



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.4.2

8 June 2023

Original: English

14th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 12 – 17 February 2024
Agenda Item 28.4

INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

(Prepared by the Government of India)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decision 13.46 - *Flyways*. It contains proposals for the adoption of a draft resolution and draft decisions to establish the Initiative for Central Asian Flyway under CMS, and the adoption of Terms of Reference for this new initiative.

INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting (COP13, Gandhinagar, India, 2020) adopted Decision 13.46 - *Flyways*, which read as follows:

13.46 Directed to Others

Range States of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) are requested to: a) collaborate with the Government of India and the Secretariats of CMS and AEWA during the inter-sessional period between the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) and COP14 to further advance the process initiated in 2018 between the Government of India and both Secretariats; b) establish, by COP14, under the umbrella of CMS, an institutional framework, under the leadership of India and in consultation with the other range states and relevant stakeholders with the aim to agree on, inter alia, conservation priorities and related actions, and measures to support Parties with the implementation of conservation action for migratory birds and their habitats in the region, including by promoting research, studies, assessments, capacity-building and conservation initiatives thereby further strengthening the implementation of CMS and its avian-related instruments; c) contribute to an inter-governmental meeting of the Range States of the Central Asian Flyway organized by the Government of India and the CMS Secretariat to agree on the modalities of the framework by COP14, to update the CMS Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats, and to consider supporting the process with resources, as applicable.

Activities to implement Decision 13.46

2. The Government of India has continued its efforts to further advance the process initiated in 2018 regarding the Central Asian Flyway (CAF).
3. An online meeting of CAF Range States, organized by the Government of India and supported by the CMS Secretariat, took place in October 2021. The meeting provided an update on the implementation of Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP13) and Decision 13.46. The Government of India reaffirmed its support through the announcement of a CAF Secretariat-India office.
4. In 2022, several coordination meetings took place between the CMS Secretariat and the Government of India, with a view of organizing an in-person meeting of the CAF Range States to establish an institutional framework for the CAF.
5. The 4th Meeting of the CAF Range States (CAF4) took place from 2 to 4 May 2023 in New Delhi, as an in-person meeting and at the invitation of the Government of India. The objectives of this meeting were to: a) develop and, if possible, agree on an institutional framework for the CAF, b) draw conclusions from a CAF conservation situation analysis report launched in summer 2022 and coordinated by BirdLife International, and discuss priority areas for implementation, c) discuss and agree on a draft roadmap for updating the CMS CAF Action Plan, and d) further develop and agree on the next steps to inform draft decisions to be proposed to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS.
6. The CAF4 meeting agreed to develop an institutional framework for the Central Asian Flyway as an 'Initiative', under the umbrella of CMS, with the goal to maintain and/or enhance the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of all migratory bird species occurring in the CAF, and their habitats.

Discussion and analysis

7. Several Range States have developed action plans and conservation actions aimed at the threatened birds occurring in their regions for example India's National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along the CAF (2018-2023)¹. However, lack of an internationally agreed framework has prevented the definition of internationally agreed conservation, management, research, capacity-building and fund-raising actions.
8. The CAF4 meeting held in May 2023 agreed on the need to establish an institutional framework for the Central Asian Flyway as an 'Initiative' to facilitate concerted efforts and procedures through a platform which would allow close and straightforward cooperation of Signatories and Range States of CMS and non-CMS instruments, partnerships and relevant stakeholders. The Government of India is taking the lead in seeking endorsement of this new institutional framework under the CMS.
9. A draft Resolution (Annex 1) has been prepared by the Government of India, following on the agreement reached at CAF4. The draft Terms of Reference for the Initiative have also been developed as an Annex of the draft Resolution.
10. Once the initiative is endorsed by the COP, the establishment of a CAF Secretariat, to be hosted by the Government of India, is foreseen. The CAF Secretariat will, *inter alia*, facilitate the development of a Programme of Work for the initiative, in close cooperation and consultation with the Range States.

Recommended actions

11. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the draft Resolution contained in Annex 1 of this document;
 - b) adopt the draft Decision contained in Annex 2 of this document.

¹http://moef.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CAF_NAP_Final-with-CL.pdf

DRAFT RESOLUTION

INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

Recognizing the efforts by the Government of India to continue the collaborative process, in close consultation with the Range States of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and with the CMS and AEWA Secretariats, to establish, by COP14, under the umbrella of CMS, an institutional framework, under the leadership of India and in consultation with the other range states and relevant stakeholders,

Recalling that the framework aims to focus on conservation priorities and related actions, and measures that support Parties in the implementation of conservation actions for migratory birds and their habitats in the region, through promoting research, studies, assessments, capacity-building and conservation initiatives, thereby further strengthening the implementation of CMS and its avian-related instruments,

Noting the BirdLife International 2023 Central Asian Flyway situation analysis, which provided status, threats and opportunities, to conserve the migratory birds and their habitats of this flyway, and the review and comments on the report provided by the Range States,

Welcoming the fruitful discussions and inputs of the Range States and stakeholders at the fourth meeting of the CAF Range States, hosted by the Government of India in New Delhi on 2 to 4 May 2023, agreeing on the next steps with regard to establishing a framework for international cooperation in the CAF,

Welcoming the kind offer of the Government of India to host a Secretariat for the CAF to support and facilitate the initiative, in coordination with the CMS Secretariat,

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

1. *Decides* to establish an Initiative for Central Asian Flyway (ICAF) as a platform for international cooperation under the umbrella of CMS to build more coherence in the work that Range States, partner organizations and other stakeholders, as appropriate, are devoting to the conservation of all migratory bird taxa and their habitats in this region;
2. *Decides* to establish a Secretariat for the ICAF;
3. *Adopts* the Terms of Reference of the Initiative annexed to this Resolution;
4. *Agrees* that the broad objectives of the Initiative are to enhance the conservation, including protection, restoration and sustainable management of migratory bird populations of taxa recognized by CMS and for migratory bird species and populations which are not yet in the focus of existing instruments and which require urgent conservation action across the CAF as well as their habitats, by strengthening coordination and cooperation across the species' ranges in Central Asia including other frameworks and partnerships, and taking into consideration the needs and livelihoods of local communities, including research and capacity-building efforts;

5. *Recognizes* that the Initiative is an instrument, *inter-alia*, to:
 - a) enhance cooperation and promote synergies among the existing CMS and non-CMS instruments and partnerships, such as AEWA, Raptors MOU, AEMLAP, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP);
 - b) increase scientific and technical expertise in the region;
 - c) address the conservation priorities identified and monitor the effectiveness of interventions;
 - d) apply targeted conservation approaches;
 - e) create opportunities for donors to allocate resources to internationally agreed priority conservation actions.
6. *Agrees* that the Initiative should be implemented through a Programme of Work (POW), which can be amended or adapted, as required, and which is characterized by commonalities of the different frameworks and instruments involved, that will implement the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for Migratory Birds by providing concrete, coordinated and synergistic conservation activities;
7. *Requests* the ICAF Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to convene regular meetings of the ICAF in cooperation with the Secretariat of CMS, to assess the implementation of the Programme of Work, revise the Programme of Work as necessary, and monitor the functionality of the Initiative;
8. *Calls upon* the Range States to strengthen their transboundary cooperation and raising support to the ICAF, *inter alia* by using other existing international and regional fora and thematic sub-initiatives;
9. *Encourages* Parties, Range States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and donors to contribute to the objectives of the ICAF, and to support the ICAF through financial and technical resources; and
10. *Requests* the Secretariat to report on the implementation of this Resolution to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY INITIATIVE UNDER CMS

Background and purpose

This initiative is established in line with the mandate provided by the Resolution adopted at COP14 entitled Initiative for Central Asian Flyway to assist the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its associated instruments, relevant MEAs and Conventions to improve the conservation status of threatened migratory birds in the Central Asian Flyway (CAF).

Goal

To maintain and/or enhance the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of all migratory bird species occurring in the CAF, and their habitats.

Role

To facilitate concerted efforts and procedures to achieve this goal in the CAF region, in close cooperation with the other CMS and non-CMS instruments and partnerships.

Scope

The initiative will be regional covering all states of the Central Asian Flyway as follows: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Georgia, India, Iran, Islamic Republic of, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom (Chagos Islands), Uzbekistan, Yemen.

The initiative will cover migratory bird taxa as identified by CMS along the CAF, with a specific focus on threatened species, sub-species and populations currently not addressed.

Remit

The initiative will:

- a) identify, develop and implement a Programme of Work (POW) that includes internationally agreed conservation strategies for globally threatened migratory bird species and threatened populations of migratory birds of the CAF, listed under the different frameworks and instruments;
- b) ensure that the POW is aligned with existing plans of the other relevant instruments and avoid duplication;
- c) take measures that allow and secure ecological connectivity of populations;
- d) identify research gaps and priorities in the conservation of migratory birds for the CAF;
- e) promote innovative approaches that deliver sustainable benefits to the local communities as well as migratory birds and their habitats;
- f) develop the capacity of Range States, stakeholders and local communities to conserve and manage, as well as monitor, populations of the migratory bird species and their habitats;
- g) increase capacity-building of Range States;

- h) assist in resource mobilization for priority actions including cooperation with international financial institutions and public and/or private organizations;
- i) improve citizen science, education, and awareness on the need of conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in the CAF;
- j) enhance and facilitate communication and information sharing between the CAF Range States; and
- k) promote and facilitate implementation of relevant decisions and plans adopted in the framework of MEAs or other frameworks, as well as partnerships, especially the CMS, and other CMS and non-CMS instruments and partnerships relevant to conservation of migratory birds along the CAF.

Membership

The membership of ICAF will be comprised of representatives of relevant governments and institutions in the field of environment, species management, and research institutions in the Parties to the participating MEAs in the CAF Region.

It will also involve representatives from the Secretariats of the participating MEAs and frameworks.

In addition, the following representatives will be invited to contribute to the initiative:

- Representatives of Parties and non-Parties elsewhere in the CAF and beyond that wish to support the work of the initiative;
- Representatives of the CMS Scientific Council, AEWA Technical Committee, the Raptors MOU Technical Advisory Group, regional CMS Task Forces on Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds, the Saker Falcon Task Force, the multi-stakeholder Energy Task Force, the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group, the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group, the Flyways Working Group, the EAAFP Technical Committee, and other groups with relevant experience;
- Academic institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders, as appropriate;
- Representatives from relevant Bilateral Migratory Bird Agreements and relevant IUCN specialist groups; and
- Relevant independent experts on migratory bird ecology and policy.

Governance

The initiative will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from amongst its members.

A steering group may be established to advise the CAF Secretariat, between meetings, composed of representatives of CMS Parties, CAF Range States, other MEAs, international organizations and international NGOs.

Decision making will be done by seeking consensus, as much as possible, among the group.

The initiative will operate by seeking consensus, as much as possible among the group and in accordance with a *modus operandi* which shall be developed once the membership is convened.

Operation

A Secretariat will be established and hosted by the Government of India in coordination with the CMS Secretariat to fulfil the following functions:

- defining, implementing and monitoring of the CAF Programme of Work, in cooperation with all CAF members.
- coordinating the update of the CAF Action Plan;
- organizing the meetings of the initiative and preparing the background documents;
- maintaining and moderating the initiative`s communication platform (website, online workspace);
- facilitating implementation of decisions of the initiative;
- facilitating fundraising and resource mobilization; and
- facilitating engagement with stakeholders within and beyond the membership.

Meetings of the initiative will be convened at appropriate intervals, as considered necessary and funding permitting. Between meetings business will be conducted electronically through an online workspace, which will provide the primary mode of communication.

In collaboration with Parties and relevant international organizations and subject to the availability of funds, the initiative will organize regional workshops in priority areas to assist in the development of appropriate local or regional solutions.

DRAFT DECISION

INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

Directed to the Parties, Range States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of the Central Asian Flyway

14.AA The Parties, Range States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of the Central Asian Flyway are invited to

- a) provide financial resources for the establishment and functioning of the ICAF Secretariat for the Initiative for Central Asian Flyway in the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15;
- b) work in coordination with the Secretariat towards a meeting of the CAF Initiative, organizations and stakeholders and the endorsement of a Programme of Work;
- c) provide resources for the update of the CAF Action Plan.