

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund  
42<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council  
Virtual Meeting  
Thursday 15 February 2024  
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)  
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Brussels and Paris Time  
10:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. (+1 day) Tokyo Time**

**Potential Partnership Among CEPF, BirdLife International, the Asian Development Bank and the GEF for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway: Opportunities and Challenges**

**Recommended Action Item:**

The Donor Council is asked to approve the Secretariat to enter into a partnership with BirdLife International to develop an application to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as Implementing Agency, as a contribution to the development of a Regional Flyways Initiative (RFI) for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

The Donor Council is also asked to approve that, for the purposes of this initiative, CEPF operates in Mongolia, which is a key country of the RFI but is not located in a biodiversity hotspot.

**Background:**

The EAAF is a migratory route for 50 million migratory waterbirds from more than 210 species, crossing 37 countries from northeast Asia to Australia and New Zealand. It is the most densely populated flyway in the world, providing ecosystem services to nearly 200 million people. It is also the most threatened of the eight major flyways that are globally recognized.

In 2021, BirdLife International and the ADB launched an RFI for the EAAF, aimed at leveraging US\$3 billion in investment to deliver impact for people, nature and climate at a flyway scale, recognizing that flyways provide an excellent organizing principle for advancing regional cooperation for sustainable development, green growth, climate resilience and biodiversity conservation.

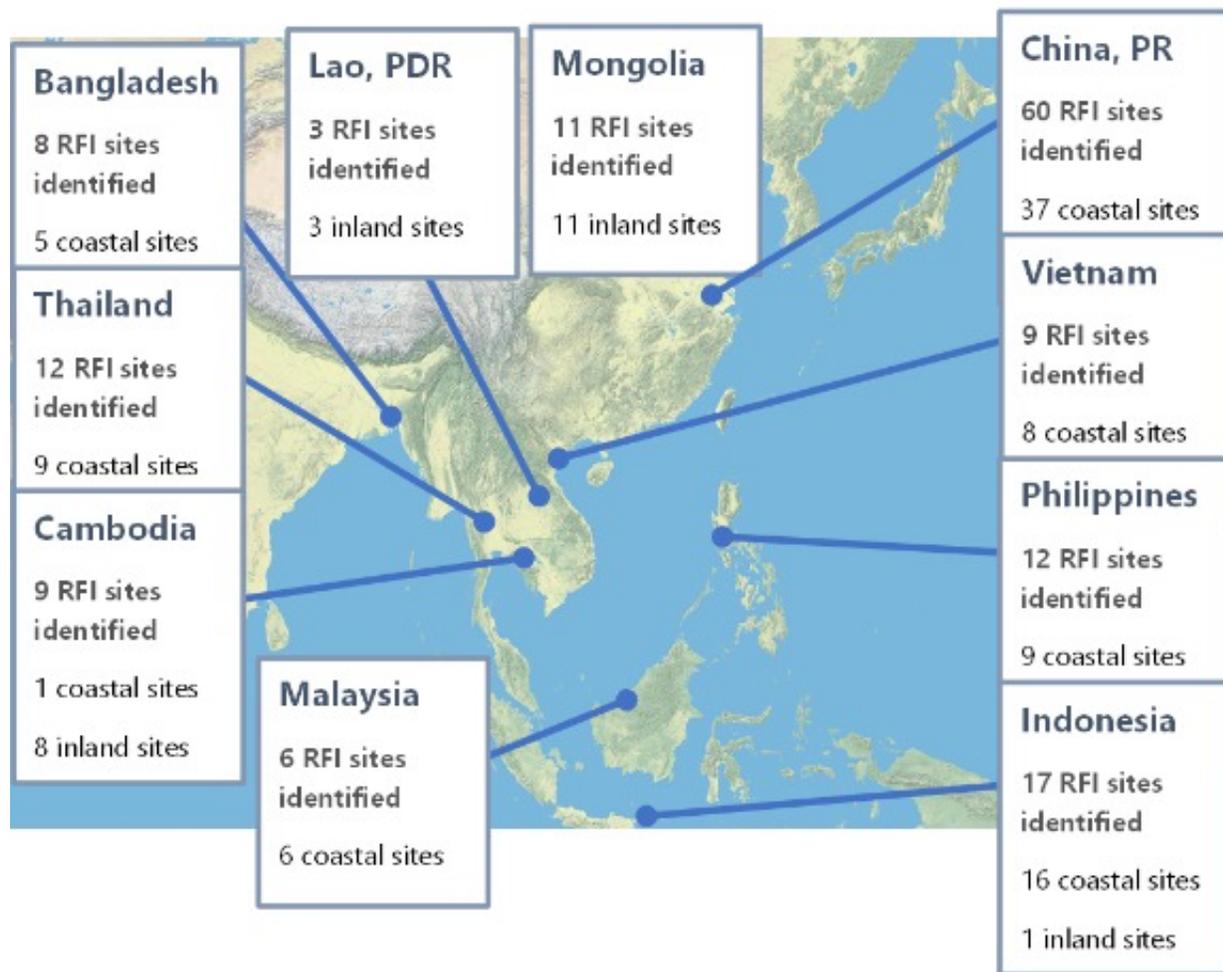
The initiative aims to mobilize multilateral finance institutions (MFIs), public and private investment, and climate funding to provide blended finance for investments in nature-based solutions at wetland sites along the flyway. In this way, the initiative will help currently under-resourced countries to access sufficient finance to realize their

commitments with respect to their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, and the Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity. To complement and maximize the impact of this investment, it is proposed to establish a granting mechanism aimed at enabling civil society to contribute to the conservation, management and restoration of flyway sites.

BirdLife International has approached CEPF to help conceptualize and operationalize this granting mechanism, drawing on CEPF’s 20-plus-year track record of grant-making to civil society for biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation.

It is proposed that the flyway granting mechanism be operated by CEPF for an initial period of five years, taking advantage of its established grant-making and financial management systems, technical expertise in grant-making to civil society, and extensive networks of civil society organizations in four biodiversity hotspots that overlap with the EAAF: Indo-Burma, Philippines, Sundaland and Wallacea. These hotspots overlap with all of the key countries of the RFI except Mongolia.

**Key countries and priority sites at EAAF**



BirdLife will contribute extensive scientific data and technical expertise in migratory bird conservation to help situate and inform loan- and grant-funded projects within the flyway initiatives. BirdLife will also be involved in selection and monitoring of grants, and capacity support to civil society organizations throughout the granting cycle. BirdLife has been a trusted partner of CEPF since the inception of the fund, serving as regional implementation team in four biodiversity hotspots.

It is proposed to access GEF finance for the granting mechanism, through ADB as implementing agency, with CEPF and BirdLife as co-executing agencies. In addition to implementing the proposed GEF project, ADB will mobilize significant co-financing through loans to national governments along the EAAF for projects under the RFI. Initial conversations have been held among the project stakeholders and with the GEF Secretariat at the Seventh GEF Assembly in Vancouver, Canada, in August 2023.

Once established, the granting mechanism could be expanded through further phases to support similar initiatives for other flyways, with relevant MFI partners. A second phase could, for example, focus on civil society participation in green infrastructure projects and nature-based solutions under development by the Americas Flyway Initiative partnership, which includes the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), BirdLife, and National Audubon Society. During the first phase, CEPF would consider with BirdLife and other stakeholders how the mechanism would be run for the longer term.