



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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CONSERVATION ISSUES

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)

1. This paper reports progress made since COP10 on various conservation activities following on from recommendations from the 17th meeting of the Scientific Council, Resolutions passed by COP10, as well as on-going activities.

Small Grants Programme

2. Since its inception in 1994 at the Fourth Conference of the Parties, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) has played a crucial role in strengthening the implementation of the Convention. After several years of dormancy resulting from a lack of funds, the Programme has been revived thanks to a voluntary contribution by UNEP for the 2012-2014 triennium. The first cohort of projects has been successfully selected and kick-started in October 2012. Due to the large number and high quality of applications (75 in total), as well as the considerable amount of time invested by the Secretariat in the assessment procedure, in total 12 projects with grants worth US\$200,000 have been selected in close consultation with the Scientific Council. Projects range from snow leopard conservation in Central Asia to empowering fishing communities in Congo to conserve coastal dolphins, and include fish, bats, marine mammals, turtles, terrestrial mammals and several bird projects. The next call for applications is envisaged to be made in late 2013.

African Eurasian Migratory Landbirds

3. Pursuant to Resolution 10.27 on Improving the Conservation Status of African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds, a Working Group has been created under the Scientific Council to develop an Action Plan. A meeting of the Working Group took place in Accra (Ghana) from 31 August to 2 September 2012, at the kind invitation of the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission of Ghana. The organization of this meeting was made possible thanks to a voluntary contribution from Switzerland. BirdLife International provided additional funds for the hiring of a Coordinator, whose main role is to draft the Action Plan in close cooperation with the Working Group; this expert is now fully on board.

4. As a result of the meeting in Accra, the Working Group requests the Standing Committee permission to start the implementation of some research activities foreseen in the Action Plan, at no cost to CMS. The Working Group also agreed to ask the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention to engage in the implementation of the Action Plan in partnership with CMS, in particular in relation to the illegal killing of birds in some European countries.

Poisoning of migratory birds

5. Resolution 10.26 on minimizing the risks of poisoning to migratory birds requests the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to undertake a detailed assessment of the scope and severity of poisoning on migratory birds and how this varies geographically and across taxa. To undertake

this task a Working Group has been established under the Scientific Council. Thanks to a voluntary contribution of the United Kingdom and a contribution of the Interim Coordinating Unit of the UNEP/CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU), it will be possible to hire a consultant to do this review and act as coordinator and facilitator of the Working Group. Terms of reference for this coordinator have been drafted and a call for tenders was published in late September 2012.

Saker Falcon

6. As a consequence of the listing of the Saker Falcon, excluding the populations of Mongolia, on Appendix I at COP10, a Task Force has been established under the auspices of the Raptors MoU Secretariat to bring together Range States, partners and other interested Parties to develop a coordinated Global Action Plan, including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the Saker Falcon. A meeting of the Task Force took place in March 2012 in Abu Dhabi and it is envisaged to organize a workshop in 2013, funds permitting, to develop the Global Action Plan.

Invasive species

7. The 17th meeting of the Scientific Council recommended that a review be undertaken on the impacts of invasive alien species on migratory species and measures to mitigate that impact. Terms of reference for this review have been prepared and funds from a long-standing voluntary contribution from Italy have been committed to do this desk study. A call for tenders was made in April 2012 and the contract was awarded to the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, with the University of Auckland (New Zealand) acting as a contractor.

Ecological Networks: Ethiopia project and case study compilation

8. Within the framework of Resolution 10.3 on the Role of Ecological Networks in the Conservation of Migratory Species, the CMS Secretariat is undertaking a project in Ethiopia to investigate the migration corridor in the Gambella region between Ethiopia and South Sudan and to improve the gazetting of an existing protected area. The project is funded by a voluntary contribution from Norway and aims to understand the ecological network of the transboundary migration corridor through satellite-collaring White-eared kob, a migratory antelope which shares its habitat with elephants and other large herbivores. The implementation partner in Ethiopia is the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) playing an important advisory role. The Gambella region is home to one of the most important migrations of terrestrial mammals in Africa, and at the same time it is experiencing a number of pressures that are largely related to human encroachment and land conversion for agriculture. Two kob were fitted with satellite collars in June 2012 and it is expected that more will be collared in 2013. In September 2012 it was found that one of the collars was not working for reasons as yet unknown.

9. Following on from COP10 request to the Secretariat to compile case studies on the effectiveness of ecological network systems for migratory species to date (paragraph 10, UNEP/CMS/Res.10.3), the Secretariat has recruited a team of scientific interns who are reviewing the literature and preparing case studies on different taxonomic groups and various geographic regions. To date the case studies include Siberian cranes, great bustards, African elephants, turtles in South-East Asia, jaguars, sturgeons and gorillas. A first draft of the case studies is envisaged to be ready in late 2012 for review by the Scientific Council through the online workspace.

10. Funds are currently sought to prepare guidelines and a strategic review on ecological networks as requested by paragraph 10 of the above-mentioned Resolution 10.3. Together with the

case studies, this document will be the main background document for Parties to adopt concrete measures for ecological network development for migratory species through a Resolution at COP11 in 2014.

Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes

11. This programme emanates from a concerted action for Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes adopted in 1991 and 1994, as well as an Action Plan adopted in 1998. It remains one of the more long-term conservation initiatives undertaken by CMS. The current phase of activities in the Range States is funded by the EU and will come to an end in 2012. It focuses on Niger and Chad and particularly in the area of the Termit tin Toumma in Niger, one of the few remaining hotspots of Saharan biodiversity where the last wild Addax are present. One of the milestones of the project was the designation of the Termit as the largest protected area in Africa with 97,000 km² protected in March 2012, concluding many years of research on the ground and close work with the authorities of Niger to designate the protected area. Efforts now concentrate on developing a management plan and to increase surveillance in the area to prevent poaching and other disturbance from oil exploitation.

12. A new phase of the project will begin in 2013 with funding from the *Agence Française pour l'Environnement* (AFD) under the programme FISONG (*Facilité d'Innovation Sectorielle pour les ONG*) in support to NGOs. It will aim at involving the local pastoral communities in the protection and management of the Termit protected area. CMS will not manage these funds directly but will continue to be involved as part of the project's Steering Committee.

13. In Chad CMS is supporting the Sahara Conservation Fund on a project to reintroduce the extinct Scimitar-horned Oryx in the area of Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim. A workshop took place in May 2012 to plan the first steps of the reintroduction with the Chadian authorities and local communities.

ICARUS project

14. CMS is collaborating with the ICARUS (International Cooperation for Animal Research using Space) project by the Max-Planck Institute for Ornithology and other experts on tracking small animals. The European Space Station which is due to be launched in 2014 will carry a specific component for animal tracking. Specific tags are currently being developed which are likely to revolutionize our understanding of animal movement, especially for small animals since the tags developed by ICARUS collaborators include ones weighing just 5g and 1g.

15. The Chair of the Scientific Council and the Secretariat participated in the First ICARUS Planning Meeting in July 2012 (Lake Tegernsee, Germany), highlighting which CMS mandates ICARUS could significantly contribute to. These included the need for small tags to inform the White-winged flufftail Action Plan and others, deep-sea tracking devices for sharks and other marine migrants, to make use of tagging data so that migratory species can serve as indicators for climate change, to better understand pathogen transmission mortality, and to guide spatial planning of infrastructure or other human uses such as shipping. Several ICARUS proposed conservation projects are currently in the final phase of development and include a sizable number of CMS species and issues, which are likely to be highly beneficial to the conservation of migratory species across the globe.

New IUCN knowledge product for measuring biodiversity value of a given area

16. The Secretariat participated in an IUCN workshop on "Consolidating criteria to identify sites of global relevance for biodiversity" in June 2012 in Cambridge, UK, to highlight the urgent

need for “Key Biodiversity Areas” identification or a similar tool for migratory species conservation. The Cambridge workshop addressed the growing need for tools to assess the “biodiversity value” of a particular site (e.g. Aichi Target 11). Methods to identify “key sites” exist for certain taxonomic and ecological groups, including Important Bird Areas (IBAs), Ramsar Wetland sites, Important Plant Areas (IPAs), sites identified by the Alliance for Zero Extinction and the AEWA Critical Site Network Tool, but there is no consistent methodology which covers all of biodiversity. The IUCN Cambridge workshop brought scientists, conservationists, several CMS Parties, industry and policy makers together to agree the scope, scale, end user group and governance arrangements of this new “knowledge product” of IUCN, which is envisaged to become a global tool just like the IUCN Red List.

Marine Debris

17. Upon invitation by the German NGO NABU, the Secretariat represented both CMS and ASCOBANS at a symposium focusing on marine debris, its sources and strategies for avoiding its entry into the marine ecosystem on 29 February 2012. The vulnerability of marine ecosystems and the migratory species depending on them was highlighted by means of a talk delivered to the audience comprising representatives of the packaging industry, recycling industry, politicians, research institutions and civil society. The occasion was also used to promote Resolution 10.4 on bycatch and findings of the symposium will be fed into the reviews Parties requested of the Scientific Council in this resolution.

Gillnet Bycatch

18. Facilitated through the Secretariat, the German NGO Friends of CMS in 2010 had funded the development of a prototype for an alternative mitigation device, the so-called Porpoise Alarm (PAL). This technology, which similarly to acoustic deterrent devices (pingers) is attached to gillnets, does not chase harbour porpoises away, but emits a species-specific warning call to make them aware of the danger posed by gillnets. After some further small-scale funding from various sources, the German Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institute for Baltic Sea Fisheries announced in September 2012 that large-scale trials and practical tests in commercial fisheries will be carried out with funding from the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection to develop these devices further until they are ready for the market. This project contributes to the implementation of Resolution 10.14 and is a good example of involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the development and testing of mitigation measures.

Action requested:

- a. The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this report and to comment, as appropriate.
- b. In accordance to point 4 above related to the Landbirds Action Plan, the Standing Committee is requested to provide permission to start the implementation of some research activities foreseen in the Action Plan in relation with surveys and monitoring of Landbirds in the wintering areas.