

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Treaty on Migratory Waterbirds Marks its 20th Anniversary

Bonn, 16 June 2015 – Today marks the 20th anniversary of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). The treaty, which is based in Bonn, Germany, was signed 16 June 1995 in The Hague, the Netherlands.

AEWA aims to conserve migratory waterbirds such as cranes, storks, ducks, geese, swans, gulls, flamingos and waders and their habitats across international borders. With 74 countries, 35 from Africa and 39 from Eurasia plus the European Union, it is the largest legally binding instrument concluded under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Both AEWA and CMS are administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

AEWA Executive Secretary Jacques Trouvilliez said: "From the beginning, the focus of AEWA has been on both endangered species and sustainable use. Through AEWA, the international community has built a powerful and flexible tool which allows countries to work together to conserve migratory waterbirds along their flyways."

Migratory birds often travel long distances across flyways that span countries and entire continents from their breeding to their wintering grounds. However, pressures resulting from a growing human population, urbanization, pollution and unsustainable use are causing the loss of species and their habitats. Climate change is increasingly affecting migration routes, causing a shift in range and in the timing and changing habitats. "Cooperation among all the countries is needed to tackle the many challenges faced by the birds" says Jacques Trouvilliez, adding "Efforts to protect the White Stork in Europe are in vain, if we do not act for the species and its habitat with the same spirit along the birds' entire migration route, which stretches across Africa".

The treaty covers 255 bird species that use one of the principal flyways connecting Europe and Africa as well as parts of Asia and North America. Countries that have joined AEWA are committed to conserve and work for habitat protection, managing human activities, research and monitoring, education and capacity-building. The accession of new Parties to ensure complete protection is one of the tasks ahead.

Flexible tools are in place to address conservation challenges. Action plans have been tailored for the most endangered species, while the AEWA African Initiative seeks to promote the conservation of waterbirds across Africa.

The annual World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is another notable achievement in the history of the Agreement. Celebrated on the second weekend each May, WMBD has reached out to an increasing number of conservation networks and interested people across the globe inviting them to stage activities to raise awareness about a central theme related to migratory birds each year.

Later this year, governments and the international conservation community will meet in Bonn, Germany, from 9 to 14 November, to set the course for the future of migratory waterbird conservation along the African-Eurasian Flyway. Under the theme "Making Flyway Conservation Happen" the 6th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA, will include the launch of the *Sixth Conservation Status Report of Migratory Waterbirds*, which will reveal key conservation successes and challenges ahead for the UN treaty. New action plans will be presented for the Grey-crowned Crane, the Taiga Bean Goose, the Long-tailed Duck and the Eurasian Curlew.

"New Parties are welcome to join the efforts under AEWA in order to ensure the protection of migratory waterbirds in their entire migratory range. New countries joining AEWA will also help to make flyway conservation even stronger!" says Jacques Trouvilliez.

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