



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



40th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, Germany, 7-8 November 2012

UNEP/CMS/StC40/7

REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

1. The activities and developments under the Scientific Council (ScC) since COP10 in November 2011 are summarized in this report, which has been prepared by the Chair of the Scientific Council, Dr. Fernando Spina.

Contacts within CMS

2. **CMS Secretariat:** after my appointment as Chair of the ScC at COP10 in November 2011 I considered it was important for me to visit and meet the CMS Secretariat. I could find the necessary resources through the Italian Environment Ministry and spent four days in Bonn in January (16-19). The Secretariat efficiently organized a detailed agenda, which offered me the opportunity to meet all staff and be briefed on the various activities and aspects relevant to the ScC in general and my role in particular. I wish to take this opportunity to warmly thank the CMS Secretariat for this opportunity. In contact with, or following requests from, the Secretariat, I have contributed to draft a few letters of support for urgent conservation measures in specific key sites or towards endangered species.

Scientific Council:

3. **Work-space** (see para 7. below): I have contacted the ScC members to brief them on the forthcoming work-space for the ScC and also to ask them to inform me about activities undertaken by the individual members of the ScC;

4. **Species focal points:** I have mailed (twice) all chairs of the taxonomic groups about the need to find focal points for concerted and cooperative action species and for all App. I and II species. I have had a positive reaction from William Perrin on marine mammals; I have recently spoken with the Secretariat about the need to produce TORs for these focal points;

5. **Possible restricted ScC meeting, 2013:** given the decision taken by COP10 to have only one full meeting of the ScC before COP11 (in 2014), I have tried to find resources to organize a meeting of a restricted version of the ScC in 2013 in Italy. I have contacted the Municipality of Gaeta and the Administration of the local *Parco Regionale Riviera di Ulisse*, asking them to fully support this meeting up to a maximum of € 20,000.00. I have produced a concept document to explain the aim of the meeting and the possible interest for the Gaeta Municipality and contributed to drafting the official letter which has been sent by the Secretariat. The proposal foresees also the organization of a one-day workshop, immediately after the ScC meeting, dedicated to the socio-economic value of migratory species for local populations. The proposal also requests logistics to have, attached to this restricted meeting of the ScC, the annual meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB). Our proposal is presently under consideration by the possible local hosts.

6. **Document on Organizational changes to the Scientific Council:** I have been involved in consultation and provided comments to this document prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/CMS/StC40/11.3) which includes proposals to improve the efficiency of the ScC according to the recommendations of the Future Shape process.
7. **Online work-space for the ScC:** on the occasion of my visit to Bonn I asked to have a meeting with AEWA, as I had been informed about the web work-space AEWA has for its Technical Committee (TC) and I had considered proposing AEWA to allow for this most useful tool to be adapted for supporting the work of the CMS ScC. The meeting I had with AEWA was very positive and resulted in subsequent further direct contacts with the CMS Secretariat, the latter being able to find the necessary resources for the adaptation of this web tool. A tender has been opened and to date we are expecting the contractor to have this work finalized by end of September. An initial training session for the Secretariat and me is foreseen for late September. I am sure the work-space will represent a useful tool for the ScC, especially in the intersessional periods.
8. **Raptors MoU:** during COP10 I proposed to Nick Williams to consider the potential contribution that an analysis of raptor migration data stored at the EURING Data Bank (<http://www.euring.org/edb/index.html>) would offer to the Raptors MoU, as a sound scientific basis helping to identify and prioritize conservation efforts. Nick showed a strong interest, hence I put him in touch with the EURING President Prof. Franz Bairlein and Chairman Dr. Wolfgang Fiedler. These contacts led to a meeting between Nick, Franz and Wolfgang, which took place in August in Bonn, and cooperation is now being formalized for example data analyses to be presented at the forthcoming MOS1 in December in Abu Dhabi.
9. **Saker Falcon Task Force (STF):** I contributed to the discussions and negotiations during COP10 for the listing of the Saker Falcon on Appendix I. As a member of the Task Force established under Res. 10.28 I took part to the first meeting which was hosted by ICU in Abu Dhabi (28-30.3.2012). I contributed to the meeting and I am presently waiting for actions to be planned through the chair of the STF also towards potential donors for the foreseen Action Plan (AP), including the EU.
10. **World Migratory Bird Day:** I was in touch with Francisco Rilla about WMBD 2012 and produced one of the annual statements for CMS. For WMBD 2013 I have contacted Prof. Theunis Piersma who is one of the world's top scientists in bird migration and has experience of special music performances together with a Dutch composer. I put Dr. Francisco Rilla in touch with Prof. Piersma.
11. **Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG):** as a member of the SWG I have been in touch with the Chair, Ines Verleye, on aspects related also to the ScC. I have contributed to the revision of the proposals originated from the tender, with a more detailed evaluation of the selected one.
12. **CMS Small Grants Programme (SGP) 2012:** I have been involved in the selection process for the 2012 CMS small grants, and contributed to the evaluation of the many excellent projects that have been submitted.
13. **Draft Action Plan "Improving the Conservation Status of Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region":** immediately after the closure of COP10 in Bergen, I chaired the first meeting of the core team on this new CMS initiative, to plan how to start the necessary preparatory actions and decide on a first meeting on the AP. In the following months I was involved, within this same team, in drafting the first version of the proposed AP. I attended the 1st meeting for the AP which took place in Ghana 31.8 – 2.9.2012. During the meeting I was also the rapporteur of the working group on gaps in knowledge.

Contacts with other MEAs and international scientific organisations

14. **UNCCD:** during my visit to Bonn in January I asked for the possibility of meeting representatives of UNCCD. The meeting was kindly organized and I was joined by Borja Heredia, who facilitated a discussion with Dr. Victor Castillo. I proposed a possible co-operation between CMS and UNCCD based on the problem of desertification leading to progressively larger ecological barriers to be crossed by landbird migrants moving between Eurasia and Africa. I proposed monitoring the use migrants make of areas which are replanted within the activities of UNCCD and relying on these migrants as indicators of the effects of such soil protection schemes for the conservation of biodiversity. After the meeting, I produced a concept document which I submitted to the Secretariat for their evaluation. Based on the positive comments from the Secretariat, there has been a meeting between the latter and representatives of UNCCD. To date, potential to activate such possible co-operation is being considered between CMS and UNCCD.

15. Through contacts and co-operation with Laura Cerasi, I also contributed drafting the text of a box on the above mentioned issues for a book on drylands biodiversity by UNCCD, IUCN and others (Davies, J., Poulsen, L., Schulte-Herbrüggen, B., Mackinnon, K., Crawhall, N., Henwood, W.D., Dudley, N., Smith, J. and Gudka, M. 2012. *Conserving Dryland Biodiversity*.xii +84p).

16. **Fifth Meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB):** together with Borja Heredia, I joined the 5th meeting of CSAB (Dublin, 25.3.2012). During the meeting I contributed to the discussion on various agenda items, including harmonization of species nomenclature, offered some ideas of possible activities to be jointly realized by different MEAs and proposed to redraft an existing list of activities the various MEAs foresee towards implementation of each of the Aichi targets.

17. **IPBES:** I represented CMS at the 2nd session of the plenary meeting on IPBES (Panama City, 15-22.4.2012). During the meeting I had a series of contacts, details of which I have reported already to the Secretariat:

- a) I joined the preliminary Stakeholders Day and presented the perspective and features of CMS. I was permanently in touch with representatives of the other MEAs and contributed to drafting joint statements which will be included in the documents of the meeting;
- b) I contributed to the discussions about the definition of Regions under IPBES;
- c) together with the ScC Vice-chair Dr. Malta Qwathekana I had contacts for possible regional meetings to foster co-operation across MEAs in Africa (with Dr. Tone Solhaug from Norway and together with CBD) and Latin America (with Dr. Alex Pires from UNEP, Regional Office Latin America and the Caribbean);
- d) I met Dr. Edgar Selvin Perez, Director of National Council for Protected Areas from Guatemala, and discussed with him the possibility of Guatemala joining CMS. I provided the Secretariat with direct contacts of Dr. Edgar Selvin Perez;
- e) also after contacts I had with representatives of the indigenous peoples at IPBES, and in view of the next COP possibly taking place in Latin America, I have considered ways to involve the world of indigenous knowledge and traditions from a perspective of migratory species. I have more recently submitted a very general concept document to the Secretariat for their evaluation.

18. After the Panama meeting and following a specific request from IPBES to the different MEAs, I have submitted to the Secretariat some ideas and proposals about the contribution CMS

can offer within IPBES on:

- a) overview of assessments;
- b) conceptual framework to guide the work of the platform;
- c) capacity building needs and activities;
- d) process for receiving and prioritizing requests from Governments and MEAs.

Most of these ideas and comments have been forwarded from the Secretariat to IPBES.

19. **Icarus Project:** I represented CMS at a first meeting in Rome (9-11.1.2012) and a second one in Ringberg (Munich, 8-11.7.2012), the latter together with Dr. Aline Kuehl from the Secretariat. In Rome, I presented aspects of interest of CMS for the type of data Icarus might allow collecting across groups of species and showed a possible specific study case on landbird migratory birds between Eurasia and Africa. In Ringberg I pointed out the reasons why Icarus was included in one of the COP10 resolutions and explained the importance of sound scientific information for the implementation of CMS instruments. After the meeting I was in touch with the Icarus coordinator Prof. Martin Wikelski on projects I had informally submitted in Rome and whose interest within the Icarus strategic plan has been confirmed.

Closing remarks

20. This first period of my activity as ScC Chair has been extremely interesting and I wish to thank the Secretariat for all the support and advice I was able to benefit from. Despite being aware that the ScC is a large community of busy experts, I found the average reaction I received from the members of the ScC to requests I put forward below my expectations; from this respect, however, I still maintain my hopes that the web work-space will lead to more concrete involvement of Councillors.

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a. take note of the report of the Chair of the Scientific Council and provide comments, as appropriate;
- b. provide guidance concerning further work and activities of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council.