



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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## MAJOR SPECIES PROJECTS INCLUDING CONCERTED ACTIONS

*(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)*

1. The present document reports on the progress made since COP8 in implementing 2 major species projects and 1 concerted action undertaken by the CMS Secretariat in cooperation with its partners on conservation of migratory species of Sahelo-Saharan antelopes, Siberian cranes and Asiatic arid land mammals with unfavourable status as defined by the Convention.

### A. SAHELO-SAHARAN ANTELOPES ACTION PLAN PROGRAMME

#### **CMS, advocate of desert biodiversity!**

2. The Concerted SSA Action is based on CMS Resolution 3.2 (Concerted actions for species in Appendix I), updated by Res. 4.2 (Nairobi, 1994), Res. 5.1 (Geneva, 1997), 6.1 (Cape Town, 1999), 7.1 (Bonn, 2002), and Res. 8.29 (Nairobi, 2005). Under this, the Conference of Parties instructed the Secretariat and the Scientific Council to encourage and assist Parties in taking concerted action on the species identified, and submit reports and results regularly to the Conference of Parties.

3. For several years, the development of the Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes Concerted Action showed how the arid lands were indisputably one of the important areas of activity of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The Convention has now acquired considerable experience with regard to addressing the very specific needs of these areas that contain a high number of emblematic migratory species very well adapted to these extreme wildlife living conditions, especially for the large fauna. Biological impoverishment and land degradation of these regions, and the resulting increase in poverty also have major economic and geopolitical consequences at the international level.

4. The overall objective of the CMS SSA Action Plan, and also the ongoing programmes for its implementation, is first and foremost that of preserving and restoring the unique biodiversity of the Sahelo-Saharan area, where the last viable populations of the large Sahelo-Saharan fauna survive, on the basis of the natural heritage use by nomadic shepherd communities, and also seeking a balance between measures for social development and conservation of this natural environment.

5. More specifically, the principal objectives of the Concerted Action are to create and reinforce protected areas, support reintroduction programmes, favour local communities' involvement and manage actions for building national capacities. The latter are achieved mainly through various training courses and biological inventories across the area where the large Sahelo-Saharan fauna are distributed. Using field and aerial surveys the programme has made it possible to confirm the precarious position of these desert species throughout the range states.

6. The CMS Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes Concerted Action is also undertaken in the context of the international efforts made by various United Nations bodies, and also the European Union to maintain biodiversity and combat desertification in the Sahara region.

7. The activities being managed under the SSA programme, and the SSA CMS/FFEM and SSA CMS/UE projects, represent a large part of the implementation of the CMS Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes (ASS) Action Plan, and may be summarised as follows for the last three years.

### **PHASE I: SSA-CMS/FFEM Project (SSAP I):**

#### **Project implementation:**

8. The SSA-CMS/FFEM Project (SSAP I) recorded funds – not including partners matching funds – amount to a total budget of € 1,754,000. The Project has been administered through CMS Secretariat following its funding by the “Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial” (FFEM) of €1,385,000 (79%) approved in April 2002, and the financing agreement between the CMS and the “Agence Française de Développement” signed in May 2003. The Convention contributed also € 280,000 (16%) over a four-year period of general coordination from 2003-2006, and Belgium an amount of € 89,000 (5%).

9. Budgetary procedures are based on a first advance followed by further advances against expenditures in conformity with both FFEM and UN financial rules. As at present, FFEM disbursements have amounted € 714,161 (52% out of FFEM budget), the balance € 670,839 (42% FFEM) covers the remaining programme and a € 300,000 reallocation as a partnership contribution to the new SSA-CMS/EC Project (SSAP II).

10. As periodically reported to the Standing Committee at its 28<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> sessions (CMS/StC28/12 & CMS/StC32/15/Rev.2), the CMS/FFEM project has been focusing on Mali, Niger and Tunisia as pilot projects with cross-cutting activities in a further four countries. Since its start at the end of 2003, several activities have been carried out in the different countries concerned with a focus on activities in Tunisia, Niger and Chad, since the preliminary surveys proved the existence of residual populations of Sahelo-Saharan antelope in the wild in these countries.

11. Mauritania, Morocco and Senegal were concerned with cross-cutting activities of the CMS/FFEM project with budgets respectively of € 60,250, € 30,250 and € 15,250. The recorded expenditure for these countries, relates to the regional training of February 2007, which took place in Tunisia, and for which officials from Morocco and Senegal were offered training. However, during this period, technical support from the Project team was proposed to Mauritania and Morocco but this has not materialised yet. Contacts are still ongoing with Senegal to follow up on Oryx reintroduction previously achieved.

12. The CMS/FFEM project in Mali was designed to be a large programme with an overall budget of €239,550 of which only €10,000 has been used for an inventory and study carried out in early 2005 by “l’Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage” (ONFCS). This inventory was about determining the status of conservation of Dama Gazelle in South Tamesna, Mali. Outcomes of the survey undertaken have proved the necessity to reallocate resources to remaining activities in key areas such as the Termit in Niger and the cross-border area with Chad. This was decided in cooperation with FFEM.

13. Since 2006, the programme has mainly developed and become concentrated on two fronts, with a focus at the Northern Sahara, with the activities in the south of Tunisia, and a second focus at the southern Sahara, with the development of the Termit-TinToumma protected area project in Niger.

#### Progress in the northern part:

14. From an amount of €465,500 aiming at the implementation of the CMS/FFEM Project in Tunisia, 44% had already been committed to cover several clusters of activities that had been carried out so far, which include:

- inventories (*Gazelle Leptoceros* phase I in April 2006 and phase II in September 2007, in Djebil, Senghar and Sidi Toui National Parks);
- ungulate re-introduction studies: translocation feasibility study of International Foundation for Wildlife Conservation (IGF), November 2004 and other studies carried out by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) in Djebil, Senghar and in Sidi Toui National Parks, January-July 2006 and September-November 2007;
- acquisition of two off-road vehicles for the CMS/FFEM project in Tunisia;
- in conformity with the Tunisian Strategy established in 2004 to allow the constitution of a meta-population of oryx and addax in Tunisia, translocation of 20 addax and 10 oryx antelopes with the technical support of International Foundation for Wildlife Conservation (IGF), as a first step to a full addax reintroduction in the wild from Djebil and Senghar national parks; and
- regional training sessions led by “l’Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique” (IRSNB) to officials from Range States’ Governments during the activities the successful February 2007 translocation of antelopes.

#### Progress in the southern part and steps towards eradicating “abusive hunting” in Niger:

15. The CMS Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the “Ministère de l’Hydraulique, de l’Environnement et de la Lutte Contre la Désertification” in August 2005 for an amount of €365,450 aiming at the implementation of the CMS/FFEM activities in Niger.

16. As of September 2007, 98.9% of the total budget of the MoU had already been committed to cover almost all activities of the CMS/FFEM project in Niger. The Niger Programme was mainly about:

- inventories update in Termit/Tin Touma in 2006-2007 (last survey made in 2004);
- start-up workshop which was held in Termit in May 2006 which was a good opportunity for the project partners in Niger to meet each other and also to meet the local communities to have them involved in the SSA conservation process;
- project of classification and management of the protected area Termit/Tin Touma led by the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF);
- acquisition of an off-road vehicle for the Niger National Coordination Unit;
- appointment of a volunteer from “l’Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès” (AFVP) to assist/support the Niger National Coordination Unit in its work on the CMS/FFEM project; and
- surveillance programme which will help Niger exert a dissuasive presence in and a surveillance of the protected area Termit/Tin Touma with the support of the pastoral communities, and raising awareness programme have been agreed with Niger’s authorities and funding is under way.

17. Illegal and excessive hunting of endangered antelope species in Tesker/Niger was reported to the 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee (Bonn, September 2006), in response to which/as a result of which CMS organized two field missions to Niger to report on and to witness the devastation after the alleged illegal hunting reported to the Committee.

18. The main outcomes of the missions were discussed during the 32<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee meeting (Bonn, November 2007) which agreed the Secretariat’s recommendations and urgent required measures. The StC32 report is available under: [http://www.cms.int/bodies/StC/32\\_StC\\_documents\\_overview.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/StC/32_StC_documents_overview.htm).

19. As an urgent measure to establish a sustainable hunting regime for Niger, terms of reference for a study have been established by the Secretariat and discussed with the SSA WG representative on the CMS Scientific Council and the board of Directors of the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF) and the International Council for Hunting (CIC) as partners. Elaboration of a practical project in view of enforcing the wildlife service’s capacities in Niger and testing an efficient organization of hunting in Niger is ongoing.

Towards a cross-border protected area between Niger and Chad:

20. The CMS/FFEM project planned to have cross-cutting activities for Chad with a total budget of €50,000 which was fully used for the project “Prospecting of conservation priority zones for SSA and identification of conservation-development programmes in Chad” led by IRSNB.

21. The aerial survey demonstrated the existence of addax populations in low numbers in Chad, which was a good incentive to make progress on a new cross-border project between Niger and Chad that was accepted in early 2007 and funded by the European Commission.

## **PHASE II: SSA-CMS/EC Project (SSAP II):**

### **A new programme to extend the SSA protection and conservation:**

22. The Project “Programme transfrontalier de conservation et de gestion durable de la biodiversité sahélo-saharienne de la zone de Termit / Tin Toumma, au Niger et du Djourab Ouest, au Tchad” entered into force in January 2007.

23. Initially, the Project has been designed with a budget of €2,875,000. However, given the unstable political situation in Chad in 2006 and 2007, the fact that temporarily, at least, it has been impossible to work in the Tchadian Djourab since 2007, and the subsequent withdrawal of certain planned co-funding, the CMS has requested a reduction in overall financing of the project, finance falling from €2,875,000 to €2,375,000 . The European Commission agreed the revised programme in November 2007.

24. The new project on the conservation of SSA in the Niger-Chad Cross border region is based on the revised Financing Agreement signed between the European Commission/Office of Cooperation Aid (EC/AIDCO) and the CMS Secretariat. The total budget of the project amounts to €2,375,000 of which €1,900,000 (80 %) is funded by the European Commission, €300,000 (12.63%) by the CMS/FFEM project, and other €175,000 (7.37%) covered by in-kind/in-cash contributions from CMS and from progressive fundraising activities led by CMS.

25. To relieve the growing burden of work on the CMS Secretariat, and considering the size and complexity of this new project, the CMS requested UNEP to establish a four-year Associate Programme Management Officer’s post at the L2 level; the previous finance assistant dealing with the SSAP I was in post from 5 September 2007 to 22 September 2008. His replacement will take place upon finalisation of a selection process, following his promotion to a P-3 post within another UN Organisation.

26. The financial report is aiming at explaining the situation of the Project that has to be started on a solid basis as well as giving the detail of use of funds during the reporting period of one and a half year.

27. Due to the reasons given above and in the CMS letter to the EC dated 3 July 2008, and the subsequent financial gap of foreseen matching funds, a request was sent to the EU Commission in May 2007, in order to lower the total budget (from €2,875,000 euros to €2,375,000 euros). Hence, the above-mentioned notification of suspension of activities in Chad, and delays in initiating the project sent to the EC/EuropeAid Co-operation Office. Negotiations on the project implementation, budget and approval of the main partner in the field (Niger/ME/LCD and SCF) were conducted in October and November 2007 in Niger through the Regional Coordination Unit of the Project.

28. The negotiations ended finally to an approval of matching funds where the total budget available for the implementation of the project is currently €2,433,000, i.e. €58,000 over the total budget for the Project as approved in the amendment of November 2007:

- €1,900,000 (EU)
- €300,000 (FFEM), as matching funds
- €233,000 (SCF), as matching funds

29. In parallel, the Ministry of Environment (MEL/CD) of Niger approved the proposed activities, budget and Organogram in February 2008.

30. Subsequently, an addendum to the existing Memorandum of Understanding between CMS and Niger (2005) was signed by both Parties in August 2008, as the basis of activities and programmes determined for the project period in Niger.

31. Field activities started in December 2007, with the completion of an aerial survey of the Termit area, as a first reference point on the global situation of the megafauna as well as global evaluation of the utilisation of the area by camels.

32. According to UN rules, and in order to ensure the efficiency of the project, as usual for the Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes Project (FFEM), a letter of agreement 2008 was established for the biennium 2007-2008 with the Coordination Unit of the Project (IRSNB), which amounts to €394,000, and is broken down as follows:

- €64,500 covered by the FFEM
- €245,500 covered by the EC
- €84,000 represents the in-kind contribution of IRSNB

33. As stipulated in the Financing Agreement between CMS and the EC/AIDCO, a first advance of an amount of €350,000 was received in January 2007 from the EC, upon request from CMS.

34. As of 30 June 2008, the total expenditure on the CMS/EC project amounts to €236,188 (of which €220,736 is direct cost and €15,452 is the UNEP PSC 7 % overhead). The total available balance on the first EC advanced payment is € 113,812. At 22 September 2008, the salary cost of the L-2 has been paid, which will lower the balance to €98,000 available for the Project activities.

#### Creation of the Termit / Tin Toumma Protected Area, a Saharan Noah's Ark:

35. The Termit region, a small mountain massif in south-east Niger, has the last wild population of Addaxes in the world, and, more generally, Saharan fauna that are still relatively protected. In November 2007, an aerial inventory made it possible to estimate the population at about 200 Addaxes. In support of the Ministry of the Environment and combating Desertification in Niger, and in partnership with the Sahara Conservation Fund, the SSA project actively supports the creation of the future Termit / Tin Toumma Protection Area (proposal for limits and zoning, classification file, raising awareness workshop with the local populations, ecological monitoring, etc.). The desert variability of rainfall and grazing and the erratic nature of the SSA, which are able to move across hundreds of kilometres, make it necessary to work over vast areas and to design protected areas, integrating these constraints covering millions of hectares.

36. The first stage of the Termit-TinToumma programme was carried out with the support of the SSA-CMS/FFEM project.

37. From 2007, a second step of this programme was negotiated and launched. It has been carried out through the "Cross-border programme for the conservation and durable management of the Sahelo-Saharan biodiversity of the de Termit / Tin Toumma area, in Niger

and West Djourab, in Tchad” Project, the French World Environment Fund (FFEM), and also with the support of the principal partner of the CMS, the Sahara Conservation Fund (SCF).

38. This period has enabled the CMS Secretariat and the regional co-ordination Unit for the SSA programme to determine the step 2 activities, flow chart, and respective resources. In parallel, co-funding and the principal partner in implementing operations on the ground have been also identified.

39. The presence of the team on the ground, who have managed to establish contact both with the local populations in Zinder, through traditional chiefs and heads of groups and with the regional administration and the armed forces, has already made it possible to gain a firm footing for the principles of the CMS Action Plan and to lead the user groups to improve understanding of needs in terms of conservation and restoration of natural resources of the Termit region as well as improve management of the opportunities they represent. A dialogue is now open with these various users.

40. The Termit region is at the highest interest level of the government of Niger, and there is now a political will to have the legal status and classification documents-related successfully completed in view of implementing an effective management in this area. Setting up the Termit PA is currently part of the national programme for 2008. An initial proposal concerning the area boundaries has been submitted to the Government of Niger. There are constant training and improvement of human capacities, partnerships set up with local and international universities, and with NGOs involved in development issues. An initial community-based monitoring and surveillance, by locally recruited teams, is being developed. The main objective here is to establish a network for collecting information and monitoring SSA, including motivated elements in the administration allowing a dissuasive presence and action on the ground, if necessary, in case of poaching or breaching national rules and regulations.

### **PROGRAMME 2009-2011**

41. In accordance with Resolution 8.5, paragraph 2.(n) - on Agreements under development in support to achieving Target 2.5 of the CMS Strategic Plan 2009-2011 - the Secretariat intends to follow the next steps for the triennium 2009-2011, under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee, in 4 directions:

- (i) administering ongoing SSAP I & SSAP II activities, and ensuring their full implementation on the ground;
- (ii) strengthening collaboration with other range states (Algeria for the cross-border region with Tunisia for the Grand Erg, and Mauritania, for the northern part; Chad, political situation permitting for the southern part);
- (iii) preparing for enlarging the CMS “Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes” Concerted Action to a “Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna” Concerted Action, which will make it possible to take into consideration greatly threatened species such as the Saharan Cheetah and the Barbary Sheep, amongst other migratory desert species; and

- (iv) organisation of the third meeting of range states during 2009. The meeting will aim at concluding an international instrument (CMS Article IV (3) or Article IV(4) agreement), in parallel with a regional workshop to update the Action Plan for the Conservation of Sahelo-Saharan megafauna. This agreement will be accompanied by a revision of the CMS SSA action plan. Finance for this workshop will be in the region of €60,000. An appeal should be made to the States of the distribution area [Range?] recommending that they accommodate this workshop. An appeal should be launched to the Parties at the CMS for support for the Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna projects.

**Action requested:**

The Conference of the Parties is requested to:

- a. acknowledge the progress made on the Concerted Action, its Action Plan and the subsequent complex projects SSAP I and SSAP II and encourage range states to support its initiatives;
- b. invite the CMS Standing Committee to pursue providing guidance to the Secretariat, which is required to report periodically on progress and any emergency matters on SSA;
- c. regarding the new SSA-CMS/EC Project (SSAP II), assist the Secretariat by encouraging donor Parties and other partners and stakeholders, with additional financial resources to implement the project as soon as possible; and
- d. Concerning the organisation of a Range States Meeting, conclude an international instrument for cooperation under CMS aegis and a workshop on the Action Plan implementation, to invite the Range States to make proposals for hosting the Meeting and the Workshop in 2009, in collaboration with the Secretariat.

## B. CENTRAL EURASIAN ARIDLAND CONCERTED ACTION

42. The Concerted Action is based on Resolution 8.29 (Concerted Actions for Appendix I Species), Recommendation 8.23 (Central Eurasian and Aridland Mammals) and Recommendation 8.28 (Cooperative Actions for Appendix II Species) adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Eighth Meeting (Nairobi, 20-25 November 2005).
43. Its *objectives* are to:
- a) restore the large mammal fauna of the arid lands of Eurasia and their peripheral biomes to a substantial amount of its past magnificence, ensuring at least that the fauna regains a richness and abundance sufficient to ensure its emotional and aesthetic appeal, that key-stone constituents of the fauna are in sufficient numbers to enable them to completely fulfil their role and that the major processes that underpin its functioning, and, in particular, eco-ethological interactions and migratory phenomena are able to take place and be enjoyed un-impeded;
  - b) organize this restoration around a network of secure and adequately protected areas, distributed throughout the region, and holding viable populations of each of the species within all, or at least a large part, of the historical range of each species;
  - c) link in due course these areas by ecologically adequate corridors, adapted to the needs of each relevant species, to avoid fragmentation of populations and favour large scale migrations;
  - d) base the needed re-deployment of the fauna on facilitation and encouragement of natural recolonisation whenever possible, on reinforcement or reintroduction with original material otherwise, on use of surrogates only if no original material exists and sufficiently satisfactory surrogates are available;
  - e) found all these steps on a sound evaluation of historical ranges and past environmental conditions so as to ensure solid cultural, aesthetic and ecological authenticity and credibility to the restored fauna; and
  - f) promote the restored megafauna as an essential part of the regional heritage, link this promotion closely to the cultural, archaeological, artistic and literary heritage the large mammal fauna has inspired in each of the regions concerned, and insure that these closely associated natural and cultural heritages constitute for the countries, regions and communities concerned a major resource and a pole of attraction, interest and visibility that radiates widely to other assets.
44. Its *geographical, biogeographical, ecological and cultural focus* is the Eurasian part of the continuous belt of arid lands that traverse Eurasia and North Africa, the largest and most complex such belt on earth, comprising an entirely interconnected ensemble of hot deserts, cold deserts, semi-deserts, sub-desert steppes, temperate steppes and cold steppes. These extraordinary biomes and their associated rivers and mountains have seen the earliest manifestation of many endeavours of mankind, the birth of several great civilisations, of urban life, of writing, of alphabets. They are the cradle of most major domestication events. They harbour an inestimable cultural and natural heritage, unique cultural landscapes, prestigious architectural and artistic legacies of civilisations going back over ten millennia, striking signs of past climate changes, impressive testimonies of ingenious, imaginative and

ambitious ways to cope with challenging environments as well as catastrophic examples of misuse provoked by irresponsible economic and social models, a fauna and flora of prodigious beauty and fascinating adaptations. The desert, more than any other ecosystem, has, by the very nature of the challenges it provides, generated extraordinarily elaborate responses both by the process of biological evolution and by that of human technological and cultural development. The achievements of these processes can still be admired today in animal and plant species of unique emblematic value as well as in manifestations of traditional cultural know-how.

45. This exceptional heritage is gravely threatened, in part by ignorance of its significance. Deserts have a negative image in dominant socio-economic models, even among organisations concerned with environment and sustainable development. The high value of their biological diversity is mostly that of beta-diversity, reflecting differential diversity, not that of alpha-diversity, measuring local richness. They thus escape the attention of many actors of biodiversity conservation, increasingly focused on centres of species richness, or biodiversity "hotspots". Specific efforts to identify the processes vital to the conservation of their distinctive species and communities are thus necessary, urgent and overdue. This message is clearly formulated by several international organisations that have the conservation of the heritage as main preoccupation, such as the UN Convention on Migratory Species or on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

46. The development of the Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes Concerted Action has shown that the arid lands are a specialised domain of activity for CMS. The Convention has, over the years, acquired a considerable experience in addressing the highly specific requirements of their environment and their fauna. Moreover, it has held a unique position in that field, as most other organisations and funding agencies have preferred to focus on biomes of higher biological diversity, such as tropical forests. The arid zones, though their species richness is comparatively low, harbour a number of highly emblematic, uniquely adapted species. Particularly remarkable is their array of large mammals, for the most part forced by the very nature of the resources they exploit to undertake migrations, often of a complex and atypical nature. Indeed, migration, seasonal, opportunistic, multi-annual, has been for all times a strategy particularly characteristic of arid lands, developed by many organisms, in particular, large mammals, including man.

47. The conservation and restoration of the unique megafauna of arid lands can be a major and ambitious endeavour for the Convention. Its approach is based on admiration, praise, respect, passion and a desire not to change the nature of the arid zones but to conserve and enhance their value. To achieve that objective there is a need to take very practical, in-the-field action to preserve the emblematic species that are such an essential element of arid land heritage, painted, carved, sculpted, used, hunted, worshiped through the millennia by brilliant civilisations, but also to considerably raise the world awareness of their significance. These goals need the co-operation of many actors. The Convention wishes to join forces and develop partnerships with like-minded conservation organisations to rise to the level of its prestigious objective.

48. The **area in which the Concerted Action is developed** is principally that of the steppes and the cold and temperate deserts of Asia and Europe (Zohary, 1973; Walter, 1974; Walter and Breckle, 1999), lands generally defined by a phytomass of less than 50 tons per hectare. Thus defined, the zone engulfs isolated islands of temperate, usually montane or sub-montane, non desert biomes. These are either entirely surrounded by deserts or are inserted between them and the seas of southern temperate Eurasia and sub-tropical Western Asia.

They must be included within the area of concern, as their mammalian fauna is either related to that of the surrounding arid land, or has been strongly influenced by the progression of the deserts and the resulting fragmentation and isolation of the enclaves. Enclosed Mediterranean and montane areas are principally those of Anatolia, the Caucasus, the Zagros, the Elburz, the Central Asian Mountains and the Himalayan system.

49. *Megafaunal restoration* is increasingly seen by conservation biologists the world around as an essential tool in the promotion of ecosystem conservation and rehabilitation over large tracts of land. Large mammal communities are the component of biological diversity that has suffered and suffers the most in the course of the extinction crisis that we are living. Their loss has serious ecological consequences as they often include keystone species capable of shaping the evolution of ecosystems, their vegetation and the communities of smaller animals they support. These keystone species, both large grazers and top predators, are essential, particularly in the open habitats characteristic of the arid belts, in preserving or promoting overall richness and diversity and preventing take-over by successful, exogenous or endogenous, invasive species, the "pests and weeds". Large mammals are also an essential part of the cultural heritage of mankind, entirely comparable to the greatest monuments and the most important repositories of knowledge. Their disappearance leads to a considerable impoverishment and loss of originality of local patrimonial values. They are the organisms whose affective and cultural perception is the most vivid, as exemplified by the place they take in the world of toys, of decorations, of objects, of films, of literature, and their pivotal importance in the attraction of tourism. National Parks and nature reserves that hold large mammals have a much higher frequentation and generate much greater benefits from distant visitors than those devoid of it. On a world scale such parks rank among the major attractions, irrespective of the continent on which are located. Large mammals have an unparalleled attraction potential, extending well beyond the generation of tourism as a source of cultural, scientific and recreational interest in the land. They are particularly well adapted as flagship species whose presence in an area guarantees a high level and continuity of conservation efforts. Mankind's special relation with other species of large mammals has existed at all periods of human cultural and social evolution. As a result mammals are by far the animal group most closely linked to the cultural heritage. They have been an essential source of inspiration for traditions, myths and artistic expression in many cultures, particularly of the steppes and semi-deserts, and their prominence in artistic testimonies is totally out of proportion with their representation in local faunas.

50. In order to succeed, however, megafaunal restoration must be founded on sound ecological evaluation and a sense of ownership among the local actors. The animals restored must have a record of past occupation of the area, but this occupation must have taken place in biogeographical and ecological conditions that are not too distant from those of today. If components of the past fauna are lost everywhere, so that no adequate material can be translocated, any substitutes proposed must be reasonable counterparts, both in their ecological role and in their overall appearance, of lost fauna, so that the emotional content, the distinctness and the uniqueness of the restored heritage are preserved. Authenticity is a key to cultural identification and cultural identification is essential to public support for what are space-consuming and potentially high-impact efforts.

51. Cultural and biogeographical authenticity provide a strong frame of reference for the choice of time-baselines, a prerequisite for any restoration project and yet one of the most difficult, controversial and debated aspect often expressed in terms of biological integrity and environmental health, notions that are difficult to define. Megafaunal richness and diversity should be maximised, in keeping with the basic objectives of the scheme, but within limits set

by eco-ethological and biogeographical plausibility on the one hand, by the relevance of cultural identification and the likelihood of patrimonial appropriation, on the other.

52. The *arid belt of Eurasia* is bestowed with one of the greatest *cultural heritages* in the world, testimony to events that have uniquely shaped the history of mankind. The sites that hold the first signs of sedentary village life and use of domesticated plants are in Syria and neighbouring areas. Urban life and writing were born in Iraq and neighbouring Iran. The first archaeological traces of sheep, goat, cow, horse domestication are in Syria, Iran, Anatolia or Ukraine. Most of these processes were intimately tied to the megafauna and its significance is superbly illustrated by Mesopotamian and Iranian monumental sculpture, by Mesopotamian, Iranian and Indus carvings, by the vivid animal art of the great steppe cultures of Central Eurasia, by the rich Roman mosaics of Syria. Many archaeological sites at which a direct experience of these processes can be obtained, with its potent emotional and intellectual content, are scattered within areas of great natural beauty, in unique habitats where the megafauna that inspired them once roamed, in cultural landscapes where unparalleled techniques of coping with the arid environment were successfully developed millennia ago. These sites are scattered over great distances and, except for a very few in or close to major urban concentrations, they are very little visited. Their fame outside of specialist groups is so minimal that some have been obliterated with little world outcry. Particularly in an area of scattered distribution of sites, as the arid zone is, the combination of several poles of attraction is indispensable to reach a sufficient threshold of socio-economic visibility. The fabulous cultural heritage of the arid zone is probably too sparsely distributed to be a major source of revenues. Linking its main archaeological and historical sites with natural sites of unique quality, through the theme of the great mammals, is a particularly promising approach to the revalorization of resources of drylands, first through quality tourism and its immediate by-products, then by the longer-term celebrity effects it generates.

53. *First triennium preparatory work* for the action has focused on precise definition of the limits of the region of concern, time baselines for restoration target, inventory of megafaunal components, conservation situation within all parts of the range of the action, conservation status of megafaunal elements, inventory of field actors as potential partners of the action, choice of implementation instruments.

54. *Limits of the region* -- As defined by Recommendation 8.23, the area of concern extends over the territory of 26 Range States, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bulgaria, European Union, China, Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (CMS Parties underlined). As much as possible, the entirety of the territory of those Range States has been included within the area of the Concerted Action, as an obvious administrative simplification. In particular, in the southwest of the Concerted Action area, the line of demarcation between cool deserts, semi-deserts and steppes of the Irano-Turanian zone and hot deserts of the Saharo-Sindian zone leaves southern Iraq and the narrow band of hot deserts and dry woodlands which fringes the region in southern Iran, Pakistan and northwestern India in the southern region. It appears faunistically and operationally coherent to include this band within the scope of the action so as to preserve the unity of the arid lands of these states. This, however, was not possible for China, India, the Russian Federation and the European Union and its Member States, for all of which a very large part of the territory belongs to other biomes. For these, entire administrative units have been, as much as possible, included within the range of the Action, excluding, when necessary, from the scope of the Action, species that have most of their distribution in other biomes and enter these administrative units only in

small areas that are not part of the Action habitat classes. Beyond the range defined by Recommendation 8.23, an extension to the whole Asian part of the Saharo-Sindian zone may be considered by the COP, for the coherence of the Convention efforts on arid land. This would add 9 Range States (Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen).

55. ***Time baselines*** -- In the arid lands of western Asia, of the Iranian Plateau, of southwestern Central Asia and of northwestern India, a baseline extending back to 11000 BCE is legitimate. Subsequent climate changes have been relatively minor, successive drought crises provoked shifts in isohyets that had profound local effects, both on human occupants and, obviously, on faunal composition, but little impact on the region as a whole. Steppe and dry woodland types, still present today, occupied varying but contiguous surfaces, with little qualitative modification. Marine transgressions provoked minor rearrangements of coastlines. No connection with major faunas external to the region opened at any moment as a consequence of these climatic vicissitudes. A profusion of artistic and cultural testimonies to the megafauna, generated by the prestigious past of human populations that continuously occupied the area, provides an ample foundation for cultural identification and appropriation throughout the period.

56. ***Inventory of megafaunal components*** -- All Ecologically Significant Units (ESUs) that occur within the Action range, regardless of whether they are treated by standard references as taxonomic species or not, have, whenever the information is available, been regarded as distinct components of the megafaunal assembly. The definition of megafauna has, as much as possible, conformed to common local perception and practice which has led to fixing arbitrary lower limits of size at about 30 kg for ungulates and 25 kg for carnivores. With these size limits, time baselines and consideration of ESUs, the megafauna of the Concerted Action area includes about 100 components.

57. ***Geographical conservation situation*** - Published information has been assembled for all the Range States and summarised in a set of per-State data sheets which will be available, for information, to COP 9. These sheets do not constitute an authorised evaluation of the characteristics and conservation situation of each of the Range States, but only a compilation of readily available information. They should be regarded as a basis for updating by relevant local actors during the second phase of the Concerted Action. In general, these compilations and additional information gathered in the field indicate that suitable protected areas exist in all Range States. A limited number of additional ones, or extension of existing ones, are needed in practically all of them to insure sufficient surfaces or redeployment of locally extinct faunal assemblages. Habitat rehabilitation will be needed in several of the existing areas. Coordination of management measures will have to be considered. Corridors linking protected areas are an essential part of a large mammal rehabilitation project. They are missing or insufficient almost everywhere. Their establishment will take time but planning and feasibility studies must be initiated. A particular effort is needed to create or enhance the promotion of the participating protected areas and to raise their profile. In some areas, major infrastructure work is needed, and must be envisaged in synergy with development projects. In other areas, infrastructures are basically satisfactory but exploitation of the tourism related potential still needs to be greatly expanded or improved. Links with the cultural heritage and synergies with distribution of global or local artisanal productions need to be established.

58. ***Conservation status of megafaunal elements*** -- Draft status sheets have been compiled for 93 significant ESUs or groups of ESUs. They will also be at the disposal of COP 9 for information and will, as much as possible, be completed, updated and validated, with

contribution from all actors, during the second phase of the Action. Within these sheets scientific nomenclature is aligned on current CMS taxonomic references (Wilson & Reeder, 2005) and does not necessarily reflect evolutionary status or most current treatment of the entities concerned.

59. *Potential partners* -- An inventory, as exhaustive as possible, has been established of major institutions and organisations actively engaged in conservation work on biotopes, species or groups of species within the area of the Concerted Action. It comprises the administrations of the 26 Range States and their main administrative subdivisions and about 75 international, supranational, national and non-governmental actors. These will be consulted on further developments of the Action and invited to participate in its implementation.

60. *Implementation instruments* -- It is proposed to found the Action on a specific Conference instrument, obtained by transformation of Recommendation 8.23, updated as needed, into a Resolution. It is further proposed to comfort the Action by a protocol to be signed during the triennium 2009-2011.

**Action requested:**

The Conference of the Parties is requested to:

- i) Take note of the present document progress on the Central Eurasian Aridland Concerted Action, as made available to COP9 through various information sheets.
- ii) Agree the extension of the limits of the Concerted Action to the whole Asian part of the Saharo-Sindian zone as mentioned in paragraph 55 above.
- iii) Consider the adopt of an implementing instrument under CMS during the triennium 2009-2011 as mentioned in paragraph 61 above.
- iv) Urge the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to design a global strategy to approach donors and general stakeholders for fundraising. Such a strategy will be presented to the next Standing Committee meeting, at the extent possible, by the Chair of the scientific Council.
- v) Instruct the Scientific Council and the Secretariat to report on the progress of the action to the next Conference of the Parties.

**C. GEF PROJECT ON SIBERIAN CRANE CONSERVATION**

**[WILL BE ANNEXED AS SOON AS PROVIDED BY THE IMPLEMENTING AGENCY (SIBERIAN CRANE FOUNDATION)]**