



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN POPULATION OF THE GREAT BUSTARD (*Otis tarda*)

*Feodosia, Crimea, Ukraine
11-12 November 2008*

REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES

Agenda Item 1.0: Welcoming remarks

1. The host country representative, Dr. Volodymyr Domashlinets, opened the meeting and provided a speech on behalf of Mr. Mykola Movchan, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection of the Ukraine (Annex 1).
2. On behalf of the Republican Committee for Environmental Protection of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Mr. Yuriy Yermakov, welcomed participants to the Crimean peninsula and highlighted both the international and regional environmental importance of the Crimean steppe habitat. The Great Bustard was stressed as a vital component of this ecosystem and thus it was excellent to conduct the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) meeting in Feodosia in the eastern part of the peninsula, which permitted participants to view the species in the wild. Mr. Yermakov drew attention to various measures relevant to the conservation of the Great Bustard, such as the fact that approximately 5% of the Autonomous Republic were designated protected areas. Best wishes for a successful meeting were expressed.
3. The CMS representative, Dr. Aline Kühl, welcomed participants and provided an opening statement from the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr. Robert Hepworth. The Great Bustard MoU was highlighted as one of the first soft law instruments for migratory species under CMS and as illustrated by the meeting documents had contributed to considerable conservation action since entry into force in 2001. Despite the heavy workload of the Convention due to the forthcoming CMS COP9 in Italy in December, the Secretariat stated that it was necessary to convene the Second Meeting of the Great Bustard MoU in 2008 to further strengthen ongoing conservation efforts. The international collaboration of Range States, as well as observing organisations, was vital for many CMS instruments. The Avian Influenza Task Force was highlighted as an example of successful international collaboration. The value of large scale projects available for some CMS MoUs such as the one for Siberian Crane or the Wings over Wetlands project for the transboundary conservation of migratory birds was mentioned and requested participants to consider the possibility of applying for a similar project for the Great Bustard. Dr. Kühl expressed her gratitude to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environmental Protection for hosting the meeting and for providing financial and logistical support to make possible the Scientific Symposium and the two-day Meeting of Signatories. She further thanked Birdlife International and the local coordinators of the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds for their hard work in assisting with meetings, logistics and for organising an excellent expedition to allow participants to watch Great Bustards in the wild. She also thanked the MoU coordinators to date, Mr. Szabolcs Nagy and Mr. Rainer Raab, for acting as the Secretariat's technical advisers and preparing a considerable number of documents for the meeting. The CMS Family Guide was presented to the Ukrainian host and to the Chair of the Scientific Symposium, Mr. John O'Sullivan; participants were invited to request copies of the guide as required.

Agenda Item 2.0: Election of Officers

4. The meeting elected Dr. Volodymyr Domashlinets (Ukraine) and Dr. Torsten Langgemach (Germany) as Chair and Co-Chair of the meeting respectively. Participants agreed that the Chair and Co-Chair would switch their roles in half-day intervals for the two-day meeting.

Agenda Item 3.0: Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule, general administrative matters

5. The meeting accepted the Chairs' proposal to operate without formal written rules of procedure since this arrangement had reportedly worked well during the first Meeting of Signatories.

6. The agenda was adopted without amendment (UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.1) and is provided as Annex 2 to this report.

Agenda Item 4.0: Opening Statements

7. The Chair invited opening statements from delegates, followed by a brief summary of the Scientific Symposium's outcome presented by the Symposium's Chair Mr. O'Sullivan.

8. The representative from Germany stated that he was pleased with the development of international Great Bustard conservation. He appreciated that the same meeting format as used during the First Meeting of Signatories was being applied since this was found to be very constructive in Illmitz, Austria, 2004. Specifically, it was recommended that future meetings should also include a scientific symposium followed by an excursion and then the actual MoU meeting. Thanks were expressed to the organisers for their achievements and efforts to date, and BirdLife International for guiding the symposium in a very professional way. He looked forward to the results of the MoU meeting.

9. The representative from Austria stated that the population trend of the Great Bustard was positive because of effective measures in conservation, considering that infrastructure projects were assessed using Environmental Impact Assessment Studies and appropriate Studies under Article six of the Habitats Directive. Good agro-environmental programmes were being realised in Austria with the help of farmers and land-owners. Several EU LIFE projects have been accomplished and are ongoing. As one of the outcomes the danger of power lines has been minimised in Austria by burying low voltage cables and marking medium and high voltage cables effectively.

10. Austria was planning to continue the excellent trans-boundary collaboration with the neighbouring countries Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic in order to take care of the western Pannonian population of the targeted species. New activities were envisaged including capturing, marking and tracking individuals in order to obtain information on migratory behaviour, to identify leks and to calculate potential carrying capacities. There would also be research conducted to assess the demography and life history of the population.

11. The representative from Bulgaria stated that the Scientific Symposium had provided efficient scientific recommendations. The implementation of these recommendations would be a significant step forward to strengthen the conservation action of Great Bustards in all range countries.

12. The representatives from the Czech Republic stated that it was necessary to re-establish the Czech population of the Great Bustard through considerable adaptation of current landscape management. To achieve this goal the experience from neighbouring countries, as well as the guidelines provided by experts were of fundamental importance. Furthermore, the scientific meetings held, and the

resultant exchange of scientific knowledge and practical experience, and last but not least international cooperation were identified as vital in this regard.

13. The representative from Hungary supported Bulgaria's opinion concerning the importance and effectiveness of the scientific symposium and suggested that the resultant recommendations should be taken into consideration during the MoU meeting, especially when reviewing the Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP).

14. Hungary had recently not been in the position to finance joint activities, however provided several in-kind contributions including the organisation of a technical expert meeting held in Mosonmagyóvár in November 2006 with the participation of seven Great Bustard Range States. In this way Hungary initiated the co-operation among Serbia, Romania and Hungary in carrying out population counts and sharing experience in a joint meeting in Mokrin and undertaking cross-border activities with Austria and Slovakia. Artificial incubation, captive rearing and habitat management practices were also shared amongst participants during a visit of German and British colleagues in Dévaványa and Kiskunság. In addition to the Ministry for Environment and Water and the relevant National Park Directorates, the Great Bustard experts of Birdlife Hungary (MME) provided support by visiting the Saratov Great Bustard Center and participating in the preparation of a feasibility and management study. In the future Hungary intends to continue and further strengthen international co-operation, especially with Serbia and Romania, taking into consideration that more attention would be needed regarding the conservation of the transboundary population and its remnant potential habitats.

15. The representative from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia highlighted that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was one of the first countries to sign the Great Bustard MoU. It was hoped that appropriate international collaboration would lead to a better understanding of the status, distribution and consequently the protection of the species in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As was mentioned during the Scientific Symposium this collaboration had unfortunately been limited during the past eight years. It was sincerely hoped that in the near future greater emphasis was placed on Great Bustard conservation in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

16. The representative from Ukraine highlighted that activities related to the Great Bustard in the Ukraine currently focused on the following directions: the revision of the Scientific and Practical Programme "Conservation of Steppe and Restoration of Eastern European Population of Great Bustard in Ukraine"; research on current status and trends of the Great Bustard population in the Ukraine; and the enhancement of measures to control illegal hunting. GIS-based methods as applied by the Ukrainian state inventory of fauna was an important tool to collect data on priority species and especially Red Data Book species such as the Great Bustard.

17. The observer from the Russian Federation highlighted the importance of involving his countries' policy makers in the Great Bustard CMS MoU. He raised the issue of egg collection from the wild and provided the Secretariat with several background documents. It was recommended that the CMS Secretariat should contact the relevant Russian Ministry to discuss MoU signing. Apologies were made for the early departure of the observer from the Russian Federation.

18. The observer from the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds wished success to participants for the MoU meeting and expressed his delight for convening this international meeting on Great Bustard conservation on the Crimean peninsula.

19. The Chair of the Scientific Symposium said that it had been an excellent one-day scientific meeting, benefiting from presentations by acknowledged experts from a wide diversity of Range States and interested organisations. There had been a lively discussion in the meeting and in the corridors.

20. The Scientific Symposium had requested a small working group to produce a statement, including recommendations to the Meeting, and this had been written, and was distributed on the morning of the first day of CMS MoU meeting.

21. The Chair of the Symposium congratulated and thanked the hosts on the organisation of the meeting and the excellent excursion. He thanked all participants, in particular the members of the working group.

22. The meeting then discussed the statement from the Scientific Symposium, in particular the section recognising the possible future implications of climate change on the distribution of Great Bustards which may require an expansion of the current MoU range. The full document is provided as Annex 3 to this report.

Agenda Item 5.0: Report of the Secretariat

Agenda Item 5.1: Status of signatures

23. The CMS representative stated that to date there were 13 Signatories to the MoU. The last signature was that of the Czech Republic on 18 February 2008. In addition, four organisations had signed the MoU as collaborators. It was noted that the countries that had not yet signed the MoU were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland and Slovenia. The Report of the Secretariat can be found in document UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.7.

24. The Meeting took note of the Report of the Secretariat and invited the remaining three countries to sign the MoU. Furthermore, Hungary proposed that the CMS Secretariat should contact the relevant focal points of the Russian Federation, Serbia and Italy to invite them to join the MoU in line with the recommendations made at the First Meeting of Signatories.

25. Based on the outcome of the Scientific Symposium (Annex 3) meeting participants discussed the options available for expanding the current MoU range. It was also noted that the decision from the First Meeting of Signatories to include Italy, Russian Federation and Serbia and Montenegro¹ as Range States to the MoU had not been implemented (see UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Inf.2). The CMS Secretariat was requested to inform the delegates of the possibilities and legal practicalities involved in expanding the MoU to the range states proposed in 2004 and more widely. The options available for allowing Range States listed under the CMS Great Bustard species listing (Appendix I/II) to sign the MoU as Signatory States, as well as those available for the inclusion of those states that are currently not listed as range states but are likely to become range states due to climate change would be assessed by the Secretariat. The findings would be communicated to delegates by email by the end of January 2009.

26. On the basis of this information the delegates agreed to approach their relevant national decision-making bodies to determine in good time for the Third Meeting of Signatories their position for the various possibilities available for MoU expansion.

27. It was noted that while it would be relatively straightforward to invite further countries currently not listed as range states under the MoU to join as observers, such an arrangement may make participation of these new observers difficult since national funding is not necessarily available. Signatory status would on the other hand facilitate such national funding. As a result it may be more practical in the long-term to suggest to new countries interested in joining the MoU to do so as signatories rather than observers.

¹ Reflecting the legal entity status in 2004.

28. The CMS Secretariat is invited to use the example of the Great Bustard MoU to encourage debate amongst member states (e.g. during the forthcoming CMS COP9) on the implications of likely range shifts due to climate change, which may require a change of MoU range.

Agenda Item 5.2: List of designated national contact points

29. The CMS Secretariat and delegates reviewed the list of national contact points on the basis of document UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Inf.3. Minor changes were adopted (Annex 4); Range States that were not present will be contacted to review their national focal point information.

Agenda Item 5.3: National Work Programmes

30. The Secretariat reminded Range States that within one year of the entry into force of the MoU national work programmes should be prepared which should include, *inter alia*, cross-border measures, agreed between the respective Signatories (see UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Inf.7). It was noted that to date only three countries had submitted National Work Programmes to the Secretariat, specifically Albania, Hungary and Macedonia. On the basis of national reports it was further noted that Germany, Croatia, Austria, Ukraine, Hungary and Slovakia have national work programmes. There was general agreement that the added value of the submission of National Work Programmes to Meetings of the Signatories was limited.

Agenda Item 5.4: National Reports received

31. The Secretariat informed the meeting that national reports had been received from the following countries: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Austria and Hungary. Due to the late submission of Hungary's report it had not been possible for the Secretariat to post the document on the CMS website. The Secretariat was asked to write to the remaining Range States that had not submitted national reports to date, namely Romania, Moldova, Greece and Albania, and to request the due delivery of these documents. National Report Format is provided as Annex 5 to this report.

Agenda Item 6.0: Review of MoU and Action Plan implementation

Agenda Item 6.1: Review of the conservation status of the Great Bustard populations in the agreement area

32. Participants discussed and reviewed the portion of the Overview Report (document UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.6 rev.1) addressing the Great Bustard's conservation status within the agreement area based on the findings of the Scientific Symposium. Participants acknowledged that population trends were improving in Germany, Austria and Hungary. However, there was a concern that the population trend may be negative in Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. It was suggested to include an additional column into the existent population status table (Table 1 of Annex 6) indicating the reliability of the data presented. Furthermore, it was agreed to rearrange the order of countries by sub-population.

Agenda Item 6.2: Status of development and implementation of national work programmes

33. Delegates reviewed the Overview Report prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.6/Rev.1). Several changes were adopted, which are included in a further revision of the document which is appended to this report as Annex 6. It was requested that future overview reports should apply a scoring system to evaluate the level of implementation of each activity. Future reports should include maps with locations of individual sub-populations for each of the range states.

Agenda Item 6.3: Status of implementation of the Medium-Term International Work Programme

34. The Medium-Term Work Programme was reviewed and discussed in detail by delegates (UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.8/Rev.1). It was agreed that the MTWIP would be extended until 2012 when the Third Meeting of Signatories would take place. A revised MTIWP containing several amendments and additional measures was produced, it is provided as Annex 7 to this report. Range States unanimously agreed to implement these measures.

Agenda Item 7.0: Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Action Plan

Agenda Item 7.1: Preparation of Guidelines

Agenda Item 7.1.1: Capture, Handling and Marking

35. The representative from BirdLife International introduced the draft guidelines on capturing and radio-tracking Great Bustards prepared by Professor Juan C. Alonso (Spain). The document UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.4 was adopted by the delegates without further changes.

Agenda Item 7.1.2: Monitoring

36. The author of the draft guidelines for monitoring Great Bustard populations, Mr. Rainer Raab, presented the outline of the document. The delegates provided feedback on the scope of the document and made recommendations towards its further development. Mr. Raab stated that the guidelines would be finalised within 2009.

Agenda Item 7.1.3: Best practise guide on mitigating impacts of infrastructure development and afforestation

37. Mr. Rainer Raab provided participants with an overview of the envisaged publication through a power point presentation. Delegates noted that the target group should be carefully defined. The document should provide practical and specific information concerning the impacts of infrastructure and land-use changes affecting Great Bustards in the agreement area. Furthermore, the publication should assist to disseminate lessons learnt concerning the effectiveness of various mitigation measures. Mr. Raab kindly offered to finalise the guide by 2009.

Agenda Item 7.2: Setting up an Advisory Panel on Reintroduction and Captive Breeding

38. The Secretariat presented the draft document on "Establishing a technical review and advisory panel for reintroduction and reestablishment" (UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.5). Delegates agreed on the establishment of an Advisory Panel with several amendments to the Terms of Reference and suggested to focus only on reintroduction efforts. The Terms of Reference as amended by the meeting are attached to this report as Annex 8.

Agenda Item 7.3: MoU Coordination

39. The Secretariat expressed its gratitude to Austria for the financial assistance in establishing a Great Bustard MoU coordination mechanism in 2005 for a three-year period. CMS further thanked the MoU coordinators Dr. Szabolcs Nagy and Mr. Rainer Raab for their tremendous efforts in coordinating the instrument. Hungary announced that it would be willing to provide in-kind assistance for the coordination of the MoU from 2009 onwards. Further information regarding the Terms of Reference and financial implications would be required from the CMS Secretariat prior to making a final commitment.

Agenda Item 7.4: Any other matters

40. The Secretariat highlighted that there were ongoing processes with both the Bern Convention and CITES to strengthen collaboration on the conservation of migratory species. The Great Bustard was addressed by several of these instruments and thus it was important that efforts were coordinated.

41. In relation to this, the representative of BirdLife International informed the meeting about the plans of revising the existing European Action Plan for Great Bustard in collaboration with the European Commission, the Bern Convention and CMS. The meeting requested that the CMS Secretariat inform delegates about the avenues available for aligning the existent Great Bustard MoU Action Plan and the envisaged revised European Action Plan. To this effect it requested the Secretariat to seek further information from the EC when work will be formally contracted in order to be able to contribute to the document to cover all the range states covered by the CMS MoU.

42. Dr. Szabolcs Nagy presented the Great Bustard webpage hosted by the Monitoring Centre of MME Hungary (<http://www.tuzok.mme.hu>), including a new monitoring tool. The website has a news section, file folders and an online database. Users would be able to register and create their own profile. The database is linked to Google Maps and thus observations of Great Bustards can be linked to exact geographical locations. This tool allows to record, maintain and analyse spatial population data. The data is then visible to the user, the national coordinators and CMS National MoU Focal Points. The maintenance of the website will be one of the tasks of the new MoU coordinator. While it was agreed that the data collected through such a tool would not be sufficient in number to permit detailed research, it was highlighted that anecdotal data could be collected and followed-up accurately with much greater use through the website.

43. Mr. Rainer Raab presented a Western Palearctic map indicating the current and potential future range states of the MoU. He offered to make this map available to the Great Bustard network.

Agenda Item 8.0: Next meeting of the Signatory States

44. It had been previously agreed (Agenda Item: 6.3) that the Third Meeting of Signatory States would take place in 2012. Hungary kindly offered to host this meeting, which participants were glad to accept.

Agenda Item 9.0: Any other business

45. No further items were raised.

Agenda Item 10.0: Closure of the meeting

46. The Chairman thanked the local organisers from the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds (USPB) for assisting with the organisation of the meetings, as well as the CMS Secretariat, BirdLife International, the interpreters and all participants for their contributions. The CMS Secretariat also expressed their thanks to the hosting country, USPB, Birdlife International and the participants for their input and substantive preparations. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.45am.

Speech by Mr. Mykola Movchan, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection of the Ukraine

Dear Delegates,

Let me on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental protection of the Ukraine welcome you in the Ukraine, in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea at the beautiful resort town of Feodosia. Preservation of biodiversity and of rare and endangered species, in particular, are an important element of the environmental policy of the Ukraine. Our country is implementing comprehensive steps aimed at the integration into global and European environmental protection projects. The Ukraine is a counterpart within all important multilateral international treaties in the sphere of wild flora and fauna protection and it duly contributes to their implementation.

Migratory species of wild animals are an integral component of natural biodiversity, which link countries and continents due to their migration. A lot of species of these animals are threatened by extinction. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, treaties and memoranda signed within its framework, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard, which gathered together today the guests from various countries, are essentially important for coordinated international activities aimed at preservation and restoration of these species.

The Crimea is an important site from the point of view of preservation of migratory species of wild animals. The coasts of the Black and Azov Seas, and a lot of land plots are used by the birds on the paths of their migrations for nestling, resting and feeding, that is the reason why several nature reservation sites have been created and have been functioning here, e.g. Azovo-Sivashski National Natural Park, Karadag Reserve located not far from Feodosia. The Crimea, namely, the Kerch peninsula, is also a natural habitat of the Great Bustard, the species being the subject of this meeting.

The Great Bustard is listed in the Red Data Book of Ukraine and is subject to special conservation. The Ministry approved the Inter-Regional Research and Practical Program “Steppes Conservation and Reintroduction of the Easter European Population of the Great Bustard”. Scientific research is being conducted to identify the current status of the Great Bustard population, and of its dynamics; environmental conservation projects are being implemented that are aimed at enhancing its conservation and reintroduction and at work organization in order to create ecological awareness in the society.

Let me express my expectation that the Second Meeting of the Signatory States of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard will have substantial effect on planning and implementing joint international activities to preserve this bird species from extinction for the sake of present and future generations.

I wish you every success in fulfilling the meeting’s agenda, developing and adopting relative documents in order to achieve the objectives set in the Memorandum.

Mr. Mykola Movchan

AGENDA OF THE MEETING

1. Welcoming remarks
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule, general administrative matters
4. Opening statements
5. Report of the Secretariat
 - 5.1. Status of signatures
 - 5.2. List of designated national contact points
 - 5.3. National Work Programmes received
 - 5.4. National Reports/Reports on MoU Implementation received
 - 5.5. Any other matters
6. Review of MoU and Action Plan implementation
 - 6.1 Review of the conservation status of the GB populations in the agreement area
 - 6.2 Status of development and implementation of national work programmes
 - 6.3 Status of implementation of the Medium-term International Work Programme
7. Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Action Plan
 - 7.1 Preparation of Guidelines
 - 7.1.1 Capture, Handling and Marking
 - 7.1.2 Monitoring
 - 7.1.3 Best practice guide on mitigating impacts of infrastructure development and afforestation
 - 7.2 Setting up an Advisory Panel on Reintroductions and Captive Breeding
 - 7.3 MoU Coordination
 - 7.4 Any other matters
8. Next meeting of the Signatory States
9. Any other business
10. Closure of the meeting

**REPORT OF THE 2nd SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM
ON GREAT BUSTARD IN MIDDLE EUROPE**

*Feodosia, Crimea, Ukraine
9 November 2008*

The meeting took place on 9 November 2008 in Feodosia, AR Crimea, Ukraine with the participation of 30 experts. The meeting reviewed the status of the European populations of Great Bustard, the scientific results of the on-going conservation projects, and of the Bustard Map project co-funded by the Memorandum of Understanding.

The participants concluded that good progress had been made by several Signatory States since the First Meeting of Signatories to implement conservation measures within the framework of LIFE Projects and agri-environmental measures. The participants also recognised that the pan-European population status of the Great Bustard has remained stable or improved somewhat during the last four years. However, in certain range states less is known about the actual population size and occurrence, especially regarding wintering populations.

In order to build on this progress, the participants at the Scientific Symposium adopted the following recommendations for consideration at the Second Meeting of the Signatories:

- 1) The Signatory States should continue to pursue conservation measures initiated by the LIFE projects and share their experience more widely in the form of guidelines and technical assistance, especially in relation to habitat management, mitigating the impact of infrastructure, control of poaching and disturbance, predator management and population reinforcement and reintroduction.
- 2) The Signatory States should step up their efforts to collect demographic parameters, on a more systematic basis and using standardised methods, including estimates of population size, sex ratio, productivity, movements and survival rate; methods should include the most up-to-date techniques, such as individual marking, telemetry and genetic studies.
- 3) The Signatory States should define realistic Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) for assessing progress towards achieving favourable conservation status for the Great Bustard. Preliminary FRVs can be derived from the spatial analysis carried out in the BustardMap project, population estimates for the Range States and published demographic data. The Signatory States should request the CMS Secretariat to commission an appropriate study for this purpose and should support this activity with voluntary contributions.
- 4) The Signatory States should recognise the possible future implications of climate change on the distribution of Great Bustard, especially in Middle Europe, by inviting, in addition to Spain, Portugal, Turkey and the UK, Belarus, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Morocco (as potential future Range States), to attend as observers, and continue to encourage Poland, Russia, Serbia, to join the MoU.
- 5) The Signatory States should request the Secretariat to communicate to the European Commission the Report and conclusions from the Scientific Symposium as a contribution to the revision of the European Species Action Plan for the Great Bustard.

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REPORTING FORMAT FOR THE GREAT BUSTARD MOU AND ACTION PLAN

This reporting format is designed to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan associated with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*). Reporting on the Action Plan's implementation will support exchange of information throughout the range and assist the identification of necessary future actions by the Signatory States. The questions presented here go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agency or institution responsible for the preparation of this report
List any other agencies, institutions, or NGOs that have provided input
Reports submitted to date: First: (Period covered) Second:
Period covered by this report (day) (month) (year) to (day) (month) (year):
Memorandum in effect in country since: [Date: dd / mm / yy]:
Designated Focal Point (and full contact details):

PART I. GENERAL

This questionnaire follows the structure and numbering of the Action Plan annexed to the Memorandum of Understanding to make it easier to read the relevant action points before the form is filled in. In some cases, however, sub-actions were not listed separately for the sake of simplicity and to avoid duplications. They should however be taken into consideration when answering the questions.

0. National work programme

Is there a national work programme or action plan already in place in your country for the Great Bustard pursuant to Paragraph 4(g) of the Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes No

1. Habitat protection

1.1 Designation of protected areas.

To what extent are the display, breeding, stop-over and wintering sites covered by protected areas?

Designation of protected areas under national law	Classification of Special Protection Areas according to the requirements of Art.4.1 of the EC Birds Directive
<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable ¹

What measures were taken to ensure the adequate protection of the species and its habitat at these sites?

Where are the remaining gaps?

Are currently unoccupied, but potential breeding habitats identified in your country?

Yes No Not applicable²

If yes, please explain how these areas are protected or managed to enable the re-establishment of Great Bustard.

1.2 Measures taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats outside of protected areas.

Please describe what measures have been taken to maintain land-use practices beneficial for Great Bustard outside of protected areas (e.g., set-aside and extensification schemes, cultivation of alfalfa and oilseed rape for winter, maintenance of rotational grazing, etc.).

¹ The species occurs only irregularly, no regular stop-over or wintering sites identified.

² Countries *outside* of the historic (beginning of 20th Century) breeding range of the species.

To what extent do these measures, combined with site protection, cover the national population?

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable¹

Are recently (over the last 20 years) abandoned Great Bustard breeding habitats mapped in your country?

- Yes No Not applicable¹

What habitat management measures have been taken to encourage the return of Great Bustard?

If there were any measures taken, please provide information on their impact.

1.3 Measures taken to avoid fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats.

Are new projects potentially causing fragmentation of the species' habitat (such as construction of highways and railways, irrigation, planting of shelterbelts, afforestation, power lines, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country? Yes No Not applicable¹

Is there any aspect of the existing legislation on impact assessment that limits its effective application to prevent fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats? Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please provide details.

Have there been any such projects implemented in any Great Bustard habitat in your country since signing this Memorandum of Understanding? Yes No Not applicable¹

Please, give details and describe the outcome of impact monitoring if available.

2. Prevention of hunting, disturbance and other threats

2.1 Hunting.

Is Great Bustard afforded strict legal protection in your country? Yes No

Please, give details of any hunting restrictions imposed for the benefit of Great Bustard including those on timing of hunting and game management activities.

Please, indicate to what extent these measures ensure the protection of the national Great Bustard population?

The national population is covered by restrictions on hunting to prevent hunting-related disturbance:

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable¹

2.2 Prevention of disturbance.

What measures have been taken to prevent disturbance of Great Bustard in your country, including both breeding birds and single individuals or small flocks on migration?

Please, indicate to what extent these measures have ensured the protection of the national population.

The national population is covered by restrictions on other activities causing disturbance:

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable¹

2.3.1 Prevention of predation.

What is the significance of predation to Great Bustard in your country?

What are the main predator species?

What measures have been taken to control predators in areas where Great Bustard occurs regularly?

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (predation reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (predation reduced by 10–49%)
- Less effective (predation reduced by less than 10%)
- Not applicable¹

2.3.2 Adoption of measures for power lines.

What is the significance of collision with power lines in your country?

What proactive and corrective measures have been taken to reduce the mortality caused by existing power lines in your country?

What is the size of the populations affected by these corrective measures?

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (collision with power lines reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (collision with power lines reduced by 10–49%)
- Ineffective (collision with power lines reduced by less than 10%)
- Not applicable¹

2.3.3 Compensatory measures.

What is the size (in hectares) of Great Bustard habitat lost or degraded for any reasons since the Memorandum of Understanding entered into effect (1 June 2001)?

What is the size of the populations affected?

Were these habitat losses compensated? Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

If yes, please explain how.

Were these measures effective? Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, give details on the effectiveness or explain why they were not effective if that is the case.

3. Possession and trade

Is collection of Great Bustard eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs prohibited in your country? Yes No

How are these restrictions enforced? What are the remaining shortcomings, if any?

Please indicate if any exemption is granted or not all of these activities are prohibited.

4. Recovery measures

4.1 Captive breeding* in emergency situations.

Is captive breeding playing any role in Great Bustard conservation in your country? Yes No

Please, describe the measures, staff and facilities involved and how these operations comply with the IUCN criteria on reintroductions.

4.2 Reintroduction.

Have there been any measures taken to reintroduce the species in your country? Yes No

If yes, please describe the progress. If there was any feasibility study carried out, please summarize its conclusions.

4.3 Monitoring of the success of release programmes.

Are captive reared birds released in your country? Yes No

If yes, please summarize the experience with release programmes in your country. What is the survival rate of released birds? What is the breeding performance of released birds?

What is the overall assessment of release programmes based on the survival of released birds one year after release?

- Effective (the survival is about the same as of the wild ones)
- Partially effective (the survival rate is lower than 75% of the wild birds)
- Ineffective (the survival is less than 25% of wild birds)
- Not applicable³

* In effect, "captive breeding" should be read as "captive rearing" according to current practices.

³ No release is taking place in the country.

5. Cross-border conservation measure

Has your country undertaken any cross-border conservation measures with neighbouring countries?

Yes No Not applicable⁴

Please, give details of your country's collaboration with neighbouring countries on national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities for Great Bustard. Especially, list any measures taken to harmonise legal instruments protecting Great Bustard and its habitats, as well as funding you have provided to Great Bustard for particular conservation actions in other Range States.

6. Monitoring and research

6.1.1 Monitoring of population size and population trends.

Are the breeding, migratory or wintering Great Bustard populations monitored in your country?

Yes No

What proportion of the national population is monitored?

- All (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- None
- Not applicable¹

What is the size and trend in the national population?⁵

Breeding/resident population

Non-breeding population (on passage, wintering)

No. of adult males: _____

No. of adult males: _____

No. of females: _____

No. of females: _____

No. immature males: _____

No. immature males: _____

Trend: Declined by __% over the last 10 years
 Stable
 Increased by __% over the last 10 years

Trend: Declined by __% over the last 10 years
 Stable
 Increased by __% over the last 10 years

For countries where the species occurs only occasionally, please give the details of known observations within the reporting period:

6.1.2 Monitoring of the effects of habitat management.

Is the effect of habitat conservation measures monitored in your country?

Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

What can be learned from these studies?

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

⁴ For countries which do not have any transboundary population.

⁵ Only for countries where the species occurs regularly.

6.2.1 Comparative ecological studies.

Have there been any comparative studies carried out on the population dynamics, habitat requirements, effects of habitat changes and causes of decline in your country in collaboration with other Range States?
 Yes No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

What can be learned from these studies?

What are the remaining gaps where the Memorandum of Understanding could assist?

6.2.2 Studies on mortality factors.

Are the causes of Great Bustard mortality understood in your country?
 Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

What can be learned from these studies?

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

6.2.3 Investigation of factors limiting breeding success.

Are the factors limiting breeding success in core populations understood in your country?
 Yes Partially No Not applicable⁶

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

What can be learned from these studies?

What are the remaining gaps and what measures are you going to take to address these gaps?

6.2.4 Studies on migration.

Were there any studies on migration routes and wintering places carried out in your country?
 Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Where are the key sites and what is the size of the population they support?

Do you have any knowledge about the origin of these birds supported by ringing or other marking methods?

⁶ Only for breeding countries.

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

7. Training of staff working in conservation bodies

Is there any mechanism in place in your country to share information on biological characteristics and living requirements of Great Bustard, legal matters, census techniques and management practices to personnel working regularly with the species? Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please describe it.

Have personnel dealing with Great Bustard participated in any exchange programme in other Range States? Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please give details on number of staff involved, country visited and how the lessons were applied in your country.

8. Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat

What measures have been taken to increase the awareness about the protection needs of the species and its habitat in your country since signing the Memorandum of Understanding?

Do farmers, shepherds, political decision makers and local and regional authorities support Great Bustard conservation? Yes Partially No

What are the remaining gaps or problems and how are you going to address them?

9. Economic measures

Have there been any initiatives taken to develop economic activities that are in line with the conservation requirements of Great Bustard in your country? Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

What percentage of the population is covered in total by these measures?

- All (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- None
- Not applicable

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (more than 50% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
- Partially effective (10–49% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
- Ineffective (less than 10% according to the species' needs)
- Not applicable¹

10. Threats

Please, fill in the table below on main threats to the species in your country. Use the threat scores categories below to quantify their significance at national level. Please, provide an explanation on what basis you have assigned the threat score and preferably provide reference. Add additional lines, if necessary.

Threat scores:

Critical: a factor causing or likely to cause **very rapid declines** (>30% over 10 years).

High: a factor causing or likely to cause **rapid declines** (20-30% over 10 years).

Medium: a factor causing or likely to cause relatively **slow, but significant, declines** (10-20% over 10 years).

Low: a factor causing or likely to cause **fluctuations**.

Local: a factor causing local declines but likely to cause **negligible declines at population level**.

Unknown: a factor that is likely to affect the species but it is unknown to what extent.

Threat name	Threat score	Explanation and reference
Habitat loss		
Losses of eggs and chicks		
Predation		
Collision with powerlines		
Human disturbance		
Pesticides		
Illegal hunting		
Others (specify)		

PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on Great Bustard or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

REVISED OVERVIEW REPORT

*Document prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the CMS Secretariat
Final version incorporating amendments agreed at the 2nd Meeting of signatory States*

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (MoU) the Secretariat shall prepare an overview report compiled on the basis of all information at its disposal pertaining to the Great Bustard. It shall communicate this report to all Signatories, signing Organisations and to all other Range States.

2. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the MoU, MoU Signatories that are also Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) should in their national report to the CMS Conference of the Parties make specific reference to activities undertaken in relation to this Agreement. At the same time, MoU signatories not Party to the Convention shall be invited to prepare, after the adoption of their national work programme, a report on the implementation of the MoU both of which they should then communicate to the Secretariat.

3. By letters dated 20 February and 10 September 2008, the Secretariat provided to all MoU Signatories the reporting guidance for Parts I and II of the Great Bustard Action Plan adopted at the First Meeting of the Signatory States. As of 17 October 2008, the following Signatories had submitted their national reports to the Secretariat: Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Croatia the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Slovakia. In addition, the report draws from national reports submitted by Signatories and non-Signatories who are also Parties to CMS COP-9: Hungary, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia. National reports from Hungary, Ukraine and Bulgaria submitted after 17 October 2008 were incorporated into the Rev1 version of the Overview Report. Finally, information available to BirdLife International in the form of data, project or threat reports, as well as, information available on the Internet was also used.

4. The structure of this report follows that of the reporting guidelines. Corresponding action points from the Action Plan are indicated in square brackets. This report does not repeat the information provided in the national reports. It only summarizes the main issues.

II. Status of Great Bustard in the Agreement Area and beyond

5. By the time of writing this report only three breeding (Austria, Germany and Slovakia) and three non-breeding range states have submitted their reports. Therefore, the population estimates presented here are based on the information available to the author.

6. A summary of available population estimates are presented in Table 1. Within the agreement area, the overall numbers are stable. Some recovery can be observed in Austria, Germany and Hungary as a result of intensive conservation measures and numbers seem to be stable in Serbia. The presence of the species during breeding season has been confirmed in Romania and suspected in Bulgaria as a result of surveys carried out in 2006 by the respective national partners of BirdLife International under the coordination of the MoU. The Ukrainian breeding population has possibly declined by 10% over the last 10 years. There is considerable uncertainty in the numbers related to the populations in Russia, but the wintering population in Ukraine has possibly declined by 20% over the last 10 years.

7. Within Europe, but outside of the agreement area, the species population is regarded stable in the Iberian Peninsula although censuses in both Spain and Portugal indicate that the fragmentation of the population still continues. The population is further decreasing in Turkey.

III. Implementation of the Action Plan

8. **Protected Areas [AP 1.1]:** The Action Plan requires responsible authorities to designate key breeding sites and key migration and wintering sites throughout the range of the species as protected areas and manage them according to the species' requirements. This includes also areas that are essential for the reestablishment of the species. In the *breeding range*, **Austria, Hungary, Germany** and **Slovakia** have reported that the leks and a significant part of the breeding areas are already protected as Special Protection Areas under the EC Wild Birds Directive. However, only part of the Great Bustard habitats is protected under national law in **Hungary, Germany** and **Slovakia**. In 2008, **Austria** has made substantial progress in designation of all key areas under the national legislation. In **Ukraine**, less than half of the display, breeding, stop-over and wintering sites are covered by protected areas, but progress in enhancing the protection was reported from the Karalar area, but there are still gaps both in Crimea Autonomous Republic, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. In 2007, **Hungary** has introduced legislation on Natura 2000 payments to compensate for the restrictions on grassland management within these areas. Similar payment is also available in **Germany**. In **Germany** and **Hungary**, large areas were purchased by the state and conservation organisations. In **Germany**, the SPA "Fiener Bruch" in Saxony-Anhalt is still not protected and managed adequately. **Serbia** has also increased the protection at the last remaining breeding population in the vicinity of Mokrin. Although there has been significant progress in relation to the habitat of extant populations, the conservation of currently unoccupied but suitable habitats appear to be more problematic, but some progress also can be reported here. In **Germany**, measures targeting the conservation of meadow birds provide some protection to habitats potentially suitable for Great Bustards. The **Czech Republic** reported that a former military airport is managed every year to ensure adequate habitat for Great Bustards, but otherwise there is no possibility to protect the historic range. **Slovakia** has made significant efforts to encourage the resettlement of Great Bustard at one area. In **Bulgaria**, significant part of the former breeding and wintering areas were designated as SPAs for other species. In the *non-breeding period* the Middle-European population migrates only occasionally and often only short distances. This makes the designation of protected areas difficult. On the other hand, the majority of the population from Saratov, **Russia** migrates regularly to the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya districts in Crimea, Ukraine. However, Great Bustard habitats are only protected in the Black Sea Biosphere Reserve. The Ukrainian report highlights the importance of protecting the Agayman area near to the Askania-Nova Biosphere Reserve and in the Kerch Peninsula.

9. **Habitat quality outside of protected areas [AP 1.2]:** The Action Plan calls for maintenance or improvement of habitat quality outside of protected areas. It calls for extensification, introduction of appropriate crop rotation, including alfalfa and oilseed rape, and set-aside schemes supported by incentives provided under agri-environmental schemes. In **Austria, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia** only a small part of the suitable habitats are left unprotected. Agri-environmental schemes support appropriate habitat management in **Austria, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia** (including also protected areas). In **Germany**, farmers are also supported under extensification schemes. However, the German and Austrian reports have also highlighted the potential negative impact of abolishing the set-aside obligation in the EU. In **Austria**, special measures were taken to encourage the return of Great Bustards to abandoned breeding habitats nearby established breeding sites inside protected areas and breeding females can be observed on these areas, what indicates that the approach is successful. In the

non-breeding ranges there is no information about targeted measures taken to address the species feeding requirements during migration or winter with the exception of **Ukraine** who has reported cultivation of oilseed rape on the Kerch peninsula.

10. **Preventing habitat fragmentation [AP 1.3]:** The Action Plan calls for prevention of afforestation and making infrastructure development, in particular construction of new roads, highways, railways and irrigation, subject of environmental impact assessment (EIA). In general, larger projects and projects within protected areas are subject of EIA, but smaller projects on unprotected areas are not. In addition, EIAs only inform, but do not bind the competent authorities in their decision whether to approve or reject a proposal. Some countries (e.g. Slovakia) have also reported insufficient enforcement of the legislation. Overriding public interest can also justify projects leading to habitat fragmentation. Potentially dangerous infrastructure development projects were mentioned in the **Czech** (windfarm, photovoltaic panels), **German** (highway, windfarms), **Ukrainian** (windfarms) and **Slovak** (airport) reports. The **Austrian** and **Hungarian** reports state that nature conservation authorities managed to prevent adverse infrastructural developments.

11. **Protection from hunting [AP 2.1]:** The Action Plan calls for prohibiting any hunting where it is considered necessary at the time Great Bustard are expected to occur in the area. These restrictions should be then strictly enforced. Already the first overview report noted that the species is officially protected in all countries either as a (strictly) protected species (**Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Slovakia and Ukraine**) and/or as game bird with a year-around closed season (**Austria, Germany, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovakia**). In **Austria**, hunting activities are voluntarily suspended by hunters at breeding sites. In **Hungary**, roe deer hunting during the display season in May is restricted by the conservation authorities around leks and breeding places. Illegal killing may occur but it is difficult to substantiate, however it is considered to be high in **Ukraine** affecting the wintering population, but actions were taken by USPB, BirdLife in Ukraine.

12. **Preventing disturbance [AP 2.2]:** The Action Plan calls for preventing disturbance of display and breeding sites through restricting or controlling access and adoption of the timing and techniques of land management. **Austria** and **Germany** have reported agreements with various stakeholders (farmers, hunters, armed forces) to reduce disturbance. Surveillance officers also play a role in enforcing legal restrictions and agreements in these countries. In **Slovakia**, access is restricted to SPAs. In **Hungary**, disturbance is prevented through statutory (as part of the protected area/Natura 2000 management plans) and voluntary (as part of conditions for agri-environmental measures) restrictions. In some protected areas, physical barriers were installed to restrict access to dirt roads close to sensitive sites as part of the recent LIFE project. **Germany** has reported visitor management. Protection of breeding and wintering sites from disturbance is carried out in protected areas in **Ukraine** (e.g. Askania-Nova) and as part of projects (near Tobechnikskiy Lake, Kerch Peninsula). Awareness raising was reported from **Croatia**.

13. **Preventing predation [AP 2.3.1]:** The Action Plan provides for the control of foxes and feral dogs in areas where Great Bustard occurs regularly. However, other predators have been also mentioned such as Raven, Badger, Raccoon-dog, Raccoon, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Hooded Crow. Control measures are taken in **Austria, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia**, but predator control is at best only partially effective in these countries. In **Germany** enclosures of 10-20 hectares large are applied to exclude foxes and give higher chance for successful breeding of wild females. A 400 hectares large enclosure was also constructed at Dévaványa in **Hungary**. In addition, experiments with electric fences were carried out in the Borsod Plain. As part of the recent LIFE project, Hungary has also drafted a Predator Management Plan which is in the process of adaptation. No measures have been taken in **Ukraine**.

14. **Adopting measures for power lines [AP 2.3.2]:** According to the Action Plan, existing lines which cross Great Bustard areas should be buried or marked prominently. New lines should not be built across Great Bustard areas. The national reports did not mention the construction of new power lines. During this reporting period **Austria** and **Hungary** have implemented major LIFE projects. In Austria, approx. 45 km of existing medium voltage power lines were buried and 125.2 km of high voltage power lines have been marked with bird protection markings, what affects the majority of the West Pannonian population (c. 300 inds). The measures are considered effective. In Hungary, 11 km powerline was buried as part of the LIFE project and at 6 other sites 1,400 visual markers were installed. In **Slovakia**, 12 km powerline was marked. **Germany** has also reported measures for powerlines affecting some 80% of the national population. Powerlines also causes mortality amongst the wintering Russian population in **Ukraine**, but lack of funding hinders measures.

15. **Compensatory measures [AP 2.3.3]:** According to the Action Plan any activities which will create new loss or degradation of Great Bustard habitat or longer term disturbance of the species should be compensated by appropriate measures. In **Germany** more than 2,400 ha have been lost since the MoU came into force and habitat improvement has taken place on 112 hectares.

16. **Possession and trade [AP 3.0]:** The Action Plan requires that the collection of eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs should be strictly prohibited and the restrictions controlled. General species conservation measures are in place in all countries that have sent a report to the Secretariat as this requirement is also covered by CITES, the Bern and Bonn Conventions and the EU Birds Directive. There is no information available whether the species is fully protected in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova. Exceptions are only possible for conservation purposes. Illegal collection and trade of eggs and chicks was reported by **Ukraine**.

17. **Captive breeding¹ in emergency situations [AP 4.1]:** The Action Plan provides for the possibility of taking eggs into artificial incubation from threatened nests if it is not possible to guarantee their survival on the field. Captive management of threatened nests form part of the conservation measures of Great Bustard only in **Germany**, **Hungary** and **Russia**. Up to 40 chicks a year from **Russia** are provided for the UK trial release programme.

18. **Reintroduction [AP 4.2]:** The Action Plan requires that reintroduction actions should be undertaken only at those sites where feasibility studies (following the IUCN guidelines for re-introductions) have been carried out with success. There were no attempts reported to reintroduce the species within the MoU area despite that, at the 1st Meeting of the Signatories, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine has announced their intention of starting a reintroduction programme. However, both Ukraine and Bulgaria reported that no reintroduction programme has taken place in their country. No information was received from Moldova and Romania.

19. **Monitoring of the success of release programmes [AP 4.3]:** The Action Plan requires that the survival of chicks bred in captivity and of chicks hatched from artificially bred clutches should be closely monitored, as well as the survival and breeding performance of adults released into the wild. Release programmes should be permanently reassessed and discontinued if birds are failing to survive under natural conditions. Release programmes form integral part of the conservation of Great Bustard in Germany and Hungary. In **Germany**, annual survival rates until the next spring varied between 18 and 53 % in the period 1998-2007 with an average of 32 %. The survival rate is lower in **Hungary**.

¹ Artificial incubation and captive rearing.

20. ***Cross-border conservation measures [AP 5.0]:*** The Action Plan requires that Signatories harmonise their legal instruments in order to conserve and manage Great Bustards more efficiently. Populations which are shared by two or more countries should be the subject of bi- or multilateral programmes to ensure that there is appropriate coordination of national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities. The transboundary collaboration has increased substantially since the 1st Meeting of the Signatories partly thanks to the coordination supported by the Lebensministerium of Austria, partly due to the LIFE and INTERREG projects implemented in Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. There are plans to submit a four-country LIFE+ proposal to cover the West Pannonian population. Similar collaboration has been also developed between Hungary and Serbia. A trilateral meeting of Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian experts took place in November 2006 in Mokrin. Efforts were made to submit an INTERREG proposal to support exchange of experience and development of the Mokrin area in Serbia. The Serb project has been also supported by the Pannonische Gesellschaft für Großtrappenschutz. Hungarian and Romanian experts have also collaborated on surveys along the border. There is also significant collaboration amongst Great Bustard range states, including Russia, Germany and Hungary from the MoU area, in relation to the UK reintroduction scheme. **Ukraine** has reported collaboration with **Russia** during the breeding, pre-migration and wintering periods.

21. ***Monitoring of population size and population trends [AP 6.1.1]:*** According to the Action Plan, efforts should be made to monitor the basic parameters of all Great Bustard populations, such as size and trends, by applying methods which lead to comparable results, at all breeding and wintering sites. Monitoring of the breeding populations is almost complete in **Austria, Germany, Hungary, Serbia** and **Slovakia**, but less comprehensive in **Ukraine** and **Russia**. The current status of the species is poorly known in **Bulgaria** and **Romania**. Although the species was considered as extinct, recent surveys have identified where the species still occurs based on direct observations or information from local people. The targeted survey and subsequent conservation of these areas is important. Distance sampling has been tested in **Russia** to provide statistically more robust population estimates. Guidelines are being developed for monitoring of Great Bustard.

22. ***Monitoring of the effects of habitat management [AP 6.1.2]:*** The Action Plan requires that studies should be carried out on the effects of habitat protection measures, implementation of agro-environmental regulations, etc. These studies should preferably be done at sites where the population has been well monitored for a number of years. In **Germany**, habitat studies focused on extensification. In **Hungary**, studies focused on the Moson project and the LIFE project has included a detailed habitat-use study at 9 sites. The first results of this were published in 2007. There is also ongoing monitoring of agri-environmental measures and the habitat management measures implemented under the LIFE programme. Population changes at a pair of sites with and without agri-environmental measures were also analysed. The results showed that the measures reduced the amount of nest threatened in alfalfa, but in the meantime, number of nest threatened in cereal crops has increased. In addition, modeling studies suggest that the coverage of the site, and especially of the most sensitive habitats (i.e. alfalfa fields and grasslands) within it, determines the population level effect of the scheme. In **Austria** and **Slovakia**, detailed monitoring has been carried out in relation to the agri-environmental schemes, but the data are still to be analysed.

23. ***Comparative ecological studies [AP 6.2.1]:*** No comparative ecological studies were reported within the reporting period, but the expert meeting at Mosonmagyaróvár has identified focus areas for further studies. Results of studies involving Russia, Ukraine and Germany carried out before 2004 were published in Bustard Studies No. 6 in 2007.

24. ***Promotion of studies on mortality factors [AP 6.2.2]:*** According to the Action Plan all individuals found dead should be examined for the causes of mortality. This, together with field studies

and monitoring of marked individuals, should help to identify the direct or indirect impact of land use on Great Bustard mortality. There is detailed mortality monitoring in **Austria, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia**, but monitoring of marked individuals is only implemented in **Germany** (apart from some *ad hoc* tracking in Hungary). Studies from all countries indicate the importance of collision with powerlines, predation and agricultural works. In **Ukraine**, also poaching has been reported based on fragmentary data. Recently (2006), only **Ukraine** has reported mortality due to harsh winter conditions, although formerly it has occurred several times in other part of the range including Hungary and Germany. It was reported to the meeting that there is an increasing number of websites offering hunting of Great Bustard within the Agreement area (e.g. in Russia and Ukraine; e.g. <http://rus-oxota.ru>). Population viability analysis studies from Hungary, Germany, Russia and Spain highlight that Great Bustard populations is more sensitive to adult mortality than to breeding success. Therefore, the impact of factors affecting adult survival (such as collision with powerlines) might have been underestimated in the action plan.

25. **Studies in factors limiting breeding success [AP 6.2.3]:** Factors limiting breeding success are monitored in **Austria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Russia** and **Ukraine**, but the importance of various limiting factors is still only partially understood.

26. **Studies on migration [AP 6.2.4]:** According to the Action Plan studies should be made to identify the migration routes and resting habitats of the Great Bustard and especially of key sites along such routes and in wintering areas. Ringing and studies involving satellite telemetry should be planned and implemented for those purposes. Local or short distance movements of birds are well understood in all countries. However, long distance movements and migration between populations are poorly known in the absence of marking and radiotelemetry studies with the exception of **Germany** (Bustard Studies 6). This reflects the sensitivity of the species to capturing (especially of adults) and the lack of experience and relatively limited financial means. **Hungary** has carried out a pilot study on satellite telemetry in 2006. To support Range States in this respect, guidelines have been drafted by a leading expert on the field and presented for adoption at this meeting. In addition, an observation reporting site has been created and hosted by MME/Birdlife Hungary (<http://www.tuzok.mme.hu/>).

27. **Training of staff working in conservation bodies [AP 7.0]:** The Action Plan recommends that personnel working regularly in Great Bustard areas (agronomists, biologists, wardens, etc.) should receive specific training on Great Bustard matters, especially their biological characteristics and living requirements, legal matters, census techniques and management practices. Also, communication and cooperation between the various sectors involved (e.g., farmer, hunter and nature conservation organisations, tourist companies and state authorities) should be intensified. Staff turnover in conservation bodies is relatively low. Hence formal training plays relatively minor role, but informal and formal interactions of staff (e.g. under the various LIFE projects, national working groups) played an important training function.

28. **Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat [AP 8.0]:** The Action Plan recommends using Great Bustard as a flagship species to protect steppes, dry grasslands and suitable agricultural landscapes. Furthermore, farmers, shepherds, the general public and decision-makers should be subject of targeted information campaigns to secure their collaboration and adopt their management practices to the species' requirements. The species maintains a high profile in the countries where it breeds. The LIFE projects implemented in **Austria, Hungary** and **Slovakia** have contributed significantly to raising awareness. In addition, **Serbia** has started developing awareness raising activities, including the creation of a visitor centre in Mokrin. From the non-breeding range states, **Croatia** and **Ukraine** have also carried out awareness raising actions.

29. **Economic measures [AP 9.0]:** The Action Plan recommends developing economic activities which are not harmful to the Great Bustard to compensate land users for any damage they may experience as a result of conservation activities. Agri-environmental measures are the main mechanism to compensate farmers in the EU Member States. The 2004 EU enlargement has significantly expanded the number of range states where these measures are applicable. No economic incentives were reported from other range states. **Ukraine** has also reported some local economic measures affecting a small part of the population. In 2007, an EU Tacis funded project on conservation of Eurasian steppes involving **Moldova, Ukraine** and **Russia** began, focusing on encouraging protected area management, organic farming and habitat restoration. In addition, in 2008, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development started a project on a potential pro-biodiversity finance facility for small and medium enterprises in the steppe regions of **Moldova, Ukraine, Russia** and **Kazakhstan**.

IV. Evaluation

30. Based on the synthesis of the national reports and other available information the following achievements can be recognized:

- Most of the achievements recognised in the 1st overview report in 2004 were sustained. The LIFE Projects and other EU cofunded projects played a pivotal role in assisting the conservation of the species; indeed without these funds none of these achievements could be realised.
- Besides transboundary collaboration between Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, similar collaboration has started between Hungary, Serbia and Romania.

31. During this reporting period, also welcome development can be recognised in relation to reducing the mortality caused by powerlines in the EU Member States thanks to several EU funded projects and in relation to applying compensatory measures for habitat loss as a result of the Natura 2000 regulations. Nevertheless, powerlines continue to pose a high risk to Great Bustards across the range states.

32. On the other hand, the following issues are of high concern:

- The level of research is still inadequate to provide solid science basis for conservation measures.
- Status of the species and the key sites in non-breeding range states in Italy and in the Balkans remain poorly known and hinders taking targeted conservation measures.
- Predation seems to be one of the major risks presenting a difficult challenge in areas where threats associated with agriculture are reduced;
- Observational and modeling data suggest that the effectiveness of habitat conservation measures is scale- and location dependent. This has some implications on the way the agri-environmental schemes are designed and managed (including targeting, payment levels and budget). The new Natura 2000 compensatory payments for obligatory restrictions may present new, alternative opportunities, although politically might be less attractive than the voluntary schemes;
- The facultative migratory behaviour of the Central European population continues to pose a challenge in terms of preparedness in potential wintering countries; and
- The projected range shift due to climate change requires developing new strategies for the Middle European population and underlines the importance of setting up an advisory panel for reintroductions and captive breeding.

Table 1. Status of Great Bustard in Europe

Subpopulation Country	Number of birds counted in breeding season in 2008 ²				
	Min.	Max.	Trend since 2004	Accu- racy	Source
Breeding range states in the Agreement area³					
Austria	185	198	+	A	Raab <i>pers. com.</i>
Bulgaria	0	6	-	C	BSPB 2007
Czech Republic	0	2	0	A	National Report 2008
Germany	110	110	+	A	National Report 2008
Hungary	1,378	1,378	+	A	National Report 2008
Moldova	0	0	X	C	National Report 2004
Romania	0	8	?	C	SOR 2007
Slovakia	0	3	-	A	National Report 2008
Ukraine	520	680	-	B	Andryushchenko <i>pers. com.</i>
Non-breeding range states in the Agreement area					
Albania	No observation from non-breeding range states				
Croatia					
Greece					
Macedonia					
Montenegro					
Agreement area total:	2,193	2,385			
Other European countries with breeding population⁴					
Portugal	1,399	1,399	+	A	Pinto & Rocha 2006
Russia	6,000	12,000	-	B	Antonchikov <i>pers. com.</i>
Serbia	35	38	0	A	Stojnic <i>pers. com.</i>
Spain	27,500	30,000	+	A	Palacin & Alonso 2008
Turkey	762	1,250	-	B	Özbagdatli & Tavares 2006
U.K.	7	15	+	A	Goriup <i>pers. com.</i>
Total	37,896	47,087			

² 2008 if not stated otherwise.

³ The Agreement area is defined here as in the MoU text.

⁴ Including the UK reintroduced population

Medium Term International Work Programme on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (2009 – 2012)

The Medium Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) for the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard has been updated and adopted at the Second Meeting of Signatories on 9-12 November 2008 in Feodosia, Ukraine. The document has been extended on the basis of the MTIWP adopted in 2004 (CMS/GB.1/Report Annex 6) to include actions until 2012.

By signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard, Signatories endeavour to work closely together to improve the conservation status of Great Bustard throughout its breeding, migratory and wintering range. The MoU emphasises the need for exchanging scientific, technical and legal information to co-ordinate conservation measures and for co-operation with other Range States, appropriate international organizations and recognized scientists.

According to MoU paragraph 8 the Signatory States shall endeavour to adopt and regularly review a Medium Term International Work Programme for the Great Bustard. This should include (1) subjects for co-operative research and monitoring, (2) measures to implement the MoU and its Action Plan, as well as (3) items for which guidelines are needed to further develop and improve the measures listed in the MoU as well as in international and national work programmes.

The Medium Term International Work Programme is organised around these three main headings. It lists objectives related to the MoU and Action Plan, and suggests a set of activities to achieve those objectives.

Lead countries for the particular activities are indicated along with relevant intergovernmental, international and national organisations that would collaborate on the Work Programme's implementation¹.

Funding will be needed to support the activities listed in the Work Programme. Multilateral, bilateral and other sources of funding will need to be secured through funding applications prepared by lead countries and collaborators.

¹ HU = Hungary; UA = Ukraine; RU = Russian Federation; DE = Germany; AT = Austria; BLI = Birdlife International; CZ = Czech Republic; SK = Slovakia; RO = Romania, SR = Serbia; BG = Bulgaria; IUCN SSC = IUCN Species Survival Commission; FYRM = Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Outstanding Actions by Range States as part of the MTIWP 2009 - 2012

Objective	Priority	Measures to be taken	Time-table	Lead	Collaborators
1.1 Synchronised counts are co-ordinated across the borders [Action 6.1.1]	Medium	Coordinated counts between HU, SR and RO implemented.	2009 - ongoing	HU	All Range States
		Organise coordinated counts between UA and RU.	2009 - ongoing	UA	
1.2 Comparative studies on habitat requirements, effects of habitat changes (including infrastructure such as powerlines and windfarms) and causes of decline in different range states are available [Action 6.2.1]	High	Elaborate a joint research programme.	2009	DE	
		Promote a joint research programme.	2010-2012	DE	
1.3 Experience in habitat management shared between Range States and results used when revising agro-environmental schemes for the new EU rural development programme period (2007-13) [Actions 6.1.2 and 6.2.3]	High	Produce a synthesis report based on studies.	2009 & 2011	AT, HU	
1.4 Effectiveness of different predator control strategies monitored and experience shared amongst experts [Actions 6.2.2 and 6.2.3]	High	Produce a synthesis report based on studies.	2009 & 2011	HU	
		Produce a synthesis report based on studies.	2009 & 2011	HU	
1.5 Effectiveness of captive management programmes in different countries assessed and lessons are shared	Low	Proceedings of the 2004 Expert Meeting published.	completed		
1.6 Key personnel and staff have opportunity to exchange experience [Action 7]	Medium	Organise 3 rd Expert Meeting.	2012	HU	Scientific institutions, NGOs, protected area management authorities
1.7 Information on the ecology and conservation of Great Bustard effectively managed and shared within the conservation and research communities [MoU Para. 7]	Medium	Maintain the web-based bibliography on GB; maintain the web-based bibliography on GB.	ongoing	AT AT	All Range States
1.8 Biological targets for favourable conservation status identified	High	Identify population targets based on population viability analysis; produce an up-dated current distribution map of the species; share Austrian experience on setting Favourable Reference Value with other range states.	2009	BLI	All Range States
			2009	AT	
			2009	AT	
1.9 Joint projects carried out Range States	Medium	Explore funding opportunities for multi-country projects.			

Objective	Priority	Measures to be taken	Time-table	Lead	Collaborators
2.1 All range states provide the same level of strict legal protection of Great Bustard and its habitat [MoU Para. 4(1) and Actions 1.1.1 and 2]	High	Review the status of Great Bustard Range States and identify existing gaps at future Meetings of the Parties.	completed as part of overview report		
2.2 Connectivity of the Pannonic subpopulation increased and the breeding population in SK and in the CZ recovered [Action 5 and MoU Para. 4]	High	Identify threats imposed by infrastructure (e.g. powerlines, windfarms, roads, buildings) in these areas and apply technical solutions;	2009	AT	CZ, HU, SK
		reach multilateral agreement on the site network;	2009		
		develop plans to improve habitat quality at occupied and recently;	2010		
		develop funding applications;	2011		
		introduce appropriate legal measures and financial incentives to protect these habitats and improve habitat quality there.	2012		
2.3 Status and feasibility of restoring the transboundary populations between HU, RO and SR is determined [Action 5 and MoU Para. 4]	Low	Carry out co-ordinated Great Bustard surveys in the border zone between the three countries and along the border in the vicinity of Salonta (RO), especially in the post-breeding and wintering period;	2006–2007	RO	HU, RO, SR
		prepare a pre-feasibility study on expanding the habitat in these transboundary regions.	2008-2012	RO	
2.4 Status of Great Bustard along the border between Bulgaria and Romania is clarified [Action 5 and MoU Para. 4]	Medium	Carry out survey in both countries along the lower section of the Danube River in particular in Dobrudja (BU, RO) during the display season.	2006–2012	BG	BG, RO
2.5 Wintering Great Bustard populations are adequately protected	High	Maintain an Internet-based reporting system on sightings of Great Bustard in winter to facilitate collection and sharing of information;	2008- ongoing	HU	All Range States
		notify other countries about use of colour ring or wing tags and make information about these marking schemes available on the Internet [Action 6.2.4];	2010 – ongoing	AT	AT, (BG), CZ, DE, HU, SK, (RO),
		expand radio tracking of Great Bustard, building on existing Spanish and German experience [Action 6.2.4];	2006-ongoing		DE, AT, HU
		ensure that wintering Great Bustards are protected from any disturbance and hunting [MoU Para. 4(6) and Action 2.2];	2005 - ongoing	HU	All Range States
		maintain an international inventory of key sites for Great Bustard during migration and winter. [Action 1.1];	2008	BLI	All Range States

Objective	Priority	Measures to be taken	Time-table	Lead	Collaborators
		assess potential causes of mortality (e.g. power lines, wind farms, hunting) at sites where Great Bustard occur regularly on migration or in winter and take appropriate measures to remove these threats [Action 2.3.2].	2010	UA	All Range States
2.6 Reintroduction and restocking programmes are coordinated to ensure the maximum conservation benefits for both the donor and recipient populations	High	Set up a Technical Advisory Panel of international experts to coordinate reintroduction and restocking projects.	2009	IUCN SSC	All Range States
3.1 Monitoring results from different countries are comparable [Action 6.1.1]	High	Develop guidelines for monitoring Great Bustard populations;	2005-2010	AT	All, mainly breeding countries
		translate the guidelines into Russian.	2011	UA	
3.2 Restoration of Great Bustard populations is based on best practices [MoU Para. 4 and Action 4]	High	Develop guidelines on restoration of Great Bustard populations covering, in this context, the issues of habitat management and restoration, as well as, predator control, captive rearing and release.	2009	DE	All Range States
3.3 All Range States can apply appropriate strategies to secure successful wintering of Great Bustard [MoU Para. 4(6)]	Medium	Develop guidelines on species and habitat conservation measures to be implemented at places where wintering of Great Bustards occur based on recommendations of the 1st and 2nd Expert Meetings.	2010	FYRM	All Range States
3.4 Risk of collision with power lines and loss of habitat due to infrastructure development and forestry measures is reduced [Actions 1.3, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3]	High	Review existing experience in mitigating the impact of infrastructure development (e.g. power lines and windfarms) as well as afforestation, and publish a best practice guide.	2008-2010	AT	All Range States
3.5 Potential negative impacts of radio-tracking on wild birds reduced	Medium	Develop guidelines on capturing and handling birds for research (e.g. radio-tracking)	completed		

TERMS OF REFERENCE
for the *Ad Hoc* Technical Review and Advisory Panel for
Reintroduction and Reestablishment

Objectives

1. The objectives of the establishment of the Technical Review and Advisory Panel for Reintroduction and Reestablishment (hereafter the Panel) are:
 - (i) to maximise the contribution of reintroductions and reestablishments towards the conservation of the Middle European population of Great Bustard; and
 - (ii) to minimise any potential negative impacts on donor populations.

Mandate

2. The role of the Panel is to provide independent review of plans or projects for reintroduction or reestablishment of great bustards in the MoU area that Signatory States may develop or have to consider for permission within their territory, or to which they should contribute by providing individuals for reintroductions.

Operational rules

3. Signatory States undertake to submit their plans or projects with all supporting documents to the Secretariat before giving their permission to the implementation of projects on reintroductions or reestablishments.
4. Only when the need for independent advice by the Panel arises, shall the Panel be established on an *ad hoc* basis. After the submission of its review, the Panel shall be suspended.
5. On request of the Secretariat, the Panel shall review the plans or projects and supporting scientific work and shall then submit its review and recommendations to the Secretariat.
6. The Panel will investigate and provide advice on the following main topics:
 - (i) whether the plan complies with the relevant IUCN guidelines;
 - (ii) the extent to which the project would contribute to the overall viability of the Middle European population of Great Bustard; and
 - (iii) the potential cumulative impacts of different reintroduction schemes on the source population(s).
7. The Panel shall communicate its finding in a joint statement within 60 calendar days to the Secretariat which will (a) make the review and recommendations immediately available to the Signatory State(s) concerned and (b) present a summary of reviews available for all Signatory States as part of the Overview Report. Thereafter the Panel shall be suspended if no further items requiring independent advice on reintroduction remain pending.

Composition and appointment of the Panel

8. The Panel will be composed of four members. Members will participate in the panel in an independent expert capacity. Members will elect among themselves a coordinator, with the task of coordinating the work of the Panel and be the main contact point with the Secretariat.
9. The Secretariat will liaise with the Chairmen of the IUCN Reintroduction and Captive Breeding Specialist Groups with a view to identifying suitable experts in the following fields (a) habitat suitability, (b) population ecology, (c) conservation genetics and (d) captive breeding.
10. The Secretariat will submit the candidates for appointment to the MoU Signatories either at a Meeting of the Signatory States or, if a meeting is not foreseen within 6 months, in writing. Decision on the appointment of the members of the panel will be taken by consensus.
11. Whenever the Panel needs to be established, members can be re-elected.

National Contact Point: Nomination Form

Memorandum of Understanding: Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)

Recalling Paragraph 5 of the above MoU:

“Signatories are invited to

- a. designate an authority or an authorized scientist as a national contact point for all matters relating to the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding, and*
- b. communicate forthwith the name and address of that authority or scientist to the Secretariat.”*

I hereby nominate the following person as national contact point:

Name:

.....

Title/Function:

.....

Department:

.....

Organization:

.....

Full postal address:

.....

.....

.....

Tel.:

.....

Fax:

.....

E-mail:

.....

Signature:

Date:

Stamp of Ministry

.....

(responsible Minister)

Please return to the CMS Secretariat

Fax: (+49 228) 815 2449 / E-Mail: secretariat@cms.int

UNEP/CMS Secretariat, United Nations Campus, Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10, 53113 Bonn, Germany

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