World Migratory Bird Day 2015

Energy – make it bird-friendly!

Statement from Patricia Zurita Chief Executive of BirdLife International

With an ever-increasing global demand for energy, developing new and expanding existing renewable energy technologies are key when striving towards a low carbon future. Yet energy cannot be truly sustainable and nature-friendly unless it fully takes biodiversity and, more specifically, migratory birds into consideration. With the theme "Energy – make it bird-friendly!", **World Migratory Bird Day 2015** aims to highlight the importance of deploying energy technologies in a way that prevents, minimises and mitigates impacts on migratory birds and their habitats.

There is little doubt that the development and deployment of renewable energies are vital if we are to end our dependency on traditional fuels. The BirdLife Partnership is committed to ensuring that appropriate planning, assessment and monitoring of renewable infrastructure takes place in order to prevent adverse effects to birds and nature. Climate change is one of the greatest risks to human societies, but also to nature, often creating a "snowball effect" exacerbating existing pressures such as habitat fragmentation. Alongside cutting energy demand and increasing energy efficiency, developing renewable sources of energy is essential in order to reduce the amount of fossil fuels burned and the emission of greenhouse gases.

All the innovative technologies being developed – wind turbines, solar panels, tidal, wave and hydropower – can have distinct drawbacks as far as wild animals – and particularly migratory birds – are concerned, if not sited correctly.

Wind energy developments can have severe impacts on birds and bats, by wind turbines and associated infrastructure, such as power lines. Migratory Soaring Birds in the Rift Valley / Red Sea flyway, the second most important flyway in the world, are at risk of collision with poorly sited wind turbines that

may result in death or injury. Wind energy developments may also fragment landscapes, cause loss of habitats and create barrier effects that cause bird displacement.

The next few decades will see a massive increase in demand for power in developing countries in Africa – and this will be matched by expansion of both renewable generation capacity and grid connections and if the design and location are not right - further devastating losses to the continent's birdlife will be inevitable.

BirdLife International and the Migratory Soaring Birds project have developed a tool and a set of recommendations on ways to reduce the adverse impact on birds and biodiversity. The tailored MSB guidance material on wind energy and powerlines provides information for the entire life cycle of a project, from site-selection to assessment of habitat loss and the Sensitivity Mapping tool has a wind sensitivity layer for developers to assess risk to birds.

These tools will make all the difference for birds and nature and ensure a sustainable future for energy.

Patricia Zurita

Chief Executive of BirdLife International