



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

Summary

The present document is the report on the activities undertaken by the Chair of the Scientific Council, Dr. Fernando Spina, since the 40th Meeting of the Standing Committee, as of 31 July 2013.

These various activities are carried out as part of the Scientific Council Work Programme, the CMS Strategic Plan and the mandate emanated from COP Resolutions and the Future Shape process.

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REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

I. GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE CONVENTION

a. Promotion of the Scientific Council online workspace

1. The workspace for the Scientific Council (ScC) has been launched thanks to efforts and funds provided by the Secretariat, in response to a proposal which I had been put forward. I have used the workspace to contact members of the ScC and to distribute documents. In particular, all councillors have been sent a detailed work programme produced by the Science Unit, listing all ScC tasks deriving from COP decisions. Each councillor has been requested to list the activities to which he/she wishes to contribute. I also used the workspace to circulate a proposal of a new possible structure and *modus operandi* for the ScC. It is clear that, despite the huge potential represented by the workspace to facilitate involvement of councillors and stimulate their contribution to the work of the Scientific Council, this is not enough to have even a reasonable percentage of members active at any meaningful level. The weak response of Councillors to messages, requests and proposals is a problem that urgently needs to be addressed.

b. Proposal on structure of the ScC based on general conservation issues

2. As for the structure and *modus operandi* of the Scientific Council, I have produced a brainstorming document proposing the establishment of small working groups within the Council, which would be based on:

- i. specific biological and demographic aspects (e.g., demography, connectivity);
- ii. methods in conservation biology (e.g., marking, analytical approaches to best describe biological aspects); and
- iii. conservation issues (e.g., bycatch, electrocution, noise).

3. Such working groups would add their expertise to similar issues across taxa or groups of taxa, with the aim of producing best practice protocols to develop optimal approaches to be implemented when planning and implementing conservation strategies. Only one Councillor has reacted with positive comments to this proposal.

c. Contribution to the new CMS Strategic Plan

4. I took part in the Meeting of the Strategic Plan Working Group in November 2012 and have followed its activities since. I have proposed considering the individual Aichi Targets in the light of migratory species and produced a draft relating to Target 1. Due to lack of time I have not pursued the other targets, although I still plan to do this before the next meeting of the Working Group.

d. Proposal for and preparation of a strategic and planning meeting of the ScC, Italy, October 2013

5. Given the operational reality and problems of the Scientific Council, the tasks referred to in the PAGA (Planning, Assessment and Gap Analysis) and the *modus operandi* of the Scientific Council derived from COP10 decisions and the need for the Council to contribute

to the CMS strategy in the framework of cooperation with other MEAs, I have proposed to the Secretariat a strategic and planning meeting of a small component of the Scientific Council. My proposal is to involve: representatives of the Secretariat, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council., COP-appointed councillors, chairs of the scientific advisory bodies of the CMS Family instruments and key persons of the Secretariats of the CMS Family instruments.

6. I have found logistic support and funds to cover part of the costs related to the meeting through the Municipality of Gaeta and the Regional Park Riviera di Ulisse in Italy. The meeting will take place in the week 7-12 October 2013 and will feature other meetings (see below) and a final workshop, which I propose should be devoted to the economic value of migratory species. The latter will feature three keynote addresses by the Chair of the Terrestrial Mammals Working Group (Roseline Beudels), the COP-appointed councillor for marine mammals (Bill Perrin) and the COP-appointed councillor for birds (Leon Bennun).

II. ASPECTS RELATED TO CMS FAMILY INSTRUMENTS AND SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

a. Raptors Memorandum of Understanding

7. I have contributed to further developing the scientific base of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) through improving the knowledge of species- and population-specific flyways, as well as conservation problems as described through causes and spatio-temporal distribution of migratory raptors mortality. I have supported the establishment of a specific project. The Coordination Unit (CU) has requested EURING to carry out a pilot analysis of recoveries of ringed birds. The species selected are Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Black Kite *M. migrans*.

8. I took part in the Raptors MoU Meeting in Abu Dhabi, 7-12 December 2012. I have contributed to the general discussions and, based on a specific request from EURING and in agreement with the CU, I have presented the results of the Raptors MoU-EURING analysis and led a side event specifically related to this cooperation. The results of these pilot analyses have confirmed the potential of ring-recovery data collected across a long historical period for describing:

- i. species and population specific flyways; identifying main human-related causes of mortality;
- ii. the spatio-temporal distribution of the various categories of causes of death; and
- iii. how human-related mortality may show variability over time, in the seasonal and geographical distribution of the areas with highest rates of, e.g., electrocution, illegal killing, road accidents, etc.

9. Such analyses on a large number of migrating raptor species would offer a sound scientific basis to conservation strategies under the MoU.

b. Saker Falcon Task Force

10. As a member of the Saker Falcon Task Force, I have contributed to the discussions and decisions and to revising draft documents on sustainable use and the Action Plan. I have

joined teleconferences of the Working Group. I have put forward a proposal to include the Saker as a special target species within the International Waterbird Counts 2014 organized by Wetlands International (WI). I have made this proposal to WI and kept contacts with the central organizers; the proposal has been accepted by WI and we are now requested to provide information material and pictures to distribute together with the field protocols to all counters in Europe, Africa and Asia. This attempt might offer new insights on the winter distribution of the species and some indication of numbers of wintering falcons.

c. Landbirds Action Plan

11. I have taken part in the activities of the Working Group. I have provided contacts which have allowed the inclusion of key ornithologists in the group. I have joined teleconferences and contributed to the revision of draft documents.

d. Minimizing Poisoning Working Group

12. As a member of the Steering Group, I have taken part in teleconferences and contributed to revising drafted documents. On 27-28 May 2013 I participated in the Technical Workshop on Migratory Birds Poisoning within the Tunis Bird Conservation Week. During the Meeting I was the facilitator of the break-out group on rodenticides. I contributed to the general discussion, with special reference also to the problem of lead.

e. World Migratory Bird Day 2013

13. I have produced a statement for WMBD 2013 about the significance of song in incoming migrants¹. I proposed holding an operatic concert to celebrate migrant birds on the bicentenary anniversary of Giuseppe Verdi, one of the world's most famous operatic composers. The offer arose from my being a member of the Opera Choir Corale San Rocco from Bologna. The project was possible thanks to the enthusiastic support offered by the CMS and AEWAS Secretariats and the Municipality of Bonn. The concert took place on 12 May 2013².

III. CONTACTS WITH OTHER MEAS AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS

a. IPBES

14. I represented the Scientific Council at the IPBES plenary that took place in Bonn in January 2013 and contributed to the general discussions and contacts with representatives of the Platform and of other MEAs. I spoke on behalf of CMS at one of the TV interviews which were broadcast through the media on the occasion of the meeting.

15. After the Bonn meeting I contributed to drafting CMS proposals for the IPBES Work Programme. In particular I drafted those on traditional knowledge and climate change. I was nominated by the Secretariat to represent CMS at an IPBES Meeting on traditional knowledge scheduled for June 2013 in Japan, but this proposal was not accepted by the organizers.

16. Together with the Chair of the Standing Committee, I represented CMS during the First Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel Meeting in Bergen, Norway 1-6 June 2013,

¹ http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/2013/images/stories/wmbd/2013/statements/fernando_spina_wmbd_statement_2013.pdf

² http://www.cms.int/news/PRESS/nwPR2013/05_may/nw_140513_bologna_choir_wmbd_concert.html

and contributed to discussions and break-out groups. At the close of the Meeting I was invited by the Chair of the Bureau, Prof. Zakri to deliver a final statement on behalf of CMS. This statement was well received and I was requested to circulate it to all participants of the Meeting.

b. Bern Convention, Council of Europe

17. On the invitation of the organizers, I took part to the Second Conference on Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade of Wild Birds, Tunis, Tunisia, 29-30 May 2013. During the Meeting I chaired the session on biological and institutional aspects. The final draft Action Plan which originated from the Meeting foresees a concrete involvement of CMS in contributing to improving the scientific knowledge required to better evaluate and tackle the conservation consequences of illegal bird killing.

c. CSAB

18. I worked on the planning of the 6th Meeting of CSAB in 2013, which CMS offered to host. I have contributed to the negotiations which have recently led to the confirmation that the Meeting will be hosted by our Convention, on 7 October 2013 in Formia-Gaeta, Italy. Within the activities of CSAB, a special meeting on bird taxonomy and nomenclature will be held on 8 October 2013, aimed at harmonizing the taxonomy and nomenclature adopted by each of the MEAs.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS

19. This second year of my activity as Chair of the Scientific Council has been again very interesting and busy. I wish to thank the Secretariat for all the support and advice from which I was able to benefit. I feel urgent consideration needs to be given to ensuring more active involvement of Scientific Councillors, given also the availability of the workspace, the potential of which still needs to be fully realized by all members of the Council. I request that the proposal I put forward to set up specific working groups within the Council should be critically considered by the Standing Committee. I feel that now is the moment for improving the profile and strengthening the role of CMS within the MEAs. Equally, I am convinced CMS has an important contribution to offer within the new opportunities offered by IPBES.

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.