

## **3<sup>d</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC3)**

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### **Progress Report: Implementation of the Programme of Work of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative since its Adoption in November 2014**

*(Prepared by CMS Secretariat)*

**Summary:**

The present document provides a summary of the activities of the CMS secretariat from November 2014 to implement the Programme of Work for the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI POW 2014-2020). It includes a brief description of the meetings, outreach events and projects conducted until May 2018.

## **Progress Report: Implementation of the Programme of Work of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative since its Adoption in November 2014**

### Background

1. The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and its associated Programme of Work (POW) were adopted by CMS Parties at the Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) in Quito, (Resolution 11.24) in 2014. The overall goal of the Initiative is to improve the conservation of large migratory mammals and their habitats in the Central Asian region by strengthening coordination and cross-border cooperation. The CAMI POW includes more than 120 activities, 42 of which are addressed to the CMS Secretariat. The Secretariat is mainly tasked with activities related to the following topics: barriers to migration, good governance, trans-boundary cooperation, awareness and knowledge.
2. The CAMI POW includes 15 species occurring in 14 Range States. This includes Appendix I species: Bukhara/Yarkand Deer (*Cervus elaphus yarkandensis*, also listed on Appendix II), Wild Camel (*Camelus bactrianus*), Wild Yak (*Bos grunniens*), Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*), Asiatic Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) and Przewalski's Horse (*Equus ferus przewalskii*). Species listed on Appendix II are Saiga (*Saiga tatarica* and *S. borealis mongolica*), Argali (*Ovis ammon*), Mongolian Gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*), Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), Khulan (*Equus hemionus*) and Kiang (*E.ang*). Other species of interest to the CAMI but not listed on the CMS Appendices are Tibetan Gazelle (*P. picticaudata*) and Chinkara (*G. bennettii*). The present document briefly summarizes the activities of the CMS Secretariat for the implementation of the CAMI POW since its adoption.

### Summary

3. Since November 2014, the CMS Secretariat has implemented or initiated the implementation of 26 out of 42 activities from CAMI POW, addressed to the Secretariat. Five CAMI meetings, eight outreach events and six sponsored projects have taken place. These addressed mainly reducing barriers to migration, strategic planning and review of the implementation, addressing threats to the Saiga Antelope and raising awareness on migratory species and existing tools and instruments to conserve them.

### Mandate

4. Activities implemented by CMS Secretariat served to achieving the following objectives of the CAMI POW:
  - Objective 1.3.1 to "make species- and landscape-specific knowledge available" and
  - Objective 1.3.3 to "promote the knowledge and application of technical solutions" to reduce barriers to migration;
  - Objective 1.4.6 "to create best practice policy guides" for issues that affect trans-boundary populations of wild animals in CAMI countries;
  - Objective 1.5.4 to "provide culturally and species appropriate activities for teachers";
  - Objective 1.7 to "strengthen trans-boundary cooperation";
  - Objective 2.1 to guide planning and implementation of prioritized conservation actions for the Snow Leopard and Argali;
  - Objective 2.2 "to address impacts from linear infrastructure and maintain landscape permeability" by developing mitigation measures;
  - Objective 2.3 to conduct research, collect information, and develop conservation instruments for the Cheetah, Goitered Gazelle, Chinkara, Wild Ass, Przewalski's Horse, and Transcaspien Urial in the south-west of the region;
  - Objective 4 to raise awareness on Central Asian species and the threats they face.

## Concluded Meetings

5. In August 2015, together with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the associated Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Mongolian office of the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ), CMS organized the workshop on “Implementing Wildlife-Friendly Measures in Infrastructure Planning and Design in Mongolia”. At this meeting, the new Ulaanbaatar Action Plan to guide the planning of roads and railroads was proposed and discussed with government representatives. This plan outlines how to modify existing transportation infrastructure in Mongolia and how best to develop new projects to ensure wildlife can pass freely.
6. In October 2015, supported by the BMU, CMS organized the Third Meeting of Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga MOU). The key outcome of the meeting was the adoption of the Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP), which is a detailed set of measures to be implemented in the period 2016-2020 to facilitate the recovery of the saiga populations after the catastrophic die-off of May 2015.
7. In August 2016, CMS organized the first CAMI expert workshop at the International Academy for Nature Conservation (INA) on the island of Vilm, Germany, supported by BMU and the Swiss Federal Office for Environment (FOEN) in cooperation with the BfN and a German NGO NABU to focus activities for the implementation of the CAMI. Experts at the workshop enhanced existing and established new partnerships, suggested solutions for organizational and political issues and developed eight project proposals, two of which were selected for immediate small-scale funding and others were used for further fundraising activities. These proposals implement the CAMI Programme of Work, addressing threats to migratory mammals, in particular, reducing barriers to migration, reducing illegal hunting, and raising awareness among decision-makers.
8. In April 2017, together with the BfN and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), CMS organized an international workshop on a migration atlas on Vilm, Germany, to create the first animal migration and infrastructure atlas for the Central Asian region. The underlying data for the creation of the atlas containing the information on species distribution and linear infrastructure was reviewed and validated during the workshop and set to be published on the CMS website upon completion. The atlas highlights problem areas, where linear infrastructure obstructs migration of Central Asian mammals and should be used to inform decision-makers in the region.
9. In April 2018, the CAMI midterm review meeting was held by the CMS Secretariat in cooperation with the BfN on Vilm, Germany, to review the implementation of the CAMI POW so far and to discuss challenges and strategy for further action. The meeting participants produced an overview of the implementation of the CAMI POW, agreed on the format and timeframe to produce an update of the conservation status of the CAMI species and agreed on steps to prepare for CMS COP13. Reinforcing transboundary cooperation among all Range States to ensure a coordinated management of the species, coordinated law enforcement and to enable cross-border migration of animals was highlighted as the key to fulfil the objectives of the CAMI.

## Projects

10. Nine completed and ongoing projects have been supported by CMS via Small-scale Funding Agreements to implement the CAMI POW and the Saiga MOU MTIWP.

### **Projects addressing the implementation of the Saiga MTIWP**

11. In response to the Saiga mass mortality event in May 2015, and at the request of Kazakhstan, the CMS Secretariat dispatched an emergency mission with experts from the Royal Veterinary College of the University of London (RVC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The experts assisted with post-mortem examinations, data collection and evaluation to determine the cause of saiga mortality. The emergency mission developed into an international research project, funded by the UK Government's Natural Environment Research Council and involving six organizations: RVC, Kazakhstan's Research Institute for Biological Safety Problems, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), Oxford University, Bristol University, the Swedish Agricultural University at Umea, and FAO.
12. In July 2016, CMS with the financial contribution of the BMU supported the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) in creating a protocol to guide sample collection in cases of mass die-off events. In addition, outreach activities among local communities were supported within the small grants Programme of the SCA. In 2018, a project to update the coding framework of the Saiga Resource Center and to release the 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of the Saiga News bulletin supported by BMU through CMS was implemented. This project will make the website Saiga Resource Center easier to use and make it easier for the Saiga Range States and stakeholders to upload information thus enhancing information sharing and to coordinate implementation of the Saiga MTIWP.
13. In November 2016, the CMS Secretariat made the "Guidelines for Addressing the Impact of Linear Infrastructure on Large Migratory Mammals in Central Asia" available in Russian language. The guidelines were developed by international experts, GIZ and reviewed by CMS with the financial support of the EU within the FLERMONECA Project. In cooperation with Kazakhstan's Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), CMS reviewed and updated the guidelines in Russian and supported the distribution and presentation of the guidelines to decision-makers in Kazakhstan by ACBK.

### **Fence removal along Trans-Mongolian Railway**

14. In response to a die-off of Mongolian Gazelles in 2016 due to an exceptionally harsh winter and the inability of the animals to cross the fenced trans-Mongolian railway in search for fodder, a proposal to remove or redesign the fence to allow Mongolian Gazelles and other animals to cross it, was developed and selected for funding at the above-mentioned CAMI expert workshop in 2016. The project is implemented by the Mongolian Gazelle Conservation Society with the financial support of the FOEN through CMS and in cooperation with Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Center.
15. In May 2018, CMS with its implementing partner WCS created the first migration atlas for Central Asian Mammals, mapping the distribution of the species and linear infrastructure in the entire region. The project was accomplished with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). International and regional experts have mapped the distribution and movement corridors of migratory animals in combination with threats from linear infrastructure, such as railways, roads, pipelines and border fences across the entire Central Asian region. The atlas will provide valuable information to policy makers and managers to understand exactly where animals move and the kinds of infrastructure obstructing the movement to help them make well-informed decisions.

## Outreach activities

16. The CMS Secretariat participated in eight international meetings, organized by other institutions to raise awareness, contribute to developing policy and management guidelines and to share their experience in conservation.
17. In September 2015, during the conference on “Regional Practices on Sustainable Use in Hunting Territories and Protection of Wildlife” in Ashgabad,, a set of recommendations for wildlife management in Turkmenistan, including mechanisms for regional cooperation, were developed with input from CMS. The meeting was organized by the GIZ within the EU Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) project.
18. In February of 2016, as a participant in the international workshop on “Nature Conservation in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia” organized by the BfN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) on Vilm, Germany, the CMS Secretariat shared its experience in nature conservation in the region. CAMI was presented as a promising regional initiative for Central Asia as it aims to focus limited resources on achieving the best possible outcome for conserving migratory species.
19. In April 2016, the CMS Secretariat arranged participation of the ACBK on behalf of CMS in Minex Central Asia 2016, which took place in Astana. This forum was one of the largest regional events for the mining industry, bringing together government regulators, private companies, financiers and associated service companies from 23 countries. The aim of CMS at the forum was to raise awareness of the impact of mining and related transportation infrastructure on Central Asian mammals and to inform participants about possible mitigation measures. The CMS Secretariat was represented in this forum by the ACBK.
20. In November 2016, CMS took part in the international round table on “Sustainable use and Conservation of Wildlife in Tajikistan”. The event was organized by the GIZ to discuss the challenges and strengthen Tajikistan’s efforts in implementing the international framework for conservation and sustainable use of wildlife including the country’s obligations under CMS and CITES. The main outcome was a Resolution to guide national decision makers, which was adopted at this meeting.
21. In July 2016, the representatives of the CMS Secretariat, Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) Secretariat and State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry of Kyrgyzstan met at an expert discussion organized by NABU, in Berlin, Germany, to facilitate the conservation of Snow Leopards. With only 3,500 to 7,000 individuals remaining in the wild, the Snow Leopard is an CMS Appendix I- and CAMI-listed species facing imminent risk of extinction within the next decades. The representative discussed the latest progress and challenges to Snow Leopard conservation and the implementation of GSLEP, resulting in a consensus that the synergies between the CAMI POW, International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of Argali and GSLEP would greatly benefit the conservation and management of Snow Leopards.
22. In September 2016, a side event on community-based wildlife management in Africa and Central Asia was held at IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC). The event showcased community engagement in conservation as a way of reducing poaching in selected countries across Africa and Central Asia. Rules of engagement for developing community based conservancies, developed with participation of local community representatives at the IUCN workshop “Beyond enforcement” were discussed. CMS demonstrated the compatibility of activities agreed under CAMI with these rules.

23. In October 2016, CMS Secretariat organized the side event “Sustainable Use for Conservation – How CMS can Provide a Complementary Tool to CITES” at the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. At this event, CMS focused on the sustainable use of the CMS Appendix II-listed Argali Sheep, highlighting the provisions of the Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali, adopted by CMS Parties in 2014. In many countries, the Argali Sheep are under the pressure of habitat conversions for agriculture and illegal hunting. CMS explained under which conditions trophy hunting creates benefits the conservation of the species and its habitat.
24. In January 2017, CMS attended the Snow Leopard Landscape Management Planning Stocktaking Workshop and the GSLEP 2<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee in Kathmandu, Nepal. To ensure the transboundary management of Snow Leopards, Twelve Range States in Asia discussed ways to conserve at least 20 Snow Leopard landscapes by 2020. CMS emphasized the importance of climate change in Snow Leopard conservation and reported the progress of the mapping and planning work within the migration atlas project.

### Conclusions and outlook

25. Since the adoption of the CAMI, the implementation of the POW has been initiated by many successful activities focused on strengthening transboundary cooperation to reduce barriers to migration, raising awareness of Central Asian migratory species both globally and regionally, and increasing national capacity for wildlife management in general, such as in cases of mass mortality events and in terms of international framework for wildlife management in general.
26. In addition to improving international cooperation, there is a need to dedicate more attention to implementing the CAMI POW through projects in the field. To achieve this, resources are to be mobilized as outlined in the CAMI POW. Key obstacles to the implementation of the CAMI are insufficient funding, poor knowledge on migratory species, insufficient monitoring and discrepancies in methodologies, as well as poor exchange of information on trans-boundary populations.
27. Therefore, more action involving the governments and international scientific community is required to: 1) enhance joint fundraising activities 2) establish methods /training in monitoring; 4) enhance cross-border cooperation information exchange and reducing the impact of border fences. CMS is dedicated to assist the Range States in addressing these issues, upon request, through, inter alia, the Scientific Council.

### Recommended actions

28. Review and take notice of the progress report