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### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: 9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Africa-Eurasian Migratory  
Waterbird Agreement (AEWA MOP 9) (Bonn, Germany, 11-14 November  
2025)  
– Statements by the EU and its Member States

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Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a compilation of statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States at the abovementioned meeting.

**9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Africa-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA MOP 9) (Bonn, Germany, 11-14 November 2025)**

**– Statements by the EU and its Member States –**

**Agenda Item 2 - Adoption of the Rules of Procedure**

[Mr/Ms] Chair,

The EU and its Member States understand that there are no changes proposed to the Rules of Procedure since the adoption through silence procedure in July this year and can support the adoption of the Rules of Procedure.

**Agenda Item 7 - Opening Statement**

[Mr/Ms] Chair, distinguished Delegates,

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

First of all, we would like to welcome the ratification of the Agreement by Greece and the accession to the Agreement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We would like to thank the Government of Botswana for its efforts to host this Session of the Meeting of the Parties which did only not succeed due to financial constraints. In that regard we would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for providing these excellent facilities here at the UN Campus enabling us to convene for the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

We would also like to express our thanks and congratulations to the Secretariat, the Technical Committee and the Standing Committee for their excellent work in the preparation of this meeting, and would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Secretariat in particular, for their flexibility regarding the scheduling of the meeting, which enabled it to be arranged and conducted without overlapping with the Standing Committee meeting of the Bern Convention. We are fully aware that this placed considerable time pressure on the Secretariat and all parties involved, and we greatly appreciate the dedication and cooperation they have shown.

This year the Meeting of the Parties coincides with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AEWA. For three decades, AEWA has been a cornerstone in international cooperation in a shared mission to protect and conserve migratory waterbirds. AEWA has successfully brought together authorities, researchers, and NGOs, and shown the way on how to facilitate and secure cross-border collaboration towards a common goal in addressing challenges that require multilateral action to succeed, supported by a strong science-policy interface that ensures decisions are made on the best available scientific evidence.

The recent announcement that the slender-billed curlew is now officially declared extinct is a reminder of the continued need to maintain and strengthen our efforts.

This year's theme for the World Migratory Bird Day encapsulates one of the major challenges of our time: the pressures migratory birds, and nature conservation as such, face due to human activities and expanding urban development. The aim of AEWA to foster coordinated conservation action across the entire migratory range of waterbirds has only grown more relevant over the years. - And in a time where division seems to be growing, unity and collaboration around our shared values and nature are more important than ever - We believe AEWA will continue to lead the way.

[Mr/Ms] Chair, the EU and its Member States are looking forward to engaging in constructive discussions and are committed to securing the continued cooperation along our flyways to ensure the future for migratory waterbirds.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Agenda Item 9 - Written Statement for the 30th Anniversary of AEWA**

The EU and its Member States are proud to be Parties to AEWA and congratulate the Agreement on the 30th Anniversary. When looking ahead the pressures on waterbirds only seem to increase and the need for strong commitment and cooperation is as important as ever. We are confident that AEWA will continue to be a cornerstone in ensuring this. Many measures being taken by AEWA are also implemented in the EU through the provisions of the Birds and Habitats Directives. For example, the network of Special Protection Areas for birds and other elements of the Natura 2000 network are safeguarding critical wetlands for migratory waterfowl throughout the EU.

Migratory waterbirds being dependent on international flyways remind us of our shared natural heritage and shared responsibility. AEWA has brought together countries along the African-Eurasian flyway in the endeavours to conserve this fascinating group of species and their habitats. During the last 30 years AEWA has shown what a multilateral agreement is capable of. Throughout its history AEWA has broadened its scope, range and ambitions. AEWA has been a frontrunner in the conservation of waterbird species and in the guidance on their sustainable use, based on science and building trust between stakeholders as the fundamental basis for securing agreement and commitment towards common goals.

## **Agenda Item 11 - Report on Communications**

The EU and its Member States welcome the report on the implementation of the Communication Strategy in the period 2022-2025. It considers the report to be consistent and comprehensive. The EU and its Member States positively assess the activities related to the 30th anniversary of the Agreement and welcomes the technological upgrade and redesign of the AEWA main website. The AEWA Secretariat and the media carried out by the IMCA Unit successfully increased AEWA's visibility globally. The awareness-raising activity of World Migratory Bird Day, which is celebrated from 2022 onwards, also contributes greatly to raising awareness of waterbirds and the need to protect both individual species and their habitats, including migratory routes. The EU and its Member States join the AEWA Secretariat in thanking Mr. Chris Rostron for his dedication and support of the work of the AEWA Technical Committee and for his continued support in strengthening the work of CEPA under the Agreement. EU MS agrees with a new interim CEPA Action Plan.

## **Agenda Item 12 - Report on the Development of 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 welcome the “Report on the Development of Waterbird Monitoring along the African-Eurasian Flyways” (AEWA/MOP 9.14) and value the presented overview of achievements and challenges in the field of waterbird monitoring. The EU and its Member States 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. Secondly it shows the value of the partnership approaches with continued support in the East Atlantic Flyway, the Mediterranean-Saharan Flyway and the Adriatic region.

The EU and its Member States have the following questions and observations based on report AEWA/MOP9.14

- The report indicates that increasing the number of populations assessed based on adequate monitoring is unlikely without improving the monitoring of breeding bird populations in the African and Asian parts of the Agreement Area. This conclusion has also been presented to MOP 8. The EU and its Member States support this analysis and adds that there is also scope for improving the monitoring of breeding birds in Europe. The EU and its Member States request that in future editions of this report the progress and development made in breeding bird monitoring for AEWA goals should be more comprehensive, broadening the scope of the rapport and adding to its current focus on technical improvements and outputs from the International Waterbird Census. The EU and its Member States would strongly support such a broadening of scope for it would create a more complete overview of the most important monitoring issues.

- The summary of the report states that *'While increasing external support is necessary for coordination and capacity building, more national governments should also take greater responsibility and invest in the running costs of their national monitoring schemes, even in low- and middle-income countries.'* The EU and its Member States support this analysis but also note this is a complex and long-lasting problem. The EU and its Member States would encourage initiatives under AEWA to overcome this issue, e.g. by further investigating this issue focussing on studying current national investment, causes of shortages of national investments and especially to explore options for improvement. One approach would be to study how, on the one hand, to capitalise on monitoring data generated by funded international projects, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and, on the other hand, to identify low-cost technical innovations that are more easily deployable in these countries, for example to carry out censuses and capitalise on these processes for strengthening national monitoring schemes in the long term.

- Related to the lack of investments in national monitoring schemes, the report also states that *'Unfortunately, a gap still exists between capacity building for monitoring and the utilisation of information generated by national monitoring activities in reporting population status to AEWA'*. The EU and its Member States support this analysis and add that in parts of the agreement area there is a gap between monitoring activities and the use of monitoring data for national and international policy and management. This could in turn also affect the support for funding national monitoring. The EU and its Member States would encourage initiatives under AEWA that investigate this gap focussing on why this uptake for reporting proves difficult and suggest options for improvement.

### **Agenda Item 13 - CSR9**

Thank you madam president,

The EU and its Member States would like to thank those involved in the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area (CSR9) and take note of its content. We strongly appreciate the special effort that has been put into making this report both informative and accessible, and we consider the report to be well tailored to all involved in AEWA and for supporting policy action.

## **Agenda Item 14 - Report on the implementation Review Process to MOP9**

The EU and its Member States take note of the report on the Implementation Review Process, as well as the report of the ad hoc working group discussion on the IRP. We thank the AEWA Secretariat, the AEWA Standing Committee, the AEWA Technical Committee and involved Parties and observers for their respective contributions to the work regarding the Implementation Review Process.

Following resolution 4.6, the IRP should assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Agreement. From the current report and the outcomes of the ad hoc working group, the EU and its Member States conclude that the IRP is facing challenges in delivering on this aim. We agree that the process should evolve to ensure it supports proactively the Parties in managing conflicts and ensuring compliance with their obligations under the Agreement.

The EU and its Member States firstly support the proposal for developing a *modus operandi* on the IRP process as it can provide more guidance and clarity to Parties, external stakeholders, the Standing Committee and the AEWA Secretariat on their respective roles and obligations, supporting the management of conflict and ensuring compliance.

The EU and its Member States secondly support the proposal to improve and possibly further develop the AEWA compliance processes. The EU and its Member States recognise that the current framework of the IRP faces challenges in delivering on its aim. We are concerned with the fact that the number of IRP-cases has increased thus also increasing the burden on the Secretariat without adequate resourcing and staffing. We also note that the engagement by the parties involved in IRP cases is poor, and that in many instances, IRP-cases are used as an option of ‘last resort’, increasing the challenges in finding solutions. We are concerned that these developments have led to the impossibility to advance or close pending cases and to reach satisfactory results.

These challenges show similarities with issues facing the Case-File System under the Council of Europe’s Bern Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

The EU and its Member States support the development of a proposal for a broader framework for compliance to the agreement, addressing the current issues and proposing a more streamlined and supportive compliance approach.

The EU and its Member States therefore strongly support the Draft Resolution and the course of action it proposes, with some amendments to the relevant operational paragraph of Resolution 9.2 text.

### **Agenda Item 15 - Proposals for Amendments to the Agreement and or its Annexes**

Mr/Ms Chair,

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of Draft Resolution 9.1 with the following amendments.

1. An amendment to the definition of the new sub-categories 3g) and 2g) in operational para 2. The new definition, which aims at removing some weaknesses and unclarities stemming from the initially proposed one, should be replaced by *“Depleted if the best available data, information or assessments indicate that the current population level is at least 20% below a 1980 baseline, or the closest available long-term baseline to this date, but no longer declining over the past 12 years”*.
2. An amendment consisting of the deletion of the new sentence added to paragraph 2.4 of the AEWA Action Plan, calling for populations listed in the newly proposed Category 0 of Column A, to be considered for re-establishment as a priority. The EU and its Member States consider that from an operational and financial point of view, the prioritisation of re-establishment efforts is a very complex exercise and prefer not to include such a provision.
3. With respect of Appendix I to Draft Resolution 9.1 and the proposed amendments to the definitions and abbreviations of geographic areas in Table 1 as well as to population’ names, the EU and its Member States note that some terms, such as “main”, “mainland” and “coastal” which are used on several occasions, but lack a definition. The abbreviation “SW Africa” is also not defined in terms of geographic coverage and range description. We would appreciate the advice of the Secretariat on how to address these issues.

With respect of specific population's range descriptions, the EU and its Member States consider that adjustments are necessary for two species, to ensure a proper representation of the population's range. These species are:

- Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus totanus*) - populations for N Europe (br) and C&E Europe (br) are currently listed. Considering this species also breeds in Western Europe, the EU+MS propose to add W for Western Europe to the C&E Europe (br) resulting in W, C&E Europe.
- Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*) - to better fit the breeding range of the species, the EU+MS propose to replace the currently proposed listing as E Atlantic (br) with W Europe (br).

With respect of the Sanderling (*Calidris alba alba*), the EU and its Member States note that the species' non-breeding range ranges to beyond Marocco to South Africa. The current E Atlantic (nbr) description does not fit this range, due to the definition of E Atlantic. Therefore, the EU and its Member States would appreciate the advice of the Secretariat on how to address this issue.

With respect of Appendix I to Draft Resolution 9.1 and the listing of populations of species, the EU and its Member States agree with all amendments consisting with the re-categorisations of certain populations resulting from the assessment of their status. The European Commission will nevertheless submit a reservation on behalf of the EU to the AEWA Secretariat, within the 90 days foreseen by Article X, for the proposal for amendment concerning the Western Europe & Western Africa population of the Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola squatarola*).

Despite the reservation, the EU will invite the concerned Member States to respect the objective of not hunting the Grey Plover in line with the new listing in AEWA.

## Agenda Item 16 - Implementation of the Agreement and its Strategic Plan

[Mr/Ms] Chair,

The EU and its Member States note with regret that both the low rate of national reporting on the Implementation of the Agreement and the Plan of Action for Africa as well as the lack of financial resources have rendered it impossible to conduct a comprehensive and representative analysis of the national reports thereby also preventing the preparation of an interim progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2027.

In order to enable a final evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2027 the EU and its Member States support the adoption of the parts in the resolution on National Reporting including the decision that African Parties are not required to report on the Plan of Action for Africa, but may instead focus their attention, efforts and capacity on compiling the national reports. The EU and its Member States strongly encourage all Parties to submit their National Reports in due time before MOP10 and suggest an addition to operational para 4 in order to emphasize that timely and comprehensive reporting and securing financial resources are a pre-requisite for the preparation of the final evaluation report.

The EU and its Member States support that in absence of an interim progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and consequently lack of guidance on implementation needs, focus for implementation of the Strategic Plan should be on the recommendations presented in the 9th edition of the Conservation Status Report.

The EU and its Member States further support the proposals for reviewing and developing improved workflow and integration of science-policy interface into AEWA, as well as the development of a modified or alternative mechanism to reactivate the Small Grants Fund to ensure an operational funding mechanism to support eligible projects essential for the implementation of the Agreement.

As stated, and more thoroughly explained under agenda item 14 Implementation review process, the EU and its Member States support the development of a comprehensive *modus operandi* for the Implementation Review Process taking into account the increasing number and complexity of IRP cases and helping Parties ensuring compliance. The proposal for a broader framework for supporting Parties in complying with AEWA will further add to the guidance of parties and the EU and its Member States support the proposal.

## **Agenda Item 17(dr3) - International Species Action and Management Plans (ISAPs and ISMPs)**

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the revised International Single Species Action Plan for the Taiga Bean Goose and the revised International Single Species Management Plan for the Pink-footed Goose – Svalbard breeding population and support the proposals for extending nine action plans as described in operative paragraphs 7 and 9 to 11. However, we would like to ask for the reasoning for extending the action plans for long-tailed duck and velvet scoter until 2034. We agree that it is desirable to align the timelines for their future evaluation, but the reasoning for the chosen period is unclear to us as it doesn't represent a full extension whether this may be either the current 10 years or the proposed 12 years for either of the species. Based on the clarification the EU and its Member States may propose amendments to paragraph 7.

The proposed extension of the International Single Species Management Plans for Barnacle Goose and Greylag Goose can likewise be supported.

The EU and its Member States support the proposed evaluation, and if necessary, update or revision, of 11 species action plans as outlined in operative paragraph 13. However, in light of the anticipated limited resources available, the EU proposes a request, to be included in operative paragraph 13, to the Technical Committee to provide a recommendation on the prioritization of evaluation of the plans.

The EU and its Member States also welcome the revision of the decision-making process for retirement, revision, update and extension of AEWA International Species Action and Management Plans in Appendix I to the DR3. We further welcome the decision on engaging Range States in the evaluation process of species action plans, as this is essential to ensure appropriate uptake. We would like to ask for some clarifications about the current and future role of conservation briefs and what is the interaction between the newly proposed option of updating Plans during the last 3 years of their lifespan and the development of conservation briefs. An initial amendment to paragraph 5 is proposed, but further potential amendments might be proposed by the EU at a later stage, as appropriate.

In regard to the evaluation process itself the EU and its Member States also welcome the request to the technical committee to review and consider revising the Evaluation Report Template to streamline and simplify the evaluation process.

The EU and its Member States support the amendments to the draft format and guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multi-Species Action and Management Plans with a view to streamlining the processes.

The EU and its Member States do acknowledge the recommendation from the Technical Committee that the BirdLife Species Factsheets may be used as a way to fulfil target 1.3 of the AEWA Strategic Plan on providing science-based conservation and management guidance by AEWA and/or its Partners for application by Parties for all populations in unfavourable conservation status. However, we have concerns on how to view the Factsheets if there are obvious shortcomings in them regarding certain populations. As the Factsheets have not been subject to review and approval by the Meeting of the Parties we would like to ask for clarification on how, other than informing range states that the factsheets are produced at species level rather than population level, the risk of deficient Factsheets form the basis for actions that may be disadvantageous to certain populations is taken into account. An amendment to paragraph 22 is proposed but the EU and its Member States may propose further amendments according to the clarifications provided.

Further we would like to propose some minor editorial amendments. All proposed amendments will be submitted in writing.

#### **Agenda Item 19 - Revision and Adoption of Conservation Guidance**

[Mr/Ms Chair]

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the Draft Resolution 9.5 as proposed.

#### **Agenda Item 20a - Institutional Arrangements Standing Committee**

[Mr/Ms] Chair,

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the Resolution and the nominated candidate(s) from Norway.

## **Agenda Item 20b - Institutional Arrangements Technical Committee**

[Mr/Ms] Chair,

The EU and its Member States support the adoption of the Resolution and the nominations to the technical committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the members that are stepping down from their positions in the technical committee. We are thankful for the engagement and commitment they have shown as members to the committee. Furthermore, we would like to thank the new appointees for their willingness and helpfulness in securing the continuous important work of the committee.

## **Agenda Item 21(dr9) - Financial and Administrative Matters**

The EU and its Member States take note of the document without amendments

## **Agenda Item 21 (dr10) - Adoption of Resolutions through Silence Procedure**

The EU and its Member States take note of the proposals aimed at strengthening decision-making under the agreement and preparing for future situations requiring intersessional decisions from Parties.

The EU and its Member States however consider that several points of clarification are necessary before the adoption of this Resolution can be envisaged.

Firstly, concerning 1) the choice of a Resolution for establishing such a procedure, the EU and its Member States would like to remind that while AEWA Parties have already adopted Resolutions in between sessions of the Meeting of the Parties on two occasions, this has occurred in exceptional circumstances. The first one was necessary due to the impossibility to organise a MOP during the COVID period and the necessity to adopt a budget for the year 2022. The second instance was this year, when it was considered necessary to adopt amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the MoP with respect of quorum requirements. The urgency here was to ensure the quorum rules amendment is in force for MOP9.

We would like to further remind that on both occasions, the procedure set in UN General Assembly Decision 74/544 governing the adoption of Resolutions through silence procedure has functioned to a satisfactory level and without major difficulties.

The EU and its Member States would therefore appreciate to receive some clarifications on the rationale behind this proposal and the legal choice of a Resolution for the establishment of such as procedure.

Secondly, the EU and its Member States also have concerns regarding 2) the interlinkage between the proposed Resolution and existing MOP and Standing Committee Rules of Procedure. In case of an adoption of the proposed draft Resolution, how will the newly established procedure interact with relevant rules already included in the RoP of the Standing Committee and the MOP, for instance regarding SC functions, voting, quorum, etc.

Thirdly, the EU and its Member States note that the resolution is unclear concerning the scope (type and content) of the Resolutions that could be put forward for adoption through a streamlined silence procedure. We note that there are major differences between procedural and technical and substantial items decided through a Resolution under the Agreement. Indeed, the two-step procedure could appear as time-consuming and burdensome, but in essence it could prevent proceeding to seeking the approval of issues that should instead be discussed at the MOP.

Next, we note that there is unclarity about the follow-up process to an objection raised under the streamlined silence procedure. Operational point 4 prescribes that '(...) in case of an objection raised by any National Focal Point the Chair of the Standing Committee may circulate a new draft Resolution under the same silence procedure, (...)'. It is insufficiently clear what is meant with 'under the same silence procedure'. When an objection has resulted in a new draft resolution, Parties need to be notified that the silence procedure has been broken, and the draft resolution needs be circulated again for parties to agree on the new version. Parties will need sufficient time to review the new draft resolution, and the current operative does not provide sufficient clarity and comfort in this matter. It is proposed to amend to 'a new round of silence procedure' to ensure that the minimum time period for response is applied. Furthermore, it is unclear what might happen when a Party raises objections to the appropriateness of the silence procedure itself, for example, when the proposed draft Resolution is rejected in its entirety by at least one Party. It would appear as appropriate that when the draft Resolution is objected *in toto*, no more steps are foreseen.

Last, the EU and its Member States note that Operational point 2 of the Draft Resolution proposes a particularly short period of time for Parties to review the Draft Resolution proposed for adoption through the silence procedure, which is furthermore in contradiction with existing rules and deadlines established for the submission of documents for adoption to Parties ahead of a MOP. This deadline should at the very minimum be extended and ideally be aligned with the deadline for submission of documents for adoption to a MOP as per its RoP.

The EU and its Member States consider that given the important concerns and reservations we just expressed, the Draft Resolution should be discussed in detail in the intersession period leading to MOP10. This will allow for a proper consideration of the identified shortcomings, before considering it again for adoption at MOP10, if appropriate.

### **Agenda Item 23 - Tribute to the Organisers**

The EU and its Member States would like to express our thanks to all the individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to the 9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties.

We express our appreciation to the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, the Czech Republic, and Croatia for their generous financial support, which greatly facilitated the organization and participation of Contracting Parties.

We are also grateful to the Government of Germany for providing excellent office and conference facilities at the UN Campus, enabling us to conduct the meeting without significant venue-related costs. Additionally, we thank the Government of Germany for hosting a reception to welcome all participants and celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Agreement.

We would like to also acknowledge the City of Bonn for its services to the meeting and the delegates, as well as the Secretariat for their effective logistical arrangements and document preparation at short notice.

Also-, our gratitude goes to the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for their support and contributions to the success of this session. Thank you all for your commitment and collaboration.

Finally, we thank the Government of Botswana for its willingness and tireless efforts to host MOP9, which did only not succeed due to financial constraints.

#### **Agenda Item 24 - Date Venue and Funding of the 10th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA**

The EU and its Member States emphasize the importance of these Meetings of the Parties. We recommend that all member states carefully consider the opportunity to host the next Meeting of the Parties (MOP10). Additionally, the EU strongly urges all Parties to provide financial support for the logistical and substantive organization of the 10th Session of the Meeting of the Parties.

We would also like to express our full support and appreciation for the significant and challenging work undertaken by the AEWA Secretariat in organizing this meeting. This work has been carried out under considerable time pressure, and yet, the results are, as always, impressive. Thank you.

#### **Agenda Item 27 – EU and its Member States Closing Statement MOP9**

Madame Chair,

Mr. Executive Secretary,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, we would like to take a moment to reflect on the past couple of days and the fruitful discussions that have marked our time together in Bonn, as well as to share some quick reflections as we embark on the journey to MOP10.

We have collectively navigated complex challenges, shared invaluable insights and learned a lot about excellent and inspirational conservation initiatives. We have jointly forged pathways for our continued cooperation. Each presentation, decision, contact group discussion, or simply exchange over coffee, has strengthened our resolve and equipped us with new tools necessary for effective conservation action.

A crucial aspect was addressed at the meeting: the adoption of the new budget for the next triennia. This budget is a testament of our collective commitment to AEWA and strives to cover AEWA's core financial needs for the next three years. We recognise however that it does not fully encompass the resources required to achieve our ambitious goals. Reminding ourselves what is expected as outcomes might help realise the challenge ahead on the road to MOP10: the production of the Conservation Status Review 10 report, the review and proposals for optimisations/streamlining of the Action Plan in Annex 3 to the Agreement; the evaluation of the current Strategic Plan and the associated Plan of Action for Africa; the development of a new Strategic Plan for the period 2029-2037; the review the AEWA provisions on sustainable use; the development of guidance on the application of definitions of AEWA Table 1 categories; the evaluation of a number of species plans, etc.

It is imperative that we actively seek ways to bridge the funding gap within the next three years, as early as possible at the beginning of the next triennium. We urge and thank in advance each Party for ensuring the full and timely payment of their financial contributions, but also for exploring other and innovative funding solutions, for engaging with potential partners and donors and advocating for increased voluntary support. Only our dedication to supplementing this budget will ensure that we can fully reach the ambitious results expected by MOP10. Let us approach this task with the same spirit of cooperation and determination that has defined this meeting.

Another specific aspect we want to pay attention to is the submission of national reports ahead of MOP10. We cannot emphasize enough how essential timely and comprehensive reporting is for the evaluation of the Strategic Plan implementation and to help plan accordingly for the next decade's strategic objectives to 2037.

As the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to AEWA comes to an end, we would like to first thank the Secretariat of the Agreement for delivering yet another successful MOP, just as every time, despite many difficulties and last minutes obstacles and changes. Thank you to each Secretariat staff member for your dedication - your hard work, efforts and energy are at the core of this Agreement, making impossible things become reality.

At the next MOP, MOP 10, we will be missing a special member of the secretariat. After 11 years it is now time to say goodbye to Executive Secretary Jacques Trouvilliez. In this period, you have been the face of AEWA working to further develop and strengthen AEWA and consistently emphasizing the importance of science-based decision-making and international cooperation as the foundation for successful conservation. We thank you for commitment and wish you the best for the future.

Our thanks also extend to the members of the Technical Committee for their unwavering motivation to support the Agreement and ensuring every decision is solidly rooted in science. Thank you to our representatives in the Standing Committee, advising and helping the Secretariat in the implementation of the strategic plan and representing the Parties.

Our special gratitude is due to the outgoing Standing Committee Chair, Simon Mackown. Your leadership, expertise and human approach will be remembered for a long time. Your guidance has been invaluable in navigating complex challenges, and your tireless support to the Secretariat was key in driving practically all AEWA's projects and tasks forward.

Thank you also on behalf of the EU and its Member States to all Parties, observers and the dedicated civil society organisations, associations and NGOs for the collaboration and commitment displayed this week.

Let us carry the momentum of this meeting forward, implementing and advocating for the agreed commitments within our respective regions and countries. Our dedication to AEWA must extend beyond this venue, championing the cause of migratory waterbirds in every policy, initiative, and conservation effort we undertake.

Until we meet again at MOP10!