



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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SAHELO-SAHARAN ANTELOPES: ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON CMS/FFEM PROJECT

Origins of the CMS Concerted Action

Due to increasing pressure on the biodiversity of the African region of Sahara and Sahel, six wild herbivore Species are now either probably extinct (*Oryx Dammah*) or seriously threatened (*Addax nasomaculatus*, *Gazella dama*, *Gazella leptoceros*, *Gazella cuvieri* and *Gazella dorcas*) by human activities such as uncontrolled poaching and overgrazing factors, all made worse by successive droughts during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Range States affected by extinction or population losses are **Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco**, Algeria, **Tunisia, Mali, Niger, Chad**, Sudan, **Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Egypt, Libya** and Ethiopia.

The fourth Conference of Parties (Nairobi, 1994) adopted a resolution that recommended the development and the implementation of an Action Plan for the conservation of the six antelope and gazelle species. Three important milestones marked the implementation of the “Concerted Action” by CMS during the last decade:

- An Action Plan and Declaration were adopted in 1998 in Djerba, Tunisia. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat was also requested to look into the need of developing an MoU among the 14 Range States.
- The Action Plan was updated, during a second workshop held in Agadir, Morocco in May 2003, with delegations of 11 Range States and attended by 80 experts from different conservation bodies. The Range States requested the CMS Secretariat to begin work on drafting the MoU.
- The UNEP/CMS Secretariat and the « Agence Française de Développement (AFD) » signed a bilateral “Convention” approving the CMS/FFEM Project in the margins of the Agadir workshop in 2003.

Initiation of the CMS/FFEM Project: Financial Plan and Institutional Organs

As mentioned by the “Convention”, the CMS and the “Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial” (FFEM) established a partnership through an ambitious project that goes beyond simple species protection in order to help conserve biodiversity in dry areas, combat desertification and promote the rational use of natural resources in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

The CMS/FFEM project focuses on Tunisia, Mali and Niger as pilot projects, with transversal activities (including inventories, training and capacity building) in Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Senegal, making 8 countries in all covered by the project.

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The final costs of the project are estimated at € 15 million, and will engage various other stakeholders as co-financiers:

- France-FFEM, € 1,385,000 (“Convention” signed in Agadir)
- CMS, US\$ 200,000, as a contribution agreed by the Parties (plus funds from UNEP/Nairobi to launch the project and support regional meetings)
- Belgium, US\$ 100,000 as a voluntary contribution in the project
- The Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique (IRSNB), with in-kind contributions for developing the Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes programme since 1996
- Concerned Countries, € 8,500,000 (especially in nature and staff contributions, synergistic projects, e.g. World Bank project in Tunisia, etc.)
- Other actors likely to be interested: GEF, UNESCO, etc

The institutional framework agreed by the “Convention” employs three main techniques to secure efficient implementation. The principles were discussed and agreed in the margins of the Agadir workshop:

- The nomination of a Regional Coordinator Project and agreement of his Terms of Reference (TOR). The Coordinator was presented to the workshop participants.
- The nomination of the Technical Committee (TC) of the project, comprising of 10 international experts and agreement of its TOR.
- Institutional functioning and procedures (essentially through nominations of National Coordinators, definition of annual programmes to present to the TC and FFEM for approval).

According to the agreed institutional framework of the project, the UNEP/CMS secretariat works closely with the “Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique” (IRSNB) as a “CMS Scientific Council Focal point for Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes”. The IRSNB is continuing to play a major role in coordination and scientific aspects. Members of its staff are leading the Working Group of the CMS Scientific Council on SSA. As a result, the Regional Coordinator’s activities are coordinated and supervised by both the UNEP/CMS Secretariat and the IRSNB, through Letters of Agreement. Finally, implementation of activities by the Regional Coordinator is subject to (i) submission of proposals for regional activities; (ii) technical clearance of proposals from the TC; (iii) FFEM non-objection and (iv) administrative and financial clearance preceding the execution according to UN Rules by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat.

Assessment of recent progress

Activities on the ground started in spring 2004, the first of which was the development of the Sahelo-Saharan database. The database is conceived as a conservation tool destined to assemble all existing data and documents on the six concerned species; (i) development of the Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes Concerted Action website comprising an invaluable source of information about the project as a whole, which could be consulted in the CMS website (www.cms.int); (ii) start-up activities in Senegal. Preliminary activities are undertaken in the Ferlo National Park, including the translocation of animals from the Gueumbeul Reserve (Oryx and Gazella dama).

In September 2004 the new team in charge of the project at the UNEP/CMS Secretariat was able to help implementation, especially in regard to the “Tunisian component of the project” and the rules of procedures for financial issues. A meeting was held in Bonn in September 2004 to discuss the project as a whole and also to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the project. The main obstacle identified was finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CMS and Tunisia concerning the Tunisian component of pilot activities. After further negotiations the MoU was signed on 14 December 2004; a letter on pending conditions towards FFEM was signed on 8 February 2005. While the clarification of procedures with the National Coordinator of Tunisia took place, important missions were undertaken on the CMS Secretariat’s initiative, in order to prepare the 2005 Programme. In addition, the CMS Secretariat obtained voluntary funds of €10,000 from German partners to partly finance equipment in the Djebil National park in Tunisia (fencing of over 20.000 ha).

Moreover, both the Regional Coordinator and IRSNB are committed to seeking potential donors and voluntary contributions to add modular activities to the initial project. Prospecting additional possibilities is ongoing, e.g. for training, with some Embassies through the region. The way to address such voluntary contributions for their implementation needs more attention; especially potential donors seek exemption from UNEP/CMS Trust Fund charges of 13% for the entire amount they may pledge.

As the implementing organization, CMS is responsible for the fund management, coordination and administration of the project. The CMS Secretariat recruited a Finance Assistant, in October 2004, according to the terms of the Convention CMS/FFEM.

As at the end of 2004, an expenditure of € 89,000 was incurred from the CMS Trust Fund and € 35,000 has been contributed by FFEM. In this context, UNEP contributed US\$ 25,000 for the reintroduction of Addax in Tunisia and for the development of a complementary proposal for Central Saharan Antelopes (Chad / Niger).

Currently, efforts are under way in preparing the 2005 programme in Tunisia (implementation of the MoU activities), in Niger (signature of the respective MoU as done for Tunisia, definition of key activities) and possibilities to extend the project to the region (Chad). The situation is as follows:

- *Tunisia*

During the year 2003 and 2004, Tunisia identified several projected activities: preparing biological inventories, identifying favourable habitats; reinforcing the Protected Areas network; translocation activities for Addax and Oryx; engagement of the local communities; initialisation of eco-tourism within the Protected Areas Network; and Scientific follow up. **An important programme of Addax and Oryx translocation is planned for October 2005.** Such a programme will help to achieve the Tunisian Strategy and is also a major opportunity to train national representatives of other Range States.

- *Niger*

Following changes in the national coordination of the project in Niger, the programme previously planned after the visit of the Regional Coordinator (November 2003) has not yet begun. CMS and the IRSNB worked together to meet with the SSA project partners in the area for a better information exchange, undertake new and much needed inventories, and implement the administrative and financial rules and regulations of the project.

First contact with the new Director of “Direction Nationale de la Faune, Pêche et Pisciculture” was an opportunity to establish a new relationship with the project and have a common understanding of its activities. It was agreed to finalise a special 2005 programme based on two components (Termit Protected Area and Gadabédji Breeding Centre of *Gazella dama*). The conservation of the Termit massif is one of the major actions in the SSA Concerted Action.

The main outcomes of the most recent mission in February 2005 are as follows (i) Institution of a “Mobile Guard Unit” dealing with the survey of ASS in and around the Termit area; (ii) Implementation of small projects for the benefit of the “Toubou” Community; (iii) Feasibility Study of a Breeding Centre of *Gazella dama* in Gadabédji and research on funding. Further details will be presented at the Standing Committee meeting in April.

Poaching and Illegal Taking

The efforts being made under SSAP by CMS, the Range States and other stakeholders are being undermined by the continuation of poaching or illegal/inappropriate killing of antelopes in key areas. There is a strong body of evidence that hunting parties originating in West Asia are responsible for some and perhaps most of these regrettable activities.

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation share CMS' concern about these developments. As a result of the Secretariat's presentation at the IUCN Congress (November 2004), the President of CIC invited the CMS Executive Secretary to address CIC Members at their General Assembly in Abu Dhabi (UAE) on 12-16 March 2005. The Acting Executive Secretary's address (full text at www.cms.int) included the following observations:

“The efforts of all these actions and the funds we have raised will be wasted if we do not deal with the problem, which threatens to drive some or all of these species to extinction. The problem is poaching and unsustainable hunting in the African Range States. Much of that poaching occurs as a direct consequence of hunting parties from the Western Asian region, who may have permission to catch other species, but whose members or supporters also kill the endangered antelope. The evidence for this is widespread and from many reputable and scientific sources. It cannot continue to be swept under the carpet. There are many, many responsible conservationists within the governments of West Asia and I appeal to them on behalf of CMS, and of the antelopes, to assert themselves and ensure that international laws on protection status are respected. All hunting of these 6 species must be stopped and the populations given a chance to recover. I appeal also to all members of the General Assembly to send an urgent signal from your meeting on this threat to the survival of the Saharan antelopes. In fact, I would ask CIC to be a “champion” for these species. Otherwise, far from reversing the trend of biodiversity losses by 2010, as all the Governments of the world agreed at WSSD 3 years ago, we will be lamenting the loss of these irreplaceable animals within our lifetimes.

Mr President, I shall be working with the key scientists in IUCN, and with other stakeholders including the CIC, to place a report on these critically endangered species before the next Conference of the Parties to CMS in Nairobi, in November 2005. I hope by then, we will be able to report that the key authorities in Africa and West Asia have joined forces to halt the hunting of Saharan antelopes, in line with the declarations made by Governments at Djerba, Tunisia in 1998 and in Agadir, Morocco in 2003”.

Possible WSSD Partnership for Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes

Several features of the SSAP – notably the range of actual and potential stakeholders, the location in a sub-region comprising mainly developing countries, the links between ecosystems and the wider poverty/development agenda, and the need for sustained action over perhaps 10-20 years – are pointers for the formation of a “Type II” Partnership under the criteria set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. Existing WSSD Partnerships such as the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) could act, in part, as models for partnership focussing on the Sahelo-Saharan antelopes in the context of species, ecosystems and dependent human populations. A Partnership would provide a firm but flexible structure to join-up initiatives at international, regional, national and local levels, and by a range of actors (CMS, other international organisations (e.g. UNCCD and IUCN), donors (e.g. GEF), range state governments, international and local NGOs (e.g. SOS Faune/Niger) and user organisations (e.g. CIC). CMS could take the initiative in forming a Partnership, and then over time seek to make the programme as self-supporting as possible.

Action requested

The Standing Committee is requested to take note of the Secretariat report and encourage the Secretariat to (a) continue to roll out the agreed CMS/FFEM project as possible; (b) attract further parties and funding; (c) co-operate with IUCN to provide a paper on scientific and illegal killing issue for COP8 and (d) take soundings on the creation of a WSSD Partnership for SS antelopes.