



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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## CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE (CAMI)

### Summary

In response to multiple mandates (notably Concerted and Cooperative Actions, Rec.8.23 and Rec.9.1, Res.10.3 and Res.10.9), CMS has strengthened its work for the conservation of large mammals in the central Asian region and developed the concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*.

This document explains the rationale for developing this initiative, outlining:

- (i) the importance of migratory mammals in the region;
- (ii) COP decisions mandating CMS to strengthen its work for their conservation;
- (iii) activities that are being carried out on single species and to address major threats; and
- (iv) an explanation of the concept proposed with the *CAMI* as a regional initiative, including a description of the process to assess conservation gaps and needs and to develop a programme of work as a strategic framework document associated with the *CAMI*.

## CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE (CAMI)

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)

### Introduction

1. Since the entry on duty of a Regional Officer for Central Asia (a Junior Professional Officer funded by the German Government) in October 2010, the Secretariat has been able to make progress in the implementation of a number of instruments and mandates relevant for species occurring in the central Asian region.

2. This document outlines the activities that are being carried out within the CMS framework with regard to the conservation of large mammals and their habitat in central Asia. It starts with an overview on the importance of central Asia for large mammal migrations, the different mandates that have led CMS to focus its engagement in this region, the activities that are being carried out on single species and to address major threats, followed by an explanation of the concept to develop a coherent framework for implementing these activities, provisionally called the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*. Finally, the process towards developing this initiative is described, which includes the development of a programme of work based on an assessment of conservation gaps and needs.

### Importance of the region for migratory mammals

3. The central Asian region harbours the largest intact and still interconnected grasslands worldwide. It is of global importance for many migratory mammals, which rely on large steppe, desert and mountain ecosystems that still enable essential long-distance movements and ensure their long-term survival. Mass migrants in this region include CMS-listed species such as Saiga *Saiga spp.*, Mongolian gazelle *Procapra gutturosa* and Kulan *Equus hemionus*.

4. Facing varying environmental conditions across space and time that define habitable areas, these species depend on moving freely over long distances, including across international borders. The region is one of the world's last remaining hotspots of large ungulate migrations, which are both a wonderful spectacle and a key structuring force for the ecosystems, often referred to as the "Serengeti of the North".

5. While the expanse, remoteness and difficult terrain of the region have still left large parts mostly untouched by modern civilization, migratory mammals are in decline, with some species having undergone dramatic population reductions in recent decades. Saiga Antelope populations for instance have declined by 95 per cent in ten years following the collapse of the Soviet Union due to excessive poaching and trade in the species' meat and horn.

6. The situation is about to deteriorate further since central Asia is not only rich in biodiversity, but also rich in oil and gas, metals and coal. Numerous long-distance railways and road networks are being constructed to provide the infrastructure for the large-scale extraction of natural resources and economic development, leading to widespread destruction and fragmentation of grasslands and ecosystems. Many migration routes are at risk of becoming bisected by railways, fences and pipelines causing barriers to essential movements to feeding and breeding grounds. Poaching, habitat degradation from overgrazing by livestock and conversion to agriculture, overhunting, illegal trade and potentially climate change put further pressure on the animals. Because many populations are already small, the impact of these various threats is likely to be further exacerbated.

7. There is thus an urgent need for science-based and internationally coordinated conservation measures across Range States, ensuring the survival of the species, their migrations and habitats, as well as sustainable benefits to people.

### **Concerted and Cooperative Actions: Central Eurasian Aridland Mammals**

8. Most of the terrestrial migratory mammal species occurring in the region are already listed on the Appendices of the CMS. These include the Bukhara/Yarkand deer *Cervus elaphus yarkandensis* (which is listed on both Appendix I and II), Wild camel *Camelus bactrianus*, Wild yak *Bos grunniens*, Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and the Snow leopard *Uncia uncia*, which are listed on CMS Appendix I. The last four of these are also designated for Concerted Action, thereby prioritizing these amongst all Appendix I species for particular attention (UNEP/CMS/Res.10.23). A further six species, the Saiga Antelope *Saiga spp.*, Kiang *Equus kiang*, Argali *Ovis ammon*, Mongolian gazelle *Procapra gutturosa*, Goitered gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*, and the Kulan *Equus hemionus* are listed on CMS Appendix II with the last four being designated for Cooperative Action (UNEP/CMS/Res.10.23).

9. With Recommendations 8.23 and 9.1, CMS Parties recognized that most Eurasian migratory mammals are in a “profoundly unsatisfactory state of conservation” and that the region’s “arid lands, with their exceptional natural and cultural heritage and their unique migration phenomena, are a crucial area for the action of the Convention”. The Recommendations also requested the Scientific Council, in cooperation with the Secretariat, the Government of Mongolia and other concerned Parties to pursue the Central Eurasian Aridland Concerted Action and associated Cooperative Action, including the development of an Action Plan and status reports for all species concerned.

10. A first draft of an Action Plan was tabled at the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Council in 2011 (CMS/ScC17/Doc.13). While urging for more action on Central Asian mammals, the meeting however did not reach agreement on the finalization of the document. This Concerted and Cooperative Action constitutes the main reference and starting point for developing the proposed *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*, which is described in more detail below.

### **Existing single-species instruments**

11. In addition, a number of activities and instruments have been developed under CMS for the conservation of single species. Through the Saiga Antelope and the Bukhara Deer MoUs, CMS is already working together with many countries and organizations in the region to enhance the conservation of those species and their habitat and to tackle common threats, such as from overexploitation, illegal trade, infrastructure development and mining. See also document UNEP/CMS/StC41/18 for more details on the activities to implement these MoUs.

12. The Secretariat, in cooperation with range states and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) has also initiated the development of an international single-species action plan for the conservation of Argali *Ovis ammon* following the listing on Appendix II at COP10 (see Action Plan as UNEP/CMS/ScC18/Doc.5.1.3). Discussions are ongoing to identify a suitable coordination mechanism to ensure sustainable implementation of the Action Plan, possibly in the frame of the *CAMI* (see also UNEP/CMS/StC40/Doc.21.a Annex). However, even as a stand-alone tool the action plan is seen as a useful common reference for Range States to align their management and conservation actions for Argali, and improve their trans-boundary cooperation.

## Addressing common threats to migratory mammals in the region

13. In addition to activities focused on single species, the Secretariat has been active to address urgent and major threats faced by all or most of the species, such as overexploitation and illegal trade in cooperation with CITES<sup>1</sup> and TRAFFIC<sup>2</sup>. The CMS CITES Joint Work Programme 2012-2014, for example, covers close collaboration on the Saiga Antelope and Snow leopards, as well as a suite of other illegal trade matters (UNEP/CMS/StC38/Doc.3). CMS has also been particularly active to address the rapid growth of linear infrastructure in the region in order to understand and reduce its impact on migratory mammals. Removing barriers to migration has become a key priority for the conservation and free movement of many steppe and mountain ungulates.

14. Together with the German and Mongolian Governments, CMS organized a workshop to address the impacts from mining and infrastructure on migratory mammals, resulting in a Declaration of Intent and associated Action Plan. Under the Saiga MoU, a study has been initiated to assess the impact of a border fence and railroad construction in Kazakhstan on Saiga and develop recommendations for mitigating these. Addressing habitat fragmentation from these barriers to migration also contributes to the implementation of Res.10.3 on ecological networks.

## The CMS Future Shape Process

15. In addition to these regional, species- and instrument-related mandates, the decisions taken by CMS Parties on the Future Shape of CMS have also been guiding the work of the Secretariat in central Asia. With Res.10.9 on future strategies and structure of CMS and the CMS Family, CMS Parties adopted a set of prioritized activities to strengthen the Convention's contribution to the worldwide conservation, management and sustainable use of migratory species over their entire range.

16. The following activities, annexed to Res.10.9 and covering the nine-year mandate of the Future Shape, are of particular relevance with regard to the work of the Convention in central Asia, and for developing the CAMI:

- ***Activity 2:*** *Improved partnership working, including to encourage more NGOs and private sector to become engaged in Agreements and MoUs (2.2);*
- ***Activity 8:*** *Identify opportunities for cooperation and coordination at the local and regional level through the creation of synergies based on geography, including to regionalize conservation efforts by having local coordinators with assistance from UNEP, NGOs and MEAs, leading to greater presence in each of the regions if appropriate. (8.1 and 8.2);*
- ***Activity 11:*** *Seek opportunities to coordinate meetings between institutions, working groups and across the CMS Family agreements;*
- ***Activity 15:*** *Enhanced collaboration between CMS agreements via Secretariats or via merger of agreements based on either geography/ecology or on species clusters, including cooperation and coordination between agreement programmes and projects based on species clustering, thematic issues or geography as appropriate (15.1);*

<sup>1</sup> CITES – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna.

<sup>2</sup> TRAFFIC - The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network.

## **The concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)***

17. Against this background, the Secretariat has worked towards reconciling the different mandates in order to use available synergies and achieve more efficient implementation, resulting in the concept for a regional initiative, provisionally called the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*. CAMI follows up directly from the Future Shape process calling for geographic synergies and cost-effective implementation of overlapping mandates. Due to a strong emphasis on synergies, it is further designed to strengthen collaboration with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, NGOs and other bodies engaged in large mammal conservation in the region.

18. With a view to complying with Res.10.9, and to harmonizing implementation of the different mandates and instruments, and after consultations between the Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific Council in early 2012, it was envisaged to further develop the existing draft Action Plan (see paragraph 10) as a strategic framework document, possibly in the form of a programme of work that outlines conservation gaps and needs, common problems and proposed conservation actions. Such a document should take into account and increase synergies between the existing MoUs and reduce overlap in addressing similar problems.

19. With funding from the Swiss Government and the European Union via the GIZ, the Secretariat was able to initiate a process which was already presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee Meetings, and which aims at developing a programme of work (POW) by ensuring participation and support of Range States and other relevant stakeholders. The provisional working title *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* was chosen by the Secretariat as a common reference for this process, which includes the following activities:

- 19.1 Conducting a gap analysis and needs assessment, including status reports of prioritized central Asian migratory mammals to obtain a comprehensive picture of the situation in the region and to identify priorities for conservation. Range states and a large number of relevant experts were engaged in the process, and national stakeholder meetings organized in several countries to provide feedback on the assessment and input for the POW<sup>3</sup>. The full draft assessment will be made available to Scientific Councillors for comments in the Scientific Council Workspace in late May 2014. An Executive Summary has been published as document UNEP/CMS/ScC18/Doc.5.1.1.
- 19.2 Based on this comprehensive assessment, development of a POW as a coherent regional strategy to guide implementation of CMS and its instruments and mandates. A draft version will be available in late July.
- 19.3 Organization of a meeting of Range States and national and international stakeholders to review, finalize and approve the POW, to identify priority activities, agree on coordination arrangements and financial mechanisms to ensure sustainable implementation, and to review a supporting Resolution (annexed to this document) for consideration for adoption at CMS COP11. The Government of Kyrgyzstan has kindly offered to host this meeting, which is scheduled to take place in September 2014 in Bishkek. A pre-COP training workshop for CMS Parties in central Asia is planned to be convened back-to-back.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing, national stakeholder meetings are foreseen to take place in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in mid-May 2014. Organizing these meetings was possible due to the presence of the GIZ in these countries, which provided essential in-kind and financial support.

20. In November 2013, the CMS Secretariat in close cooperation with the GIZ Regional Programme for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Central Asia, commissioned a consultant to undertake the gaps and needs assessment and to draft the POW. This assignment comprises a participatory consultation and review process with Range States and stakeholders, including national stakeholder meetings in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The GIZ, within the framework of the EU-sponsored FLERMONECA project<sup>4</sup>, has hired national ERCA coordinators in five countries to facilitate national consultations and to support all other CMS related activities.

21. Through these national coordinators, the Secretariat is implementing activity 8.1 of Res.10.9 and is increasing the presence of CMS regionally and nationally, which greatly supports the dialogue process initiated with the *CAMI* and the production of above mentioned documents. Already, this dialogue and consultation have stimulated discussion on how to improve implementation of CMS in the region and constitutes a major outreach event that contributes to increasing awareness and understanding of the Convention.

### Discussion on the taxonomic and geographic scope

22. While a number of instruments for the conservation of migratory birds in central Asia have been developed under CMS, including the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for Migratory Waterbirds, the Siberian Crane MoU and the Birds of Prey MoU, the above mentioned initiative only covers terrestrial mammals. This is due to the differences between these two taxonomic groups in terms of threats and ecology of the species, Government focal points and overall stakeholders involved. Synergies are therefore less evident, and covering all migratory species would risk becoming too complex, also reducing options for concrete joint actions.

23. The *CAMI* is meant to be open for migratory mammals that would benefit from a transboundary, multi-lateral approach to conservation and management. However, due to the limited financial and human resources available for the gaps and needs assessment, an attempt was made to narrow down the taxonomic scope to priority species with a particular focus on CMS-listed species.

24. Currently, the initiative covers the above mentioned eleven mammal species which are already listed on the CMS Appendices. In addition to the CMS-listing, further selection criteria have been developed, resulting in the identification of three additional species to be covered, and which are not yet listed on the CMS Appendices:

24.1 Chiru *Pantholops hodgsonii*. Selection criteria: Long distance migrant in central Asia with transboundary populations.

24.2 Przewalski's horse *Equus ferus przewalskii*, Tibetan gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*. Selection criteria: Species with one or more potential transboundary population that share more or less the same range as the CMS-listed species and which face similar threats; in short, species, the addition of which would probably mean little extra effort in terms of their conservation.

<sup>4</sup> The EU Regional Project Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) implemented by GIZ consists of the following components (1) Forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG); (2) Ecosystem Restoration in Central Asia (ERCA); and (3) Environmental Monitoring in Central Asia (MONECA). The project aims at two objectives: enhancing the regional cooperation between the Central Asian countries as well as between the Central Asian countries and the EU in the fields mentioned. Supporting the implementation of the CMS is a core issue of the ERCA component.

25. The distribution of the currently selected priority species comprises the following 14 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, INDIA, IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF), KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MONGOLIA, Nepal, PAKISTAN, the Russian Federation, TAJIKISTAN, and UZBEKISTAN<sup>5</sup>. For the Cheetah, only Asian populations are being considered. Two other species, the Kulan and in particular the Goitered gazelle also occur in more countries, with the range of the Goitered gazelle extending to the Caucasus and West Asian region, including the Arabian peninsula. These regions are however not covered by the current frame of the initiative, due to the many ecological, historical, socio-economic and political differences which make it more difficult to kick-start effective regional cooperation and implementation of a joint POW (see also UNEP/CMS/ScC18/Doc.5.1.1).

26. While with these 14 countries, the POW already covers a vast geographic area, the overall concept of the initiative is meant to be open, inclusive and participatory, leaving room and potential for spill-over effects and inclusion of further countries, depending on the interest of the countries as well as on available financial and human resources.

27. The gaps and needs assessment only focused on ten countries, excluding Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The reason for this is that while several of the selected species also occur in those four countries, with only few exceptions, these populations are rather small. Furthermore, due to financial and time constraints, it was necessary to keep the amount of information and complexity of issues and stakeholders involved at a manageable level. Assessing conservation gaps and needs to the appropriate level of detail in all 14 countries, was beyond the human and financial capacities available for the assignment.

### **Coordination requirements**

28. As explained above, the *CAMI* does not aim at setting up an additional instrument which would risk further increasing the workload of the Secretariat. Instead, it aims at more efficient implementation of existing instruments and mandates. However, should central Asian countries wish to further formalize their cooperation through developing a legal instrument under CMS, will this be possible in accordance with the criteria for new agreements to be considered for adoption at COP11.

29. The successful implementation of the proposed *CAMI* and the associated POW will depend on the long-term commitment of the governments concerned, including the provision of adequate financial and in-kind resources. In addition, coordination is required to stimulate and maintain progress in implementation *inter alia* by facilitating communication and exchange of information and best practice, convening of regular meetings, securing of funding for activities and by coordinating the monitoring and revision of the POW.

30. Options for establishing a coordination mechanism might include outsourcing technical coordination to partner NGOs and/or a committed Range State, or setting up a working group consisting of representatives from range states, relevant organizations and international experts. The options for setting up an effective coordination mechanism including developing terms of reference will be subject for discussion at the range states and stakeholder meeting scheduled for September.

31. Regardless of which option for coordination will be chosen, all such arrangements will require a certain level of supervision and guidance from the Secretariat, currently provided by the Officer for Central Asia, whose contract however expires by October 2014. After that, the

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<sup>5</sup> Countries in capital letters are Parties to CMS as of 1 May 2014.

capacity of the Secretariat will not allow taking up this task and therefore the establishment of the post of an Officer for Central Asia as of 1 January 2015 will be proposed for adoption by COP11. The Secretariat is grateful for the voluntary funding provided so far that allowed all recent activities undertaken in the region and is in the process of seeking *Champions* for the implementation of *CAMI*.

## Conclusion

32. The concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* has been developed to strengthen the implementation of CMS and its instruments and to thereby improve the conservation of migratory mammals and their habitat in central Asia. The initiative includes the development of a gap and needs assessment and a programme of work through a full participatory consultation process with Range States and stakeholders, including national stakeholder meetings as well as a meeting of the Range States.

33. Through this CAMI, the Secretariat aims at achieving multiple objectives, including

- 33.1 implementation of various Concerted and Cooperative Actions for a number of species, including Rec.8.23 and Rec.9.1;
- 33.2 strengthen implementation of existent species MoUs and Action Plans, such as on the Saiga Antelope, the Bukhara Deer and the Argali;
- 33.3 implementation of several activities outlined in Res.10.9 on the Future Shape of CMS and the CMS Family; and
- 33.4 Streamline human and financial resources available for servicing MoUs and implementing above mentioned mandates both within and outside the Secretariat.

### **Action requested:**

The Scientific Council is invited to:

- (a) Take note and comment on the progress made towards implementing the Concerted and Cooperative Actions and the work in central Asia.
- (b) Take note of and provide guidance on the concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* including its title.
- (c) Discuss and endorse the Draft Resolution on the *CAMI* contained in the Annex of this document.



**DRAFT RESOLUTION****THE CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE**

*Deeply concerned* that large mammal migrations in one of the last remaining regions supporting long-distance movements, the central Asian plains and mountains, are severely threatened by overexploitation of wildlife as well as exploitation of minerals and other natural resources and that the habitats upon which large mammals depend are becoming lost, degraded and fragmented at an unprecedented rate;

*Recognizing* that extractive industries, infrastructure and fences can have a particularly detrimental impact on the conservation status of migratory mammals and may cause direct mortality and fragmentation of habitats, disrupting essential movement from one place to another and *further recognizing* the urgent need for practical guidelines to [Mitigate Impact from Mining and Infrastructure on Migratory Mammals], not only in central Asia, but across the wider Asian region;

*Aware* that migratory species and their habitats provide essential ecosystem services, such as the carbon storage capacity of grasslands and watersheds of mountains, as well as cultural heritage value and economic benefits for instance through sustainable use and tourism, and that many human communities directly and indirectly rely on the availability of large mammal species and on intact ecosystems for their livelihoods;

*Acknowledging* the multiple mandates of CMS to work in the region, including Memoranda of Understanding covering the Saiga Antelope and Bukhara Deer, five large mammal species listed on Appendix I ([four] of these designated for Concerted Action)<sup>1</sup>, a further six on Appendix II ([four] of these designated for Cooperative Action)<sup>2</sup> and Recommendations 8.23 and 9.1 on Central Eurasian Aridland Mammals, which highlight the exceptional importance of Eurasian arid ecosystems for migratory species and the crucial role of CMS in conserving them;

*Noting with satisfaction* the progress made since COP10 in implementing these mandates, in particular the International Single-species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali *Ovis ammon* (CMS/UNEP/COP11.24.xx), and the assessment of conservation gaps and needs (CMS/UNEP/Inf.11.xx) and the Programme of Work (CMS/UNEP/COP11.14.3), developed in preparation of a broader initiative to comprise all activities aimed at conserving large migratory mammals and implementing CMS in the central Asian region;

*Recalling* the decisions under the Future Shape process, including activities 8 and 15 under Res.10.9 urging Parties to “identify opportunities for cooperation and coordination at the local and regional level through the creation of synergies based on geography”, and “to seek opportunities to develop synergistic relationships either based on geography or species clustering”, such as with the development of a common conservation programme;

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix I - Bukhara/Yarkand deer *Cervus elaphus yarkandensis* (listed on both Appendices, not designated for Concerted Action), Wild camel *Camelus bactrianus*, Wild yak *Bos grunniens*, Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus*, Snow leopard *Uncia uncia*.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix II - Saiga antelope *Saiga spp.*, Kiang *Equus kiang*, Argali *Ovis ammon*, Mongolian gazelle *Procapra gutturosa*, Goitered gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*, Kulan *Equus hemionus* (the latter four designated for Cooperative Action).

*Welcoming* the Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of Snow Leopards and the comprehensive, long-term Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme adopted by Range States at the Global Snow Leopard Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic in October 2013; and

*Grateful* for the financial and in-kind support from the Governments of Switzerland and Germany and the European Union through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) in pursuing the work for the conservation of migratory mammals in the central Asian region;

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

1. *Adopts* the Programme of Work for the Conservation of Large Mammal Migrations in Central Asia and *endorses* the concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* as an innovative and integrative approach building on a regional programme, that identifies synergies based on common or shared work programmes, geography, species and interests in line with Future Shape decisions, to enhance cooperation and coordination at the local, regional and international level, to minimize institutional overlap and to improve efficient implementation of CMS and its instruments on large mammals in the region;
2. *Further adopts* the Guidelines [to Mitigate Impact from Mining and Infrastructure on Migratory Mammals] in Asia;
3. *Also adopts* the International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali *Ovis ammon*;
4. *Instructs* the Secretariat to take up the role of coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Work and *agrees* to establish a post for an officer within the CMS Secretariat to coordinate the CAMI, including to support the implementation of relevant MoUs, Single-species Action Plans such as for the Argali and other CMS mandates;
5. *Requests* Parties and *invites* all Range States, partner organizations, donors and the private sector to engage in the CAMI and to provide the financial or in-kind resources to support its full and timely implementation; and
6. *Instructs* the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to continue and strengthen efforts to collaborate with other relevant international fora with a view to strengthening synergies and implementation of CMS and the CAMI in these fora.