**Outcome of the National Workshop on Intertidal and Estuarine Wetland Conservation and Management in the Yellow Sea Provinces of the Republic of Korea**

**Incheon, 26-27 May 2016**

The loss and degradation of the Yellow Sea's intertidal and estuarine wetlands are of critical concern. These wetlands are of global biodiversity importance and among the most threatened habitats in the world. They are widely recognized as key stopover and feeding sites for many migratory waterbird species, including Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*), and Chinese Egret (*Egretta eulophetes*).

The development of the Yellow Sea's coastal areas has led to a drastic decline in the number of migratory waterbirds and to increased calls from many stakeholders for the conservation and restoration of intertidal and estuarine wetlands. At the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Jeju, Korea in September 2012, 100 per cent of voting governments (including the Republic of Korea) agreed to adopt Resolution 28 on the ‘Conservation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea’ as well as Resolution 51 on “Improving conservation and sustainability of the Yellow Sea”. These resolutions call on governments and organizations to take effective action to halt the decline of intertidal ecosystems along the coast of the Yellow Sea and protect habitats for migratory waterbirds.

In line with these commitments, efforts have been made at local, national and regional levels to expand protected areas, promote research and enhance cooperation among the countries of the Flyway. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea also hosts the Secretariat of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), whose mission is to protect migratory waterbirds and their habitats. However, the survival of migratory birds is still threatened by habitat loss, pollution and alien species.

In response to these concerns, representatives from central and local government, academia, NGOs, the media and international organizations gathered together in Incheon on 26-27 May 2016 to seek solutions to the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. Workshop participants recognized that: i) the Yellow Sea's intertidal and estuarine areas are of global importance, in particular, for sustaining the migration of millions of waterbirds; ii) the vital ecosystem services provided by intertidal and estuarine wetlands are fundamental for sustainable social-economic development; iii) because of their strategic importance, effective conservation and restoration of the intertidal and estuarine wetlands along the Yellow Sea requires the commitment of the government of the Republic of Korea, as well as significant international collaboration.

***In this context, workshop participants called for the following:***

1. All of society, and in particular, national, provincial and local governments, should accord strong recognition to the important ecosystem services provided by the intertidal and estuarine zone of the Yellow Sea, including biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, fisheries protection, and tourism development. Awareness of the importance of intertidal and estuarine protection and management, notably intertidal zones, should be raised at all levels.
2. Protection and sustainable management of intertidal and estuarine wetlands should be included in the governmental agenda, in consultation with the public and local stakeholder groups.
3. All relevant ministries should undertake collaborative efforts to reduce habitat loss in the intertidal and estuarine wetlands of the Yellow Sea.
4. Identify priority intertidal and estuarine wetland zones for protection. Establish protected areas at key sites that are not under protection. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current protected area system and improve it.
5. Develop and implement a national strategy and action plan for the protection, restoration and management of intertidal and estuarine wetland ecosystems of Korea.
6. Expand the basis for the conservation of migratory waterbirds along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, establish an effective system for building the capacity of habitat managers and incorporate the system in the national development planning framework.
7. Strengthen national and international collaboration and exchange of information on achievements and experiences in protection and wise use of intertidal and estuarine wetlands. Incorporate the conservation of the Yellow Sea's intertidal and estuarine wetlands into key international cooperative frameworks.
8. Strengthen monitoring and research on ecological characteristics of the Yellow Sea's intertidal and estuarine wetlands, establish a national coastal wetland monitoring network, and provide scientific and technical support for scientific/wise policy-making and management.