

CMS COP12 High-Level Panel Discussion



How implementing CMS can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs

On the eve of what is certainly going to be the premier international conference on wildlife conservation of 2017, a High-level Panel will take place with the participation of government ministers, representatives of civil society organizations and chief officers of international organizations. The Panel will discuss how implementation of the policies adopted through CMS can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were agreed by Governments in 2015 as successors to the Millennium Development Goals and renew the global commitment to eliminate poverty and urge Governments to promote prosperity and achieve social progress in terms of health, wealth, education and employment, while still protecting the planet's environment. The SDGs do not entail setting contradictory or conflicting objectives – they are complementary and interlinked – so, success in achieving the SDGs will facilitate the work of the Convention, just as implementing CMS will contribute to the SDGs.

The Convention on Migratory Species and the Animals It Seeks to Protect

The value of migratory species can be measured in many ways: one can take a purely pecuniary perspective and ask what price an animal can command in terms of dollars per kilo in the market place; or in cultural terms, migratory species often have symbolic significance as national emblems with which the inhabitants of a country identify. Animals can also have strong geographical associations - Africa without its elephants and lions would be like Paris without the Eiffel Tower or Egypt without the pyramids. Each species also contributes to rich and complex ecological tapestry performing specific functions essential for the maintenance of the wider environment. Elephants, for instance, prune the bushes enabling the grass upon which ungulates graze to grow. Hawksbill Turtles keep the sponges upon which they feed in check, clearing the corals and providing habitat for other animals. There is also an important human dimension as people derive direct benefits from migratory species, as food or as the basis of wildlife-watching tourism.

The distinguishing feature of migratory species is that they move with the seasons or in accordance with the different stages of their life cycles. This makes them a natural resource of more than one State and these States accordingly share responsibility for conserving the animals. The efforts of one Range State are in vain if another for its part fails to take appropriate measures. The Convention provides the forum where Governments can coordinate policies guaranteeing that all countries in the species' range can continue to benefit from the animals' presence. The core objective of CMS is to conserve the hundreds of species listed on the two Appendices along with their habitats – with Appendix I listing endangered species and imposing clear obligations on the Parties to protect them and Appendix II identifying species that would benefit from international cooperation. As a framework Convention, CMS has given rise to seven legally binding Agreements and nineteen less formal Memoranda of Understanding.

Sustainable Development Goals – the Role of the CMS Family

In October 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 subordinate targets with the aim of stimulating 15 years of action in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. These goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, and they balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. CMS has a clear role to play in achieving the SDGs as the conservation of migratory species and their habitats is directly relevant to several goals and targets, and will most notably contribute to SDGs 14 and 15, *Life beneath Water* and *Life on Land*.

Habitat Loss and Degradation

Loss and degradation of habitat are identified as the main threats to 85 per cent of all species described on the IUCN Red List. Reasons include the encroachment of agriculture into wildlife habitat; exploitation of natural resources through mining at land and underwater; development of coastal areas and concurrent elimination of mangroves and seagrass; and construction of infrastructure, such as roads, railways or border fences. The loss and degradation of habitat clearly go hand-in-hand with an extension of human activities into wildlife habitat. As a result, ways must be found in which humans and wildlife can better live together. This concerns, in particular, land-use policies, such as landscape approaches to conservation and the involvement of local communities.

Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Birds and bats can play important roles in biological pest control in agriculture. Many songbirds and bats feed on insects, while birds of prey usually feed on rodents and other small mammals, enabling farmers to use less pesticide. Birds (worldwide) and bats (primarily in the Tropics) are also indispensable pollinators, with over 80 per cent of the world's flowering plants dependent on them. Bees, birds and bats affect a third of the world's crop production, increasing outputs of leading food crops and many plant-based medicines.

There are also several fish species listed on CMS that are harvested and the conservation of which is important to achieving food security. Where fishing occurs, it must be done in a sustainable manner, requiring quota systems and adaptive management practices. Sharks, as apex predators, play a vital role in maintaining healthy and balanced ecosystems. Continued excessive removal of sharks can have serious consequences for other species, many of which are commercially exploited.

CMS has engaged with other partners in collecting and disseminating information about the contribution of wild meat to food security and local livelihoods and how unsustainable harvesting can affect the ecological stability of ecosystems. CMS is now widening the discussion internationally on the impacts on both species conservation and human health of the increasing demand for aquatic wild meat.

Land Management

The African-Eurasian Migratory Landbird Initiative under CMS places great emphasis on promoting sustainable land management practices, particularly in West Africa, that support community-based livelihoods, without compromising ecosystem services, while also ensuring that there are sufficient natural habitats for species. Adaptation to climate change and an integrated landscape approach to fulfil the needs of people and biodiversity are also taken into account.

Clean Water

Clean water is essential to human survival, and lakes, rivers or wetlands from which the water is taken are home to many CMS species. In protecting these habitats because of their importance to migratory species, CMS and instruments concluded under it such as the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), are making important contributions to the achievement of SDG6, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

CMS Parties have adopted guidelines combating pollution and have urged that lead ammunition be phased out and replaced by non-toxic alternatives across all habitats. They have called for lead fishing weights to be banned in areas used by migratory birds.

Climate Change

The process of animal migration is intricately tied to climatic conditions. Through a dedicated Programme of Work, CMS is promoting the establishment of species-specific conservation approaches as well as adaptation measures at the level of networks of habitats. CMS has a keen interest in seeing effective action on the climate.

Climate change is likely to be the greatest driver in biodiversity loss in the coming years. Alongside cutting demand for energy and increasing efficiency, the development of renewable sources of energy is essential to reduce dependence on the fossil fuels which produce greenhouse gases. However, appropriate planning and monitoring of renewable energy infrastructure are necessary to prevent adverse effects to wildlife. The CMS Family has developed guidelines on the deployment of renewable energy technology and has established an International Multi-stakeholder Task Force to bring together conservationists and power companies to find mutually satisfactory solutions.

Infrastructure

The modern world needs efficient infrastructure to ensure that goods and people can be transported. New roads and railways can, however, lead to habitat fragmentation, which is a particularly serious threat to wide-ranging species with extensive home ranges. Central Asia has many vast and intact habitats, but also faces some of the greatest pressures for transport infrastructure projects. CMS has developed guidelines, which provide advice on avoiding and mitigating impacts of linear infrastructure development on ecological networks.

Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry with 9 per cent of jobs globally either directly or indirectly connected to this sector. A major portion of this sector is nature-based involving appreciation and interaction with the environment. Such tourism can provide alternative livelihoods replacing unsustainable consumption of species as well as generating funds for conserving the sites visited. Developing countries are profiting from this booming industry – their share of the global market rose from 17 per cent in the 1990s to 28 per cent in 2012. Another benefit of this industry is the increased awareness of locals and visitors of the wider value of biodiversity.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2017 to be the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Accordingly, the theme chosen for the International Day for Biological Diversity 2017 was “Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism”. For its part, CMS has long recognized the positive contribution that tourism can make and published a set of case studies on wildlife watching tourism. CMS is also in the process of developing guidelines on boat-based marine wildlife watching which will be presented for adoption by the Conference of Parties.

Trophy hunting involves animals that have certain characteristics. Because of changes in demography and land use, wildlife habitat is under increasing pressure in many parts of the world, and trophy hunting has created incentives and revenue to governments, private land-owners and local communities to conserve wildlife and its habitat. It must be well managed, to avoid unsustainable exploitation of wildlife, meaning clear regulations and conditions under which wildlife can be hunted must be observed. For some species, such as the Argali Sheep, CMS has recognized the benefits of sustainable trophy hunting, and CMS has called upon Range States that allow trophy hunting to strengthen their management capacity.

Responsible Consumption

While Parties are obliged to prohibit the taking of species listed on Appendix I of CMS, unless the limited exceptions permitted under the Convention apply, several agreements concluded for the conservation and management of species listed on Appendix II of CMS do provide for them being sustainably used. Examples of instruments that specifically provide for the sustainable use of species are those relating to the Saiga Antelope, the Argali Sheep and sharks and rays.

Strengthening Institutions

CMS is fully committed to building the capacity of its Parties at national level. CMS is collaborating with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN Environment in supporting Parties to include CMS objectives into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). CMS also supports States in establishing necessary structures and legislation for implementing the Convention and participating effectively in meetings of its Conference of Parties through regional pre-Conferences training sessions for national delegates.

Poverty can be addressed by creating livelihood opportunities for men and women through the establishment of ranger squads, restoration of ecosystems or infrastructure development for nature conservation, amongst others. Education and learning opportunities for all can be increased through conservation work; and gender equality and participation in decision-making increased through the establishment of governance committees within conservation areas of local communities.

Format of High-level Panel Discussion

The discussion will be conducted in an open round table setting with the participation of ministers and senior officials of international organizations. At the outset, a keynote speaker will set the scene. Each panellist will have the opportunity to make some short opening remarks. The round table will then be divided into segments based on the questions below. At the end of the discussion, each panellist will have the opportunity to make closing remarks. The round table will be facilitated by a professional moderator.

Purpose of the High-level Panel Discussion

Against this backdrop, the High-level Panel will discuss the possibilities of contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the implementation of CMS. A summary of the high-level panel discussion will be prepared which will allow the participants to send a collective message to the Conference of Parties. The message could be adopted by the COP as a resolution, declaration or statement.

Questions for the High-level Panel Members

The following questions will be posed to the panellists:

1. Is there a deficit in the thinking between conservation of species and sustainable development, and, if so, how can we address it?
2. How can policy makers and the private sector partner to make sure that the sustainability of the planet's natural resources is not compromised?
3. What approaches to sustainable development are necessary that ensure that humans and migratory species can co-exist?
4. Are legal mechanisms required at the international and/or national level to ensure that local communities are effectively involved in sustainable development as it affects migratory species?
5. What cooperation is required between the conservation sector and those that use migratory species in a consumptive manner, such as the fisheries and hunting sectors?
6. What alternative income-generating activities can be applied to reduce people's reliance on the use of migratory species and what is needed to make them effective?
7. What incentives can be offered to public and private entities to encourage them to make stronger links between conservation and sustainable development?
8. We know that migratory species are important for our economies and the environment, even though a specific assessment is yet to be made. How do we turn this knowledge into actions for the sustainability of migratory species?
9. What are the opportunities for sustainable wildlife-based tourism? How do we enhance these opportunities?
10. Migratory species are 'shared' resources, which require sharing of responsibilities for conservation as well as benefits deriving from species services. What approach would ensure equitable and sustainable use of these resources?

CMS Key Actions contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals



