



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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Agenda Item 26.4

POWER LINES AND MIGRATORY BIRDS

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress with respect to activities undertaken by the Secretariat on the impact of power lines on migratory birds as of August 2019, primarily through the multi-stakeholder Task Force on Reconciling Selected Energy Sector Developments with Migratory Species Conservation (the Energy Task Force). The document includes proposed amendments to Resolution 10.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Birds*, based on consultations with the members of the Energy Task Force, to update and align it with the development of international processes since its initial adoption, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and activities of the Energy Task Force itself.

POWER LINES AND MIGRATORY BIRDS

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties at its 10th meeting (COP10, Bergen, Norway, 2011) adopted Resolution 10.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Birds*, in which it:

6. Instructs the Secretariat, in close cooperation with relevant CMS agreements, to consult the Secretariat of the Bern Convention in order to update the mitigation guidelines regularly, as appropriate, and to disseminate these to their respective Parties.

2. Power lines are one of the major causes globally of unnatural, unnecessary and avoidable mortality for migratory and other wild birds. Under CMS and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), work on the impact of power lines on migratory species has been undertaken for many years, as reflected in the production and adoption of various relevant documents:

- [CMS Resolution 7.4 *Electrocution of Migratory Birds*](#);
- [AEWA Resolution 5.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Waterbirds*](#);
- [CMS Resolution 10.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Birds*](#);
- [CMS Resolution 11.27 \(Rev.COP12\) *Renewable Energy and Migratory Species*](#);
- [Review of the Conflicts between Migratory Birds and Electricity Power Grids in the African-Eurasian Region](#);
[Guidelines on How to Avoid or Mitigate the Impact of Electricity Power Grids on Migratory Birds in the African-Eurasian Region](#);
- [Renewable Energy Technologies and Migratory Species: Guidelines for Sustainable Deployment \[UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.23.4.3.2\]](#).

3. The 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12, Manila, 2017) mandated through [Resolution 11.27 \(Rev.COP12\) *Renewable Energy and Migratory Species*](#) the establishment of the multi-stakeholder Task Force on Reconciling Selected Energy Sector Developments with Migratory Species Conservation (the [Energy Task Force](#))¹. The terms of reference of the Energy Task Force, adopted by COP12 through the same Resolution stipulate, *inter alia*, that:

The Energy Task Force will cover the issues of power line impacts and impacts of renewable energy technology deployments [...] with initial focus on power lines, hydro, wind and solar energy technologies [...].

and that

The Energy Task Force will monitor the implementation of relevant guidelines and their effectiveness as well as existing impediments for adequate implementation of such guidelines, and submit progress reports to the governing bodies of the participating MEAs.

¹ The Task Force was established after the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Activities since COP12

4. Based on the mandate in Resolution 11.27 (Rev.COP12), most of the recent activities on the impacts of power grid infrastructure, including the update of the mitigation guidelines, as appropriate, and their dissemination, as requested in Resolution 10.11, have been conducted through the Energy Task Force. The Energy Task Force, coordinated by the CMS Secretariat and BirdLife International, produced *inter alia* an [information package](#) on the sustainable deployment of renewable energy technologies and power lines aiming to avoid and mitigate negative impacts on biodiversity. A detailed report on the activities conducted by the Energy Task Force can be found in Document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.2.1 *Renewable Energy and Migratory Species*.
5. The Secretariat participated in a workshop on *Minimizing the Impacts of Power Lines on Birds*, held in Ostrava, Czech Republic on 29 May 2019, organized by the EU Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DPT-PAC-PA2 PA 02 Energy), the Government of the Czech Republic and the UN Environment Carpathian Convention. The workshop focused on the countries situated in the Danube/Carpathian region of Europe. The current extent of the impact of power lines on birds through collision and electrocution was analyzed by the experts and representatives of organizations, utility and service providers, and strategies, and options for mitigation measures and monitoring were discussed. The Secretariat presented the activities of the Energy Task Force on the impact of power lines on migratory birds, and the relevant decisions and guidelines endorsed under the Convention (cf. background section, above). The participants of the workshop emphasized the need for EU-wide regulations and resources for wildlife-friendly power line infrastructure, and for strengthening and improving the implementation of provisions and guidelines existing under MEAs such as CMS.
6. An analysis of the efforts and progress made by Parties to reconcile the development of renewable energy and power lines with the conservation of migratory species, based on the national reports submitted to COP13, and building up and comparing with the assessment submitted as [UNEP/CMS/COP12/Inf.32](#) to COP12 was under preparation at the time of writing.

Amendment of Resolution 10.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Birds*

7. Within the process initiated by Resolution 11.6 *Review of Decisions*, and mandated through the scope of the Energy Task Force adopted through its Terms of Reference, members of the Energy Task Force proposed amendments to Resolution 10.11 *Power Lines and Migratory Birds* in order to update it to reflect the development of international processes relevant to energy infrastructure such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to link the relevant provisions of Resolution 10.11 to the recent activities and recommendations of the Energy Task Force for science-based mitigation measures, related data sharing, legislation and monitoring.

Recommended actions

8. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to adopt the draft amendments to Resolution 10.11 contained in the Annex of this document.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 10.11

POWER LINES AND MIGRATORY BIRDS

Recalling Article III 4(b) of the Convention which requests Parties to endeavour, *inter alia*, to prevent, remove, compensate for or minimize, as appropriate, the adverse effects of activities or obstacles that seriously impede or prevent the migration of species,

Further recalling Resolution 7.4 *Electrocution of Migratory Birds*, which encourages Parties to take appropriate measures to reduce and avoid the electrocution of migratory birds from medium voltage transmission lines by implementing a number of mitigation measures,

Noting that Resolution 7.4 and the *Suggested Practices for Bird Protection on Power Lines* (UNEP/CMS/Inf.7.21) are still fully valid,

Noting with satisfaction Recommendation No.110, which was adopted in 2004 by the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) on minimizing adverse effects of above-ground electricity transmission facilities (power lines) on birds,

Welcoming the Report by the Governments on the implementation of Recommendation No. 110/2004 (T-PVS/Files (2010) 11), as presented to the *30th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention* and describing valuable measures taken by Parties to reduce the adverse effects of power lines,

Further welcoming the *Position Statement on Birds and Power Lines: On the risks to birds from electricity transmission facilities and how to minimise any such adverse effects*, adopted in 2007 by the *BirdLife International Birds and Habitats Directives Task Force*, calling for appropriate technical measures to reduce the adverse effects of power lines,

Highlighting the need to collect data on bird distribution, population size and movements as an essential part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), prior to and/or during the planning phase of a power line, and the need to monitor regularly the mortality caused by electrocution and collision with existing power lines,

Welcoming the *Budapest Declaration on bird protection and power lines*, as adopted on 13 April 2011 by the *Conference on Power lines and bird mortality in Europe* which calls for, *inter alia*, an international programme consisting of groups of national experts on bird safety and power lines, wider dissemination of knowledge, and improved planning of power lines in relation to bird distribution data,

Recalling the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement's *Guidelines on how to avoid, minimize or mitigate impact of infrastructural developments and related disturbance affecting waterbirds* (Conservation Guidelines No. 11), which contain a number of relevant recommendations,

Recognizing the need for closer cooperation and synergies amongst the CMS Family, other biodiversity-related conventions and other MEAs including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as well as relevant national and international stakeholders with respect to implementation of decisions and guidelines to reconcile energy sector developments with migratory species conservation needs.

Recognizing the importance for society of maintaining a stable energy supply, as also reflected in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 on energy as well as SDG 13 on climate change, as well as the need to achieve the targets adopted by the UNFCCC in Paris on global warming, including through the increased use of renewable energy sources, which often requires the deployment of new power line infrastructure,

Also noting ~~and~~ that electrocutions, in particular, sometimes cause outages or disruption, and thus that determining appropriate locations of and putting in place mitigation measures for power lines that minimize impact, and mitigation measures applied to power lines provide a win-win situation for birds and the stability of power provision,

Noting the Review of the conflict between migratory birds and electricity power grids in the African-Eurasian region (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.29), and concerned that within the African-Eurasian region tens of millions of migratory birds are killed annually as a result of electrocution and collision, including storks, cranes, many other waterbird species, birds of prey, bustards and grouse,

Noting that many of the birds killed by electrocution and/or collision are internationally protected, including under CMS and the CMS instruments on African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, Middle-European Great Bustard and African-Eurasian Birds of Prey,

Concerned that further research and monitoring on birds and power lines are urgently required, that only few studies are currently available that are sufficiently well-designed to assist in guiding policy, and that there is a serious geographical bias in research that needs to be addressed,

Recognizing the conclusions and recommendations concerning birds and power lines presented in document UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.29 which, inter alia, highlight that the number of birds killed can be substantially reduced if mitigation measures are applied during the planning and construction of power lines,

Welcoming the *Guidelines on how to avoid or mitigate the impact of electricity power grids on migratory birds in the African-Eurasian region* (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.30), which provide extensive practical guidance on, inter alia, mitigation measures, bird surveys and monitoring and the technical design of power lines,

Acknowledging that a number of Range States are already applying mitigation measures, for example, during planning of the location and route of new power lines,

Noting with satisfaction that funding has been made available, inter alia, through the EU/LIFE programme, to take immediate measures to protect a number of rare species, including the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) and Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), from electrocution and collision,

Noting with satisfaction also the UNDP/GEF Migratory Soaring Birds Project, which is being implemented by BirdLife International, and which aims to ensure that the conservation needs of migratory soaring birds are addressed by industry, including the energy sector, along the Red Sea/Rift Valley Flyway, and the potential this project has to promote the implementation of this resolution and the above-mentioned guidelines at national and local levels,

Acknowledging with thanks the generous financial support provided by RWE Rhein-Ruhr Netzservice GmbH towards the development and production of the above-mentioned review and guideline documents (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.29 and UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.30), and

Noting with satisfaction the discussions at the 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council and those during the AEWAs Technical Committee at its 10th meeting on the drafts of the above-mentioned review and guideline documents on power lines and birds, and aware of the guidance provided by these fora, which has been incorporated into both documents,

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

1. Welcomes the *Guidelines on how to avoid or mitigate the impact of electricity power grids on migratory birds in the African-Eurasian region* (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.30);
2. Urges Parties and encourages non-Parties to implement these Guidelines as applicable and to:
 - 2.1 *apply*, in the African-Eurasian region as far as possible, and as applicable elsewhere, AEWAs Conservation Guidelines No. 11 on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures regarding the development of power lines, and make use of recent global best practices for SEA and EIA adopted by the World Bank and International Finance Corporation;
 - 2.2 *consult* regularly relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, scientific bodies, non-governmental organizations and the energy sector, in order to monitor jointly the impacts of power lines on birds and to agree on a common policy of action;
 - 2.3 *Establish* a baseline of bird distribution, population sizes, migrations and movements, including those between breeding, resting and feeding areas, as early as possible in the planning of any power line project, over a period of at least one year, and with particular emphasis on those species known to be vulnerable to electrocution or collision and if such studies identify any risks, to make every effort to ensure these are avoided;
 - 2.4 *Design* the location, route and direction of power lines on the basis of national sensitivity and zoning maps and avoid, wherever possible, construction along major migration flyways and in habitats of conservation importance, such as Important Bird Areas, protected areas, Ramsar sites, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network, the West/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Crane and other waterbirds and other critical sites as identified by the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool for the African-Eurasian region;
 - 2.5 *Identify* those sections of existing power lines that are causing relatively high levels of bird injury and/or mortality due to electrocution and/or collision, and modify these as a matter of priority by applying the techniques recommended by the Guidelines in UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.30, and use mitigation measures, for which their effectiveness has been assessed in the scientific literature available on platforms such as *Conservation Evidence*; and
 - 2.6 *Regularly* monitor and evaluate the impact of power lines on bird populations at the national scale, as well as scientifically assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures put in place to minimize the impact of power lines on bird populations, and make data on effectiveness of the mitigation measures publicly available;
 - 2.7 *Make data and results of surveys and monitoring undertaken publicly available, including data on mortality of species due to collisions and electrocutions from transmission and distribution infrastructure; and*

- 2.8 Enact appropriate legislation, and put in place licensing and permitting procedures, that integrate biodiversity and migratory bird considerations into design, planning and mitigation of the impact of power lines, and include clear procedures to address cases of noncompliance;
3. *Urges* Parties and *invites* non-Parties, inter-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions, as appropriate, to include the measures contained in this Resolution in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and relevant legislation, if applicable, in order to ensure that the impact of power lines on bird populations is minimized, and *calls on* Parties to report progress in implementing this Resolution to each Conference of the Parties as part of their National Reports;
 4. *Encourages* electricity companies such as RWE Rhein-Ruhr Netzservice GmbH, development banks and other relevant stakeholders to disseminate the Guidelines widely within their networks, including as well as at relevant events and conferences, to be used *inter alia* in their planning of new infrastructure and refurbishment of existing infrastructure;
 5. *Requests* the Scientific Council, specifically the Working Groups on birds and flyways, to monitor the implementation of this Resolution and to provide further guidance when relevant new developments on reducing the impact of power lines on birds become available, such as improved mitigation techniques and standardized monitoring protocols;
 6. *Instructs* the Secretariat, in close cooperation with relevant CMS agreements, to consult the Secretariat of the Bern Convention in order to update the mitigation guidelines regularly, as appropriate, and to disseminate these to their respective Parties; and
 7. *Urges* Parties and *invites* ~~UNEP~~ the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant international organizations, as well as the energy sector, to promote and support financially the implementation of this Resolution.