



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.17 (Rev.COP14)

Original: English

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

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 14th Meeting (Samarkand, February 2024)

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 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) related to the effective restoration of degraded areas, 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, woodland and forests, and the combined factors of anthropogenic habitat degradation, unsustainable harvest and climate change are driving declines in the non-breeding areas,

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 to migratory birds; and this problem needs to be addressed because such biodiversity is valuable both in its own right and for the ecosystem services it provides; which constitute the foundation of resilient livelihoods for rural people,

Noting that an updated Programme of Work for 2021-2026 for the Working Group was coordinated by the AEML Steering Group and the Secretariat, supported by the Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI) as the Coordination Unit, and approved by the Working Group in November 2022,

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 completion of 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 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), 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 29th 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 10.27¹ 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 11th 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.COP14) *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.COP14) *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,

Acknowledging with thanks the contributions of the members of the Working Group established under the CMS Scientific Council and its coordination by BirdLife International from 2015 to 2017,

Further acknowledging with thanks the coordination of the Working Group by the Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI – Vogelwarte Sempach) from 2022,

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 publication of the *Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas*, based on recoveries of ringed birds and tracking studies by the European Union for Bird Ringing (EURING), 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-Palaeartic 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 socioeconomic benefits for local communities, so as to provide insights on beneficial interventions, and

Further noting the conclusion of the PAOC symposium and round table, ‘Integrating science, policy and sustainable development to address African-Eurasian migrant landbird declines: African perspectives on a flyway-wide issue’, that there are many opportunities for positive outcomes for migratory landbirds, wider biodiversity and local communities if biodiversity and human development-focused communities work together on ecosystem restoration based approaches to sustainable development, including on selection of tree species to maximize

¹ The resolution was repealed and consolidated into Resolution 11.17, which was amended at COP12, COP13 and COP14.

benefits to both local communities and biodiversity, framing interventions to deliver on both socioeconomic and biodiversity indicators, and using monitoring of outcomes of interventions in the landscape to build a better understanding of effectiveness of different approaches,

*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 the Annex to this Resolution and urges Parties and encourages non-Parties and stakeholders to implement the Action Plan as a matter of priority, especially in line with the Working Group's Programme of Work 2021-2026;*
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 avoid harmful land use and land use changes harmful to biodiversity 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 CMS Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (SPMS), and assist delivery of 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 continue to urgently address the problems of illegal and of unsustainable killing, taking and trade² 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 continue 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, taking and trade of birds in line with Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP14) *The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds;**

² There are regional differences in the agreed terminology, in English, for the problem of the illegal removal of birds from the wild; in Europe and the Mediterranean, the agreed term is "illegal killing and taking" to avoid confusion with legitimate hunting practices whereas in Asia-Australasia, the agreed term is "illegal hunting and taking" due to cultural sensitivities.

7. *Further calls on Parties to urgently take practical measures to address threats to migratory bustards, a highly threatened and declining group of migratory landbird species under particular pressure from illegal killing, unsustainable taking, collision with energy infrastructure and habitat loss and degradation including as outlined in relevant Species Action Plans;*
8. *Urges Parties and invites non-Parties to implement the Guidelines to Prevent Poisoning of Migratory Birds as adopted through Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP14) Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds; in particular those referring to agricultural pesticides and veterinary pharmaceutical treatments which have a special significance for migratory landbirds as a major source of mortality;*
9. *Requests the Scientific Council, subject to the availability of resources, in partnership with the Working Group, in liaison with the MLSG, relevant academic institutions and research-funders, to evaluate: existing long-term and large-scale datasets, (such as the European Atlas of Bird Migration, the African Bird Atlas Project (ABAP) and the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas); the use of new and emerging tracking technologies, field studies of migrant birds in Africa, Europe and Asia; the use of survey and demographic data from the Eurasian breeding grounds and the use of remote sensing earth observation data of land cover change in Africa and Asia, and use the outcomes of this evaluation to actively promote research that addresses key knowledge gaps relating to migratory landbird conservation in African-Eurasian region, inter alia, to:*
 - a) *Using multi-species analyses and tracking technologies to identify migratory pathways and strategies, and better understand movement patterns, geographic areas of particular importance to multiple landbird species and migratory connectivity, enabling field research, monitoring and conservation action to be targeted more effectively;*
 - b) *undertaking detailed field studies in sub-Saharan Africa and at staging sites, using existing data where appropriate, to better understand species distribution patterns, habitat use and foraging ecology, and in particular identify and enhance conservation of the stop-over sites immediately to the north and south of the Sahara (including through data collection and seeking linkages with relevant stakeholders);*
 - c) *synthesizing data from Eurasian breeding grounds to explore spatial and temporal patterns in demographic parameters in relation to migratory pathways and large-scale patterns of environmental change;*
 - d) *using satellite image Earth observation data and, where possible, in conjunction with on the ground habitat and bird monitoring data (including through synergies with and expansion of common bird monitoring schemes) to improve understanding of where land cover is changing and how this impacts African-Eurasian migrant birds, and research the drivers of land use/land cover change;*
 - e) *seeking better understanding of how to influence the economic and social policy drivers causing land use/land cover change at different scales;*
 - f) *encouraging research to determine which traits of migratory populations are associated with population declines and for which declining African-Eurasian migrant landbird populations declines cannot be explained by conditions in the breeding grounds;*
 - g) *working in collaboration with relevant initiatives to monitor the effect on migrant landbirds of land-use and habitat-based interventions including those with a poverty alleviation or climate change focus and to mainstream knowledge of tree*

- species of particular importance for migrant landbirds into planning processes of tree planting initiatives; and
- h) encouraging detection of nesting sites to avoid their destruction by agricultural practices;
10. *Further requests* the Scientific Council and the Working Group, subject to the availability of resources, 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;
 11. *Further requests* the Scientific Council and the Working Group, subject to the availability of resources, in liaison with FLAP, to disseminate evidence and information to decision makers and those formulating prescriptions for action;
 12. *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;
 13. *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 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;
 14. *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 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and international processes that deal with sustainable land management;
 15. *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;
 16. *Requests* the Working Group and the CMS Scientific Council, subject to the availability of resources in liaison with the MLSG and FLAP, with the support of the CMS Secretariat, to support implementation of Action Plans for a set of species including the European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) originally adopted through Resolution 12.12 *Action Plans for Birds*, the European Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), adopted by the 48th Meeting of the Standing Committee in line with Decision 12.21 *Action Plans for Birds*, and the Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*), once endorsed; and to continue to develop Action Plans for declining migratory landbirds, particularly buntings;

17. *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; and
18. *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.