 and 6.18). The Secretariat secured funding to supplement the position of the Coordinator up to 100% and that of the Programme Assistant up to 80% for the current reporting period, and it expects to be able to maintain these percentages until the end of 2018, thanks to contributions from the Federal Office for the Environment in Switzerland and the European Commission.

1.2 Technical Support Unit

The Technical Support Unit (TSU), offered by the Governments of France and Senegal, consists of a team of multi-disciplinary experts that offers technical support to the African Range States in various areas, including survey and monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats, waterbird data management or promoting sustainable use of waterbirds and wetland resources. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is a member of the TSU Steering Group and participates in its annual meetings which aim to coordinate planning for TSU activities. The AEWA Executive

Secretary and African Initiative Coordinator attended the TSU Steering Group meeting of 2 February 2017 in Paris, France, immediately after the 12th Meeting of the AEWA Standing Committee.

1.3 Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continued to work closely with the five African Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators (SRFPCs)¹ to support them in guiding the implementation of AEWA in their respective sub-region. They were, for instance, closely involved in the development of the draft AEWA PoAA 2019-2027 and the 2016 capacity-building workshop for database managers (cf. below).

During the current reporting period, the SRFPCs for Southern Africa and Northern Africa changed. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat worked closely with the responsible government agencies for the designation of new AEWA National Focal Points (NFPs) and their confirmation as SRFPCs. In December 2017, Mr. Thulani Sihle Methula was designated as new AEWA NFP for Swaziland and confirmed as SRFPC for Southern Africa. Algeria was still to confirm the new NFP and SRFPC at the time of reporting.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AEWA AFRICAN INITIATIVE AND PLAN OF ACTION FOR AFRICA

2.1 Development of the draft AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027

AEWA Resolution 6.14 extended both the AEWA Strategic Plan and the PoAA until the 7th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP7), in 2018, and instructed the development of a draft Strategic Plan and draft PoAA for the period 2019-2027 for submission to MOP7. The Concept Note guiding the development process for the draft PoAA 2019-2027 was approved by the AEWA Standing Committee (StC) in October 2016. In line with the Concept Note, a team of independent consultants was recruited to develop the draft PoAA 2019-2027, with essential input from the Working Group for the development of the AEWA PoAA. The PoAA Working Group was convened in March 2017. It comprises African regional representatives of the AEWA StC, regional representatives and experts of the AEWA Technical Committee (TC), African Contracting Party representatives from each sub-region whose selection was coordinated by the respective SRFPCs, as well as observers from non-African AEWA Parties, partner organisations and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

The PoAA Working Group met in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2017 in order to establish the basis for the new PoAA. It identified priorities, targets and actions for inclusion in the draft plan while also addressing the structure and appearance of the plan as well as implementation challenges. The workshop was made possible thanks to the generous financial and other contributions from the Governments of Switzerland, through the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), and Senegal. Details on this workshop are available at: <http://www.unep-awea.org/en/meeting/workshop-working-group-development-awea-plan-action-africa-2019-2027-10-12-october-2017>

The draft PoAA 2019-2027 is currently under development and a first draft is scheduled to be circulated to the PoAA Working Group for comments in March 2018. A second draft is scheduled to be circulated to all African Parties and key stakeholders by May 2018 and a final draft presented to the AEWA Standing Committee in June 2018.

¹ AEWA SRFPCs: http://www.unep-awea.org/en/activities/african_initiative/poa_for_africa_ai/srfp_coordinators

2.2 Species conservation and monitoring

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat secured funding from the Government of Sweden, through the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, to support the International Waterbird Census (IWC) in seven AEWA African Contracting Parties along the West-Asian/East African Flyway (Burundi, Chad, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). This project, implemented over the period of 2016-2017, was coordinated by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in collaboration with key partners of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Monitoring Partnership. Implementation on the ground was led by National IWC Coordinators and other national partners. The project helped to maintain and/or expand the IWC coverage in these countries and enhance national capacity for waterbird identification and monitoring. A detailed report is available at: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/boost-waterbird-monitoring-seven-aewa-parties-africa>

In March 2017, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat secured funding under the European Commission (EC) Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Thematic Programme to support the implementation of the International Single Species Action Plans (ISSAPs) for the Endangered Grey Crowned-crane and the Critically Endangered White-winged Flufftail. This EC funding will enable the organisation of the first meeting of the Grey Crowned-crane International Species Working Group (ISWG) which comprises governmental representatives and experts from the ten principal range states for the species, namely Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as other key partners. The meeting will help promote and coordinate the implementation of the ISSAP along the flyway. It is scheduled for the third quarter of 2018 and preparations have been initiated in close collaboration with the African Crane Conservation Programme which coordinates the implementation of this ISSAP, under an MoU with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

The EC funding will, in addition, contribute to the implementation of the highest-priority actions identified in the ISSAP for the White-winged Flufftail. This includes the organisation of a local stakeholder workshop to promote the engagement of local communities in the conservation of the Berga Wetland in Ethiopia which is one of only two confirmed breeding sites for the species. The funding will also help to initiate the process for management planning and the eventual designation of the Berga Wetland as a Protected Area.

2.3 Operation of the AEWA Small Grants Fund

In April 2017, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, in collaboration with the AEWA TC and StC, completed the selection and approval process for the following four conservation projects to be supported under the 2015 cycle of the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF)²:

- *Zimbabwe*: The sum of USD 16,000 was allocated to a 18-month project entitled “*Species surveys and habitat assessment for conservation planning to secure the future of two crane Species in Zimbabwe*” which is implemented by BirdLife Zimbabwe in collaboration with the African Crane Conservation Programme (ACCP) and other national partners. The project focuses on survey and monitoring of the Grey Crowned-crane and Wattled Crane and their habitats, enhanced capacity for future survey and monitoring, as well as the development and update of a national Crane action plan;
- *Kenya*: The sum of USD 9,000 was allocated to a 12-month project entitled “*Building capacity preparedness for Rift Valley Lakes conservation*” which is implemented by Nature Kenya. The project will primarily support

² AEWA SGF 2015 cycle: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/page/four-new-projects-africa-benefit-aewa-small-grants-fund>

biannual waterbird counts at lakes Bogoria, Elementaita, Nakuru, Magadi and Ol-bolossat and build capacity for local community volunteers, park rangers and scientists on waterbird identification and monitoring;

- *Nigeria*: Approved for a total of USD 9,000, this 12-month project entitled “*Building the capacity of stakeholders to enhance effective monitoring of migratory waterbirds in some coastal and inland wetland areas of Nigeria*” is implemented by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation in collaboration with the Nigerian National Parks and Federal Ministry of Environment. It aims to enhance capacity in waterbird monitoring for key stakeholders at the Sokoto Rima River Basin, Manga and Lake Maladumba, conducting waterbird counts at these sites, establishing a waterbird monitoring strategy/guidelines, establishing Sites Support Groups to support waterbird conservation and organise World Migratory Bird Day and World Wetlands Day activities.
- *Mauritania*: Receiving a total of USD 8,000, this 13-month project entitled “*Conservation of the Nesting Sites for Lesser Flamingos (Phoeniconaias minor) at the Island of Aftout Essahili (Chat Boul)*” is implemented by the “*Association mauritanienne des amis des oiseaux et de la protection des espèces animales menacées d’extinction (AMISO)*”. It focuses on enhancing technical and material capacity for waterbird identification and monitoring for staff of Diawling National Park (which is the responsible national authority for Aftout Essahili), as well as for the local communities living around the site.

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat also monitored the implementation of ongoing SGF projects from the 2013 and 2014 project cycles and provided support towards the relevant the administrative and technical processes. In 2016, three SGF projects which focused on enhancing national capacity for waterbird monitoring and conservation were successfully completed in Gabon³, Guinea⁴ and Togo. In 2017, one SGF project on the conservation of the White-headed Duck in Morocco⁵ was successfully completed.

2.4 Expanding membership to AEWA in Africa

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continued to promote the accession of new Contracting Parties, with a focus on the Central and Southern African regions, as well as on Portuguese-speaking African countries, where major gaps in membership to AEWA in Africa exist.

Botswana became a Contracting Party to AEWA on 1 November 2017⁶, thanks to the collaborative efforts of governmental and non-governmental partners and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

In 2016, funds were secured from the Swiss Government, through the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), which enabled the translation of the AEWA text into Portuguese, in response to a request from some of the Lusophone African countries. The Portuguese version of the AEWA text⁷, which became available in July 2017, now helps to facilitate the accession of the four (out of five) Lusophone African range states which are not yet a Party to AEWA (Angola, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Mozambique).

This financial contribution also enabled the organisation of a national multi-stakeholder workshop to promote the accession of Cameroon to AEWA. The workshop, organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Cameroon

³ AEWA SGF project Gabon: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/capacity-building-gabon-conserve-migratory-waterbirds>

⁴ AEWA SGF project Guinea: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-small-grants-fund-project-successfully-concluded-guinea>

⁵ AEWA SGF project Morocco: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/focus-white-headed-duck-morocco>

⁶ Accession of Botswana to AEWA: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/botswana-accedes-aewa-party-no-77>

⁷ AEWA Text in Portuguese: http://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/basic_page_documents/aewa_agreement_text_2016_2018_Portuguese_FINAL_WITH_COVER.pdf

Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), took place in December 2016 in Yaoundé, Cameroon⁸. It helped to increase key stakeholders' understanding of the legal, technical and socio-economic implications of acceding to AEWAs and of the various steps required to complete the accession process. The engagement of the key partners involved in the accession process was confirmed through a final communique signed between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and MINFOF. Significant progress was subsequently made in the accession process which is currently at the level of the Prime Minister's Office.

The Secretariat was also able to re-establish contacts and/or help advance the accession process in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

2.5 Capacity-Building and CEPA in Africa

Enhancing technical and administrative capacity for the implementation of AEWAs in Africa cuts across many expected results and associated actions of the AEWAs PoAA 2012-2018. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat therefore dedicated efforts towards capacity-building on various issues in the region.

Enhancing capacity for waterbird data management

In collaboration with Wetlands International and the Technical Support Unit (TSU), and with local logistical support from Wetlands International Africa, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat organized a waterbird data management workshop from 22-24 October 2016 in Dakar, Senegal, immediately following the 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC 14). This training was made possible thanks to a generous financial contribution from the Swiss Government, through the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). It brought together some 20 participants, including national IWC data managers from 13 African countries (Angola, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe) and representatives from partners concerned with waterbird data collection in Africa, including Wetlands International Africa and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative. The workshop equipped participants with an in-depth understanding of IWC processes, the underlying systems and tools required for data entry, curation and analysis, and enabled them to review and cleanse of historical IWC data. It also provided an opportunity for participants to exchange relevant experience and expertise. Further information is available at: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-workshop-strengthens-data-management-capacity-africa>

Enhancing capacity for waterbird survey and monitoring and flyway conservation

Increasing the quantity and quality of waterbird population data from Africa is among the highest priority actions of the PoAA 2012-2018. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat promoted capacity-building for waterbird identification and monitoring through various activities, including in the framework of the AEWAs Small Grants Fund (SGF) where all on-going projects during the current reporting period have contributed to enhanced capacity for waterbird monitoring (see section 2.3 for details). Some African Contracting Parties also received support to enhance capacity for waterbird monitoring in the framework of the IWC project (see section 2.2 for details).

In 2017, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat secured funding from the European Commission (EC) in the framework of the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Thematic Programme for activities which span over the period of 2017-2020. Part of this funding is earmarked for the organisation of a training of trainers (ToT) workshop to enhance capacity of technical experts and training institutions from 16 Francophone Western and Central African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic

⁸ Accession workshop in Cameroon: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/new-impetus-cameroon%E2%80%99s-efforts-accede-aewa-0>

Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Mauritania). The Wings over Wetlands Flyway Training Kit will be used as the main training tool, and will be complemented by the ONCFS toolkit on waterbird identification and monitoring as well as the Birdlife International IBA monitoring guidelines. The ToT workshop is planned for early 2019 in Benin, and preparations have been initiated.

Promoting World Migratory Bird Day in Africa

The 2016 World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) celebration received significant prominence in the African region thanks to a WMBD grant which was made possible through a voluntary contribution from the Government of Germany through the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). The grant helped support nine national events in Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as two transboundary events in Mauritania (conducted in collaboration with Senegal) and Togo (conducted in collaboration with Benin and Ghana). In addition, the following WMBD events were organized in the framework of AEWA SGF projects:

- The NGO Guinea Ecology, in collaboration with the Guinea Office for Parks and Reserves (OGUIPAR), celebrated WMBD 2016 at the General Lansana Conté University of Sonfonia in Guinea: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-small-grants-fund-project-successfully-concluded-guinea>;
- The Research Group for Bird Protection in Morocco (GREPOM) organized three WMBD events in 2017 at the Souss-Massa, Sidi Mousa-Walidia and Kenitra wetlands: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/focus-white-headed-duck-morocco>;
- The Ministry of Water and Forestry of Cote d'Ivoire organized a WMBD event in Adiaké in October 2017.

2.6 Promoting partnership for the implementation of AEWA in Africa

As mentioned in the sections above, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continued to work closely with key partners (BirdLife International, Wetlands International, Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, etc.) on the organisation and implementation of AEWA activities in Africa so as to maximise efforts and resources and avoid duplication. The AEWA African Initiative Coordinator furthermore participated in the following meetings in order to reinforce existing synergies and initiate new ones with relevant partners:

- The 3rd Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for the BirdLife/MAVA Foundation project on the conservation of migratory birds (CMB) along the coast of West Africa (Guinea, October 2017). This helped to further align CMB project activities to support AEWA implementation and promote further collaboration with AEWA and other relevant MEAs, including the Ramsar Convention. Thanks to this partnership, the CMB project provided financial and human resources to support the capacity-building workshop organized under the AEWA SGF project in Mauritania, mentioned under section 2.3 a;
- The African regional preparatory meeting for the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Senegal, February 2018). Attending this meeting helped to further increase awareness on AEWA issues among government representatives and partners and was an opportunity to network, discuss AEWA relevant issues, promote accession and initiate possible collaboration with new partners, including on the emerging issues of wetlands conservation through remote sensing;
- The GPGC Programme Steering Committee meeting between the EC and UN Environment (Belgium, March 2017). This resulted in a pledge for funding for AEWA African activities (see sections 2.2 and 2.5 above).