

FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF PREY IN AFRICA AND EURASIA: 9-11 DECEMBER 2012

The First Meeting of Signatories (MoS1) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) was held from 9-11 December 2012 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. It was attended by more than 90 participants, including representatives from 22 Signatories and the European Union (EU).

Signatories agreed on: a process on future work and national reporting; the creation of the Raptors MoU Coordination Unit and the Technical and Advisory Group; identification of priority areas to address the threats facing birds of prey; and the endorsement of CMS Resolution 10.11 on power lines and migratory birds.

As participants left the meeting, they noted a sense of accomplishment and praised the CMS Secretariat for steering the MoU in the right direction. However, participants were also conscious of the scale of the challenges facing migratory birds of prey. MoU Signatories will have to address these challenges by developing national and regional raptor conservation and management strategies, while using the MoU as a tool for international coordination efforts.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF PREY IN AFRICA AND EURASIA UNDER CMS

Raptors are threatened by land use practices that reduce prey availability and suitable breeding habitat, pollution, poisoning, hunting, persecution, illegal taking and trade, (e.g. for falconry), and collisions and electrocution from overhead power lines. While hunting, trapping and persecution levels may be declining for most species, the trapping of the saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) for falconry is of concern. For other species, accidental poisoning, persecution, shooting for sport and trapping may also be key or contributory factors causing population declines

or long-term reductions in range. Climate change exacerbates these problems. Migratory raptors face additional conservation challenges because they need adequate networks of suitable habitat along their flyways.

In 2005, a year-long study commissioned by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) found that more than 50% of migratory birds of prey populations in the African-Eurasian region were in poor conservation status, and many species were showing rapid or long-term declines. The UK presented the results of the DEFRA study to the 8th Conference of Parties (COP8) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2005. CMS Resolution 8.12 was adopted by COP8, which urged parties to explore whether the development of a CMS instrument

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would assist in promoting the conservation of African-Eurasian migratory birds of prey. The Governments of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the UK jointly led an initiative to act on this resolution.

A meeting to identify and elaborate an option for international cooperation on African-Eurasian migratory raptors under CMS was held in Loch Lomond, Scotland, in October 2007. A second meeting of range states, in Abu Dhabi, UAE in October 2008, aimed to negotiate and conclude a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (the “Raptors MoU”). The Raptors MoU was concluded and signed by 28 range states on 22 October 2008. It came into effect on 1 November 2008.

The Raptors MoU extends its coverage to 76 species of birds of prey and owls, which occur in 130 range states and territories. It has 40 Signatories (as of 1 October 2012) comprising 39 range states and the EU. The CMS Secretariat, BirdLife International and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey are Co-operating Partners.

SAKER FALCON: At the ninth meeting of the CMS COP held from 1-5 December 2008 in Rome, Italy, the proposal to list the saker falcon on Appendix I was withdrawn, but a resolution was adopted that set out the direction for future work on this species, and proposed listing it at COP10 unless its conservation status improved significantly. COP10 agreed to: list the saker falcon in CMS Appendix I, excluding the population in Mongolia; establish an immediate concerted action; and establish a task force. The first meeting of the Saker Falcon Task Force was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 29 March 2012. The task force agreed on its Work Plan for 2012-14, including adopting a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

On Sunday, 9 December, Bert Lenten, CMS Deputy Executive Secretary opened the first Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU MoS1) and welcomed all the participants. He thanked the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and the UK for their support. Noting that 39 countries and the EU had signed the Raptors MoU, he underscored that this is the first CMS MoU that is facing the question of amendments to list new species and what criteria to apply. He highlighted some of the threats facing migratory raptors across their range: from vultures dying in Asia and Africa because of the use of veterinary drugs, to raptors killed by hunters in Europe and Amur falcons (*Falco amurensis*) killed in India.

Shaikha Al Dhaheri, Executive Director, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, delivered a speech on behalf of His Excellency Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi, Managing Director, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi. She stressed the commitment of the UAE to the conservation of birds of prey, citing their importance in the local culture and heritage. She emphasized that the Raptors MoU provides a clear road and opportunities for networking, capacity building and funding. Salim Javed, Manager, Terrestrial Assessment and Conservation, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, described the situation of birds of prey in the UAE and current research, highlighting: the presence of more than 450 species, of which 44 species are birds of prey;

the 50% decline since 1994 in the range of the sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*), and impact on the falcon of the pesticide use on cultivated fields in Madagascar; and the saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) conservation and research programme in Mongolia and Bulgaria.

Nick Williams, CMS Secretariat, highlighted the history behind the development of the Raptors MoU. He recalled that the MoU has 40 signatories, including the EU.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: On Sunday, delegates adopted the agenda (Doc.3.1/Rev.1) and schedule of work (Doc.3.2/Rev.1).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Delegates then unanimously elected Colin Galbraith, Vice Chair of the CMS Scientific Council (UK), as Chair of the meeting and Shaikha Al Dhaheri, as Vice-Chair. Chair Galbraith thanked everyone for his election and underscored that the Raptors MoU has been a major tool to advance conservation policies, but stressed that the meeting should focus on the enhancement of these policies. He noted finance, processes, and the technical advisory group as key items on the agenda to be solved, asking parties to be “flexible” in order to provide “windows of opportunities” to move forward efficiently. The UK noted the need to discuss financial issues. Parties decided to discuss financial issues together with rules of procedure. Two working groups were established: one on process, chaired by the UK, which would address finance and rules of procedure; and the other on the technical and advisory group (TAG), chaired by France.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE: On the credentials of delegations, it was agreed that the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, would take on this responsibility.

ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS: On Sunday, Chair Galbraith introduced CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.7, Annex I on admission of observers, which was adopted.

ADOPTION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: On Sunday, on this agenda item (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.4/Rev.2), Nick Williams, CMS Secretariat, recalled that the MoU is not a legally binding agreement. The EU proposed minor amendments on rules number 4 and 12, which suggest that Regional Economic Integration Organizations “shall have” votes equaling the number of member states.

On Sunday, the Working Group (WG) on Process, chaired by Elaine Kendall (UK), concentrated discussion on the rules of procedure and some changes to the current text, including: amendments to the MoU text; a proposal that observers be members of working groups; and the identification and role of cooperating partners.

In the afternoon, the WG completed the discussion on the Rules of Procedure.

On Tuesday, Elaine Kendall presented the report of the WG, noting that the procedural side constituted the bulk of the work. She highlighted the decision of the WG to keep the section on cooperating partners in a separate annex. In response to a suggestion by Switzerland on the circulation of records, the Secretariat agreed that notifications of meetings and reports should be circulated not only to Signatories but also to range states. The Meeting then adopted the Rules of Procedure.

Arrangements for Convening Meetings of Signatories: The Working Group on Process addressed this item (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.14.2). It proposed that: Meetings of Signatories shall take place once every three years, unless the MoS decides otherwise; and the Coordinating Unit shall notify all Signatories and range states of the venue and the dates of each MoS at least six months before the meeting is due to commence. The Meeting agreed to the proposed arrangements as reflected in the adopted Rules of Procedure.

NEW SIGNATORIES

On Sunday, Somalia signed the MoU and on Monday, Niger also signed the MoU. This brings the total number of Signatories to 42, including the EU.

REPORT OF THE INTERIM COORDINATING UNIT

On Sunday, Nick Williams introduced five documents (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.9 and Annexes I, II, III and IV). In introducing the Report of the Interim Coordinating Unit (ICU), he highlighted key developments since the Raptors MoU entered into effect in 2008. On the 2012-13 WorkPlan, he noted: the hope to provide support to Signatories in developing their national or regional raptor conservation and management strategies; subject to the outcomes of MoS1 and the availability of funds, the organization of regional workshops to enhance technical capacity to develop raptor conservation strategies; the plan to guide the Saker Falcon Task Force, including hosting a stakeholders' workshop in 2013 and finalizing the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) by the end of 2013; and the aim to establish and implement development of an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty falcon.

France noted that the national contact point for his country was just recently appointed. Senegal inquired about technical assistance for the development of national strategies. Williams replied that based on the already limited resources available, funding is allocated to international coordination efforts only, and thus resources are not available at this stage to support the development of national strategies.

CMS COP10: OUTCOMES RELEVANT TO THE RAPTORS MOU

On Sunday, Bert Lenten, CMS, introduced CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.10 Annex I. He said species cannot be protected without safeguarding their ecosystems. Presenting the Capacity Building Strategy (2012-2014), financed by the EU, he noted CMS CoP10 resolutions and argued that the New Strategic Plan (2015-2023) should mainstream biodiversity concerns. He also noted that it should link to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, mainly target 20 on resources mobilization, due to its importance to implementation of conservation policies on the ground. Following the presentation, Hungary urged parties to take steps towards the listing of species on Annex 1 to include, for example, Red Kite birds. The Report was noted.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES BY ICU UNDER THE RAPTORS MOU

On Sunday, Nick Williams introduced the document on conservation initiatives (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.11). The Meeting heard presentations on the saker falcon, Egyptian vulture and migratory birds of prey of Madagascar.

SPECIES: Saker falcon: Chair Galbraith, Chair of the Saker Falcon Task Force, introduced the report of the Task Force (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.11.1). He observed that the issue of sustainable use is fundamental and highlighted the need to develop future research to fill existing gaps. He also noted that it is critical to engage local people. He highlighted the Task Force's goals, including the development of the SakerGAP, and underscored some of the objectives under the WorkPlan, such as advocating, monitoring and progress evaluation.

Egyptian vulture: Stoyan Nikolov (Bulgaria) presented on the "Conservation of the Egyptian Vulture along the Eastern Mediterranean migration flyway: challenges at the trans-continental level." He lamented that the species has decreased 50% in the last 50 years, citing persecution, poisoning and electrocution as the main threats. He also highlighted the urgent need to elucidate the wintering range, learn more about the species' ecology during the non-breeding period, and build a comprehensive knowledge of key sites and key threats facing Egyptian vultures in Africa. In that respect, he noted a UNEP funded capacity-building project in Chad, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Migratory birds of prey of Madagascar: Lily-Arison Rene de Roland (Madagascar) presented the case of birds of prey, such as the Sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*), in Madagascar and stressed the need for transnational cooperation. He noted a project funded by a US\$15,000 grant used to protect and monitor the Sooty falcon during 2012-2015 between Oman and Malagasy biologists, which aims to connect knowledge and follow the movements of this species.

THREATS: On Sunday, the Meeting discussed threats to migratory birds of prey

Minimizing the risk of poisoning to migratory birds: On behalf of Borja Heredia, CMS, Melanie Virtue discussed how to minimize the risk of poisoning for migratory birds. She identified lead poisoning, and the use of pesticides and veterinary drugs, such as diclofenac, as key threats. Virtue reported that CMS is addressing poisoning of birds through the establishment of a working group, which will meet in 2013 and is expected to develop guidelines on combating poisoning for adoption at CMS COP11 in 2014. She concluded that poisoning is a difficult issue and that farmers are under great pressure to stay competitive and suggested that tools that take into consideration livelihoods issues should be developed.

Power grids: Sergey Dereliev, African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), presented a study on the impacts of electricity power grids on migratory birds (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.11.2). He highlighted that hundreds of thousands of birds die because of electrocution in the African-Eurasian region alone. He noted that the study recommends: developing and supporting collaboration between relevant stakeholders; setting priorities, including identifying problematic locations; applying appropriate strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments; and using state of the art technical standards for bird safety.

OTHER INITIATIVES: On Sunday, Nick Williams introduced the following initiatives: Migrating Soaring Birds (MSB), EURAPMON, and EURING.

MSB Project: Markus Kohler, Birdlife International, presented the MSB project, which aims to conserve soaring birds during their migration along the Rift Valley and the Red

Sea Flyway. He highlighted that MSB works in 11 countries and protects 32 species of raptors and is the second most important flyway in the world, connecting the Middle East to Africa. He also explained that the project is divided in two groups of countries, and targets the sectors of agriculture, energy, hunting, waste management and tourism. Reflecting a concern from Pakistan, he observed that the project is advancing best practices, meeting donor bank criteria for sustainability. From a case study in Lebanon, he argued that hunting remains one of the largest challenges.

EURAPMON Initiative: Janusz Sielicki, EURAPMON, highlighted that his organization seeks to establish consensus on Europe-wide priorities for monitoring for and with raptors, based on comprehensive inventory of existing monitoring, and of needs of key users.

EURING Initiative: Fernando Spina, CMS Scientific Councillor, highlighted the key messages from his side event presentation on the EURING Initiative. In the presentation entitled “The value of ring recovery data for implementing the goals of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Birds of Prey: a case study of the black and red kite,” he discussed the phenology of raptors migration. He focused on the outcome of the EURING, a bird ring database consisting of 38 national ringing schemes that has already collected data from over four million birds. He explained that the programme assesses causes of mortality and indicates critical geographical areas where further work is required. To illustrate, he noted that the problem of electrocution of the species Black Kite *Milvus* has increased in Germany, while shooting has decreased in Europe but augmented in Africa. He concluded by hoping that a general analysis of all raptors data can gain further support, since it is an efficient monitoring tool.

The reports were noted and initiatives described therein endorsed.

REVIEW OF THE MOU AND ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES: On Monday, Nick Williams introduced the relevant document (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.12.1) and the document containing replies received from Signatories concerning the development of National or Regional Raptor Conservation and Management Strategies (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.12.1/Annex I/Rev.1). He described the history of the development of the Guidelines for Preparing National and Regional Raptor Conservation and Management Strategies. Noting that these strategies are the fundamental basis on which to implement the Raptors MoU Action Plan, he stressed that they should also include measurable targets and/or outcomes. However, Williams noted that to date no strategies have been submitted by Signatories to the ICU, with the originally-agreed two-year deadline exceeded by the majority of Signatories.

Chad noted that he sent his National Strategy in 2008. Williams asked for the document to be re-submitted since he had not seen it. The EU highlighted his challenges in developing a Strategy given the number of states that have signed the MoU in the meantime and the amount of activities happening over a large geographic range. France questioned the need to develop a country-level strategy, suggesting that an EU-level

strategy would be more appropriate. The League of Arab States highlighted a workshop held in Iraq, which discussed the relevance of CMS.

Williams proposed offering technical workshops to support Signatories that still have to produce a strategy. South Africa also noted the delay in the preparation of her strategy.

Norway noted his delay in the implementation of the MoU but highlighted that progress is being made. He noted that work has been contracted out to a consultant and a draft would be available in March 2013 for review with expected completion in May. Senegal objected to having a deadline for the drafting of the strategy. The UAE also noted the difficulty in meeting the deadline, given the challenge of integrating the MoU activities with other obligations.

Chair Galbraith expressed hope that it would be a good target to aim to submit the strategies within the next year and a half. The Meeting agreed. BirdLife International suggested looking at the deadlines under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and see whether the Raptors MoU strategies could be integrated into those.

The Meeting noted the Guidelines for Preparing National and Regional Raptor Conservation and Management Strategies.

NATIONAL REPORTING BY SIGNATORIES: On Monday, on this item (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.12.2), Nick Williams updated Signatories, saying that reporting procedures are critical for effective implementation of conservation actions, including the Action Plan. He noted CMS Resolution 10.9 on future strategies, which calls for harmonization of information.

Sergey Dereliev, AEWA, discussed practices of national reporting in the context of AEWA, which has a wide geographical scope, including 119 countries, and covering 255 birds dependent on wetlands. He mentioned that, under AEWA, national reporting is mandatory for each ordinary session of the contracting parties. On the online reporting system (ORS), he noted the opportunity to expand this reporting process and noted the best reporting rate among CMS agreements, around 71% of parties.

During the subsequent discussion, the UK supported the ORS saying that the method is easy to use and has the advantage to potentially inform several international organizations at once. The EU, supported by France, recalled that the MoU is not a legally binding agreement and questioned the pertinence of further reporting on specific species instead of on “activities.” Dereliev reiterated that reporting is crucial for monitoring and pointed out that it is the starting point for implementation policies.

Croatia, on behalf of the EU and its member states, highlighted the need to keep reporting simple. Delegates noted the need to simplify and harmonize reporting. Williams emphasized the importance of identifying a schedule for the reporting process.

The Meeting agreed to simplify reporting and identify a schedule.

INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COORDINATING UNIT: On Monday, Nick Williams introduced the relevant document (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.13.1 Rev.1). He highlighted the Donor Agreement between UNEP and the Environment Agency - Abu

Dhabi, which provided US\$3.6 million to fund the operation of the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi for the period from July 2009 to June 2012, and its extension through 2015, which includes a pledge by the Agency of a similar amount to cover operation of the UNEP/CMS Office – Abu Dhabi for the following triennium (2015-2018) and beyond. Williams also highlighted the offer of the Agency, on behalf of the UAE, to establish the Coordinating Unit at the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi. Norway, France and the UK welcomed the offer, which the Meeting accepted.

The Meeting agreed to establish the Coordinating Unit.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE RAPTORS MOU: On Sunday, the TAG WG convened in the afternoon under the chairmanship of Jean-Philippe Sibley (France). Delegates suggested amendments regarding desirable characteristics for potential TAG members, including: capacity to network with other organizations; recognized expertise on conservation and management; experience in working with raptors; and available time to take on responsibilities under the Raptors MoU agenda. Participants agreed. AEWA recognized the valuable contribution of NGOs as providers of technical input and advocated inclusion of BirdLife International as part of the TAG. On priority tasks, participants agreed they could be identified by the end of the meeting.

During Monday's meeting of the TAG WG, the UK presented potential priorities for the Interim TAG until the second Meeting of Signatories, including the revision regarding the context of Annex 1 (species) and recommendations, particularly on the desirability to harmonize approaches across multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). On potential working areas, he mentioned the revision of threats to birds of prey; the need for guidance on measures to conserve them; and stocktaking of flyways and the knowledge gaps on flyways. He also highlighted the need to improve standards on monitoring according to national experiences and noted that the TAG could advise on how to integrate national export quotas into the MoU commitments. In the ensuing discussion, Hungary highlighted the importance of coordinating data collection and exchange on raptor populations and threats to them. BirdLife International suggested adding guidance on monitoring science, especially with regard to threats to raptors.

Switzerland suggested the inclusion of representatives from AEWA and the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbird Action Plan, which was welcomed on the condition that these representatives are self-financed. The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey asked to include "cooperating partners." On threats to birds of prey, David Strout (UK) recalled demands from delegates to ask TAG to tackle the issue of illegal trade and persecution of birds. Complementing a request from Kazakhstan to include "breeding areas," Wetlands International suggested adding "non-breeding" sites among raptor flyways in the section addressing the management of important sites and flyways.

On Tuesday in plenary, Strout reported on the terms of reference of the TAG outlining the main sections of the document. Among the recommendations of the Interim TAG, Strout noted the size of the nominated committee, indicating that up to five experts could be included, along with members assigned by the Signatories and Birdlife International. He

underscored the priorities for the second meeting of the MoU Signatories described in Annex 1, which includes, *inter alia*: the revision of the species' list; recommendations in relation to taxonomy; work on elements related to advice on threats to birds of prey; assessment of relevant knowledge gaps; consideration of threats to birds of prey and their habitats; and envisaged actions to foster legal prosecution.

Chair Galbraith noted the need to ensure future activities are "cost effective." The Meeting agreed to establish the TAG and adopt its terms of reference.

SAKER FALCON WORKING GROUP

On Monday evening, participants convened in a session chaired by Colin Galbraith, Chair of the Saker Falcon Task Force. Nick Williams provided an introduction to the Saker Falcon Task Force, the rationale behind its establishment, including the 47% rapid decline of the saker falcon between 1993 and 2012. He highlighted the next steps: preparatory analyses and a SakerGAP workshop leading up to the development of the SakerGAP; stakeholders' awareness raising; and fundraising for the implementation of the SakerGAP. He asked participants to consider how they can engage with the preparatory work. Saudi Arabia stressed the importance of outreach. During the discussion on sustainable use, BirdLife International asked whether the issue of hybridization should be raised under this item or another. She also highlighted that the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) is addressing the issue of hybrid birds.

DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN: Fernando Spina, CMS Scientific Councillor, highlighted the gaps in knowledge and geographical coverage and the challenge they represent for the implementation of the SakerGAP. He called for sharing of survey and monitoring protocols to collect data. Hungary underscored that China and Russia's participation would be critical. Williams noted that there was no progress to report to date on their possible participation. International Wildlife Consultants described some of the ongoing research and conservation activities, including the artificial nest project in Mongolia and the reintroduction project in Bulgaria.

COOPERATING PARTNERS

On Monday, Nick Williams introduced the relevant document (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.13.4). Noting that the Raptors MoU currently lists several Cooperating Partners that could potentially sign the MoU, he said that a flexible procedure is required for accepting new Cooperating Partners. He described some of the roles envisaged for Cooperating Partners, including: to actively support and promote the implementation of the MoU and its objectives, and in particular, the Action Plan; and to consider establishing joint or collaborative workplans or projects with Signatories and/or the Coordinating Unit. Norway noted that the WG on Process discussed the rules of procedure on Cooperating Partners.

On Tuesday, in plenary, the WG on Process introduced the proposal to address the issue of Cooperating Partners in an annex to the Rules of Procedure.

The Meeting agreed to a procedure to accept new Cooperating Partners and address the item in an annex to the Rules of Procedure.

PROCEDURES FOR AMENDING THE MOU TEXT AND ITS ANNEXES

On Tuesday, Nick Williams introduced CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.13.3. He then invited BirdLife International to provide an update of the scientific data underpinning the MoU in 2012. Vicky Jones, BirdLife International, outlined the main issues to be considered by the Raptors MoU, urging Signatories to observe the rapid change of data, which needs to be updated constantly. She reiterated the commitment of BirdLife International to the Raptors MoU, highlighting that site monitoring is crucial for conservation, and offered to share assessment methods.

During the subsequent discussion, Hungary drew attention to NATURA 2000 in the EU context and France remarked on the differences for conservation policies between extinction and rapid decline. Jones confirmed the importance of this observation and underscored that less focus has been given to the decline of species. The Secretariat commended BirdLife International for their efficient work in identifying priorities for the TAG.

The Meeting adopted the procedure outlined in the Rules of Procedure for modifying the Raptors MoU text and its annexes.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

On Monday morning, the WG on Process discussed the report on the current financial status and future funding (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.14.1). The Secretariat highlighted that the pledged amount for the following triennium ending in 2018 was not secure until received. On establishing a Small Grants Programme under the Raptors MoU, the UK suggested drawing on experiences from other CMS instruments, such as AEWA. However, she noted that establishing it now might be premature given other institutional priorities.

On Tuesday, Nick Williams introduced the document on the current financial status and future funding (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc. Doc.14.1 and Annexes I, II, III and IV), highlighting that the purpose of the report is to invite Signatories to identify opportunities for additional sources of funding to enhance the resources available to the Coordinating Unit to provide increased support for the implementation of the Action Plan of the Raptors MoU. He also emphasized the opportunity to consider establishing a Small Grants Programme under the Raptors MoU.

The UK reported on the work of the WG on Process on finance. She noted that the WG recommends: a system for contributions that would be “voluntary and *ad hoc*” and not “voluntary assessed”; bilateral approaches to address urgent projects; and working with the TAG to develop a procedure for establishing and administering the Small Grants Programme at MoS2. The Meeting agreed to the WG’s recommendations with some amendments and comments, including: Switzerland’s proposal to explore possible financial contributions through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Rio Conventions to support development of national strategies; and South Africa’s comment that options for both “voluntary and *ad hoc*” and “voluntary assessed” contributions should be provided.

CMS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME: Christiane Roettger, CMS Secretariat, presented on the Small Grants Programme, highlighting its goal to catalyze the development and implementation of concerted and cooperative actions under CMS. She noted that: all species included in the CMS

Appendices are eligible for funding; and projects should be focused on conservation in the field, capacity building and awareness raising.

Citing the misconception that conservation does not contribute to science, Fernando Spina, CMS Scientific Councillor, highlighted that CMS-funded projects often deliver scientific papers. On the application of the Small Grants Programme to raptor-related projects, Norway and France underlined the importance of funding projects focused on the ecology of raptor species.

The Meeting noted different opportunities for additional funding and agreed to delay the establishment of a Small Grants Programme under the Raptors MoU.

CLOSING SESSION

On Tuesday, Chair Galbraith provided an oral summary of the main outcomes of the meeting, which include:

- an agreed process on future work and national reporting;
- creation of the Coordination Unit and the TAG;
- identification of priority areas to address the threats facing birds of prey; and
- endorsement of CMS COP10 Resolution 10.11 on power lines and migratory birds.

He inquired about candidates to host the next MoU meeting, but a decision on the time and venue was not made.

South Africa stressed that more than 50% of migratory birds are showing significant decline, mainly due to human-induced actions. Considering the rising threats, she called for greater integration of the MoU with the NBSAPs, which shall take advantage of the appropriate GEF funding mechanism.

In closing the session, the CMS Secretariat highlighted the two new signatories, Somalia and Niger, the creation of a Coordinating Unit, a TAG and the continuity of funding from the UAE. He thanked the host country, particularly the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, and the financial support of the UK.

Chair Galbraith expressed satisfaction with the excellent work rhythm and thanked all participants underscoring that falcons can “link cultures.” The Meeting was gavelled to a close at 12:35 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF MOS1

In closing the meeting, Chair Colin Galbraith recalled that falcons “link cultures.” Guided by the shared spirit of conserving a valued group of species, the Signatories and observers to the first Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey (Raptors MoU), swooped through their agenda, described by some as “light and friendly.” In the words of many participants, the first meeting of the Raptors MoU represents an important step towards strengthening the framework for the conservation of migratory birds of prey. Two of the visible outputs, the establishment of a Coordinating Unit, no longer “Interim” and the Technical and Advisory Group (TAG), equip the Raptors MoU to be the catalyst for international coordination and tackle pressing conservation issues.

This analysis briefly examines the significance of this meeting and the Raptors MoU in the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) family of instruments. It also looks at the MoU’s role in addressing many of the threats facing migratory birds of prey.

SOME TAKE OFF, OTHERS PAUSE

Unlike other CMS instruments, such as the Bukhara deer MoU, the Raptors MoU has experienced a relatively brief period of “dormancy” since its entry into force in 2008. Many participants noted that this meeting “should have taken place earlier” but the unexpected departure of the previous policy officer and some administrative difficulties have created visible delays. However, the listing of the red-footed and saker falcons, along with the setting up of the Saker Falcon Task Force at CMS COP10 in 2011, have brought back a sense of urgency and momentum to act. Signatories are now working to stay on track and participants have the feeling that “the people that are here at this meeting are committed.” Moreover, secured funding from the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi is now ensuring some level of sustainability of this MoU.

This is of particular importance to CMS’s flyway, as the Convention’s family of instruments expanded considerably. This growing scope prompted CMS parties to adopt Resolution 10.16 at COP10 to guide them on when and how new instruments should be established. Resolution 10.16, entitled “Priorities for CMS Agreements,” lists criteria that need to be taken into consideration when developing proposals for new instruments. The criteria include: evidence of the case for a new instrument, based on an analysis of needs and gaps in current conservation provisions; information on whether the proposal helps to deliver a specific existing CMS COP mandate or other existing CMS initiative; the financial implications of the proposal, and what plan for financing the instrument is in view; and whether a new instrument is the only option, or whether alternative options exist, such as extending an existing instrument. However, not only new proposed instruments need to pass the Resolution 10.16 criteria “test,” but even instruments adopted before Resolution 10.16 are being revisited in light of the resolution. Consensus in the corridors is that the Raptors MoU has passed the test.

This scenario differs from the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Action Plan meeting, held back to back with the Raptors MoU meeting in Abu Dhabi. In the case of the CAF, the Resolution 10.16 is asking parties to consider a possible new “flyway”: one that either involves extending the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) geographical area to encompass the entire CAF region and incorporating the CAF Waterbird Action Plan under the Agreement, or setting-up such an action plan as an independent framework outside CMS.

Overall, MoS1 confirmed the need for an overarching framework for the conservation of migratory birds of prey. Some noted that Signatories will only be able to assess real progress in tackling conservation gaps on the ground at the next MoU meeting, yet to be scheduled, since MoS1 mostly dealt with procedural and institutional issues. While the Raptors MoU is taking off, the CAF is briefly pausing on a stop-over along its flyway.

SOARING CHALLENGES

“The cartridge, as a lethal agent, is a perfect product of industrial chemistry... The hawk, as a lethal agent, is the perfect flower of that still utterly mysterious alchemy – evolution... No man-made machine can, or ever will, synthesize that perfect coordination of eye, muscle, and pinion as he stoops to his kill,” writes Aldo Leopold in *Sand County Almanac*, when describing falcons and the art of falconry. It is that perfect product of

industrial chemistry—the cartridge and the lead that it contains—that has emerged as one of the key threats to migratory birds of prey, especially in Europe. In a report on Policy Options for Migratory Bird Flyways, the Flyways Working Group recognizes the importance of eliminating the use of lead shot, particularly, but not exclusively, in wetlands and water bodies, reducing the impact of existing lead in the environment, and working with the hunting community and policy makers to ensure that the use of lead is phased out worldwide. The CMS Scientific Councillor added that hunters and people consuming game shot with lead cartridges are at risk too, citing peer-reviewed literature.

But these are not the only threats faced by migratory birds on their flyways.

The document prepared by the Raptors MoU Interim Coordination Unit on conflict between migratory birds and electric power grids, cites that many species of birds of prey are particularly at risk from electrocution due to their habit of selectively utilizing power grid structures for perching, roosting and nesting. The Meeting recognized the urgency of this issue and endorsed CMS COP Resolution 10.11 on power lines and migratory birds and encouraged Signatories and range states to adopt mitigation guidelines. For example, a participant cited the case of power lines in Sudan that continue to cause mortality of Egyptian vultures, leading to very high population declines.

Among the other severe threats is poisoning from diclofenac. As illustrated through a CMS presentation, three endemic vulture species are critically endangered following dramatic declines in South Asia, as a result of exposure to diclofenac, a veterinary drug often present in livestock carcasses that they scavenge. Despite the ban of veterinary formulations of diclofenac in 2006, human formulations are still being used illegally.

Some participants highlighted that the use of a different drug, meloxicam, would be a safe alternative, since it is of low toxicity to vultures and thus a possible solution to substantially reduce mortality in the Indian subcontinent. However, while already available, they add, higher costs make it a limited option.

FLY AWAY INTO THE BLUE

“Moreover the hawk, at the slightest error in technique of handling, may either “go tame” ... or fly away into the blue,” continues Leopold. Modern falconry has come under scrutiny for its impact on wild population of birds of prey. Historically, falcons were released back into the wild to their original breeding places after each hunting season. Wild falcons that “fly away into the blue” unintentionally or intentionally, for example through Falcon Release Programmes in the UAE, typically reintegrate with their wild relatives. But many of the falcons used in modern falconry are hybrids, often between a Saker and Gyr falcon, as participants had the opportunity to witness firsthand at the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital. When released intentionally or not, BirdLife International pointed out, unnatural genetic introgression to native wild falcon populations, and especially to the saker falcon, represents a threat. This concern has already been raised by the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), but many participants deem the Raptors MoU is a place to further discuss this topic, since the text of the Raptors MoU calls for appropriate measures to prevent the introduction of non-native birds of prey, including hybrids where this would have an adverse effect on the conservation of native biodiversity. While the impact of hybrids

on the genetics of wild falcon populations is not known, some participants suggest that a precautionary approach should be adopted, as it has been for other birds threatened by invasive bird species. In that respect, a scientist from BirdLife International cited the Bern Convention pan-European call to eradicate the invasive Ruddy Duck, which threatens the survival of the White-headed Duck.

THE FLIGHT FORWARD: BRINGING THE “BLACK HOLES” TO THE TABLE AND FILLING THE GAPS

A member of the CMS Secretariat, echoed by some of those who attended the Saker Falcon Working Group meeting, stressed that it is fundamental to bring to the table the “black holes,” countries like China and Russia, which are important breeding grounds and flyways. Moreover, these countries are also part of the region where much of the illegal captures of falcons go undetected.

As a result of all the outlined challenges, participants recognized the importance of coordinated action and efficient communication to tackle the threats holistically. For example, some cited that comprehensive figures on the scale of illegal trade in one of the flagship species, the saker falcon, are not available. They hoped that this is one of the gaps that the Saker Falcon Task Force, established at COP10, will be able to fill as the Task Force develops the Global Action Plan.

Participants leaving the meeting, many of them headed to prepare for the CAF meeting, summarized the awaiting challenges as follows: identifying funding to address the lack of capacity and time of some Signatories to develop national strategies; collecting more data; and making informed decisions based on sound science. Others added to that the importance of measuring the impact and sustainability of conservation activities, such as the artificial nest and reintroduction programmes, by engaging independent experts to reduce bias.

Part of the CMS Secretariat that flocked from Bonn to help with the organization of the meeting was surprised at the ease with which consensus was reached on the agenda items discussed. Some participants commented that the enthusiastic leadership of Nick Williams combined with his knowledge of raptors spanning 50 countries, instilled a lot of hope in the process and trust that this MoU can fly high.

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Third Meeting of Signatories to UNEP/CMS MoU on Middle-European Population of Great Bustard: The Great Bustard Scientific Symposium and the Third Meeting of the Signatories to the CMS MoU on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) will be held to advance conservation actions on this species. **dates:** 8-12 April 2013 **location:** Szarvas, Hungary **contact:** Melanie Virtue, CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2401 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** mvirtue@cms.int **www:** http://www.cms.int/species/otis_tarda/otis_tarda_meetings.htm

CBD COP 12: The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is expected to be held in the second half of 2014. The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization will also be held. **dates:** to be announced **location:** Republic of Korea **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** http://www.cbd.int

CMS COP 11: The next meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties will be held in the third quarter of 2014. **dates:** to be announced **location:** Paraguay **contact:** UNEP/CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2401 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** secretariat@cms.int **www:** http://www.cms.int/

Sixth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 6) to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA): The dates and location of AEWA MOP 6 will be decided by the AEWA Standing Committee. **dates:** 2015 **location:** to be announced **contact:** AEWA Secretariat **phone:**+49-228-815-2414 **fax:** +49-228-815-2450 **email:** aewa@unep.de **www:** http://www.unep-aewa.org/

UPCOMING MEETINGS

IPBES 1: The first plenary session of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) aims to agree on the remaining rules of procedure for the meetings of the platform, consider other rules of procedure for the platform, elect Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel members, and agree on the next steps by which the IPBES work programme can become operational. Regional and stakeholder consultations will take place one day prior to the meeting on Sunday, 20 January 2013. **dates:** 21-26 January 2013 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNEP Secretariat **phone:** + 254-20-762-5135 **email:** ipbes.unep@unep.org **www:** http://www.ipbes.net/plenary/ipbes-1.html

CITES CoP16: The 16th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties will convene in March 2013. The 40th anniversary of the Convention will be celebrated during the CoP. **dates:** 3-14 March 2013 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **contact:** CITES

GLOSSARY

AEWA	African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICU	Interim Coordinating Unit
MoS1	First Meeting of Signatories
MoU	Raptors Memorandum of Understanding
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
SakerGAP	Saker Falcon Global Action Plan
TAG	Technical and advisory group
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
WG	Working Group