

**5th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the
CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC5)**

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SAHELO-SAHARAN MEGAFUNA

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document provides information in the context of Decision 13.101 *Sahelo Saharan Megafauna*, as a basis for the Scientific Council to examine the possibility of an extension of the area of the Concerted Action 13.4 for Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna to the deserts of the Horn of Africa and associated biomes, and to make recommendations in that regard to the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

SAHELO-SAHARAN MEGAFUNA

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting (COP13, Gandhinagar, India, 2020) adopted Decision 13.101 *Sahelo Saharan Megafauna*, which reads as follows:

The Scientific Council and the Secretariat are requested, subject to the availability of resources, to 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.

2. The Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action was initiated in 1994 as the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action¹. Originally, the Concerted Action aimed 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.
3. 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 efforts³.
4. The Action Plan was updated and adopted by the Range States at the Second Regional Seminar through the [Agadir Declaration](#) of 2003⁴. 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. Nonetheless, a number of major projects have been carried out since 2003 to implement the Sahelo-Saharan Antelope Action Plan⁵.
5. In 2008, CMS COP9 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 9.2⁶, the Sahelo-Saharan Ungulates Concerted Action was reformulated as the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action. Since then, conservation activities have continued under the reformulated Concerted Action.
6. In 2020, COP13 adopted the renewal and continuation of the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action⁷ in accordance with the process elaborated in Resolution 12.28 *Concerted Actions*⁸. COP13 further adopted the inclusion of two additional species in the Concerted Action: the Red-fronted Gazelle (*Eudorcas rufifrons*), and the Barbary Sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*). Together with the Scientific Council, the CMS Secretariat supports the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action⁹.

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

2 Recommendation 4.5 (Nairobi, 1994)

3 UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.14/Rev.1

4 Operative paragraph 7

5 See [UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.4](#) for details

6 Superseded by [Resolution 9.21 \(Rev.COP13\)](#)

7 [Concerted Action for the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna \(Concerted Action 13.4\)](#)

8 Superseded by [Resolution 12.28 \(Rev.COP13\) Concerted Actions](#)

9 Resolution 12.28 (Rev.COP13) *Concerted Actions* operative paragraph 6.

The possibility of an extension of the area of the Concerted Action to the deserts of the Horn of Africa and associated biomes

7. The provision formulated in Decision 13.101 dates back to Recommendation 9.2 Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna¹⁰. Ad hoc consultations on this issue were held with members of the IUCN ASG, who provided valuable advice for this paper.
8. The Horn of Africa covers Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia, all of them being Parties to CMS. Ethiopia and Eritrea are already Range States to the Concerted Action. The situation in large parts of the area is characterized by political unrest and insecurity resulting from ethnic tensions and secession attempts by various groups of their societies, strongly challenging conservation interventions.
9. The Danakil is the only real desert in the Horn of Africa region. This hyperarid area extends along the Red Sea in Eritrea and adjoins a part of Ethiopia. Apart from that, the region covers a diversity of habitat types: arid steppes, different types of savannahs, including extensive areas of wooded savannah, dense thorn scrub, as well as Afroalpine montane habitats, evergreen forest, and wetlands. The diversity of biomes brings along a large diversity of mammal species, including 30 species of antelopes. Of the eight species currently covered by the Concerted Action, two are present in the Horn of Africa: the Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) and the Red-fronted Gazelle (*Eudorcas rufifrons*, as its subspecies *E. rufifrons tilonura*). The two additional mammalian megafauna species of the region that are currently listed under CMS are: the White-eared Kob (*Kobus kob leucotis*, Appendix II), which occurs seasonally in the swamp areas of extreme South-Western Ethiopia; and the African Wild Ass (*Equus africanus*, Appendix I). A separate Roadmap¹¹ exists as the guiding tool for the conservation of the African Wild Ass, adopted through Resolution 12.18 (Rev.COP13) *Conservation of the African Wild Ass (Equus africanus)*¹².

Discussion and analysis

10. In line with the vision of the Concerted Action, which *aims in due course to cover all threatened large migratory mammals of the temperate and cold deserts, semi-deserts, steps and associated mountains of the Sahelo-Saharan region*, the following Scenarios could be considered as a basis for recommendations to the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties:
 - a) Extension of the Concerted Action to countries in which its current target species occur. This would concern the Dorcas Gazelle and would mean adding Djibouti and Somalia as Range States to the Concerted Action. Note: the Dorcas Gazelle range in Somalia extends only in the self-declared autonomous region of Somaliland, not the rest of Somalia. It also occurs in Israel and Jordan.
 - b) Extension of the Concerted Action to the Danakil and adjoining desert and semidesert, in line with the logic of the biogeographic vision of the Concerted Action. This Scenario would add the same Range States of the Dorcas Gazelle as in Scenario a). It would add the Soemmerring's Gazelle *Nanger soemmerringii* (IUCN Red List status: Vulnerable; currently not listed on the CMS appendices) as a target species to the Concerted Action, subject to the adoption of a corresponding CMS listing proposal. As a consequence of the approach of adding megafauna target species extant in relevant biomes of the Horn of Africa, the African Wild Ass would be added to the Concerted Action as well.

¹⁰ Superseded by [Resolution 9.21 \(Rev.COP13\)](#)

¹¹ [Roadmap for the Conservation of the African Wild Ass *Equus africanus*](#)

¹² [Resolution 12.18 \(Rev.COP13\) *Conservation of the African Wild Ass \(Equus africanus\)*](#)

- c) Extension of the Concerted Action to all dry plain habitats of the Range States and species as outlined under Scenarios a) and b), and thereby including the dry plains of Somalia. In addition to the Soemmerring's Gazelle and the African Wild Ass (see Scenario b)), it would cover the Beisa Oryx (*Oryx beisa*, IUCN Red List status: Endangered) and the Beira *Dorcatragus megalotis* (IUCN Red List status: Vulnerable), which inhabit the dry hills interspersed throughout the plains, as additional target species. Both species are currently not listed under CMS. Therefore, the nomination of these two species would be subject to the adoption of corresponding CMS listing proposals. The Speke's gazelle *Gazella spekei* (IUCN Red List status: Endangered; not on CMS Appendix), also inhabiting this range of dry plain habitats, is endemic to Somalia, based on recent reports¹³.
- d) Postponement of the decision on the extension of the Concerted Action to the Horn of Africa to later meetings of the Conference of the Parties. This proposal could be reasoned based on the current focus of implementation of conservation measures in the 'core' Sahelo-Saharan region, including emergency interventions for the Addax and other highly threatened migratory megafauna that are already listed under CMS. This will require significant additional resources for emergency actions and sustainability of regional and national conservation activities in the long-term. This approach may also be considered under the aspect of challenges and current prospects for success of on-the-ground conservation actions in the Horn of Africa, taking into account the security situation in many parts of the region. Meanwhile, CMS listing proposals for migratory megafauna species present in the Horn of Africa could be developed and considered.
11. Scenarios a) and d) might have the advantage of focusing efforts, projects and resources on the current set of target species of the Concerted Action, with Scenario d) consolidating the focus on the 'core' Sahelo-Saharan region and species under consideration of the distinct political circumstances in the Range States and the alarming situation of several species populations and challenges that already exist. Obviously, Scenarios of the extension to the Horn of Africa imply additional institutional and financial requirements for concrete action to be undertaken in this region. Scenario a) would still allow for consolidating the focus on the current set of species, but in addition might raise the importance of the Horn of Africa for the conservation of megafauna in the whole northern part of Africa, and therefore leveraging international political support for actions in Djibouti and Somalia as prospective new Range States. Scenarios b) (in a narrower scope) and c) (in a broader scope) would meet the logic of the biogeographic vision of the Concerted Action. Through the addition of the two prospective Range States and their deserts, semi-desert and dry plain biomes, these Scenarios could potentially further the political support for the implementation of Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP13) *Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna*¹⁴ regarding the preparation of proposals to include in Appendix I or Appendix II threatened species that would benefit from the Concerted Action, the accession of Range States of the Sahelo-Saharan fauna that are not yet Parties to CMS, and to apply an ecosystem approach and to strengthen efforts to conserve and restore habitats for Sahelo-Saharan megafauna. The inclusion of these additional biomes might also provide benefits to other megafauna species in the region, including non-migratory ones. However, it should be kept in mind that implementing Scenarios b) or c) would be subject to the preparation and adoption of the relevant species listing proposals by the COP, under the premise of political support and activities by the Range States. In the longer term, the feasibility and prospects of success of concrete conservation activities have to be considered in the light of the particular political and security situations, and the capacities of new Range States to ensure the enabling conditions for such actions.

¹³ IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group

¹⁴ Cf. operative paragraphs 1.-3. of Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP13) *Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna*

Recommended actions

12. The Sessional Committee is recommended to examine the possibility of an extension of the area of the Concerted Action to the deserts of the Horn of Africa and associated biomes against the Scenarios outlined in paragraph 10 of this document and make recommendations to the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.