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To: All BirdLife Partners and Secretariat staff

**BirdLife at the UN Climate Change Convention Conference,
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Internal Policy Briefing: Policy overview for BirdLife Partners**

Climate change impacts

Climate change increases unabated. Warming of the climate system is now unequivocal. Eleven of the last twelve years (1995-2006) rank amongst the twelve warmest years ever recorded. In the last one hundred years, the surface temperature of the Earth has risen by an average of 0.74°C. Temperatures have risen more steeply over land and in the Arctic, in some places they have risen well above 2°C, as is indicated by the accelerating loss of ice. (For comparison, the difference in temperature between the peak and trough of a major Ice Age is about 4°C.)

Most of the observed increase in temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely (>90%) due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations. Global GHG emissions due to human activities have grown since pre-industrial times, with an increase of 70% between 1970 and 2004, alone. Global atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial values.

Climate change impacts including droughts, crop failure, flooding, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events are already being felt across the world, with the poorest people and vulnerable ecosystems being hit hardest. Evidence from all continents and most oceans shows that many natural systems are being affected by regional climate changes. In terrestrial ecosystems, earlier timing of spring events and poleward and upward shifts in plant and animal ranges are with very high confidence (>90%) linked to recent warming. In some marine and freshwater systems, shifts in ranges and changes in algal, plankton and fish abundance are with high confidence (80%) associated with rising water temperatures.

According to experts from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB), some species and ecosystems are already showing negative impacts under current levels of climate change, which is modest compared to most future projected changes. They assert that climate change is projected to increase species extinction rates, with approximately 10% of the species assessed so far being at an increasingly high risk of extinction for every 1°C rise in global mean surface temperature.

Climate change is an issue of extreme urgency – we need to act now to avoid large scale catastrophic impacts. Current estimates are that there is a window between now and 2015 within which it may be possible to significantly slow down or lower the expected increases in global temperatures through reductions in global emissions.

Why is UNFCCC COP 15 important?

2009 is a major year for climate change policy. A new agreement is being negotiated which is scheduled to be finalised by the Conference of Parties (COP) in Copenhagen in December 2009. It is a major opportunity for Governments to sign up to a legally binding agreement to address emission reductions and adaptation to climate change.

However in Barcelona, towards the end of the last UNFCCC intergovernmental pre-meeting before Copenhagen, some countries suggested that a full, legally binding treaty on tackling climate change could not be signed in Copenhagen. Instead, they proposed that a political agreement, possibly with a timetable setting out the path to a full international treaty, would be the most that was achievable. BirdLife continues to advocate for a legally binding enforceable agreement to be signed at Copenhagen. The evidence on the financial crisis, when world leaders were able to address a complex issue and mobilise trillions of dollars within days, shows that this is perfectly possible. What is required is continuing political investment in the process.

What is BirdLife doing?

BirdLife has an active policy and advocacy programme addressing many major aspects of these discussions. See BirdLife's Climate Change Position adapted June 2008 for further background.

Some BirdLife Partners are working nationally to influence government policy and positions. Internationally, BirdLife actively engages with UNFCCC meetings.

c.50 individuals from 16 BirdLife Partners from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific will be in Copenhagen.

Partners will work on different aspects of the climate change agenda in Copenhagen – which will address mitigation, adaptation, capacity building, technology transfer and finance.

BirdLife policy thematic leads for these areas are: REDD (John Lanchbery, RSPB and co-chair of the Climate Action Network group on REDD), Land Use, Land use Change and Forestry (Melanie Coath, RSPB), Adaptation (Joanna Phillips, RSPB and Melanie Heath, Secretariat). Partners working on finance include Ruth Davis, RSPB and Carsten Wachholz, NABU (see separate document for full list of Partners attending).

The BirdLife Partnership has strong relations with many local, national and international organisations. BirdLife is an active member of the Climate Action Network (CAN), a worldwide network of 450 Non-Governmental Organisations working to promote action by governments and individuals that will limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. CAN will be extremely active in Copenhagen and BirdLife will play a full role.

Through communication of these policy messages BirdLife will make recommendations to governments and the international community on climate change policy, processes, planning and action, building on and highlighting our unique local-to-global structure and strong science base.

What are BirdLife's key policy asks going into Copenhagen?

Through significant and effective BirdLife engagement, we want to help achieve an ambitious and effective 'global deal'.

To be successful, the BirdLife Partnership believes any global deal agreed in Copenhagen must:

- 1. Cut global emissions by the amount needed to limit global average temperature rises to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.**
- 2. Recognise and support the vital importance of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the essential services they provide in climate change mitigation, in particular, reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD).**
- 3. Recognise and support the vital importance of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the essential services they provide in climate change adaptation.**
- 4. Provide funding for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation, support low-carbon development and enable adaptation to climate change in developing countries.**
- 5. Ensure that when developed countries account for their land use sectors they fully account for carbon emissions to, and removals from, the atmosphere.**

Further detail on each policy area

1. Cut global emissions by the amount needed to limit global average temperature rises to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Ask: Cut global emissions at sufficient speed and depth to restrict global warming to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This is necessary to prevent irreversible damage to ecosystems, with devastating consequences for people and biodiversity. Industrialized countries must take on targets of at least 40% below 1990 levels, by 2020. Developing countries must achieve significant emission reductions below business as usual, with appropriate financial support from developed countries.

Background: Governments must act now to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels through reduced energy consumption and increased energy efficiency. This means setting and sticking to hard targets. Developed countries should, for reasons of fairness and practicality, take the lead in cutting emissions, but the rapidly industrialising developing nations must act effectively too. Global emissions must peak and decline well before 2020 and go to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

2. Recognise and support the vital importance of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the essential services they provide in climate change mitigation, in particular, reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation.

Ask: Reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) should prioritise the conservation of natural tropical forests because they are the most carbon dense and hence, when cut, give rise to the greatest emissions. REDD must include provisions which ensure the conservation of biodiversity because it is the plants and animals in natural forests that help create their carbon density. Biodiversity is not a co-benefit but a core necessity. REDD must respect, support and promote the rights of local and indigenous peoples, making links to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other applicable instruments. Both the conservation of biodiversity and the impacts on biodiversity must be explicitly considered by REDD activities, rules and modalities. REDD must specifically exclude the conversion of natural forests to industrial forests or plantations. Emissions from deforestation and degradation must be reduced to zero by 2020.

Background: The conservation of natural forests is essential in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Restoration of natural forest can assist in helping restore carbon-dense stocks. Emissions from tropical deforestation account for 15-20% of all human-induced emissions. These emissions are greater than those of all cars, trucks, planes, ships and trains worldwide. If tropical deforestation were to continue at its present rate, resulting in almost total forest clearance within a few decades, this would add as much as 400,000,000,000 tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere, increase the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide by about 100ppm, and result in an increase in global mean surface temperatures of about 0.6 °C. . At current rates of deforestation there is, in other words, no chance of staying below a two degree mean global temperature rise.

There is a need for effective mechanisms to maintain and restore these carbon stocks. Under negotiation as REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation - forested developing countries would undertake to reduce their emissions from deforestation below a historic reference level, and would be financially compensated for doing so.

3. Recognise and support the vital importance of safeguarding biodiversity, ecosystems and the essential services they provide in climate change adaptation.

Ask: The importance of healthy ecosystems should be recognized in the Copenhagen outcomes, incorporating the need to build and maintain ecosystem resilience. Outcomes should encompass taking an ecosystem approach to *all* adaptation; should appropriately refer to the direct use of ecosystems, their functions and services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, often termed Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA); and should recognise particularly vulnerable ecosystems as a priority concern .

Background: Ecosystems play a vital role in climate change adaptation. Managing and protecting the natural environment must be a critical component of any strategy or approach to adapt to climate change and ensure sustainable development.

The effects of climate change will almost certainly persist for centuries, and depending on the level of mitigation (emission reductions etc.) achieved, will be of increasing severity. Adaptation is needed now and we are going to have to adapt further in the future. Healthy bio-diverse environments play a vital role in maintaining and increasing resilience to climate change, and in reducing climate-related risk and vulnerability. This is particularly important in the poorest countries and places where the most vulnerable people often rely on biodiversity and natural resources most directly for their livelihoods and well-being.

It is important to note that, within the UNFCCC context, adaptation is primarily about the needs of developing countries and the most vulnerable people. It is politically very challenging to talk about biodiversity adaptation *per se* with Parties or non-conservation NGOs, and there is no previously agreed precedent for this within the Convention. Biodiversity concerns are seen by many governments as the remit of the CBD to be dealt with there. In discussions on adaptation within the UNFCCC, ecosystems and ecosystem services terminology have much more traction than biodiversity.

4. Provide funding for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation, support low-carbon development and enable adaptation to climate change in developing countries.

Ask: Provide acceptable, adequate, new, predictable and equitable funding for developing countries – including at least \$200 billion dollars annually by 2020, to include:

- **At least \$35 billion annually to reduce emissions from deforestation (REDD)**
- **At least \$100 billion annually to enable developing countries to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change**
- **Support for developing countries to reduce the growth of their industrial emissions, making substantial reductions below business-as-usual.**

Developing countries are not currently ready to undertake REDD and need to build the capacity to do so, to enable them to deliver early and substantial emission reductions. It is imperative and urgent that **interim finance be provided to support them. 25 billion euros over five years** is needed for this task and could deliver emission reductions of about 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.

5. Ensure that when developed countries account for their land use sectors they fully account for carbon emissions to, and removals from, the atmosphere.

Background: Under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries are required to account for their forest-related activities (afforestation, reforestation and deforestation) and can, voluntarily, account for a range of other land use activities too, such as forest management and re-vegetation. It is generally accepted that the current Kyoto Protocol rules for accounting for emissions from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) need to change. They are complex, hard to comprehend and do not account for the full set of carbon emissions to, and removals from, the atmosphere. Indeed, they amount to cheating because they enable countries to hide emissions whilst claiming credit for carbon storage. Also, countries can, in effect, pick and choose their own rules.

Currently, the new set of rules is shaping up to be even worse than the old ones. If this continues we would like the amount of credits that countries can claim from LULUCF activities to be capped, as it is at present, in order that countries can't meet their targets entirely through false credits from LULUCF. This is not a good solution however. Indeed, it is not a solution at all, but it would limit the damage caused by what could be a corrupt set of rules. There are one or two positives coming out of the proposed new rules including that, if new text stays in, it will be possible to account for emissions from peatland and wetland management. This is relevant to the BirdLife peatland re-wetting project in Belarus, which is contributing to our understanding of peatlands as carbon stores and how their emissions could be accounted for.

Ideally, we would like to see "full carbon accounting" i.e. accounting for all sources and removals of carbon from land, just as in any other sectors such as electricity generation. Unfortunately the quality of the data available for countries to do this at the moment is too poor so it isn't technically possible. Instead, BirdLife (along with many other NGOs) is calling for a move towards full carbon accounting as soon as possible, starting with plugging the gaps and loopholes in the rules.