



## CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.17 (Rev.COP13)

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### **ACTION PLAN FOR MIGRATORY LANDBIRDS IN THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN REGION (AEMLAP)**

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Gandhinagar, February 2020)

*Concerned* that there is compelling scientific evidence of widespread declines of African-Eurasian migratory landbirds in recent decades, and that these declines are of growing conservation concern in both scientific and political arenas as the European breeding populations of some formerly widespread species have more than halved in the last 30 years,

*Aware* that the status of migratory landbirds is widely used as an indicator of the overall health of the environment and other biodiversity, *inter alia* the achievement of Target 12 of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and when monitored with standardized methods migratory landbirds can provide an effective indicator of sustainable land use,

*Aware also* that the key drivers of this decline appear to be degradation of the breeding habitats, particularly within agricultural systems and woodland and forests, and in the non-breeding areas the combined factors of anthropogenic habitat degradation, unsustainable harvest and climate change,

*Concerned* that current trends in African land use, alongside those in Eurasia, are leading to considerable landscape changes that can have significant negative impacts on biodiversity, including migratory birds; this problem needs to be addressed because such biodiversity is valuable both in its own right and for the ecosystem services it provides; and that these services constitute the foundation of resilient livelihoods for rural people, who are some of the poorest in the region,

*Noting* that the African Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group ('the Working Group'), at its second meeting in Abidjan, from 25 to 27 November 2015, agreed on a Programme of Work, as endorsed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council on 18-21 April 2016, where land use change was given top priority,

*Welcoming* the report of the workshop on *Sustainable Land Use in West Africa: National and International Policy Responses that Deliver for Migratory Birds and People (LUMB)* ('the workshop') that was held in Abuja, from 24 to 26 November 2016 and the *Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Land Use for People and Biodiversity including Migratory Birds in West Africa*,

*Further welcoming* the BirdLife International and Naturschutzbund Deutschland project: *African Biosphere Reserves as Pilot Sites for Monitoring and Conservation of Migratory Birds (AfriBiRds)*, funded by Germany, and the potential of the project to contribute to the development of national wild birds' indices and generation of information on migratory birds in general, as well as the BirdLife partnership project *Living on the Edge*,

*Further welcoming* the work of BirdLife International partners funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to set up and operate national Common Bird Monitoring projects (derived from and compatible with the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme established in 2002 and supported by the European Union and RSPB) in Uganda and Botswana using local volunteer citizen scientists, that have successfully been able to produce scientifically robust wild bird indicators and additional environmental information for their nations,

*Recalling* the relevance of sustainable land use for CMS and its Strategic Plan 2015 – 2023, and for other CMS Family instruments such as the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and its Strategic Plan 2019 - 2027, and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU),

*Acknowledging* the critical role that land plays both in driving and storing as well as sequestering greenhouse gas emissions, identified in the report *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*, prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and consequently the importance of transitioning towards sustainable land use systems in order to realize the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement,

*Acknowledging* the importance of sustainable land use for implementing a wide range of international agreements relevant to migratory landbirds including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020, the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 and the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and its Strategic Framework 2018 - 2030,

*Acknowledging* the African Union Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), the Strategic Objective 2 of the FAO Revised Strategic Framework, the Ministerial Declaration on Food Security and the agricultural sectors in a changing climate made at the 29<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Africa, on 8 April 2016, the recommendations of the participants of the FAO Regional Meeting on Agroecology in Sub-Saharan Africa, on 6 November 2015, Resolution 2/24 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and the United Nations Environment Programme and its *Poverty and Environment Initiative* (PEI), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021,

*Acknowledging also* the *West African Regional Agricultural Investment Programme* (ECOWAP 25), the *Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Utilization of Forest Ecosystems*, Nationally Determined Contributions under the UNFCCC and the African Union Agenda 2063 to support sustainable management practices and approaches that will support birds and people in West Africa,

*Noting* that land use change is a key driver of continuing loss of biodiversity across Africa, and that the drivers of land use change and the solutions that can achieve sustainable land use identified at the workshop are applicable to conservation in many landscapes across Africa and beyond,

*Recalling* that Resolution 10.27<sup>1</sup> of the Tenth Conference of the Parties urged Parties and invited non-Parties and other stakeholders with the CMS Secretariat to develop an Action Plan for the conservation of African-Eurasian migrant landbirds and their habitats throughout the flyway, which was adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on the basis of which the COP can consider the need for a new instrument or using an existing instrument as a framework,

*Further recalling* Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP12) *The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds*, and the Guidelines to Prevent Poisoning of Migratory Birds adopted through Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP12) *Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds*,

*Taking note* of the report of the workshop to elaborate an Action Plan on African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds, that took place in Accra between 31 August and 2 September 2012,

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<sup>1</sup> Superseded by Resolution 11.17 (Rev.COP12) *Action Plan for Migratory Land Birds in the African- Eurasian Region* (AEMLAP)

*Acknowledging* with thanks the contributions of the members of the Working Group on African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds (the Working Group) and its coordination by BirdLife International established under the CMS Scientific Council,

*Welcoming* the establishment of the Migrant Landbirds Study Group (MLSG) as an international network of specialists and organizations working on research, monitoring and conservation of migratory landbird species,

*Taking note* of the results of its inaugural Meeting in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, 26-28 March 2014 and of the Friends of the Landbirds Action Plan (FLAP) as a forum for interested stakeholders, individuals and organizations to follow and support the CMS Action Plan and migrant landbird conservation in general, and subsequent successful development and operationalization of FLAP by BirdLife International as an online networking platform,

*Further welcoming* the initiative of EURING (European Union for Bird Ringing) and the Scientific Council to produce a *European Atlas of Bird Migration*, based on recoveries of ringed birds, with the support of the CMS Secretariat and the Italian Government,

*Taking note* of the conclusion of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative workshop, 12-13 March 2019, on *Science and Policy to Address Threats to the Afro-Palaearctic Migratory Birds: new research and future policy* that for many declining African-Eurasian landbirds the single most beneficial 'generic action' in the non-breeding grounds is likely to be retaining and enhancing tree cover in the landscape, specifically through measures in the wider landscape beyond traditional forest protection, and that international approaches to retain and enhance tree cover such as the Bonn Challenge, Trillion Trees and the Great Green Wall and local aid and development initiatives around agriculture and forestry provide potential experiments to determine, through careful monitoring, both what works in habitat creation (enabling comparison of biodiversity between sites and across years) and socio-economic benefits for local communities, so as to provide insights on beneficial interventions.

*The Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Adopts* the *African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)* (the Action Plan), and its Annexes, contained in Annex II of document UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.23.1.4/Rev.1 and updated in document UNEP/CMS/COP13/26.1.2/Annex 3 and *urges* Parties and *encourages* non-Parties and stakeholders to implement the Action Plan as a matter of priority, especially in line with the AEMLAP Programme of Work 2016-2020;
2. *Urges* Parties and *encourages* non-Parties to address the issue of habitat loss and degradation of migratory landbird species through the development of policies that maintain, manage and restore natural and semi-natural habitats within the wider environment, including working with local communities, and in partnership with the poverty alleviation community and the agriculture and forestry sectors in Africa;
3. *Urges* Parties and *encourages* non-Parties to work together with agencies, organizations and local communities to address harmful land use changes in the African-Eurasian flyway region, notably West Africa in the first instance, by promoting sustainable land use through practices and approaches set out in the CMS workshop of November 2016 (*Abuja Declaration*);
4. *Calls on* Parties and non-Parties to recognize and support joint action by relevant Conventions and international processes on sustainable land use of benefit to migratory birds that can deliver CMS objectives, especially in respect to Article II.1 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 and to assist delivery the Sustainable Development Goals;

5. *Requests* Parties and *invites* Range States to implement existing measures under CMS, AEWA, the Raptors MOU and other relevant international environmental treaties, especially where these contribute to the objectives of the Landbirds Action Plan, in order to increase the resilience of migratory landbird populations and their potential to adapt to environmental change;
6. *Calls on* Parties to urgently address the problems of illegal and of unsustainable taking of landbirds during migration and wintering and ensure that national conservation legislation is in place and enforced and implementation measures are taken, and *requests* the Secretariat to liaise with the Bern Convention and other relevant fora in order to facilitate the national and international mitigation of the problem of illegal killing of birds in line with Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP12) *The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds*;
7. *Urges* Parties and *invites* non-Parties to implement the *Guidelines to Prevent Poisoning of Migratory Birds* as adopted through Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP12) *Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds*; in particular those referring to agricultural pesticides which have a special significance for migratory landbirds as a major source of mortality;
8. *Requests* the Scientific Council and the Working Group, in liaison with the MLSG to promote work to address key gaps in knowledge and future research directions, in particular through the analysis of existing long-term and large-scale datasets, the European Atlas of Bird Migration, the use of new and emerging tracking technologies, field studies of migrant birds in Africa, use of survey and demographic data from the Eurasian breeding grounds and use of remote sensing earth observation data of land cover change in Africa;
9. *Further requests* the Scientific Council and the Working Group, in liaison with FLAP to promote and encourage increased public awareness of, and support for, migratory landbird conservation along the flyway among the general public and stakeholders, including about how individual birds are shared across countries and act as indicators of the overall health of the environment, of people and all biodiversity;
10. *Instructs* the Secretariat, in collaboration with Parties and relevant international organizations, subject to the availability of funds, to organize regional workshops to address specific issues and promote the implementation of the Action Plan and share best practice and lessons learnt in the effective conservation of migratory landbirds;
11. *Calls on Parties* and *invites* non-Parties and stakeholders, with the support of the Secretariat, to strengthen national and local capacity for the implementation of the Action Plan including, *inter alia*, by developing partnerships with the constituencies dealing with poverty alleviation, land degradation neutrality and nature-based climate change solutions and developing training courses, translating and disseminating examples of best practice, sharing protocols and regulations, transferring technology, and promoting the use of online tools to address specific issues that are relevant to the Action Plan;
12. *Encourages* Parties and non-Parties to maintain or develop, as necessary, national common bird monitoring schemes with a view to the establishment of national wild bird indices as indicators of sustainable land use and ecosystem health for example, in the context of development of a 'Landbird Monitoring Programme for the East Atlantic Flyway', building on the experiences gained from the successful operation of Common Bird Monitoring projects in Africa and the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme in Europe, involving the establishment of a set of terrestrial bird monitoring sites across several countries, which can eventually form the basis of a global wild bird indicator that can be utilized by the different MEAs and international processes that deal with sustainable land management;
13. *Further encourages* Parties and non-Parties to actively support and use the FLAP platform in promoting landbirds and sustainable land use and what works to deliver these, including by exchange of ideas and information, education, and awareness raising;

14. *Requests* the Working Group and the CMS Scientific Council, in liaison with the MLSG and FLAP, with the support of the CMS Secretariat, to support implementation of Action Plans for a first set of species including the European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) adopted through Resolution 12.12 *Action Plans for Birds*, the European Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee in line with Decision 12.21 *Action Plans for Birds*, and to continue to develop Action Plans for declining migratory buntings, including the Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*);
15. *Urges* Parties and *invites* the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant international organizations, bilateral and multilateral donors, including from the constituencies dealing with poverty alleviation, land degradation neutrality and nature-based climate solutions, to support financially the implementation of the Action Plan including through the provision of financial assistance to developing countries for relevant capacity-building;
16. *Calls* on Parties and the Scientific Council to report progress in implementing the Action Plan, including monitoring and efficacy of measures taken, to future meetings of the Conference of the Parties.