



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 14.18

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AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

Noting the significant work under CMS on avian influenza,

Recalling Resolution 12.6 *Wildlife Disease and Migratory Species*, and the resolutions on wildlife disease and avian influenza which were consolidated into it and repealed by COP12: Resolution 8.27 *Migratory Species and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza*, Resolution 9.8 *Responding to the Challenge of Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases in Migratory Species, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1*, and Resolution 10.22 *Wildlife Disease and Migratory Species*,

Aware that the spillover of the A/goose/Guangdong/1996 lineage of H5 highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (hereinafter HPAI virus) from the poultry sector has subsequently caused significant and concerning mortality in waterbirds, seabirds, raptors and avian scavengers as well as a number of mammal species on multiple continents and *further concerned* about future spread to other populations of migratory and other species already under multiple pressures,

Aware that via spillback events, HPAI virus has had major impacts on livelihoods and economies related to poultry production,

Noting the important role that wild birds now play in the spread of HPAI virus between countries, but also recognizing that spread occurs through other pathways including the human facilitated movement of birds, bird by-products and equipment associated with these respective industries and activities,

Further noting that the spread of HPAI virus in poultry-dense areas occurs mainly by movements of infected poultry or their products, contaminated equipment, and/or people wearing contaminated clothes or footwear,

Further noting that reforms of the poultry sector are being recommended to reduce risks for poultry, such as improved biosecurity, reduction of size and density of poultry farms, avoidance of waterbird areas as a location for farms, and considering vaccination of poultry against HPAI virus as a complement to other control measures,

Aware that practices such as some high-risk markets, wild bird trade and grazing of domestic ducks in natural wetlands increase likelihood of viral transmission by creating extensive interfaces between domestic and wild birds, with additional risks for onward spread of infection to people,

Very conscious of zoonotic infections caused by this virus in people occupationally or otherwise exposed to infected birds or mammals (wild or domesticated) and *concerned* that, if the subtype of HPAI either genetically re-assorts or adaptively mutates into a form transmissible between humans, this could have the global health, social and economic consequences of a human influenza pandemic,

Mindful that while exposure to infected poultry represents the greatest risk to human health, fear of risks from wild birds can negatively affect public attitudes and support for species conservation,

Concerned that in many countries there is a lack of information and preparation, and, in some cases, public misinformation on important issues related to the spread of HPAI, the risks it may pose, and how to anticipate and respond to outbreaks, and *noting* in particular the difficulties that low-income countries face in assessing and responding to the threat of HPAI, especially given the significance in many of these countries of both domesticated and wild birds as the basis of rural livelihoods and food security,

Aware that inappropriate responses to HPAI in wild birds, such as lethal control and habitat destruction, are contrary to advice from FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) and the mandates of CMS Resolution 12.6, AEWAs Resolutions 3.18 and 4.15, and Ramsar Resolutions IX.23 and X.21 (and its annexed guidance); *recognizing* that lethal measures to eliminate HPAI in wild bird populations are not feasible and may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds; and *further emphasizing* that destruction or substantive modification of wetland and other habitats with the objective of reducing contact between domesticated and wild birds does not amount to wise use as urged by Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and Articles 1 and 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds,

Noting that prevention and responses should be focused on avoiding unfortunate and possibly deleterious long-term consequences for conservation, especially for species that are currently threatened, and/or already have small or localized populations,

Welcoming the involvement of FAO, WOAH and WHO in responses to HPAI, notably through their Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and its implementation, inter alia, through regional Technical Cooperation Programmes on Emergency Assistance for Early Detection and Prevention of Avian Influenza,

Welcoming also the WOAH World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), the joint FAO–WOAH–WHO Global Early Warning System for health threats and emerging risks at the human–animal–ecosystems interface (GLEWS+), the WOAH-FAO network for expertise in animal influenza (OFFLU) and existing regional information systems, and the need to complement existing communication channels, specifically WOAH disease reporting and ProMed-mail,

Recognizing the need for and benefits of rapid and continued sharing of data and information across sectors, and the need for recording the impact of HPAI virus and other emerging pathogens on wildlife populations in order to better guide policies for future prevention, preparedness and management of emerging infectious diseases, from human health, agricultural economy and nature conservation perspectives,

Noting the need to strengthen research, monitoring and surveillance related to species affected by HPAI to understand epidemiology and impacts of disease, as supported also by AEWAs Resolutions 8.2, 8.7 and 8.15, as well as prevention, preparedness and management to conserve wild bird populations, and

Thanking the CMS Secretariat, the FAO Animal Health Service and the coordinator and members and observers of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds for their valuable work in producing situation updates and guidance for those responding to HPAI in wildlife, recognizing that anticipation, prevention and preparedness are essential for responding to disease,

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

1. *Calls on* Parties to note the key messages, use the guidance and implement the recommendations from the 2023 statement of the CMS-FAO Co-Convened Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, specifically relating to the need for:
 - a) cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder planning and preparedness, and the development and implementation of national wildlife contingency plans for HPAI to enable effective prevention, responses and minimization of losses,
 - b) an appreciation among environment sections of government of their responsibility for wildlife aspects of HPAI and enhancing coordination and collaboration with veterinary and wildlife health authorities,
 - c) robust outbreak investigation following a One Health approach with virological and epidemiological analyses, and
 - d) integrated population monitoring to measure impacts of the disease;

2. *Requests* Parties to ensure that responses to HPAI in wildlife do not include lethal responses such as culling of wildlife, nor use of disinfectants or other measures in wild settings that may affect habitat quality, nor destruction or substantive modification of wetland and other habitats with the objective of reducing contact between domesticated and wild birds;

3. *Further requests* Parties to adopt measures to reduce the risk of transmission of avian influenza between wildlife and poultry by:
 - a) preventing spillover of HPAI viruses from poultry to wildlife and reducing risks to both sectors by, inter alia, enhancing biosecurity measures, implementing adequate farming and aquaculture standards, vaccinating domestic birds and better planning as well as reforming and reassessing intensive production where risks have been identified,
 - b) further mitigating activities that are high risk in terms of viral transfer between livestock, wildlife and people by, inter alia, restricting the grazing of domestic ducks in natural wetlands, addressing risks associated with high-risk markets, and trade of wild birds, and
 - c) strictly applying internationally agreed quarantine and health standards for the cross-border transport of birds and their products and measures for the prevention of the illegal transportation of birds and their products, both nationally and internationally; and
 - d) maintain ecosystem integrity to reduce wild and domestic interfaces;

4. *Calls on* Parties, non-Parties, and relevant international and national organizations to further enable effective prevention, preparedness and response to avian influenza outbreaks, in particular by supporting and building capacity for:

- a) research into HPAI in wild birds and mammals including determination of impacts of HPAI outbreaks,
 - b) long-term monitoring of migratory bird populations and movements, with focus on enhanced assessment for those species affected by HPAI,
 - c) robust surveillance programmes with conservation objectives for HPAI in populations of wild birds while additionally preventing delays in diagnosis and research caused by regulatory limits on transporting specimens across national boundaries,
 - d) integrating and analysing existing data sets across different flyways to determine precise migratory routes, fluxes and species' population dynamics, and sharing data with other sectors to enhance multisectoral risk assessment,
 - e) early warning systems,
 - f) international cooperation in surveillance and risk assessments across flyways, and
 - g) improving rapid wildlife reporting systems with collaboration and information-sharing with WOA national delegates and wildlife focal points, WOA WAHIS, the joint FAO–WOA–WHO GLEWS and existing regional information systems;
5. *Urges* Parties and international donor organizations to support the activities of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, through both financial and in-kind support, in particular for the funding of the implementation of Task Force recommendations;
6. *Further urges* Parties to actively support the work of the CMS Flyways Working Group given its role in providing information relevant to disease issues; and
7. *Requests* the Secretariat to:
- a) explore possibilities for establishing partnerships so as to support the development of long-term funding for monitoring schemes, such as the International Waterbird Census and its derived outputs, that are relevant to the Convention's objectives,
 - b) provide support for the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, and
 - c) include information on implementation of this Resolution in the format of the National Reports and to report progress on the implementation of this Resolution to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.