



AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF
AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS

15th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
11-13 December 2019, Bristol, United Kingdom

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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Agenda item 1. Opening of the Meeting

1. The Standing Committee Chair, Mr Simon Mackown, opened the 15th Meeting of the Standing Committee (StC) by warmly welcoming all those present to Bristol.
2. The AEWA Executive Secretary, Dr Jacques Trouvilliez, thanked the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for hosting the meeting and the StC members and observers for their attendance.

Agenda item 2. Admission of Observers

3. Referring to Document AEWA/StC Inf. 15.6, *Provisional List of Participants*, Mr Mackown gave a brief overview of the observers present at the meeting.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>All observers present were admitted to the meeting.</i>
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Agenda item 3. Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme

4. Mr Mackown informed the meeting participants that Ms Nadjeeba Bendjedda, Regional Representative for Northern Africa and the Middle East, not being able to attend the meeting, the report for that region would be moved to the end of agenda item 4.
5. Furthermore, Mr Mackown pointed out that agenda item 7. (Implementation Review Process) would be a closed session for the StC members only and suggested that it should therefore be swapped with agenda item 8.
6. There were no items announced under AOB.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The agenda and work programme were adopted with two minor changes to the agenda and no items under AOB.</i>
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Agenda item 4. Reports

a. Reports by the Standing Committee Members and Party Observers

7. The attending regional representatives delivered progress reports to the meeting from their respective regions. The reports by the regional representatives on the implementation of AEWA in their respective regions are available for download on the AEWA website for complete information. These include reports from Western and Central Africa, East and South Africa, Europe and Central Asia and Northern Africa and the Middle East regions.
8. In his capacity as the Regional Representative for Western and Central Africa, Mr Aristide informed all those present that the written report was available in English and French. He highlighted the regional training of trainers that took place in Benin in May 2019 and emphasised how important this workshop was for the region. In addition, Mr Aristide mentioned the forestation activities that took place during the World Migratory Bird Day.

9. In her capacity as the Regional Representative for East and South Africa, Ms Mafumo highlighted in particular the public awareness campaign that was undertaken near Lake Ngami in Botswana, which is an important wetland, bird and biodiversity area for migratory species in the region. In October 2019 the campaign was undertaken under the World Migratory Bird day's theme; "Protect Birds: Be the solution to plastic pollution", where at least 400 students from primary and secondary schools participated. Students presented songs, plays and poetry around the theme as a way of presenting the message to the general public.

10. In his capacity as the Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, Mr Mackown said that it was challenging for some of the focal points in the region to report back on activities relating to the implementation of AEWA due to the high number of international meetings before the StC meeting. Nevertheless, Mr Mackown highlighted a couple of activities happening in the region. He said that efforts were being increased to conserve the Eurasian Curlew, which was one of the top conservation priorities in the United Kingdom. He went on to highlight that the government of Croatia had banned the hunting of the Common Pochard, that the Swiss authorities were bringing forward a legislation to ban the use of lead shot, particularly over wetlands and that there was a general movement toward restricting the use of lead shot in Europe.

11. Since Ms Bendjedda, Regional Representative for Middle East and Northern Africa, could not attend the meeting, Dr Trouvilliez delivered the report for this region. He highlighted the organisation of the 9th International Spoonbill Workshop organised by the AEWA Eurasian Spoonbill International Expert Group that took place in November 2018 in Djerba, Tunisia. This was the first workshop of this group that took place in a wintering area of the Eurasian Spoonbill. Exchanges on the latest discoveries concerning flyways and Spoonbill behaviour were the focus of the discussions of this expert meeting, but also the opportunity to propose a better conservation of important sites for the survival of the species.

12. Dr Trouvilliez went on to inform all those present about the recommendations that came out of the Middle East and Northern Africa regional report. First, there was a need for improved coordination between the representative of the region and the focal points of representative countries in the region. Second, it was proposed to provide translation of documents in Arabic and French, especially for the intermediate versions submitted for discussion and opinion.

13. Following this, there was a brief discussion on whether Arabic translations of documents were really necessary and whether there were resources to do so. As Chair of the StC, Mr Mackown concluded that translations were of course welcomed, but depended on the budget of the AEWA Secretariat. With more Arabic countries on board, some in-kind contributions could help for translation. On the other recommendation, Mr Mackown recognised the need to coordinate these kinds of meetings but believed it was not the Secretariat's responsibility to do so. He thought it was the function of the Regional Representatives.

14. Following the regional presentations, Dr Trouvilliez read a statement by Ms Amy Fraenkel, acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species. This statement is available in Appendix I.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The StC members took note of the regional reports.</i>
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b. Report by the Technical Committee

15. In her capacity as the Chair of the Technical Committee (TC), Dr Ruth Cromie gave a brief presentation on the current composition of the TC, the 15th meeting of the TC, the TC workplan 2019-2021 as well as an overview on essential tasks and resource needs.

16. Following Dr Cromie's presentation, Mr Mackown made the observation that countries did not engage much between MOPs and posed the question what the StC could possibly do to facilitate this and motivate countries.

17. Mr Dereliev, Head of the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit at the AEWa Secretariat, responded that the Secretariat was not only looking for funds, but also in-kind contributions. He believed that six out of eight tasks could be done with in-kind support. Mr Dereliev added that the Secretariat had already identified providers for the budgeted tasks and that timeframes had already been agreed upon.

18. Mr Dereliev further underlined that the Secretariat was still hoping to get a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) for TC support. This additional capacity would be extremely useful for some of the essential work the TC had been tasked with and Mr Dereliev briefly explained the process of getting a JPO. The AEWa Secretariat would send a request to UNEP. UNEP would decide to include the proposal in the list of JPOs proposed for funding to the countries participating to the JPO programme. The countries would then decide which JPO proposal they would fund. The AEWa Secretariat had benefited from this programme in the past with a JPO in the field of communication funded by Germany. This JPO had subsequently been recruited as a staff member (Mr Florian Keil). For a country the benefits were numerous. The JPO once back in his country would have gained great knowledge of international cooperation or could be recruited as a UN staff.

19. Mr Mackown noted that it seemed to be quite a complex process and that he would need more details on what a JPO actually did in order to promote this with the UK government. Mr Dereliev then offered to provide everyone with a job description for a JPO.

20. Going back on the issue of the in-kind contributions, Ms Wilmar Remmelts, representative of the Netherlands, enquired whether tasks had already been distributed, upon which Mr Størkersen, representative of Norway, suggested that a list could be sent out at the end of year with prioritised wishes.

21. Mr Dereliev responded that a list had been circulated a few weeks ago and reiterated that the resource need was significant. He added that many other tasks had already been taken up as pro-bono work by the TC itself.

22. Mr Mackown concluded that the funding gap would need to be stressed to Parties and that Regional Representatives and the members of the StC needed to be more pro-active in doing so and not leave everything to the Secretariat.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The StC recommends that all Parties, which are members of the JPO programme, should consider supporting AEWa by allocating a JPO.</i>
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c. Report by the Depositary

23. Referring to document AEWa/StC 15.4, *Report of the Depositary*, Ms Remmelts, on behalf of the Depositary, was happy to report on the three latest accessions to the Agreement since MOP7: Central African Republic, Serbia and Malawi.

24. Ms Remmelts went on to inform all those present about the reservations received by the Depositary concerning the amendments adopted during MOP7. She highlighted in particular the late reservation submitted by the European Union stating that the amendments concerning nine species could not be implemented in the EU without a prior change in EU law. The Depositary had accepted this late reservation on a tentative basis with a period of 12 months within which other Parties may object to it. If no objection was raised, the reservation would be confirmed.

25. Dr Trouvilliez said that a resolution on late reservations would be presented by the EU at the next CMS COP upon which Ms Remmelts clarified that the resolution would describe the procedure in case of a late reservation, but that it would not say that it was no longer allowed.

d. Report by the Secretariat

26. Introducing document AEWA/StC 15.5, *Report of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat*, Dr Trouvilliez noted that the report was divided into five sections and that the finance and administrative issues would be covered under agenda item 10.

27. Dr Trouvilliez reminded all those present about the previously discussed JPO, which the AEWA Secretariat had applied for in 2019. Unfortunately, no country had offered a JPO to the AEWA Secretariat. The Secretariat would renew its proposal in 2020.

28. He went on to explain that without extending the part-time positions through voluntary contributions and savings, but also the availability of staff funded entirely through voluntary contributions, the Secretariat would not have been in a position to deliver all services requested by Parties.

29. Moving on to the general management section, Dr Trouvilliez was happy to report that three new Parties had acceded to AEWA, bringing the total number of Parties to 80. Furthermore, significant progress had been made in the accession process of some African non-Party Range States. In addition, there had been some progress in the accession process of Saudi Arabia and some Central Asian non-Party Range States, which would be reported on under agenda item 5.

30. Dr Trouvilliez went on to remind all those present that the last StC meeting had taken place in December 2018 right after MOP7 in Durban, South Africa and that the last TC meeting had taken place in April 2019 in Bonn, Germany of which both reports were available on the respective webpages.

31. Reporting on the cooperation with UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and other organisations, Dr Trouvilliez said that the CMS Family had met the newly appointed UNEP Executive Director to discuss how to increase the programmatic cooperation and cooperation with UNEP. He commended her and the Deputy Director on the great job they had been doing so far and said the expectations for the future were high.

32. Dr Trouvilliez continued by informing all those present about various meetings the Secretariat had participated in 2019. Amongst others, the Secretariat participated in the 4th meeting of the CMS Multi-stakeholder Task Force, the 3rd meeting of the CMS Illegal Killing Task Force, the meeting of the CMS African-Eurasian Migratory Landbird Action Plan Working Group as well as the 12th Expert Group on the Birds and Habitats Directives (NADEG).

33. Dr Trouvilliez further stated that the cooperation with the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention had mainly focused on African topics, such as the training of trainers workshop on flyway conservation that took place in Benin in May 2019.

34. With regards to cooperation with the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), the Secretariat had attended the 66th General Assembly in May 2019 in Namibia. Dr Trouvilliez participated in special events on migratory birds and presented the concept of adaptive management for migratory waterbirds. Dr Trouvilliez pointed out that these meetings were a good opportunity to present AEWA to the Minister in charge of the Environment as Namibia was not a Party.

35. Dr Trouvilliez went on to inform all those present about the RESSOURCE Project, which aimed, among other objectives, to evaluate the sustainability of using the resources represented by waterbirds thanks to its integrated approach. For the first time in AEWA history, a project was looking at the economic value of waterbirds in Africa.

36. The next Steering Committee meeting of the RESSOURCE Project would be hosted by the AEWA Secretariat in June 2020 in Bonn, Germany. In order to increase synergies between organisations, the Secretariat would ask the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to participate in this meeting.

37. Dr Trouvilliez further mentioned that the Secretariat served on the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) Steering Group for the African-Eurasian flyway and had attended the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Circumpolar Seabirds Expert Group meeting in March 2019 in Iceland.

38. On other flyways, Dr Trouvilliez reported that Mr Dereliev had been nominated as a member of the Technical Committee of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), which allowed for a closer cooperation between the two instruments.

39. With regards to the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), Dr Trouvilliez highlighted that the meeting of the CAF Range Countries convened by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in November 2019 had been attended by the Secretariat and that three countries, namely Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and India itself, had attended this meeting. The outcome of the meeting would be shared at the CMS COP13 in February 2020. Of the 30 Range States within the Central Asian Flyway, 17 were already covered by AEWA and 3 of them were already Parties to the Agreement. The StC recommended that any solution for the CAF structure should not be detrimental to AEWA.

40. Dr Trouvilliez carried on by announcing that the MOP7 proceedings had been published online and was grateful to the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) for having printed hardcopies in English and French.

41. Moving on to the communications, information management and outreach section, Dr Trouvilliez was happy to tell all those present about some of the IMCA unit's successes, such as the successful organisation of the World Migratory Bird Day 2019. He recalled the StC had set up the institutional arrangements on 25 October 2016. AEWA contributed to one third of the IMCA human resources and in return should receive one third of the working time of the team. This document on the IMCA Institutional Arrangements would be sent again to all StC members. Furthermore, MOP7 had approved the continuation of the joint CMS/AEWA unit.

42. However, Dr Trouvilliez also pointed out that AEWA continued to have a negative balance for the time allocation between the two partners. This was due partly to vacant CMS positions in the unit. This issue was discussed with the acting CMS Executive Secretary and it was agreed that a solution needed to be found after the CMS COP13.

43. After a brief discussion on this issue, it was decided that Dr Trouvilliez would provide a report to the StC by April 2020 showing the cost efficiencies of the joint IMCA Unit and the measures to reduce the time allocation deficit as well as a staff table concerning the IMCA team.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Secretariat to provide a report to the StC by April 2020 showing the cost efficiencies of the joint IMCA Unit.</i>
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44. Introducing the next section on the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit (SICU), Dr Trouvilliez told those present that the Secretariat had been invited to attend a meeting of national hunting associations from the north-west European countries convened by the Danish Hunters Association (DHA) in May 2019 in Denmark in order to discuss the contribution of the hunting community to the sustainable harvest and management of migratory waterbird populations.

45. Ms Rimmelts was worried that governments had not been involved in this meeting, upon which Mr Dereliev clarified that it was a bottom-up initiative to establish an informal network amongst certain hunting associations in north-west Europe in order to support work with respect to sustainable harvest. He explained that one of the main issues discussed was data collection and how to improve that to generate necessary information. The Secretariat had presented existing frameworks for the hunters to consider.

46. Dr Trouvilliez emphasised that it was good to have a direct dialogue with the hunters, since they did not know AEWA well enough to understand the Secretariat's processes and data requirements.

47. Mr Szabolcs Nagy, representative of Wetlands International, added that the hunters had come to the realisation that they needed to take action on the conservation of waterbirds if they wanted to maintain hunting and that the meeting had been attended in order to explain how AEWA worked and what AEWA's view was on where major data was missing.

48. Dr Trouvilliez continued by giving an overview of the AEWA International Species Action and Management Plans and AEWA International Species Working Groups and reported on some of the meetings, in particular the meeting on the Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) in Paris in September 2019, where it had been agreed to launch the development of an Adaptive Harvest Management Programme.

49. Ms Rimmelts noted that there had been a condition attached to this agreement, namely that the French government should pay for it, upon which Mr Dereliev responded that a decision on the costs had not been taken yet. This would depend on the capacity and resources available.

50. Moving on to the European Goose Management Platform (EGMP), Dr Trouvilliez reminded all those present that the platform continued to be coordinated by Ms Eva Meyers, working in close collaboration with Aarhus University.

51. Dr Trouvilliez highlighted that the 4th Meeting of the AEWA European Goose Management International Working Group, which took place in June 2019 in Perth, Scotland, UK, was an important one, as decisions had been taken on next steps in the implementation of the International Single Species Action and Management Plans. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, the position of the administrative assistant could not be renewed in September 2019 which increased the workload of the coordinator and slowed down some processes.

52. In the final section of the report, capacity building, Dr Trouvilliez reported on the organisation in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative of a training of trainers workshop on flyway conservation for francophone West and Central Africa in Benin in May 2019, which had already been mentioned previously.

53. Following Dr Trouvilliez' report, Mr Størkersen shared his appreciation for the thorough overview provided. Going back on the previously mentioned issue on the IMCA Unit, he believed several proposals would be made at the CMS COP in February 2020, but was concerned that, nevertheless, status quo would be maintained.

54. Ms Remmelts enquired whether it would be possible for the Secretariat to provide a separate overview listing all the positions in the Secretariat including units, grades and duties, which Dr Trouvilliez agreed to.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Secretariat to provide a staffing table to the StC and to send the Institutional arrangements for the IMCA team adopted on 25 October 2016 by 31 January 2020.</i>
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55. Having a separate report on the Implementation of the AEWA African Initiative (AI) and the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) rather than having it incorporated into the overall Secretariat report would help to highlight the emphasis of the Secretariat on Africa, said Dr Trouvilliez introducing the specific report (see document AEWA/StC 15.11).

56. He reminded everyone that Ms Evelyn Moloko lead the AI and was supported by Ms Birgit Drerup. It had, however, proved to be a challenge to maintain these two posts, due to a significant funding gap. Voluntary financial contributions received from the European Commission in 2018 and from the Governments of Luxembourg and Germany in 2019 had contributed to supplementing both positions but are, nevertheless, in urgent need of additional voluntary contributions in order to be maintained at 100% and 80% respectively for the rest of the triennium.

57. Moving on, Dr Trouvilliez informed all those present that an initial draft of the Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) reporting module would be shared with the AEWA StC and TC in early 2020.

58. Dr Trouvilliez continued by mentioning some of the fruitful meetings that took place in Africa during 2019, these being the first Meeting of the AEWA International Working Group for the Grey Crowned-crane (GCC IWG), in July 2019 in Uganda as well as the 3rd Meeting of the AEWA White-winged Flufftail International Working Group (IWG) in November 2019 in South Africa.

59. Furthermore, the 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. The Secretariat had been closely following up with the Republic of Cameroon where major progress on accession was made in July 2019, when Parliament passed a law authorising the President of the Republic to proceed with the country's accession to AEWA.

60. The StC members welcomed this specific report on the African Initiative and thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to promote AEWA in Africa.

e. Report by UNEP

61. The UNEP Focal Point for AEWA, Mr Rami Abdel Malik, UNEP Law Division, apologised for not being able to attend the StC meeting. Introducing document AEWA/StC Inf. 15.4, Dr Trouvilliez highlighted the links between the outcomes of the sessions of the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) and the implementation and strategic plan of AEWA.

f. Reports by Other Observers

62. There were no reports given by other observers.

Agenda item 5. Recruitment of Parties

63. Introducing this agenda item, Dr Trouvilliez said that he would like to get advice from the StC members as to what they thought would be the best way to recruit Parties and to discuss the idea of mobilising embassies of European Contracting Parties.

64. He told all those present about Mr Dereliev's and Ms Mikander's mission to Central Asia and Caucasus and that they visited Turkmenistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan with the purpose of meeting not only Government Officials but also European Embassy Representatives in order to ask for support in promoting the accession of these countries to the Agreement.

65. Mr Dereliev informed everyone that he and Ms Mikander had had a total of 30 meetings during that mission and had received solely positive feedback. Good contacts had been established and the awareness for AEWA has, therefore, risen. Mr Dereliev added that he hoped that this mission would pay off eventually.

66. Ms Mafumo asked to be reminded of the upcoming meetings in Angola and Namibia and if this could be an opportunity to lobby other range states to accede to the Agreement.

67. Mr Dereliev responded that there would indeed be a big scope for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to recruit new Parties for AEWA. The missing SADC countries were Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and Zambia. Mr Dereliev said it would be important to aim for a higher level, such as the environment and/or foreign minister level in order to get Parties to accede to the Agreement.

68. The Chair asked if the Secretariat had prioritised countries to target for accession. Dr Trouvilliez answered that all range states were encouraged to join AEWA and the Secretariat used any opportunities to promote the Agreement. A list of priority range states had been established based on the importance for migratory waterbirds. Looking at the gaps, it clearly appeared that Central Asia and the Arabic peninsula together with Russia were the main priorities.

69. Dr Trouvilliez suggested that the StC Chair could send a letter to the Parties informing them accordingly.

Agenda item 6. 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA

a. Date and Venue, update on the status of preparation

70. Introducing this agenda item, Dr Trouvilliez reported on his recent visit to Budapest, Hungary and delivered a short presentation on the World of Hunting and Nature Exhibition and Series of Events that would be taking place in Budapest in 2021, one of which would be MOP8.

71. Dr Trouvilliez said that he had had an informative and fruitful meeting in Budapest, discussing the way forward on MOP8 with the relevant Hungarian Government Officials.

72. Considering that there would be a closing celebration with a high-level segment on 14 October 2021, Dr Trouvilliez said, the focus was on scheduling MOP8 for 5-9 October 2021, which would also be aligned with World Migratory Bird Day on the last day of the meeting.

73. Mr Mackown concluded that all StC members agreed on the suggested dates.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Adoption of the calendar for MOP8 in Budapest, Hungary: 5-9 October 2021.</i>
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b. National Reporting

74. Mr Dereliev introduced this agenda item by referring to document AEWA/StC 15.6, *Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2018-2020*.

75. He explained that the document had been adopted through resolution 7.1 and that the format was to be revised, amended and enhanced after each MOP in order to align it with any latest decisions taken. The amendments proposed had been drafted by the Secretariat following some decisions by MOP7 and had been discussed with and agreed by the TC.

76. Mr Dereliev said that the recommendation was for the StC to adopt these amendments and further explained that the amendments and a few minor additions to the format were saved in the document as tracked changes for ease of identification.

77. Ms Rimmelts remembered that the format had also been discussed at StC13 in The Hague and that every species had to be entered. Mr Dereliev responded that now major repetition was being avoided and that not the look of the format was to be adopted, but the fields, that would be prefilled for questions that had already existed.

78. With the agreement of the StC members, Mr Mackown concluded that the amended format was adopted.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The revised format for National Reports on the implementation of AEWA 2018-2020 was adopted by the StC.</i>
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Agenda item 7. Outputs of the Technical Committee Work Plan 2019-2021

79. Introducing document AEWA/StC 15.7, *Proposals for revision of population delineations of species listed on Annex 2 of AEWA*, Mr Dereliev informed all those present that this task was agreed upon by MOP7 as part of the TC workplan. Delineations of all auks and two species of seabirds were to be reviewed and these discussions had taken place at the last TC meeting in April 2019.

80. Mr Dereliev added that the TC had developed a template for each delineation proposal and agreed on all proposals apart from the proposal on the Goosander, which was summarised on pages two and three of the above-mentioned document. The conclusion was that there would be no category changes in Table 1 of the Agreement text despite some changes in delineation of populations.

81. Furthermore, the TC had agreed to announce an open call for proposals, which was posted on the AEWA website. As a result, one proposal had been received from the AEWA International Expert Group on the Eurasian Spoonbill, which the TC had agreed to.

82. The StC was asked to consider these changes and to agree on the proposals to be used in the context of the 8th edition of the Conservation Status Report. The amendments to the delineations would formally be submitted for approval to MOP8 in 2021.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The StC agreed to all population delineations for the six species of auks, the Common Eider and the Eurasian Spoonbill proposed by the TC.</i>
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Agenda item 8. Implications of moving from a 3-yearly to a 4-yearly Meeting of the Parties

83. Introducing document AEWA/StC 15.10, *Concept note for Assessing the Impact of a 4-year cycle for the Meeting of the Parties*, Dr Trouvilliez briefly explained that MOP7 had requested through resolution 7.12 the StC to evaluate the implications of moving from a 3-yearly to a 4-yearly cycle for the Meeting of the Parties.

84. He further explained that the idea was to convene a working group, which would discuss the implications and to recruit an external consultant to draft an evaluation.

85. After some discussions mainly around the high cost implications this would entail, it was suggested that this could be done internally between the Secretariat, the StC and the TC.

86. Ms Sabine Herzog, representative for Switzerland, proposed to have an initial brainstorming at the end of day two of the meeting on the kind of issues that may arise when changing from a 3-yearly to a 4-yearly cycle.

87. The Meeting agreed upon this proposal and Mr Mackown added that the outcome of the brainstorming session would be shared with the TC through the TC workspace for further comments.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The list of items to be examined will be shared with the TC and the staff of the AEWA Secretariat for discussion. After this first step, the StC will decide if the evaluation requested by MOP7 requires a consultant.</i>
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Agenda item 9. Implementation Review Process (IRP)

88. Mr Mackown gave a brief summary to the meeting of what had been discussed in this closed session.

89. On the case of the illegal hunting of the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*) in Syria, Mr Mackown reported that the decision of the StC was to keep this case on hold. Due to the current complicated political situation in the country, it was difficult to make a proper assessment of the case.

90. Moving on to the case of the drainage of the salina of Ulcinj for tourism development in Montenegro, Mr Mackown informed all those present that the decision was to maintain this case as open and that further clarification needed to be requested on the current status.

91. On the case of the windfarming project adjacent to Lake Durankulak putting at risk the globally threatened Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) in Bulgaria, Mr Mackown said that this case had been escalated to the European Commission and that some clarification was needed from them on certain points. This case would, therefore, also be maintained as open.

92. With regards to the fourth case, plans for lowland afforestation threatening breeding habitats of AEWA-listed waterbird species in Iceland, Mr Mackown reported that the positive move in Iceland towards developing a strategic plan around forestry planting would be recognised in writing. Further information would also be requested as to how the plan would be implemented. This case was also to be maintained as open.

93. On the hunting of the Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) in the UK, Mr Mackown was pleased to inform everyone that the UK had a draft legislation ready, however, due to the upcoming election, it had not been possible to pass it through the Parliament. Until then, the case would be maintained as open.

94. Two further cases were also briefly discussed. One was an IRP case concerning the hunting of the Eurasian Curlew in France. Mr Mackown had submitted an initial letter to the AEWA National Focal Point in France to ask for further information to be provided by early 2020.

95. Finally, on a potential new case in Kenya concerning the construction of a powerline at Lake Elmenteita, Mr Mackown said that the StC decided to open a case file.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>All current IRP case files to be maintained as open and to open another one on powerline construction at Lake Elmenteita in Kenya.</i>
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Agenda item 10. Financial and administrative matters

a. Execution of the 2016-2018 and 2019-2021 budgets

96. Introducing document AEWA/StC 15.8 rev.2, *Report of the Secretariat on Finance and Administrative issues*, Dr Trouvilliez informed all those present that the budget for the triennium 2016-2018 of approx. 3 million Euro had almost been completely spent, showing an ending balance of only EUR 159,946 before programme support costs. This unspent amount would be going into the trust fund.

97. Mr Storkersen asked for a clarification on the “unpaid pledges” shown in the report. Dr Trouvilliez responded that these were actually mandatory contributions and the Secretariat would use the word pledge for the voluntary contributions only in future.

98. Ms Remmelts pointed out that the balance sheet indicated that the Netherlands had not paid their contribution while the Netherlands had in fact paid, but the Secretariat had just not been able to identify the payment. Dr Trouvilliez informed all those present that the contribution of the Netherlands had meanwhile been identified and was already reflected on the webpage dedicated to the status of AEWAs contributions.

99. Following this, there was an extensive discussion on the fact that it was difficult to read the various tables despite their standard format and that it was not clear for some members of the StC where the funds were coming from and where the deficits were. Furthermore, there was some uncertainty about the assessment and level of the trust fund. The report should explain the complexity of it, which it currently did not.

100. Dr Trouvilliez recalled that all mandatory contributions were collected through the core budget and allocated to budget lines as approved by MOP7 through Resolution 7.12, Appendix IA. The expenditures were given following the same table. The voluntary contributions were allocated to projects, some of them including salary expenditures, see for example Annex 5 of the document AEWAs/StC 15.8 for the year 2019.

101. Dr Trouvilliez then explained into detail how the trust fund worked. The trust fund was the sum of the operational reserve (150 000 EUR or 15% of the estimated annual expenditures, whichever is higher), the unspent amounts from the previous budgets and the mandatory contributions received including advance payments made for future years (311,054 EUR as of 12th December 2019), minus the expenses. These components made the analysis of the status of the trust fund not immediate and could show quite large fluctuations during the year. The fact that the Secretariat had a budget adopted in EUR while UNEP dealt only with USD increased the difficulties as the monthly variation in the exchange rate had to be taken into account. At the date of the meeting, the trust fund had reached 790,254 USD.

102. Dr Trouvilliez informed all those present that five staff members worked within the Administration and Funds Management Unit (AFMU), funded by the 13% PSC raised on all mandatory and most of the voluntary contributions. This unit was shared by CMS, AEWAs and EUROBATS. Answering a question on the institutional arrangements in this common unit, Dr Trouvilliez explained that a P-3 staff member was functioning as Head of the unit, supported by four G-staff members specialised in different areas, i.e. procurement, travel, finance management, human resources management etc. The AEWAs Secretariat did not, however, participate in the evaluation of the staff members. The StC requested the Executive Secretary to try to be added as additional supervisor of those staff members working partly for AEWAs as done in the case of the IMCA team.

103. Mr Mackown concluded that revised and corrected tables were to be provided by the end of January 2020, and a better way of analysing the budget should be developed within the next six months.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>An updated status of the 2019 budget to be sent by the Secretariat end of January together with a staffing table. Secretariat to present a new format of expenditure report and financial overviews within six months.</i>
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b. Administrative and Personnel Matters

104. Under this agenda item, Dr Trouvilliez pointed out that the Secretariat had not been in the position to extend the contract of the Assistant to the European Goose Management Platform beyond July 2019 due to lack of funding.

105. For the two African Initiative positions funding was also still lacking as the core budget covered only a part time of 50%, however, due to the generous contributions received from the EC and the Governments of Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland both positions could be maintained at 100 % and 80% respectively.

106. Mr Mackown emphasised the need to have a clear view of the funding gaps for these positions.

107. Dr Trouvilliez stressed the difficulties the Secretariat faced as the voluntary contributions no longer covered salary costs which were not closely linked to the project supported by a contribution. For the routine work of the Secretariat, it would be a desirable outcome of the next MOP to have the costs of both African Initiative positions fully covered by the core budget.

c. Status of AEWA Contributions in Arrears

108. Dr Trouvilliez introduced this agenda item by saying that he wanted to discuss with the StC the idea of increasing measures for Parties that did not pay their mandatory contributions. Since MOP4 (2008) the MOP had, at each session, reiterated its decision through its resolution on financial and administrative matters to exclude countries from the funding of their delegates at AEWA meetings, if they had payments in arrears of more than three years (see for example AEWA Resolution 7.12 para 13). Many donors, moreover, requested that Parties with arrears should not be eligible for funding of participants to specific meetings such as the training of trainers. As a new item Dr Trouvilliez suggested to discuss the idea of suspending Parties from the right to vote in case of arrears, a measure that was already in place at CMS.

109. Dr Trouvilliez proposed to the StC a 2-step ‘traffic light’ process: After the first three years of not paying, Parties would not be funded any longer, and when the ‘traffic light’ would turn red - after a six-year period - the Party could lose its right to vote. As done by the GA in UN, the concerned countries would be asked to provide an explanation as to why they had not been able to pay, and these explanations would be analysed by a committee that would make a recommendation to the MOP. For some countries, e.g. facing a war, the right of vote could still be maintained. Moreover, it could be decided that Parties with more than three years in arrears would not be eligible to hold a position in any of the AEWA bodies.

110. Mr Mackown suggested to take this proposal forward to MOP8, whereby a proper analysis of risks when taking these measures would be needed.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>The Secretariat to draft a paper with options on measures to be taken for Parties with arrears drawing on CMS’ experience for the next StC meeting.</i>
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d. Voluntary Funding

111. Dr Trouvilliez first thanked the representatives of Switzerland and Norway for their generous contributions.

112. He said that the Secretariat had applied for funds in the framework of the EC funded ACP Programme but without success for this year. The Secretariat had introduced a new request which would be examined at the 8th Project Steering Committee Meeting for the EC GPGC Programme Cooperation Agreement with UNEP.

113. Ms Remmelts asked Dr Trouvilliez whether it was possible to have in-kind contributions reflected in the report. Dr Trouvilliez responded that he could send a reminder to the national focal points to provide the in-kind contribution amounts by the end of each year in order to maintain an overview.

114. Mr Mackown noted that voluntary contributions showed the engagement of Parties, but that he would like to see a much clearer explanation of the pro-active work the Secretariat was doing to secure the future of the Agreement in terms of funding.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Secretariat to remind national focal points to list the in-kind contributions. A separate overview on voluntary contributions to be added to the next report of the Secretariat.</i>
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e. AEWA Scale of Contributions for 2022-2024

115. Dr Trouvilliez informed all those present that it had been agreed at MOP7 that the Agreement was to return to the UN scale of assessment in a step by step process. At MOP7 it was decided after a long discussion within the Finance and Administrative Working Group to use the UN scale of assessment in effect at the date of the MOP and not the one which would be published and applied by the UN only in the next triennium. It was also decided to freeze all contributions which would otherwise have decreased. Document AEWA/StC 15.9 applied the UN scale of assessment 2019-2021 and without freezing of current contribution amounts. Some StC members recommended keeping the idea of freezing those contributions that would otherwise decrease in order to limit the increase of contributions for some other Parties.

116. For the 16th meeting of the StC, the Secretariat would provide four budget scenarios using the current UN scale of assessment, a minimum threshold of 2,000 EUR, a maximum contribution of 20% of the budget and a freeze of all decreasing contributions.

Agenda item 11. Date and venue of StC16

117. Considering the date of the next MOP, Mr Mackown confirmed that the next StC should be scheduled to take place in April/May 2021 and asked all those present if anyone was interested in hosting it. He added that he had realised that hosting this StC in the United Kingdom had been a great opportunity to raise awareness of AEWA and its purpose in the country with various ministries. If no host was found for the next meeting, it would take place at the UN Campus in Bonn, where the AEWA Secretariat is based.

<i>Decision</i>	<i>A general call for hosting the next StC will be sent to all national focal points.</i>
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Agenda item 12. Any other business

118. No further issues were raised.

Agenda item 13. Closure of the meeting

119. In closing the meeting, Mr Mackown was grateful to all participants for attending and was happy about a very productive meeting. He emphasised that Parties needed to do more and that there were many opportunities to promote AEWA. He felt privileged to be able to champion AEWA as the StC Chair.

120. Dr Trouvilliez thanked everyone for the fruitful discussions and decisions and agreed with Mr Mackown that Parties needed to engage more in order for AEWA to be more effective. He thanked DEFRA once more for hosting the meeting and appreciated the energy Mr Mackown had put into chairing it. He went on to thank the logistics team for their hard work and commitment in preparation of the meeting and, finally, wished everyone a safe return home.

121. With that, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Appendix I – Statement by Amy Fraenkel, Acting Executive Secretary of CMS

I am most grateful to Jacques for giving me this opportunity of addressing the 15th Meeting of the AEWA Standing Committee. I wish I could have attended in person, but we are in the middle of preparations for our thirteenth Conference of the Parties taking place early next year in Gandhinagar, India.

We often refer to the Convention and its associated Agreements and instruments as the “CMS Family”. In this vein, AEWA might be described as the grown-up son or daughter, being the largest and one of the oldest and most effective of the Agreements.

Not only does AEWA lead on fostering flyway-scale conservation action for migratory waterbird species across the African-Eurasian region, it has also been a champion in the development and effective implementation of a series of targeted Single Species Action Plans. It also actively contributes to many joint initiatives with CMS, such as the Energy Task Force which aims to minimize the impacts on migratory species from energy developments, efforts to combat the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds in the Mediterranean, and addressing the problem of lead poisoning.

In these times when budgets and capacity are stretched, the CMS and AEWA Secretariats have also actively sought ways of making our budgets go further. In this respect, the formation of the Joint Information Management, Communications and Awareness Raising (IMCA) Unit several years ago has paid dividends, with both Secretariats able to benefit from the strong pool of skills of a now well-established and smoothly running joint communications team consisting of staff drawn from both Secretariats.

The World Migratory Bird Day campaign – a flagship campaign of CMS and AEWA - which is organized by the Communications Unit each year, has helped to raise the profile of both organizations, and the recently established partnership with Environment for the Americas has further increased its impact, making World Migratory Bird Day a truly unified global campaign for promoting the cause of migratory bird conservation. This year, the campaign had the theme “Protect birds: be the solution to plastic pollution” and resulted in over 700 events being organized in 80 countries and over 12 million social media impressions, including one of the most successful social media posts in the history of WWF. Next year the theme will focus on the important concept of ‘ecological connectivity’, which is among the top priorities for the CMS Family in the post-2020 biodiversity framework, and the campaign slogan will be ‘Birds connect our world’.

The concept of the CMS Family also extends to the excellent working relationship I share with Jacques, and I am grateful for our strong collaboration on policy matters as well as the business of running a UN Secretariat.

Thank you again for all your support and I wish you a successful meeting in the beautiful city of Bristol.

Appendix II – StC15 List of Participants

MEMBERS

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (1)

Mr Simon Mackown (Chair)
Head of Wildlife Management, Wildlife Crime and
Wild Bird Conservation Policy
Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Deanery Road
BS1 5AH Bristol
United Kingdom

Tel. : +44 2080266900
simon.mackown@defra.gsi.gov.uk

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (2)

Dr Volodymyr Domashlinets
Head of Fauna Protection Division
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources,
Natural Resources Protection Department
Mytropolyta Vasylya Lypkivskogo str., 35
03141 Kiev
Ukraine

Tel.: +380 442063127
Mob.: +380 662886229
Fax: +380 442063127
vdomashlinets@yahoo.com

WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Mr Ossiena Aristide Kone
Chef de service Protection de la Faune
Direction de la Faune et des Ressources Cynégétiques
Ministère des Eaux et Forêts
Plateau, Cite Administrative, Tour C, 7e etage
BP 650 Abidjan 01
Côte d'Ivoire

Tel.: +225 58654849
aristidekone42@gmail.com

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Ms Humbulani Mafumo (Vice-Chair)
Deputy Director Conservation Management
Biodiversity and Conservation Branch
National Department of Environmental Affairs
473 Steve Biko Street
Arcadia 0083
Pretoria
South Africa

Tel.: +27 123999586
Mob.: +27 824856499
hmafumo@environment.gov.za

DEPOSITARY / THE NETHERLANDS

Ms Wilmar Rimmelts
Senior Policy Advisor
Department of Nature and Biodiversity
Ministry of Economic Affairs
P.O. Box 20401
2565 MR The Hague
The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 70 378 4907
w.j.remmelts@minez.nl

HOST COUNTRY FOR MOP8 - HUNGARY

Mr Zoltán Czirák
Councillor
Ministry of Agriculture
Kossuth tér 11
H1055 Budapest
Hungary

Tel.: +36-17952046
zoltan.czirak@am.gov.hu

CHAIR OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Dr Ruth Cromie
Head of Ecosystem Health
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Slimbridge
Gloucester GL2 7BT
United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 1453 891254
ruth.cromie@wwt.org.uk

OTHER OFFICIAL DELEGATIONS

BOTSWANA

Ms Malebogo Somolekae
Principal Wildlife Officer
Research and Statistics Division
Department of Wildlife and National Parks
PO Box 131
0000 Gabarone
Botswana

Tel.: +267 74237614
mlsentsho@gmail.com

PORTUGAL

Dr Vítor Encarnação
Technical Official
Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas
Avenida da República, 16 a 16 B
1050 191 Lisboa
Portugal

Tel.: +351 211973700
vitorencarnacao@icnf.pt

ZIMBABWE

Prof Patience Gandiwa
Director
Transfrontier Conservation Areas & Conventions
Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
International Conservation Affairs
Director General's Office
P.O.Box CY140
Causeway, Harare 263
Zimbabwe

Tel.: +263 8677 707 627
pgandiwa@zimparcs.org.zw

NORWAY

Mr Øystein Størkersen
Principal Advisor
Species Management Department
Norwegian Environment Agency
P.O. Box 5672 Sluppen
7485 Trondheim
Norway

Tel.: +47 735 805 00
oystein.storkersen@miljodir.no

SWITZERLAND

Ms Sabine Herzog
Senior Policy Advisor
Federal Office for the Environment
P.O.Box 3003
Bern
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 58 463 03 40
sabine.herzog@bafu.admin.ch

INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

Ms Nicola Crockford
Principal Policy Officer
BirdLife International
RSPB, The Lodge,
Sandy
Bedfordshire
SG19 2DL
United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 176 769 30 72
nicola.crockford@rspb.org.uk

FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING AND CONSERVATION OF THE EU (FACE)

Dr Cy Griffin
Senior Conservation Manager
Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of
the EU (FACE)
82, Rue Frederick Pelletier
1030 Brussels
Belgium

Tel.: + +32 2 4161619
cy.griffin@face.eu

WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL

Dr Szabolcs Nagy
Senior Advisor Wetlands International
Horapark 9
6712 LZ Ede
The Netherlands

Tel: +31628554823
szabolcs.nagy@wetlands.org

UNEP/AEWA SECRETARIAT

Dr Jacques Trouvilliez
Executive Secretary
Executive Management Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49 228 815 2414
Fax: +49 228 815 2450
jacques.trouvilliez@unep-aewa.org

Ms Marie-Therese Kämper
Administrative Assistant
Executive Management Unit
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49 228 815 2413
Fax: +49 228 815 2450
mt.kaemper@unep-aewa.org

Mr Sergey Dereliev
Head of SICU UNIT
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49 228 815 2415
Fax: +49 228 815 2450
sergey.dereliev@unep-aewa.org

Ms Jeannine Dicken
Programme Management Assistant
SICU UNIT
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49 228 815 2455
Fax: +49 228 815 2450
jeannine.dicken@unep-aewa.org