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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Eighth Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA MOP8) (27–30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary) - Compilation of Statements and speaking points by the EU and its Member States

Delegations will find in the Annex for information a compilation of Statements and speaking points as delivered by the EU and its Member States during the abovementioned meeting.

**8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the
African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
(Budapest 26 – 30 September 2022)**

- Compilation of Statements/speaking points by the EU and its Member States -

Opening statement

Mr. Chair, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this meeting, the Czech Republic in the role of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

First of all, we would like to welcome the accession to the Agreement by the Republic of Cameroon and the announcement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the intention to join the Agreement.

We would like to thank the Government of Hungary for its generosity and hospitality in hosting this meeting and for the very warm welcome we have all received from the local authorities and the people of the beautiful city of Budapest.

At the same time, we would like to express our thanks and congratulations to the Secretariat, the Technical Committee and the Standing Committee for their excellent work on preparation of this meeting.

We are meeting in a difficult time - the covid pandemic has affected our entire planet, affecting not only individual regions and countries, but also the lives of each one of us. We are witnessing that globalization can also bring challenges. On the other hand, it has become clear that international cooperation is crucial for solving crisis situations in various areas of human activity. We continue to believe that international cooperation is also crucial for nature conservation, including the protection of habitats, species and entire ecosystems. The protection of nature and natural resources should be an inherent part of state policy, it should be a regular part of education and a regular part of people's lives, not some superstructure that only comes into play in a crisis.

For the protection of waterbirds, which are the subject of the AEWA agreement, the conservation of their habitats - i.e. wetlands - is essential. Unfortunately, we see continuation of negative trends in many areas, wetlands are still decreasing and the global state of biodiversity is deteriorating.

Mr. Chair, the representatives of the EU Member States present in this meeting are committed to ensure the future of migratory waterbirds, a group of animals whose existence is directly dependent on international cooperation. Waterbirds are an integral part of the planet's biodiversity; their migration routes connect our countries and remind us of our shared responsibilities.

Let's use this week to discuss and approve measures that will help. We as the EU Member States commit ourselves to a constructive discussion this week that will help to ensure the future of waterbirds, their conservation and sustainable use.

Thank you for your attention.

Agenda item 10: Report on the Implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019 – 2027

The EU and its Member States take note of the report and support the adoption of the relevant parts of the resolution. Considering the important implementation gap and limited progress in achieving the targets of the Strategic Plan, the EU and its Member States strongly support the recommendations on advancing the implementation of the Strategic Plan, contained in the *“Progress report on the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (Doc. AEWA/MOP8.11)”*.

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the relevant part of the Draft Resolution and propose to include a reference to the conclusions and recommendations of Document AEWA/MOP 8.11 in the relevant part of the Resolution 8.3.

Agenda item 11: Report on the Implementation of the African Initiative and the Plan of Action for Africa 2019 – 2027

The EU and its Member States take note of the report and support the conclusions and recommendations of the Analysis of the Reports on the Implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa for the period of 2019-2020 (Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.15). The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the relevant part of the Draft Resolution and propose to include a reference to the conclusions and recommendations of Document AEWA/MOP 8.15 in the relevant part of the Resolution 8.3.

Agenda item 12: Analysis and Synthesis of National Reports

The EU and its Member States take note of the synthesis and analysis of the national reports for the triennium 2018-2020.

As far as the new format is concerned the anyhow foreseen adjustments by the Technical and Standing Committee should be used to ease reporting duties of the Parties by:

- Where no changes occurred in relation to the former reporting, the duty to give the same answers again should be avoided - e.g. preferably the old answers should appear in the new party related format or by answering in each chapter at the beginning “no changes in comparison to the last national report” and no further answers needed.
- The format should be checked again by both Committees to avoid redundancies and to get a briefer, more efficient and less time-consuming reporting.

Agenda item 13: Analysis and Synthesis of the reports on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA)

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the “Analysis of the National Reports on the Implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa for the Period 2019-2020” together with the “Draft Format for the National Reporting Module on the Implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2021-2024”. The EU and its Member States hope that Parties will continue to cooperate together, coordinate actions, share experiences, and maintain their progress and commitment towards meeting AEWA’s five principal objectives in next years, so that migratory waterbirds are conserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

Agenda item 26: Resourcing needs for delivering international-level deliverables in the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027

The EU and its Member States welcome the document AEWA/MOP 8.43 that will support decisions on the budget for the next triennium and propose to request the Secretariat to focus on the recommendations made in the documents Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.11, Doc. AEWA/MOP 8.15 and Doc AEWA/MOP 8.19. They support the adoption of the other relevant parts of the Draft Resolution 8.3.

Agenda item 27: Capacity for implementing the Agreement – priorities at the international level

The EU and its Member States support in general the adoption of the relevant part of the Draft Resolution 8.3 with following amendments:

- We would like to introduce new paragraph in which we would request the Technical Committee and the Secretariat to perform 3 of the tasks that are now listed in paragraph 17.
- In addition, opportunities to incorporate aspects of AEWA implementation capacity support should also be sought with CMS, Ramsar and UNEP and we therefore propose to amend the relevant part of the Draft Resolution paragraph 17.
- We propose to delete the part on financing the sub-regional meetings before each COP from core budget as this decision will be made within the resolution on Financial and Administrative matters.

We would also like to underline that the Draft Resolution 8.9 operative paragraph 3 on AEWA's contribution to the future GBF, calls again for the integration of waterbird conservation into the updated national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). The integration of AEWA Strategic Plan objectives and targets into NBSAPs would not only further promote synergies between biodiversity-related treaties but also significantly increase wider national awareness of AEWA obligations and waterbird conservation needs.

In addition, opportunities to incorporate aspects of AEWA implementation capacity support should also be sought with CMS, Ramsar and UNEP and we therefore propose to amend the relevant part of the Draft Resolution.

Agenda item 17: Proposals for Amendments to the Agreement

The EU and its Member States welcome Draft Resolution 8.1 and recognise the positive impact the additional step and consultation of the Technical Committee can have on the quality of the amendment proposals submitted by Parties. It can furthermore ensure the proper implementation of the Agreement obligations that will arise for given species populations. The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Draft Resolution 8.1 with some amendments.

The EU and its Member States propose to add the word “voluntary” to Article 1 of the Draft Resolution, so will read: “*Decides* to establish an additional preliminary voluntary step to the procedure for submission of proposals”. We stress the non-binding nature of this requirement and the fact that the only binding deadline with respect of amendment proposals remains Article X.3 of the Agreement.

The EU and its Member States also propose to adjust the timeline for the submission of the proposals to the TC. The preferred deadline for submitting proposals to the TC should be 300 days and 250 days should become the fixed deadline. We propose to modify Article 1.1 which will read as follows: “1.1 The text of any proposed amendment and the reasons for it, other than proposed amendments originating from the work of the Technical Committee, should be communicated by the submitting Contracting Party to the Technical Committee, through the Agreement Secretariat, preferably 300 days and not later than 250 days before the opening of the session of the Meeting of the Parties;” Eventually, the EU and its Member States propose to add a new Article 2 to the Resolution which will read: “Urges Contracting Parties to make use of the additional step foreseen in Article 1 above, as the advice of the Technical Committee will help improve the quality and comprehensiveness of the amendment proposals.”

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Draft Resolution 8.2 without amendments.

The EU and its Member States would however request clarification from the Secretariat on the modalities of application of the new “data deficient” category, namely on what criteria and by what procedure the Technical Committee decides on the application of the “data deficiency” threshold.

The European Commission will submit a reservation on behalf of the EU to the AEWA Secretariat, within the 90 days foreseen by Article X, for the proposals for amendments concerning the populations of the following five species - the Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), the Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), the Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola squatarola*), the Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus longipes*) and the Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis fabalis*). Despite the reservation, the EU will encourage Member States to respect the objective of not hunting the concerned species that is in line with the new listing in AEWA.

Agenda item 18: AEWA International Species Action and Management Plans

- The EU and its Member States consider this agenda item to be very important. Species Action and Management Plans embody the quintessence of AEWA and the flyway approach, fostering coordinated conservation and management of prioritized populations across their range;
- We would like to thank the Technical Committee, Secretariat and wide range of experts that have been involved in producing the various documents we have before us today as well as the wider AEWA community involved in the implementation of these Plans throughout the flyway;
- We have some amendments we would like to propose to two of the documents under this agenda item (Common Eider Action Plan/document 8.25 and the Revised Format for AEWA Species Action Plans/document 8.23) as well as some amendments to Draft Resolution 8.4. itself.

AEWA Single Species Action Plan for the Common Eider:

- Regarding the new Species Action Plan for the Common Eider (document 8.25), we would like to thank Finland and the drafting team for funding and developing this Plan.
- We would like to introduce one small final amendment to the Action Plan, adding the following footnote to 1.3.2. of the Action Framework which deals with the foreseen Adaptive Harvest Management Programme:

- *Adaptive harvest management encompasses both the conservation and management of the species/population concerned. As such, participation from all relevant Range States to the process should ensure the best possible decision-making and outcomes (e.g. non-hunting range states can contribute by providing demographic and other necessary data). It should be noted, however, that participation in the process in no way constitutes an encouragement or requirement for those Range States with a closed hunting season or where the species is protected to (re)open harvest of the species/population concerned.*
- *The AHM system is strongly encouraged to be financed by those Range States willing to allow sustainable harvest, while those AEWA Parties which are not allowing harvest are not expected to contribute to the financing. However, other parties should make the regularly available data (e.g. for reporting under the Birds Directive) accessible. Further data requirements, -especially if linked to additional duties in terms of staff and money – need guarantees in advance that the related costs will be covered by the AHM responsible parties - especially if there is a concern, that such additional data are needed regularly in a long term frame.*
- Following this insertion, the EU and its Member States can agree with the adoption of the Plan as foreseen in Draft Resolution 8.4. operative paragraph 1.
- In addition, the EU and its Member States are aware that predator control could be a risk for protected and endangered predators, like e.g. White-tailed Eagle or the Eagle Owl. The control of native predators should be considered as an exceptional measure and should target only species whose populations are very large and in good conditions.
- Therefore, we ask the Common Eider Range States for a special care and concern to avoid, that such protected and endangered species will not be killed or harmed when measures against predators are considered. We note that an EU guideline might provide useful guidance in this field.

AEWA Conservation Briefs for existing Species Action Plans

- The EU and its Member States welcome the Conservation Briefs developed and adopted by the Technical Committee during the past triennium for older Action Plans which were not prioritized for revision at MOP7. The Conservation Briefs are expected to provide a much needed boost in implementation of conservation action which is urgently needed for the species concerned.
- We note that the new Conservation Briefs have introduced some changes in the prioritisation of actions compared to the original Single Species Action Plans based on a revised threat assessment, and include corresponding additional recommendations for action. However, there was no involvement of the National Technical Focal Points from relevant Range States in the drafting process. Some of the Conservation Briefs presented as information documents to this meeting would benefit from Range State input and corrections.
- The involvement of Range States in the production of Conservation Briefs would provide for their stronger uptake and adoption. This is particularly the case, as Conservation Briefs are mainly meant to be produced for extended Action Plans without an active inter-governmental AEWA Species Working Group under the auspices of which governments and species range state experts are regularly engaged in and can agree on updated priority actions.

- We therefore propose to add a new operative paragraph 4bis to Draft Resolution 8.4. to reflect the need to include the consultation of Range States as part of the Conservation Brief preparation process:
- *“Requests the Technical Committee when developing Conservation Briefs to circulate these to Contracting Party and non-Contracting Party Range States for review to assure a comprehensive information update before adoption”*

AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose

- Regarding the Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose, the Technical Committee recommends in document AEWA/MOP 8.22 that it be extended for another three years to allow for its revision and subsequent adoption at MOP9 (reflected in the current operative paragraph 11 of the Draft Resolution).
- The EU and its Member States propose that the Action Plan instead be retired, as it is unlikely that an agreement amongst all Range States can be reached on the revision of the Plan.
- Range states and other relevant actors should, however, still be encouraged to continue funding and implementing conservation efforts for this globally threatened species at flyway level, despite the absence of an AEWA International Action Plan and attached international conservation coordination mechanism. A conservation note developed by the Technical Committee during the next triennium could be useful for guiding and encouraging continued action within the Western Palearctic.
- We therefore propose to delete operative paragraph 11 and replace it with a new operative paragraph 7), as follows:
- *“Retires the International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Anser erythropus) Western Palearctic population, but calls on all Range States, relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations including the European Commission to continue the implementation of urgent conservation action and provision of funds for this globally threatened species and requests the AEWA Technical Committee to produce a conservation guidance note for the Lesser White-fronted Goose during the next triennium.”*

Revised format for AEWA International Single and Multi-Species Action Plans

- It is proposed to revise the AEWA International Action Plan Format adopted at MOP7 to include Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) as a mandatory element for all future AEWA International Species Action Plans as outlined in document AEWA/MOP 8.23.
- Establishing FRVs to provide the reference for assessing whether a population is in a favourable conservation status is very useful, also in terms of measuring the success of conservation action. It will however, prove challenging to establish FRVs for all species’ populations prioritized for action-planning under the Agreement within the first ten years of Action Plan implementation. This in particular, as large data gaps exist for many species’ populations within the Agreement area and more detailed guidance on the establishment of FRVs is still pending (the task will be mandated to the Technical Committee through Draft Resolution 8.4).
- The EU and its Member States therefore propose that the wording to be included in the Action Plan format under heading 2 “Framework” (on page 8 of document AEWA/MOP 8.23) be amended as follows:

- Where it reads “Favourable Reference Values (either following option A or B), delete the last part of the sentence under option B:

Option B) Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) for all [insert number of populations covered by Action Plan] populations (and their respective management units, if deemed applicable) will be elaborated and agreed on amongst the Principle Range States during the implementation phase of the Action Plan ~~within its first full cycle of implementation.~~”

- We also stress the importance of ensuring that the processes for establishing FRVs will be aligned under AEWA and the Birds Directive in order not to have two parallel definitions and processes.
- We therefore propose the following changes to the 2nd bullet point in chapter 2.6.4 in part B “Action-Planning Guidelines” in document AEWA/MOP 8.23:
- *“The approach for establishing the favourable reference values will need to be agreed amongst the respective Range States for each population, as it will vary depending on the distribution of the population during its annual cycle and the data available for the species. Favourable reference values for AEWA-listed populations will be established in accordance with the CMS definition of Favourable Conservation Status which has four criteria (population dynamic, range, habitat and historical levels) and the population is considered to be in unfavourable status if it does not meet any of the criteria or its future prospects are negative. More detailed guidance on the interpretation and establishment of favourable reference values is under development by the AEWA Technical Committee building on **and in coherence with existing work, especially the guidelines of setting favourable reference values under Art.17 of the Habitats Directive**”.*
- We also propose the following amendment of footnote 1:
- ~~In the interim,~~ *Action Plan compilers are **in any case** advised to follow the key concepts and approaches presented in the explanatory notes and guidelines under the EU Habitats Directive Article 17. “DG Environment. (2017). Reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive: Explanatory notes and guidelines for the period 2013-2018. Brussels: European Commission”.*
- In addition, for improved clarity, the full new texts on FRVs added under both sections A. Format (page 8) and B. Guidance (2.6.4 – page 18) should be marked in red in document AEWA/MOP 8.23.
- We also propose the following changes to Draft Resolution 8.4, in operative paragraph 19 on favourable reference values:

*19. Requests the Technical Committee to develop more detailed guidance on the interpretation and establishment of favourable reference values building on existing work ~~under other relevant international frameworks~~ **and in coherence with existing work, especially the guidelines of setting favourable reference values under Art.17 of the Habitats Directive**”;*

Agenda item 19: Waterbird Monitoring

The EU and its Member States underline the importance of waterbird monitoring as an essential tool for the implementation of the agreement. Though progress is made in the number of populations whose status can be assessed based on monitoring, more support is needed to reach the target of 2/3 of the populations set by the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019–2027. The EU and its Member States highlight the interconnectedness between developing and strengthening waterbird monitoring in general and the development of monitoring under the AEWA Site-Network (AEWA/MOP8.DR6), amongst others on the monitoring of pressures.

The EU and its Member States welcome the “*Report on the Development of Waterbird Monitoring along the African-Eurasian Flyways*” (AEWA/MOP 8.26) and value the presented overview of achievements and challenges in the field of waterbird monitoring. We underline the importance of implementing and strengthening national monitoring schemes throughout the Agreement Area, and of the potential value of increased contributions to the Waterbird Fund, as a tool for achieving AEWA monitoring targets.

The EU and its Member States adopt the priorities and recommendations outlined in document AEWA/MOP 8.27 to guide the further development and strengthening of the monitoring of AEWA waterbird populations and drivers of their trends. In this context, we propose to highlight in operative paragraph 3, the importance of working towards demographic monitoring and the monitoring of drivers to analyze the possible causes of these trends.

The EU and its Member States endorse the possible synergies of waterbird monitoring with other frameworks and processes as outlined in document AEWA/MOP 8.28, and adopt the recommendations for strengthening those synergies.

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Draft Resolution 8.5 with the following amendments:

- For preambular paragraph 9 we propose to add France and the French Facility for the Global Environment as important partners in developing waterbird monitoring, and to specify the French Agency for Biodiversity as Office Français de la Biodiversité;
- For operative paragraph 1 we propose to add the specification “including demographic monitoring and monitoring of population drivers”, as examples of priorities and recommendations outlined in the related documents;
- For operative paragraph 4, the EU and its Member States propose to extend the period for undertaking the mentioned assessment of monitoring activities into the first half of 2023;
- For operative paragraph 4, we propose a change in wording to reflect that the “Baseline assessment of African avian monitoring schemes” is still in development.
- Finally, we propose some editorial amendments in document references made in operative paragraphs 1, 4 and 9.

Agenda item 20: AEWA Flyway Site Network

The EU and its Member States support the development of an effectively managed and monitored site network under the Agreement, which is a prerequisite for ensuring a coherent flyway level protection for all migratory species' populations. We welcome the fact that the EU Natura 2000 Network SDF is identified as the international framework that provides all the necessary information for an assessment of the indicators for state, pressure and response of the Flyway Network sites.

The EU and its Member States stress that for some EU countries delivering on the monitoring obligations will require investments in both human and financial resources. However, the AEWA Flyway Site Network will only work properly if the required data is gathered throughout the Agreement area. Therefore, the EU and its Member States call for matching efforts in this area both in EU countries and Contracting Parties elsewhere in the Agreement area. If and where necessary, support by the AEWA bodies (Secretariat and Technical Committee) in particular to African countries should be ensured. This might have consequences in terms of action prioritization and budget and should be taken into account in the relevant discussions on Draft Resolution 12.

The EU and its Member States consider that the existing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified pursuant to Art. 4 of the BD are sufficient to guarantee the protection of all birds falling under AEWA Annex III & Table 1 in these areas. The requirements under the EU legislation are that all species referred to in Article 4 of the BD that are present on a site need to be listed in the site's SDF and no conservation objectives and measures are to be established for non-significant occurrences on a given site.

The EU and its Member States consider that it is important to ensure the process and tools which will be used for the data submission are as integrated as possible with other existing frameworks. This will avoid any unnecessary additional burden on Parties for example with manual data entry of parts of information from the relevant SDFs fields.

The EU and its Member States require a clarification on the data portal mentioned on page 13 of Document 8.29, the following sentence "A data portal will be needed to a) import relevant SDF results, and b) to support collection of data from other sites both within the EU and beyond"). What is exactly envisaged and what would exactly be required from Parties?

The EU and its Member States require another clarification concerning the words "where appropriate", included in operational para 4 of Draft Resolution 8.6. How is this expression to be interpreted in the framework of the monitoring efforts from Contracting Parties?

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Resolution 8.6 with some amendments.

1. We propose the inclusion of an additional paragraph in the preambular part of Resolution 8.6, aimed at ensuring the current Natura 2000 SDF review process, in particular with respect of the threat and degree of conservation classifications, is taken into account;
2. We propose an extension of the deadline for the finalisation of Parties' work on the submission of their site inventories to end June 2023, given the resources and time necessary for completing this task;

3. We propose the inclusion of a new operational point 4bis to Resolution 8.6, aimed at recognising that the information contained in the EU Natura 2000 Network SDFs, provided it is regularly updated, is sufficient for the needs of the Flyway Network monitoring;
4. We propose an amendment to operational point 5 to reflecting the necessity for the data entry tools to be developed in the future to allow as much as possible for an automatic collection of data from the SPAs SDFs.

Depending on the clarifications received on the data portal mentioned on page 13 of Document 8.29 and the words “where appropriate” under Operational point 4, additional amendments might be proposed to Resolution 8.6.

Agenda item 21: Addressing causes of waterbird mortality

- The EU and its Member States welcome document AEWA/MOP 8.40, which outlines opportunities for addressing some of the major causes of waterbird mortality as well as Draft Resolution 8.15.
- We take this opportunity to thank the UK government for funding this important work.
- There is a clear need for increased synergies both within the biodiversity and environment cluster as well as for better collaboration with other relevant sectors to address human-induced causes of waterbird mortality. Such synergies are vital to the efforts of implementing the AEWA Strategic Plan and will also serve as AEWA’s contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors.
- The seeking of synergies on national, regional and flyway level is particularly pertinent in light of the challenges of influencing cross-sectoral policies but also considering the limited resources available.
- Collaboration should also be sought across taxonomic groups (for example ASCOBANS), where relevant, to facilitate implementation at national level avoiding parallel processes.
- The EU and its Member States would like to propose the following small additions/corrections to Document AEWA/MOP 8.40 itself related to the chapters on invasive alien species and illegal killing:
 - On page 16 add a reference to the Bern Convention StC Recommendation No. 189 (2016) on the control of the American mink (*Neovison vison*) in Europe;
 - On page 16 add a reference to the possibility to provide input to the Bern Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species. AEWA experts could be involved in specific meetings and/or involved in the preparation of future recommendations, for example;
 - On page 17 where EU Regulation 1143/2014 is mentioned, it would be useful to mention that the regulation foresees rapid eradication at an early stage of invasion and management of widely spread listed species. Most relevant listed species for waterbirds are raccoon and raccoon dog;
 - On page 12 we request that the reference to the Roadmap towards IKB be deleted as the Roadmap will not be updated in the future.
- In addition, the EU and its Member States wish to propose a few substantive as well as smaller technical revisions to Draft Resolution 8.15. to clarify and further strengthen the text:
 - In the preamble, we propose to insert a new paragraph on The Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas produced by Euring and CMS. In particular to the research module “Intentional killing of birds by man”, which provides useful information on IKB across Europe and Africa.

- We also propose the following editorial amendments to the preamble:
- Preambular para 4: replace “other relevant multilateral biodiversity processes thus facilitating with that facilitate the development of mutually beneficial actions”
- Preambular para 5: add “behind” after “lagging”
- Preambular para 13: delete the word “offsetting”.
- In the operational part which deals with energy infrastructure, we wish to clarify in paragraph 2.1. that the aim should be to assess and minimize environmental impacts but not to systematically exclude energy infrastructure developments in protected areas.
- In 2.2. it should be clear that the establishment of buffer zones next to protected areas is recommended but not mandatory.
- In addition, we propose to add a new operational paragraph (2.2bis) regarding the need to put in place mitigation measures to prevent additional mortality due to the development of energy infrastructure and to establish conservation measures. Such measures are of great relevance, considering the massive growth of power plants for the production of renewable energy, including offshore facilities that will occur in the next future.
- In paragraph 2.3. we would like to delete the reference to the EU RePower Plan.
- In paragraph 2.9. we propose to include a reference to the HELCOM Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group to make the call for cooperation more specific.
- In paragraph 2.11. we propose to delete the word offsetting and refer more generally to conservation measures instead.
- Coming to the section on illegal killing, in paragraph 2.14 we would like to specify that we are speaking of illegal killing activities and that any follow-up actions and initiatives under AEWA should be specific to other regions within this flyway.
- Regarding fisheries bycatch, in paragraph 2.15 the EU and its Member States would like strengthen the wording to read “*Work with CMS, HELCOM, OSPAR and the European Commission to promote effective action to minimize bycatch issues at relevant future meetings*”.

We have some further small editorial proposals, which we will submit to the Secretariat in writing.

Agenda item 22: Ecotourism as a tool for waterbird conservation and local community benefits

On behalf of the EU and its Member States, we would like to support the adoption of the Draft Resolution 8.16 with one small amendment. Specifically, we would like to add a footnote reference including a link to the AEWA Conservation Guidelines #7 to the last preambular paragraph point 4.

Agenda item 23: Knowledge Gaps and Needs Relevant for the Implementation of the Agreement

- The EU and Member States welcome the Draft Overview of Knowledge Gaps and Needs Relevant for the Implementation of AEWA: Priority Needs in 2021 prepared by the Technical Committee and can support the adoption of document AEWA/MOP 8.30 as an assessment of priority needs for information to underpin the implementation of the Agreement.

- As outlined in both the background document and Draft Resolution 8.7, the EU and Member States highlight the need for synergies and close collaboration with other relevant international organisations and processes when striving to bridge knowledge gaps. This is of particular relevance in relation to seabirds as well as the proposed establishment of strategic guidance related to the potential for wetland restoration, which should be developed in close collaboration with other ongoing work including under Ramsar and UNEP.
- In this context, it is important to highlight not only the role of the global biodiversity conventions, but also relevant regional environmental treaties and processes such as Bern, HELCOM, OSPAR, the Barcelona Convention, the Nairobi Convention and the Arctic Council Biodiversity Working Group CAFF. There are many other examples within the AEWA region. We propose this aspect be reflected in the last preambular paragraph.
- In addition, we propose to include a reference to the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas produced by Euring and CMS in the preamble, recognising its outstanding value as information source on waterbirds movements, flyways and important areas.

Finally, we have some further minor editorial amendments to the Draft Resolution in preambular paragraphs 3 and 10, operative paragraph 2 as well as the addition of “indigenous peoples and” before the term local communities in operative paragraph 3.

Agenda item 24: Guidance on Implementation of the Agreement

- The EU and its Member States welcome the new and revised conservation guidance documents submitted to MOP8 by the Technical Committee for adoption and would like to stress their relevance. We would like to express our thanks to the Technical Committee, Secretariat and other experts that have contributed to the development of this body of work.
- We can support their approval through Draft Resolution 8.8, subject to some minor technical amendments to the Draft Guidance on Managing Waterbird Disturbance (AEWA/MOP 8.32) and the Draft Guidance on Addressing the Risk of Accidental Shooting of Look-alike Species of Waterbirds in the Agreement Area (AEWA/MOP 8.34):
- With respect to the Draft Guidance on Managing Waterbird Disturbance, the EU and its Member States would ask to add a reference to the Guide to Sustainable Hunting under the Birds Directive (§ 2.6.14 - 2.6.22) on pages 22 (section 5) and 30 (section 10).
- With respect to the Draft Guidance on Addressing the Risk of Accidental Shooting of Look-alike Species of Waterbirds in the Agreement Area we propose to add a footnote with the link to the same EU Guide to Sustainable Hunting in section 2, page 4.
- Here we would also propose amending the draft guidance in order to clarify where the CSN tool can be found and how the additional functionality can be accessed as follows:
- by adding to the link in “Step 1” that the CSN tool is accessible on the Wetlands International website www.wetlands.org/knowledge-base/critical-site-network and/or the AEWA website;
- in the fourth sentence of the first paragraph of section “Step 1” it would be clarifying to add some words (underlined): “By clicking on the plus button on the row of any of the Column-A-listed [- - -]”.

Agenda item 25: AEWA's Contribution to the Aichi Targets 2011-2020 and Opportunities for AEWA to Support the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of documents *AEWA's Contribution to the Aichi Targets 2011-2020* (AEWA/MOP 8.35), and *The Relevance of AEWA to Delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals* (AEWA/MOP 8.37). We have some comments and amendments that we would like to propose on the Resolution 8.9.

In the view of the EU and its Member States, the draft resolution text should be further strengthened in terms of highlighting how AEWA can contribute to the implementation of the GBF, which should be considered as an overall umbrella framework for biodiversity conservation. It could be, for example, useful to determine whether AEWA should develop bespoke guidances on the various topics highlighted in the Draft Resolution, or rather explore the development of AEWA guidances which deal with the mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across other sectors in collaboration with other relevant conventions and bodies to foster better implementation.

We would also like to note that the current version of the document 8.36 seems to date to summer-fall 2021 and was not updated to take into account developments at the in-person meetings of CBD, such as the OEWG-3 and OEWG-4 that took place in spring-summer of 2022.

We have several proposals on the language of the Resolution, mainly to align it with the commonly used terms and strengthen the language in certain sections and to provide references to new reports and assessments that have been published more recently. We are ready to send those proposals in written form.

Closing statement by the EU and its Member States

Mister Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, the European Commission has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Government of Hungary for their excellent hosting of this meeting in the wonderful city of Budapest. Meeting with the AEWA family members in a face-to-face format was long overdue, so thank you again very much for making this a reality.

At the start of the meeting, looking at the tight schedule, we knew it will be a challenging one. To the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the meeting and of the working groups and to the whole AEWA Secretariat – we address a sincere thank you for all your efforts, dedication, and hard work. They were key for making this meeting a success.

We are content to note the implementation of the AEWA Strategic Plan and the Plan for Africa have kicked off after MOP7. Nevertheless, we remain worried and want to stress again that the overall Strategic Plan implementation is assessed as limited and waterbird status has actually deteriorated compared to the 2018 baseline. Challenges clearly remain, if not increase. We all need to speed up efforts in our respective positions and functions to help catch up on the delays accumulated in reaching the targets we have set for ourselves in those Plans. We also underline the importance of cooperation with other conventions, in particular the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

One of our key tasks at this MOP was strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to promote the implementation of the Agreement. For the EU and its Member States, the Agreement is very important to reinforce cooperation and action on bird conservation beyond the EU, particularly in the Sahel region and elsewhere where the Agreement is lacking engagement. The budget increase agreed at this MOP, although limited, is very welcome and we are certain it will enhance the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa and the implementation of the species action plans, both being core delivery mechanisms of the Agreement. The EU and its Member States stand ready to contribute and call on all Parties to support this core budget increase with voluntary contributions and thank the UK and Norway for their pledge to contribute financially to further enhance the staff capacity of the Secretariat. We remain committed to supporting and cooperating with AEWA and are particularly keen on seeing further action to strengthen the Agreement flyway site network. Let's keep up the work, double our efforts to advance conservation action for the benefit of migratory waterbirds, nature and people.
