

Meeting report

Workshop on the Implementation and Coordination of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga spp.*) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and other CMS Instruments for Migratory Ungulates in Kazakhstan

**17-18 February 2011
Kazakhstan, Astana**

Agenda item 1: Welcoming Remarks

1. The meeting was opened by Mr Yerlan Nyssanbayev, Chairman of the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In his speech, Mr Nyssanbayev welcomed the meeting participants, including representatives of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), guests from Russia and Uzbekistan. He noted the importance of the issues addressed by the meeting's agenda, which was closely linked to Kazakhstan's international commitment to nature conservation, which was illustrated by the ratification of 22 relevant conventions. He pointed out that the government was investing significant funds in saiga protection and restoration of the global population. The impact of this assistance was clearly visible from the increasing population trend in two saiga populations in Kazakhstan, namely the Betpak-dala and Ural populations.

2. The Chair of the meeting, Deputy Chairman of the Forestry and Hunting Committee, Mr Khairbek Mussabayev welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude to the representatives of the Bonn Convention (CMS) for initiating the meeting and supporting the implementation of the Saiga MOU Medium Term International Work Programme (MTIWP). He highlighted the objectives of the workshop (see agenda), introduced the participants and gave the floor to the representatives from CMS.

Agenda item 2: Instruments under CMS and its Central Asian Work Programme

3. The representative from CMS, Christiane Röttger, expressed her gratitude to the Forestry and Hunting Committee for hosting the meeting and to Olga Klimanova and her team from the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK) for providing logistical support to make his two-day meeting possible. Ms Röttger pointed out that one of the objectives of the meeting was to discuss the coordination of the Saiga MOU through ACBK and the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA). In order to facilitate the start of these technical coordination activities, Ms Röttger shared the good news that the Swiss Government had pledged financial support of Euro 15 000. She was grateful for the generous support provided

by Switzerland as well as by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, who sponsored the Astana workshop.

4. Ms Roettger then illustrated the overall structure and policies of CMS, which were of relevance to Central Asia. The next Conference of the Parties, the 10th one since the Convention came into force in 1983, would be held in Bergen, Norway from 20 to 25 November 2011. Kazakhstan was a Signatory to the following CMS MOUs: Siberian crane (*Grus leucogeranus*), Saiga antelope (*Saiga spp.*), Bukhara deer (*Cervus elaphus bactrianus*¹), and Slender-billed curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*). Clarification was provided regarding the commitments and opportunities of CMS Parties regarding species listed on Appendix I and II of the Convention. The process of listing new species under CMS was outlined by the Secretariat.

5. Ms Röttger summarized the decisions taken at the second Meeting of Signatories to the Saiga MOU, which took place in September 2010 and which adopted the new MTIWP for the period 2011-2015. Unlike the Saiga MOU, the Bukhara deer MOU was much less developed despite coming into force in 2002, four years prior to the Saiga MOU. Implementation of the Bukhara deer MOU had been less active and the UNEP/CMS Secretariat had so far received little information from Signatories regarding national activities. The Astana workshop was aimed to initiate this dialogue and improve implementation. Ms Roettger therefore appreciated the fact that among the participants at the meeting were international experts for Bukhara deer conservation and she welcomed the opportunity to jointly review the actual status of the Bukhara deer and to discuss a possible way forward. The Astana meeting should be seen as the first step to prepare for the first Meeting of Signatories to the Bukhara deer MOU, which would take place on 19th November 2011 prior to the COP in Bergen, Norway.

6. Ms Röttger introduced participants to two other initiatives which were currently undergoing development. One of them was the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for the conservation of migratory water birds. She emphasized the importance of the Central Asian region as a crossing point for various global flyways. The region featured important resting, moulting and breeding sites for many water birds. More than 182 bird species migrated along these flyways, 29 of them being endangered. Another initiative was the Central Eurasian Arid Land Mammals Concerted Action, which had been adopted by the last Conference of the Parties (COP9) in 2008 as Recommendation 9.1. The Recommendation provided CMS Parties and the Secretariat with the mandate to develop this initiative further in order to better protect migratory mammal species of the arid regions of Eurasia. Ms Roettger invited participants to share their view and openly discuss their interest in this initiative in order to proceed in applying this policy on the ground.

¹Listed as *Cervus elaphus yarkandensis* on CMS Appendix I.

Agenda item 3: Progress made under the Saiga MOU since Ulaanbaatar

5. Aline Kühl, a representative of the UNEP/CMS Secretariat, summarized progress made in implementing the saiga MTIWP. She thanked the Committee for the opportunity to hold the current meeting at their premises in Astana and congratulated Mr Mussabayev on his official appointment as the CMS Focal Point for Kazakhstan. Ms. Kühl expressed her gratitude to the German Government for allocating considerable funds for nature conservation measures, particularly, for the conservation of migratory species in Central Asia. Ms Kühl informed the attendees of the results of the meeting in Urumqi which was organised together with the CITES Management Authority of China and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). There was considerable interest from the representatives of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (CTM) industry to financially support and engage in saiga conservation measures since the long-term goal of recovering saiga populations to the point where sustainable use was once again feasible was a common goal of range and consumer states. Kazakhstan confirmed that there had been no bilateral follow-up since the Urumqi meeting between China and Kazakhstan since the Urumqi meeting. Kazakhstan confirmed that financial support from China would be welcome. It had to be ensured that a bilateral project would not fuel the illegal trade in saiga horn. Assistance from the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in negotiating with consumer states such as China would be welcomed by Kazakhstan. Ms Kühl confirmed that together with CITES, the UNEP/CMS Secretariat was in regular contact with the relevant authorities in China in order to assist. It was a unique opportunity to work closely with the Traditional Chinese Medicine Authorities and other relevant stakeholders and to engage them more closely in the conservation action. Ms Kühl highlighted the priority areas for saiga MOU implementation set in Urumqi by population: for the Ural population it was the investigation of the epidemiological situation and the prevention of mass mortalities following the sudden death of 12,000 saiga antelopes in May 2011; for the Ustiurt population it was the need for strengthening the fight against poaching, and for the Betpak-Dala population it was the need to strengthen the involvement of the local population in saiga conservation.

6. Ms Kühl expressed her satisfaction about the fact that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had signed a bilateral agreement in April 2010 to coordinate and strengthen transboundary conservation activities. The content of this agreement had not yet been made public, but Mr Mussabayev confirmed to share the document with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. Ms Kühl was concerned that poaching in Betpak-dala had become more high-tech and that the Ustiurt population continued to decline rapidly. She suggested that based on the results of today's meeting, it would be good to make a list of priority projects to be used by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat for fundraising in order to improve the situation in the saiga populations. Unfortunately, the Secretariat could not

guarantee that funds could be raised, but the Secretariat would certainly try to further support the promising progress under the Saiga MOU.

There were two further matters for participants to discuss: Firstly, one of the action points under the MTIWP requested Saiga MOU Signatories to include the MTIWP activities in the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (activity 1.1. in MTIWP 2011-2015) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Secondly, the UNEP/CMS Secretariat would like to hear more about progress being made with regards to the various different government agencies working together more closely in order to effectively protect saiga antelopes.

7. Ms Kühl highlighted several interesting policy matters that were likely to be adopted at the forthcoming COP. A draft resolution on ecological networks would be considered by Parties, which could provide the foundation for the first legal framework of global scale for connecting individual habitats of critical importance for migratory species. The opportunity also existed to list further species on the Convention's Appendixes. Mountain ungulates, such as the argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*), may be amongst those with relevance for Kazakhstan. The proposal to list the argali in Appendix II of CMS was currently prepared by Kyrgyzstan. However, as the country was not yet a Party to CMS (although very close to accession), the listing may be postponed or taken up by another argali range state. It was noteworthy that the deadline for submitting species proposals was 150 days prior to COP, ie 23rd July 2011. The meeting noted that materials on argali had been prepared by the GEF/UNDP Altai-Sayan transboundary project on the Russian side, which may be used to justify the inclusion of argali on Appendix II of the Convention. There was general agreement that the range states should work closely together to support the listing of the argali. Any CMS Party was eligible to list a new species on the CMS Appendixes by submitting a relevant proposal. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat was willing to assist with the process.

Agenda item 4: Identifying the Saiga Conservation Priority Projects in Kazakhstan

8. Mr Mussabayev informed the participants of the main activities contributing towards the implementation of the Saiga MOU MTIWP in Kazakhstan and explained that the bilateral agreement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had been signed and ratified. The corresponding action plan was being approved. Unfortunately, the responsible officer for the development of the agreement in the State Nature Committee could not attend this meeting. The discussions and approval procedures were being done by e-mail. Approval of the action plan under the Agreement was one of the priority activities and aimed at bilateral interaction, joint saiga monitoring, counting and conservation measures. A regional project had been launched. It was planned to increase the number of satellite collars for tracking the Ustiurt population. The status of saigas in the Ustiurt population had not improved. The census in May 2011 would most likely show a decreasing population trend. The participants of the meeting

discussed the opportunity of crossing the state border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for the purpose of saiga monitoring. When doing research, scientists were permitted to cross the border, but there was no possibility for a plane to cross the border for the aerial census. Ms Elena Bykova, a representative of the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) based in Uzbekistan, said that it was considered reasonable to focus efforts on terrestrial census in December-January. For the draft bilateral agreement between Kazakhstan and Russia targeting the Ural population, this approach was being approved by the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources.

9. Mr Mussabayev reported that Kazakhstan will trial the use of thermal imaging for saiga monitoring in 2011 in the Betpak-dala population. Depending on the success of this method it might be employed as a regular census method in future, which would be reflected in the required legal amendments and state budget allocation. Mr Orken Shaimukhambetov, an ACBK representative, added that this year the aerial census methodology would also be further refined together with Mr Yury Grachev from the Institute of Zoology in Almaty and international experts.

10. Mr Mussabayev noted that across all populations the level of poaching had significantly increased. In 2010 approximately 483 poaching cases had been registered, and 1,822 horns had been confiscated (compared to 100 saiga carcasses and 129 horns confiscated in 2009). In Kostanai oblast, there had been three poaching cases with respectively 31, 84, 85 saiga males killed with cut-off horns. The carcasses had been left behind. The increase of poaching aimed at saiga horn had been discussed with law enforcement agencies in the saiga range and the General Prosecutor's Office in Astana in 2010. More recently the criminal police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had been notified, who are tasked with assisting. The Ministry of Communication and Information had issued an instruction to its central and regional divisions to prohibit any advertisements for the sale or trade in saiga horn in the mass media. Mr Sergey Orlov, a representative of Okhotzooptom State Enterprise, added that there was anecdotal information about illegal structures in Kazakhstan which processed saiga horn and exported the ground-up product. To date customs had not come across such cases. The price for saiga horn was reportedly rising and driving saiga horn supply.

11. Mr Mussabayev noted that since the death of 12,000 saigas took place in the Ural population in May 2010 there had been no specific measures to investigate the root causes of this event or to set up preventative structures. Therefore the investigation and prevention of disease in Saiga antelopes remained a priority for Kazakhstan, which the representatives from the Biosecurity Research Institute under the Science Committee, Institute of Zoology, and Veterinary Center of the Ministry of Agriculture would be able to advise on.

12. Mr Assylkhan Assylbekov, Manager of the GEF/UNDP Project for Conservation of Steppe Ecosystems highlighted several priority projects for Kazakhstan. He presented an overview of

the projects in Kazakhstan which were currently financed by the GEF. Achievements included the expansion of the protected area (PA) network and the targeted conservation of keystone species in the steppe and other focus ecosystems. The most important saiga habitats and migration routes had been included in PAs in the Betpak-dala region. It was planned to establish the “Bokei Orda Zhaik” reserve in Western Kazakhstan for the conservation of saigas in the Ural population. The second component of the GEF/UNDP Project for Conservation of Steppe Ecosystem was implemented by ACBK and includes monitoring of key species, database maintenance, satellite tagging and creation of a migration corridor. In addition, the project was aiming at tasks such as enhancing awareness in the local population and training PAs staff. Mr Assylbekov pointed out that law enforcement had been strengthened in response to the rise in poaching pressure. He agreed that the investigation of disease, development of preventive measures and the setup of an early warning system should be a priority for the conservation of Saiga antelopes in Kazakhstan. He highlighted the need to continue and expand the satellite tagging programme, to use thermal imaging for saiga monitoring and to raise awareness in rural communities. Mr Sergey Sklyarenko, an ACBK representative, stated that 80-90 percent projects proposed by research institutions in Kazakhstan were similar in nature. It might therefore be useful to consolidate this research and develop one coherent project. Mr. Yury Grachev pointed out that the Institute of Zoology had recently sent a request to conduct an “Assessment of the Current Saiga Status” to the Science Committee of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Education and Science.

13. Mr Sandybayev, a representative of the Biosecurity Research Institute under the Science Committee of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Education and Science presented the scientific and technical programme “Epizootic Monitoring of Contagious Diseases in Saiga Populations in Kazakhstan and Development of Preventive Measures, 2011-2015”. The proposed programme covered fundamental and applied research aimed at solving the disease-related problems of saiga conservation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. To this end, it would be necessary to focus on: 1) epizootic monitoring of contagious diseases in the various saiga populations in Kazakhstan; 2) assessing the molecular, genetic and biological properties of pathogens present in the saiga populations; 3) developing instant diagnosis techniques for disease monitoring involving genetic and serological techniques; 4) developing methods for the prevention of the most common contagious diseases in saigas. The programme included ongoing monitoring and research of the Kazakh saiga populations and their habitats and the development of recommendations for conservation of the unique species. During the discussion after the presentation it transpired that the findings of the official investigation of the May 1988 mass die-off of Saiga Antelopes in Turgai province (Betpak-dala population) would not be disclosed or published. With regards to the 2010 mass-die off it was pointed out that the assessments of the Biosecurity Research Institute and the Ministry of Agriculture both pointed towards pasteurellosis as the main cause. Mr Sandybayev pointed out that the development of a vaccine

was a further priority of the programme. Open questions regarding the vaccination process remained.

14. Mr Amangeldy Yeshmukhametov, a representative of the Reference Centre of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Agriculture, presented on the status of the investigations into the mass die-off in the Ural population in May 2010. One of the centre's functions was the systematic monitoring of wild animal diseases. The collection of wild animal samples for scientific purposes in coordination with the Committee for Forestry and Hunting was necessary to perform this task. Laboratory staff made regular expeditions all across Kazakhstan to collect samples. In 2010 40 such expeditions were made. The centre took part in the investigation of the mass die-off of 12,000 Saigas in Western Kazakhstan in May 2010. According to many institutes, the reason for the mass mortality was pasteurellosis. However, the analyses made by the centre suggest that the situation may be more complex indicated by unexpected substance levels such as high chlorine levels (6-9 times higher than permitted levels) found in samples of Saiga carcasses, water, soil and plants. The presence of chlorine is likely to have resulted in body weakening, which may have made individuals more susceptible to pasteurellosis, which was an opportunistic infection. The centre had the only pathomorphology and forensic veterinary examination laboratory in Kazakhstan. Samples had to be brought to Astana for analysis, which made analysis of epidemiological matters difficult in regions far away from Astana. There was a need for training staff in the centre. It would be beneficial to deploy staff for training to the Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences to study genetic analysis and expand from the current physiological and chemical analyses currently used in the centre.

15. When asked what role CMS had in the past played in reducing the negative impact of wildlife diseases, Ms Kühl outlined the formation and work of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza in 2005 in response to global concerns about the role of migratory birds as potential vectors of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. This task force had been highly successful in disseminating the best available scientific information and preventing the mass culling of migratory birds. The 9th CMS Conference of Parties (2008) had decided to expand on this and set up a Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Disease under the joint leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and CMS. The Saiga disease matters fitted into the mandate of the group and the UNEP/CMS Secretariat would alert the Task Force accordingly. The MTIWP under the Saiga MOU included disease activities (1.8 and 8.8) and the Secretariat would appreciate being kept up to date by Signatories regarding implementation. Proposals to address these matters could be submitted to the Secretariat by Parties (via Focal Point and Scientific Councilor). While the Secretariat could not guarantee to secure funding, this may be a fruitful avenue for progress in terms of alerting range states and other stakeholders. There was another relevant side issue which the forthcoming COP would discuss. A Resolution on Emergencies was being prepared and would be presented in Norway. If

adopted, this would potentially provide the Secretariat with a mandate for providing emergency support in the case of mass mortality events, such as the one in Kazakhstan in May 2010.

Agenda item 5: Review of the Mechanism for Joint Technical Coordination of the Saiga Antelope MOU by ACBK and SCA as agreed in Ulaanbaatar

16. Ms Elena Bykova, Executive Secretary of the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA), introduced the item. She outlined the activities of SCA in supporting the implementation of the Saiga MOU, which included the creation and support of a database on experts and projects, the issuance of the publication “Saiga News” in 6 languages, as well as the provision of technical assistance to the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in arranging Meetings of Signatories. The SCA analysed the implementation of the first MTIWP during the period 2006 -2010 across all range states. Based on this experience, the SCA had proposed to act as the technical coordinator for the Saiga MOU and the associated second MTIWP (2011-2015) together with ACBK. This proposal had been adopted at the second Meeting of Signatories to the Saiga MOU, which took place in September 2010 in Ulaanbaatar. The main coordination objectives include: 1) provision of technical and logistic assistance to the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in preparing MOU-related meetings; 2) creation of a mechanism for communication and exchange of information between all stakeholders on MOU implementation; 3) creation of an atmosphere of cooperation and results-based monitoring; 4) active engagement in the promotion of Saiga conservation internationally and 5) provision of technical advice. In summary, the SCA would continue to coordinate the information exchange and monitoring, which would be published in Saiga News, and prepare implementation reports and other documents. In addition, a new webpage called the “Saiga Resource Centre” would be created, where any Saiga-related information would be collected, presented and stored in a popular format. Under the joint coordination agreement, ACBK would be responsible for collecting information from national governments, NGOs and other stakeholders and ensuring high quality of data by providing expertise and assistance. An updated national reporting format would be created. Further tasks included the maintenance of databases (e.g. projects, experts) and logistical support for technical and other meetings.

Agenda item 6: The Bukhara Deer MOU Status, linkages between Instruments and further Steps.

17. CMS representative Ms Röttger summarized the progress made under the Bukhara deer MOU and its associated action plan, which had been signed by all four Bukhara deer range states included in the MOU (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in Dushanbe in 2002. No meetings had been taken place since then within the framework of the MOU. Ms Roettger posed the following questions in order to assess the status of this MOU: 1) What is the

current situation with the Bukhara deer populations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan? 2) What is the status of the MOU implementation and how did it promote Bukhara deer conservation? 3) Which aspects of the Saiga MOU may be applied to improve the Bukhara deer MOU implementation? 4) What are the next steps necessary to enhance its implementation and build up to the first Meeting of Signatories to be held in Bergen in November 2011?

18. Ms Olga Pereladova, representing the WWF Russia and Coordinator of the Central Asia Programme, reviewed the implementation of Bukhara deer conservation measures in the widest sense, not only under the MOU (see powerpoint presentation). She focused on the WWF project "Restoration of the Bukhara Deer in Central Asia 1999-2000", which covered the majority of Bukhara deer habitat in the four MOU countries. In 1989, the global population size was estimated to number 900 deer. The habitat at the time was estimated to be able to support 4,000-5,000 individuals. This evaluation of the prospective population numbers became the basis for preparing the Bukhara deer MOU and Action Plan within the framework of CMS. Today, the opportunities for restoring the populations of the Bukhara deer varied from country to country. In the Amur-Dariya river region, the riparian forests (tugai) had decreased by almost 90 percent, whereas along the Syr-Dariya and Ili rivers, the forests were being restored quite successfully. At the beginning of the WWF project implementation in 1999, the total population number of Bukhara deer was 350, with the largest groups in the Amur-Dariya valley. After the signature of the Bukhara deer MOU in 2002, the WWF project was the only project which contributed to the implementation of the MOU. Kazakhstan had actively joined the implementation measures within the past 5-6 years, while other countries were not always actively involved. In Uzbekistan, implementation had started with the construction of an enclosure for deer which had been brought from Kyzyl-Kum and Badai-Tugai reserves in Uzbekistan. As part of the WWF project, constant technical assistance had been provided to the reserves, and the Amur-Dariya basin inspection was established. A grant from the Large Herbivore Initiative was used to purchase equipment and uniforms for the rangers, petrol, forage for the deer kept in the enclosure. Significant work had been done in the Zaravshan reserve in Uzbekistan where captive deer had been released and had mixed with wild deer. However, in spite of the fact that the enclosure was currently overcrowded, the reserve management administration in Uzbekistan did not give permission for the next release, which was a problem. Ms Pereladova asked the CMS representatives to help solve this problem by raising this issue with the official CMS Focal Point in Uzbekistan.

19. In Turkmenistan, the focus of the activities had been on providing technical assistance to the reserves and organizing awareness raising events with children. In 2008, the WWF activities in Turkmenistan stopped. In 2010 the number of deer decreased due to severe flooding and the capture of animals for zoos. From 2003-2006, WWF implemented a project aimed at the creation of the Central Asian environmental network, the ECONET. This programme had been

approved by the Intergovernmental Commission on Sustainable Development and was signed by all the countries with the intention of creating a PA network in the region. No ECONET activities targeting Bukhara deer had taken place in Tajikistan since due to military operations the donors did not agree to finance projects in the country. At a later stage some activities had been undertaken to restore Bukhara deer habitat around the rivers and management plans had been developed. A small grants programme had been launched for the farmers to introduce more energy- and water-efficient agricultural technologies.

In Kazakhstan the WWF had initially provided financial assistance for the construction of an enclosure. During the most recent 5-6 years the government had financed all Bukhara deer activities. From 1999 to 2010 the global population size of Bukhara deer had increased from 350 to 1,600. Ms. Pereladova presented the dynamics of the population numbers by year and countries (see powerpoint presentation for details).

20. Ms. Marmazinskaya, Coordinator of the WWF Bukhara deer restoration programme in Uzbekistan, presented the outcomes of their work, which focused on three protected areas: Kyzylkum Reserve, Budai-Tugai Reserve, and Zaravshan Reserve. She gave an overview on the data obtained from monitoring Bukhara deer in these reserves since the early 70s. The current reported population size of Bukhara deer are as follows: Kyzylkum Reserve – 150 animals monitored in 2010, Budai-Tugai Reserve – over 400 animals in 2009, and Zaravshan Reserve – 22 animals in 2009. Key threats for the population in the Kyzylkum Reserve include increasing water levels of the Amudarya River and poaching. For the Bodai-Tugai Reserve the main threats originate from human population growth as well as from the degradation of vegetation and the movement of Bukhara deer outside of protected areas where they are poached. Further threats are related to land use and farming. Within the reintroduction programme, awareness raising and information activities were carried out in the neighboring communities with a focus on school children and unemployed adults.

21. Mr Baidavletov, Bukhara deer expert of the Institute of Zoology in Almaty, started his presentation with an overview of the historical range of Bukhara deer at both the global level and in the former Soviet Union. In Kazakhstan the two traditional sites that are well-known Bukhara deer habitat are the Syrdarya River valley and Ili River valley. Within the WWF programme an open air enclosure was constructed in Almaty Zoo in 2000 and two additional ones in Syrdarya River valley and Altyn Emel National Park. In total 14 deers were brought to those two enclosures in 2001-2002. The total population size of the Turkestan group in January 2011 amounted up to 22 animals. Eighteen animals were released in 2009 from the Turkestan enclosure. In Altyn Emel Park, only three females were observed and urgent actions were needed to restore the population (at least 5-6 deer should be brought to that site including two males). Awareness raising and training programmes for school children was carried out during

2005-2010 within the neighboring villages. Bukhara deer could be successfully reintroduced into the wild in the deltas of Ili and Shu Rivers of Kazakhstan where sufficient grazing areas are available.

Agenda item 7: Initiative for the conservation of Central Eurasian Aridland Mammals. Actions planned by Kazakhstan within this Initiative

22. Ms Röttger from CMS presented the initiative for the Central Eurasian aridland mammals, which was based on Recommendation 9.1, and opportunities for CMS Parties to become active within this framework. The meeting participants came to the conclusion that an additional discussion would be needed to appropriately address these opportunities for Kazakhstan.

Agenda item 4 (cont.): Identifying Saiga Priority Projects in Kazakhstan

23. Ms Klimanova from ACBK reported on the priority projects for Kazakhstan within the MTIWP and proposed a number of projects in addition to those discussed in the previous sessions. The complete list of project priorities as agreed during the meeting (see meeting recommendations for the full list) include: 1) Development of a project on epidemiological and other research on saiga diseases to inform mitigation, control and action in the event of a disease outbreak or mass mortality episode; 2) creation of a protection coordination center under Okhotzooptom State Enterprise; 3) enhancing the capacity and awareness level of the services involved in the prevention of illegal trade and export; 4) creating incentives for local people to engage in saiga conservation and to support anti-poaching activities; 5) in-depth study of saiga ecology and behaviour; 6) identify critical saiga habitats by seasons (calving, rutting, wintering sites, migration routes); 7) addressing the opportunities to encourage game husbandries to improve the efficiency of the saiga protection; 8) promoting saiga conservation on the local and national levels; (9) enhancing the efficiency of the saiga counting the countries of habitat and using consistent census techniques; 10) satellite saiga tagging in all populations; 11) creating new Pas to protect the key saiga habitats. All the priorities for projects were aimed at implementing the Saiga MOU's MTIWP and are part of the official recommendations of the meeting.

Agenda item 8: Presentation of the MOU Coordination Mechanism by the ACBK and SCA

24. The representatives from ACBK (Ms Olga Klimanova) and SCA (Ms Elena Bykova) spoke on the activities they would implement under the Saiga MOU technical coordination. SCA will continue publication of Saiga News as a mechanism for communication on the progress of saiga conservation for the range states and broader public. Saiga News has already proved a successful platform for open information sharing and discussions within saiga community. Additionally, SCA will develop online Saiga Resource Center as a hub for information on saiga and its conservation, and activities being carried out within the Saiga MoU. SCA will continue to

provide technical support in preparation of documentation for the Saiga MoU meetings and reports on status of the species and revised MTIWP.

25. ACBK will maintain contacts with the range states to redesign the national and project report forms. Project data format will be available for the registered users on the web based Resource Center to update the relevant project progress. Based on the stakeholders list compiled by SCA, ACBK will develop and administer a web based data base that will be hosted at the Resource Center. In addition, projects data base will be compiled and will also be available online. ACBK will set up a coordinating team to provide support to the signatories of the Saiga MoU in order to organize activities within the MTIWP, including responding to queries and questions on projects reporting and preparation of the national reports. The group will be based in Astana. ACBK will also organize and convene technical meetings on key aspects of the MTIWP.

26. In conclusion, the ACBK and SCA representatives signed an agreement on the Saiga MOU joint coordination.

Agenda item 9: Closure of the Meeting

27. Mr Khairbek Mussabayev thanked the participants for the productive work, and the Bonn Convention representatives for the opportunity to discuss and clarify many issues related to implementation of Saiga and Bukhara deer MOUs, as well as other matters of relevance to Kazakhstan in the context of CMS.

24. The Bonn Convention representatives thanked the Committee for Forestry and Hunting for kindly hosting the meeting and ACBK for the superb organization. The engagement and input of all the participants had been excellent which would strengthen the implementation of CMS instruments in the region and thereby assist the conservation of many migratory species.

List of participants

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Workshop on the Implementation and Coordination of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga spp.*) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and other CMS Instruments for Migratory Ungulates in Kazakhstan

Astana, Kazakhstan,
17-18 February 2011

Representatives of the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, together with representatives of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and several scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as a panel of experts met in Astana, Kazakhstan, from 17-18 February 2011, with the aim to:

1. Review the implementation of the CMS Saiga MOU in Kazakhstan;
2. Discuss the Saiga MOU technical coordination and how it could contribute to Saiga MoU implementation in Kazakhstan and the other range states;
3. Identify priority projects for Kazakhstan to implement the Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) 2011-2015;
4. Assess the implementation of the Bukhara deer (*Cervus elaphus bactrianus*¹) MOU in Kazakhstan and the other range states; discuss next steps building up to the First Meeting of Signatories to the Bukhara deer MOU in Norway in November 2011;
5. Introduce the CMS Eurasian Aridland Mammal Concerted Action (Recommendation 9.1).

The workshop was hosted by the Forestry and Hunting Committee and jointly organized by CMS and the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK). Financial support was provided by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

The meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Khairbek Mussabaev (Forestry and Hunting Committee), confirmed

1. The need to enhance the efficiency of coordination and information exchange between the Saiga MOU Signatories in order to implement the MTIWP 2011-2015;
2. The need to put in place disease prevention and training measures to minimize the risk of a further mass die-off of Saiga antelopes taking place;
3. The necessity of urgent intervention in order to halt the ongoing decline of the Ustiurt saiga population;
4. A dramatic increase in poaching aimed exclusively at Saiga horns, which is only born by the males of the species and is thus likely to lead to a severe decline in males;
5. The insufficient protection of all saiga populations due to the vast species range;
6. The insufficient awareness of the saiga conservation challenges among communities located nearby the saiga distribution areas of all three populations;
7. The need to study Saiga ecology and migratory routes in order to enhance the

¹ It is noteworthy that, following the adoption of Wilson & Reeder (2005) as a taxonomic reference at the 9th CMS Conference of the Parties, the Bukhara deer was listed as *Cervus elaphus yarkandensis* on CMS Appendix I.

conservation of the species.

With reference to the above mentioned objectives, the participants of the meeting:

1. Welcomed and supported the Saiga MOU coordination mechanism proposed by ACBK and the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) and agreed to collaborate closely to ensure effective MOU coordination, for example by providing expert advice and sharing information.
2. Identified the following priority measures for the conservation of Saiga antelopes in Kazakhstan within the framework of the MTIWP 2011-2015:
 - a) Development of a project on epidemiological and other research on saiga diseases to inform mitigation, control and action in the event of a disease outbreak or mass mortality episode (MTIWP: section 8.8); taking into account the concepts presented by Kazakhstan's Institute of Zoology, Institute of Human and Animal Physiology, Biosecurity Research Institute, and KazAgroInnovation JSC at the meeting;
 - b) Making joint fundraising for this epidemiological project a priority;
 - c) Extending the satellite telemetry programme, which is currently being successfully applied in Betpak-dala and initiated in Ustiurt, to the Ural population;
 - d) Creating a protection coordination center under Okhotzooptom State Enterprise as a matter of urgency in Kazakhstan;
 - e) Enhancing the relevant capacity of those agencies involved in the prevention of illegal trade and export of horns and horn products, such as customs;
 - f) Creating economic incentives for local people to engage in saiga protection (MTIWP: 4.1, 4.3);
 - g) Conducting further research into the ecology and behaviour of Saiga antelopes in order to improve conservation effectiveness in the long-term;
 - h) Identification of critical sites for the Saiga antelope by seasons (e.g. calving, rutting, wintering sites, migration routes; see MTIWP sections 6.0);
 - i) Encouraging game husbandry managers within the saiga range to engage in order to improve saiga protection;
 - j) Enhancing the efficiency of the saiga census in all range by using consistent and coherent census techniques (MTIWP: 8.3, 8.5);
 - k) Strengthening and expanding the existing protected area network for the conservation of Saiga antelopes.

The participants further

3. Emphasized the need to discuss the conservation status of the Bukhara deer in all range states and suggest convening a separate technical meeting for this purpose in order to address issues such as the protection and restoration of critical habitat (riparian forests) and the release of captive bred animals.
4. Urged the member states of the Bukhara deer MOU, with assistance from the UNEP/CMS Secretariat, to submit to the Secretariat official national reports on the status of the Bukhara deer MOU implementation in their countries.
5. Invited the UNEP/CMS Secretariat to look into the possibility of involving Afghanistan

into the conservation of Bukhara deer under the MOU, as the country is a range state of Bukhara deer.

6. Welcomed the CMS Eurasian Aridland Mammal Initiative based on Recommendation 9.1 and invited the relevant stakeholders to develop this policy further in close collaboration with the CMS Scientific Council and UNEP/CMS Secretariat. Additional consultations may be required.

7. Considered the listing of additional migratory species on the Appendices of the Convention leading up to the 10th CMS Conference of the Parties and noting the deadline of 23 June 2011 for the submission of species proposals to the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. Guidance regarding the procedure is available from the Secretariat.

8. Recommended (i) to include the above-mentioned priorities in the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and other sectoral development programmes in Kazakhstan, and (ii) to improve the coordination between the government agencies involved in the saiga conservation and protection (e.g. customs, police, border patrol), and (iii) to enhance the interaction and negotiation process with the Chinese Traditional Medicine Association and companies, reiterating the recommendations of the Urumqi saiga meeting in 2010.