



**CONVENTION ON
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Agenda Item 26.3

SAHELO-SAHARAN MEGAFUNA

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP12) *Sahelo Saharan Megafauna* and proposes to amend the Resolution as contained in Annex 1.

This document should be read in conjunction with the proposal for the renewal and continuation of the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action as contained in document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.28.2.4

SAHELO-SAHARAN MEGAFUNA

Background

1. The Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action was initiated in 1994 as the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action¹. The Concerted Action aims to conserve and restore six antelope species: Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), Cuvier's Gazelle (*Gazella cuvieri*), Dama Gazelle (*Nanger dama*), Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*), Slender-horned Gazelle (*Gazella leptoceros*), and Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*)². The Scientific Council played a crucial role in initiating the Concerted Action, preparing the initial proposal and a draft Action Plan for the Concerted Action. Together with the Scientific Council, the CMS Secretariat supports the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action³.
2. At the Seminar on the Conservation and Restoration of Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes (Djerba, 1998), the draft Action Plan was finalized and adopted by all Range States as [the Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Action Plan \(Action Plan\)](#) through the [Djerba Declaration](#). While the Action Plan focused on the restoration of the unique antelope species in the region, it sought to find a balance between measures for social development and conservation efforts⁴.
3. The Action Plan was updated and adopted by the Range States at the Second Regional Seminar through the [Agadir Declaration](#) of 2003⁵. The Declaration called for a third regional meeting in four years to take stock of the progress achieved; to revise the Action Plan in the light of the progress made and setbacks encountered; and to discuss the options for improving the implementation of this Action Plan, based on the experience acquired. However, since 2003, there have been no Regional Seminars due to resource constraints.
4. Nonetheless, a number of major projects have been carried out since 2003 to implement the Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Action Plan. The first of these projects, funded jointly by the CMS Secretariat and the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFM) was executed over the period 2003 – 2008 in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia. In Niger, for example, the project contributed to the initial development of the Termit-Tin-Toumma protected area, which, along with other efforts, led to the establishment of the Termit Tin Toumma Nature Reserve in 2012.
5. In 2008, the CMS Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to extend the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action by including other species of large mammals occurring within the area of the Concerted Action. Through Recommendation 9.2, the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action was reformulated as the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action.
6. Since then, conservation activities have continued under the reformulated Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action. In 2016, the Government of Chad started the successful reintroduction of the Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*) with the assistance of the Government of Abu Dhabi as well as the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi and technical support by the Sahara Conservation Fund. This species had been extinct in the wild over its range for 30 years.

¹ The Concerted Action was also referred to as the Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Concerted Action

² Recommendation 4.5 (Nairobi, 1994)

³ Resolution 12.28 paragraph 6

⁴ UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.14/Rev.1

⁵ Operative paragraph 7

Continuing threats and challenges to Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna

7. Despite these successes under the Concerted Action, Sahelo-Saharan megafauna continues to face a catastrophic decline. These species face multiple threats such as poaching, infrastructure development, agricultural expansion, urbanization and resource extraction activities. These threats are interlinked and have a cumulative impact on the megafauna as well as on the habitats on which they depend. Increasing human conflicts and social unrest in the region are exacerbating biodiversity decline. The number of conflicts in the region has increased more than five times since 2011⁶ and the occurrence of illegal wildlife killing in the region is found to be correlated with conflict, terrorism, human trafficking and organized crime^{7,8}. Climate change brings additional challenges to Sahelo-Saharan megafauna⁹.
8. The eradication of poverty and assurance of food security for the growing population have been major priorities for the region. However, unsustainable agriculture and grazing practices, wood collection and the conversion of natural habitat into pastures and agricultural fields, have contributed to fragmentation, degradation and loss of the habitat for Sahelo-Saharan megafauna¹⁰.
9. An ecosystem approach¹¹ would probably be beneficial for addressing these multiple pressures on Sahelo-Saharan megafauna. The approach would bring a more coordinated effort across sectors to manage the shared ecosystem within a given geographical boundary. Well-managed ecosystems, in turn, provide improved ecosystem services and benefits to both people and the megafauna living in the ecosystem.

The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)

10. In March 2019, the General Assembly proclaimed 2021-2030 as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration with a view to supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration¹². Ecosystem restoration contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the CMS Strategic Plan 2015-2023¹³, especially Target 11¹⁴.
11. The UN Decade presents an opportunity for the Sahelo-Saharan megafauna Range States to step up efforts on ecosystem restoration as part of the strategy to restore the Sahelo-Saharan megafauna as well as to enhance resilience to climate change impacts.
12. Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/284 paragraph 4, the CMS Secretariat will support Parties in contributing to the Decade including by identifying and developing possible restoration activities for the habitats of CMS-listed species.

6 Brito, J. C., Durant, S. M., Pettorelli, N., Newby, J., Canney, S., Algadafi, W., ... & de Smet, K. (2018). Armed conflicts and wildlife decline: Challenges and recommendations for effective conservation policy in the Sahara - Sahel. *Conservation Letters*, 11(5), e12446.

7 Brashares, J. S., Abrahms, B., Fiorella, K. J., Golden, C. D., Hojnowski, C. E., Marsh, R. A., ... & Withey, L. (2014). Wildlife decline and social conflict. *Science*, 345(6195), 376-378.

8 Brito, J. C., Godinho, R., Martínez - Freiría, F., Pleguezuelos, J. M., Rebelo, H., Santos, X., ... & Ferreira, S. (2014). Unravelling biodiversity, evolution and threats to conservation in the Sahara - Sahel. *Biological Reviews*, 89(1), 215-231.

9 Soultan, A., Wikelski, M., & Safi, K. (2019). Risk of biodiversity collapse under climate change in the Afro-Arabian region. *Scientific reports*, 9(1), 955.

10 Brito, J. C., Godinho, R., Martínez - Freiría, F., Pleguezuelos, J. M., Rebelo, H., Santos, X., ... & Ferreira, S. (2014). Unravelling biodiversity, evolution and threats to conservation in the Sahara - Sahel. *Biological Reviews*, 89(1), 215-231.

11 COP Decision V/6 on Ecosystem Approach (2002), para. A(1) defines an ecosystem approach as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way

12 A/RES/73/284

13 Resolution 11.2 (Rev. COP12)

14 Target 11: Migratory species and their habitats which provide important ecosystem services are maintained at or restored to favourable conservation status, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable

Updating the Action Plan for the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action

13. The existing Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Plan has provided a framework for Concerted Action, but it needs updating. Since the last revision of the Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Action Plan in 2003, various status reports and action plans have been developed. In 2006, the report on the conservation status of the six Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes was prepared under the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action 15. Subsequently, the following new species action plans have been prepared:
 - a. IUCN (2018) Conservation strategy and action plan for Cuvier's Gazelle (*Gazella cuvieri*) in North Africa 2017-2026;
 - b. IUCN (2014) Conservation Review of the Dama Gazelle (*Nanger dama*); and
 - c. Noé's (2017) Plan d'Action Régional Addax et Gazelle Dama 2018 -2022.
14. An updated Action Plan for Sahelo-Saharan megafauna should build on these existing status assessments and action plans, incorporating the best available knowledge for the conservation of the relevant species. It should be developed on the basis of the results of all actions that have been taken so far under the Concerted Action.
15. As a preparatory process for the development of an updated Action Plan for the Concerted Action, the CMS Secretariat, together with relevant stakeholders, will initiate a stock-taking exercise of ongoing conservation activities in the region. The study is expected to provide an overview of the conservation activities in the region and will provide a baseline for the updated Action Plan.
16. The organization of the Third Regional Seminar, which the Scientific Council recommended several times over the years¹⁶, is recommended so that the Range States, donors, academia, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders can review and provide inputs to the updated Action Plan.
17. The Government of Morocco has already made a generous offer to host the Third Regional Seminar. The Parties and relevant stakeholders are, therefore, invited to provide financial and technical contributions to support the organization of the seminar and the development and implementation of the updated Action Plan.

Inclusion of Barbary Sheep and Red-fronted Gazelle in the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action

18. At COP9 (Rome, 2008), Parties to CMS listed Barbary Sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*) on Appendix II. Subsequently at COP11 (Quito, 2014), Red-fronted Gazelle (*Eudorcas rufifrons*) was listed on Appendix I of the Convention.
19. Barbary Sheep are native to the arid and semi-arid central Saharan mountains, in particular the mountains of the North African Atlas and the rocky areas of the Sahara stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. Range States are Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, and Tunisia. Apart from that of Morocco, the population sizes are not well known¹⁷. According to the IUCN (2008) Red List, the species is Vulnerable (C1)¹⁸. The species has been declining due to unsustainable hunting, habitat degradation as well as predation by dogs¹⁹.
20. The Red-fronted Gazelle occurs in dry grasslands and Sahelian bushland from Mauritania and northern Senegal to the western side of the River Nile in Sudan. The Range States are Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania,

¹⁵ See <https://www.cms.int/en/publication/sahelo-saharan-antelopes—status-and-perspectives-ts-no-11>

¹⁶ UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.8 of 2014; UNEP/CMS/ScC17/Report Annex II of 2011

¹⁷ Proposal I / 6/Rev.1 submitted to CMS COP9 (Rome, 2008)

¹⁸ Cassinello, J., Cuzin, F., Jdeidi, T., Masseti, M., Nader, I. & de Smet, K. 2008. *Ammotragus lervia*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2008.

¹⁹ Proposal I / 6/Rev.1 submitted to CMS COP9 (Rome, 2008)

Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan and Sudan²⁰. The IUCN lists the species as Vulnerable (A2cd)²¹ but if the current declining trend due to poaching, competition with domestic livestock and habitat degradation continues, the species could soon be threatened with extinction²², particularly in the western parts of its range.

21. Considering that the Range States of Barbary Sheep and Red-fronted Gazelle largely overlap with that of the other six species under the Sahelo-Saharan Concerted Action, it is recommended to add these two species.
22. The Concerted Action is envisaged to in due course cover all threatened migratory large mammals of the temperate and cold deserts, semi-deserts, steps and associated mountains of the Sahelo-Saharan region²³. The inclusion of the two species would be in line with this vision. Moreover, this would increase the efficiency of conservation actions and enhance synergy with ongoing activities, given that resources for conservation activities have been limited.

Recommended action under the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action for the intersessional period

23. The Secretariat recommends that an updated Action Plan for the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action be developed taking into consideration adoption of an ecosystem approach. A Third Regional Seminar on the Conservation and Restoration of Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna is crucial for the Range States to develop an updated Action Plan.
24. Further details of the activities under the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action during the intersessional period 2020-2023 are presented in the proposal for the continuation of the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action in document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.28.2.4.

Proposed amendments to Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP12)

25. Based on the discussion above, the Secretariat recommends that Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP12) be revised including by incorporating reference to an ecosystem approach and to the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021- 2030).
26. The Secretariat further suggests converting Paragraph 4 of Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP12) into a decision in line with Resolution 11.6 (Rev. COP12).

Recommended actions

27. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the proposed amendments to Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP12) *Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna* as contained in Annex 1 of this document; and
 - b) adopt the draft Decisions as contained in Annex 2 of this document.

20 UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.24.1.3: Proposal I/3

21 IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group. 2017. *Eudorcas rufifrons*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2017

22 UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.24.1.3: Proposal I/3

23 Recommendation 9.2 (Rome, 2008)

PROPOSED AMMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 9.21 (Rev.COP12)

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NB: Proposed new text to the resolution is underlined. Text to be deleted is crossed out.

Recognizing that the large mammal fauna of the arid lands of North Africa and Eurasia have many species with threatened populations that are in a profoundly unsatisfactory, and often critical, state of conservation,

Conscious that the arid lands, with their exceptional natural and cultural heritage and their unique migration phenomena, are a crucial area for the action of the Convention,

Recalling that several species found in that biome are on Appendix I of the Convention,

Noting that recommendation 4.5 adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Fourth Meeting (Nairobi, 7-11 June 1994) requested that the Scientific Council, in cooperation with the Secretariat, establish a Concerted Action for Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates,

Noting with satisfaction the progress made by this Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action,

Taking into account the intersessional process on the future shape of CMS, and *conscious* that the development of new instruments is to be linked to this process,

Acknowledging the recommendation of the 14th and 15th meetings of the Scientific Council that the SAHELO-SAHARAN UNGULATES CONCERTED ACTION be continued and extended to other species of large mammals occurring within the area of the Concerted Action

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

1. *Encourages* Range States and other interested Parties to prepare, in cooperation with the Scientific Council and the Secretariat, the necessary proposals to include in Appendix I or Appendix II threatened species that would benefit from the Concerted Action;
2. *Encourages* the Secretariat to pursue efforts to bring into the Convention, Range States of the Sahelo-Saharan fauna that are not yet Parties, and to liaise with other concerned Conventions to enhance synergies;
3. *Urges* Parties to apply an ecosystem approach and to strengthen efforts to conserve and restore habitats for Sahelo-Saharan megafauna, in particular in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030);
- ~~3.~~ 4. *Urges* non-Party Range States to support the Concerted Action, in recognition of its global significance; ~~and~~
- ~~4.~~ ~~*Encourages* the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to envisage, in consultation with the Range States concerned, an extension of the action area of the Concerted Action to the deserts of the Horn of Africa and associated biomes.~~

ANNEX 2

DRAFT DECISIONS

SAHELO-SAHARAN MEGAFUNA

Directed to the Scientific Council and the Secretariat

- 13.AA The Scientific Council and the Secretariat shall examine the possibility of an extension of the area of the Concerted Action to the deserts of the Horn of Africa and associated biomes and provide their recommendations to the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.