



# Convention on Migratory Species CMS Abu Dhabi Office

معاهدة المحافظة على الأنواع المهاجرة – مكتب أبوظبي

United Nations Environment Programme



RAPTORS  
MOU



DUGONG  
MOU

## CMS Office – Abu Dhabi: A Decade of Achievements

*Celebrating a 10-year Partnership  
with Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates*

### Hosting CMS Office - Abu Dhabi Advances UAE's Conservation Tradition

On 12 October 2009, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) signed a partnership agreement establishing [CMS Office – Abu Dhabi](#), a regional hub of the Secretariat of the Convention, dedicated to the conservation of Dugongs, migratory birds of prey and other migratory species.

With this, CMS Office – Abu Dhabi became CMS's sole office operating outside the Convention's headquarters in Bonn, Germany, and it was fully hosted by a CMS Member State.

CMS Office – Abu Dhabi oversees the implementation of two specialized international agreements under the CMS framework: the CMS Dugong Memorandum of Understanding ([Dugong MOU](#)), which came into effect in October 2007, and the CMS [Raptors MOU](#), effective from November 2008. The Office also coordinates activities addressing common threats to migratory species of national and regional importance and promotes CMS and its agreements in the West Asian and North-West Indian Ocean regions.



*H.E. Majid Al Mansouri, Elizabeth Mrema and Lahcen El Kabiri (from right to left) during the signing ceremony on 12 October 2009 © CMS*



*H.E. Mohamed Ahmed  
Al Bowardi © EAD*

For the United Arab Emirates, supporting this strategic conservation partnership was the next step in the country's long tradition of protecting the natural environment. The origins of this tradition can be traced back to the UAE's founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, said His Excellency Mohammed Al Bowardi, EAD Vice Chairman and UAE Minister of Defense.

"Sheikh Zayed respected the natural environment. He had a strong conservation ethic and a love for wild animals, coupled with a vision to work not only within the country, but also with other countries to achieve conservation goals," said Mr. Al Bowardi.

By the mid-2000s, Abu Dhabi had longstanding conservation interests in marine and bird species (for example, marine turtles, Dugongs, sharks, swordfish, Houbara Bustards, Greater Flamingos, Saker Falcons, Sooty Falcons, Osprey and Egyptian Vultures). EAD scientists were conducting groundbreaking satellite tracking of migratory species and the results clearly demonstrated that Abu Dhabi's populations travelled significant distances and were shared with other countries. The EAD leadership realized that the success of Abu Dhabi's conservation efforts depended on working with other Range States, said Mr. Al Bowardi.

"The realization that the animals, our conservation work, and the conservation work of other countries were all interconnected fueled a desire to support a UN-based multilateral forum to catalyze country-level efforts and coordinate conservation efforts across migratory ranges," said Mr. Al Bowardi. "We were convinced such an approach would be much more effective, compared to working bilaterally."

Abu Dhabi has the longest coastline in the UAE. It shares the world's second largest Dugong population with three other countries in the Arabian Gulf, so the idea of supporting a CMS mechanism catering to the peaceful sea mammal came first. It was inspired by EAD's active engagement on behalf of the UAE with the CMS Indian Ocean and South-East Asia Marine Turtles MOU ([IOSEA](#)).



*Dugong dugon © Mandy Etpison*

"We were impressed by the delivery of IOSEA and how it catalyzed national action and international cooperation while promoting information exchange, technical cooperation and outreach," said Majid Al Mansouri then Secretary-General of EAD.

EAD offered to host in the UAE capital a secretariat unit for the Dugong MOU, following a series of discussions in 2006 and 2007, and the co-hosting in Abu Dhabi of an international meeting where the Dugong MOU was finalized and signed by seven countries including the UAE, in August 2008, during an informal meeting of the MOU Signatory States in Bali, Indonesia.



*African White-backed Vulture © Andre Botha*

With regard to raptors, by 2006 when the United Kingdom (UK) invited the UAE to co-lead a process to develop a dedicated CMS instrument, EAD was already aware from satellite tagging data that a 'flyway approach' was needed for successful conservation efforts, said Mr. Al Mansouri. In 2007, the UAE accepted the UK's invitation to share the leadership in creating a mechanism for raptors.

In October 2008, a meeting, co-hosted by the UAE and the UK, took place in Abu Dhabi to conclude the Raptors MOU. During the meeting, the UAE represented by EAD, offered

to host an interim Coordinating Unit for the MOU and further proposed creating a regional hub for CMS in the UAE capital. The Raptors MOU was finalized successfully with 28 States including the UAE, signing it, and then entered into effect on 1 November 2008.

These steps paved the way to 12 October 2009 when CMS and EAD signed a partnership agreement. As the then Secretary-General of EAD, Mr. Al Mansouri was the official who signed the agreement on behalf of the Abu Dhabi Government. Representing CMS was Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, who was at the time the CMS Executive Secretary.

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“The cooperation between the UAE and CMS is a huge success for conservation and the Convention. It’s a text-book example of how we would like to see other specialized CMS instruments evolve,” said Ms. Mrema, who is currently leading the Convention on Biological Diversity.

“The generous and sustained support of the Abu Dhabi Government has ensured that the two MOUs are effectively managed and coordinated. This is outstanding,” she said.

“The success of CMS Office - Abu Dhabi is testament to what can be achieved within a short period of time when a Member State has a vision, takes on a leadership role and commits to invest in concrete actions at the national, regional and international level,” said Ms. Mrema.

A number of important conservation initiatives have resulted from the productive and successful collaboration between CMS Office – Abu Dhabi and Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi since 2009 when the Office in the United Arab Emirates was first established. The vision and strong long-term support of Abu Dhabi’s Government, combined with the rich scope of a United Nations forum, is supporting the conservation of Dugongs, raptors and other migratory species, and promoting the well-being of associated human communities, to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.