

Part IV: Report of the Range State Meeting



Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Executive Summary of the Sixth Meeting of the Siberian Crane Range States

**Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan
15-19 May 2007**

Representatives of the Cracid and Crane Breeding and Conservation Centre (CBCC, Belgium) and Wetlands International signed the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of their respective partner organisations. Governmental and technical focal points were confirmed for all countries, with the exception of Afghanistan, China, and Mongolia (pending consultation). The Report on the Conservation Status of the Siberian Crane was approved pending inclusion of points agreed during discussion. Further discussion focused on the following themes: capacity-building, financial sustainability, releases, monitoring, the need to efficiently focus activities and resources, improving information flow and cooperation among project countries and other projects, sharing of lessons learned, promoting interagency and bilateral cooperation, and more effective publication of project results.

The meeting approved the structure of the new reporting and Conservation Plan templates. Changes proposed by Flyway Working Groups to the Conservation Plan template were consolidated and agreed by consensus. Focal Points undertook to monitor progress and coordinate national activities on an annual basis. The meeting formally adopted the three flyway Conservation Plans including the detailed activities listed therein. Signatories were given an opportunity to undertake final review and revision (by 30 June 2007), before the posting of the final draft on the Siberian Crane Flyway Coordination website.

The Range States agreed in principle to the concept of establishing an International Trust Fund to sustain MoU-related activities, particularly after completion of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (the UNEP/GEF SCWP). The proposed fund would be set up under the MoU and administered by UNEP; and would serve to leverage funds from governments and other funding sources. The CMS Secretariat agreed to explore, before the next meeting, the feasibility of creating such fund under UNEP/CMS. It was acknowledged that contributions from Range States the Trust Fund would be voluntary, funds should be sought from other sources than CMS, and consideration should be given to equitable distribution of resources available within the fund. It was proposed that some MoU Signatories that were already Parties to CMS might consider increasing their annual contribution to CMS, with the additional funds earmarked specifically for the Siberian Crane MoU in order to facilitate the bureaucratic formalities.

A round table discussion on the Release Program for the Central and Western populations reached the following conclusions. For the Central Population, the Russian team established a Steering Committee comprising Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan would consider joining the steering committee; and other countries and partners were invited

to participate. The meeting supported the development of a release technique for human led migration – from Kunovat to Uzbekistan; and winter site studies to be conducted in Uzbekistan. CBCC and the International Crane Foundation offered to assist with fund raising pending an approved proposal. For the Western Population, it was decided to continue cooperation on release of captive Siberian Cranes) in Iran, through the aegis of the Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC).

The Meeting took note of the report and launch of the East-Asia - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and requested representation of the MoU at the annual meetings of the EAAFP, through the CMS Secretariat and ICF. The meeting also requested the CMS Secretariat and ICF to develop a paper on opportunities for synergy between the MoU and EAAFP, for presentation at the next meeting of the Range States. The Range States took note of the report of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan and were invited to support the endorsement of the Action Plan and its implementation, as well as the interim coordination mechanism.

The Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and other Waterbirds (WCASN) was formally launched with a formal ceremony. The Site Review Working Group (SRWG) recommended 10 sites for approval, and the Site Network Committee (comprising governmental Range State representatives) endorsed the SRWG recommendations. Additional sites were being considered for approval, subject to the submission of additional information for the Site Information Sheets and provision of letters of endorsement. Clear recommendations were provided to each country in this regard. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the working group members for their contributions to the review process.

Terms of Reference for the Site Network Committee (SNC) were approved; membership of the SNC was confirmed and the Russian Federation (in the person of Dr. Alexander Sorokin) was appointed Chair of the SNC. The members of the SRWG were appointed, including representatives from the Russian Federation (breeding sites), Islamic Republic of Iran and India (wintering sites), two new representatives from Pakistan and Kazakhstan (migration stopovers), as well as Elena Ilyashenko and Crawford Prentice (ICF) and Taej Mundkur (Wetlands International) as Chair. The SRWG would continue to review nominations inter-sessionally, with recommendations on further nominations to be provided within two months.

In order to ensure a smooth transition of conservation activities back to the CMS MoU framework, following completion of the UNEP/GEF SCWP, the meeting requested CMS and ICF to confirm their respective roles and support. The transitional and follow-up activities would be incorporated into the MoU Conservation Plans, a process already begun in Almaty. In order to assure financial sustainability, it was suggested that finances be sought for targeted activities and support provided to countries to seek financing. It was agreed that the establishment of an international trust fund should be considered; and that the Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator (SCFC) role should be supported (e.g. through trust fund resources) for coordination of the WCASN, website, newsletters, email list-serve, database, etc. It was decided to take advantage of the opportunity to showcase activities conducted under the MoU and the UNEP/GEF SCWP at CMS COP 9 (Italy, November/December 2008) and to discuss future financial support for activities under the MoU.

It was agreed to convene the next CMS MoU7 meeting in mid-late 2009, at a venue still to be determined. Informal proposals to host meeting were received from the representatives of Azerbaijan, China, Mongolia and Pakistan, all subject to government approval. A meeting in China would be contingent on linking it to the UNEP/GEF SCWP Completion Workshop. The Russian Federation had recently hosted two Siberian Crane meetings, but would consider hosting; as would Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan after further consultation within government. The CBCC confirmed its definitive interest in hosting the meeting in Belgium. The CMS Secretariat undertook to write formally with a view to soliciting formal offers, describing specific requirements including organization and financial requirements. It was noted that the

decision on hosting should be made by the time of the CMS COP9 Meeting (November/December 2008), at which time any possible CMS funding for the meeting would be confirmed or denied. It was further noted that CMS members, including the regional CMS Standing Committee representative, had a role to play in promoting the allocation of funding for specific programmes in the CMS budget process. Their voices needed to be heard to assure continued support for Siberian Crane conservation activities.

Among other conclusions/outcomes of the meeting, the Range States were encouraged to participate in World Migratory Bird Day and to continue to coordinate with the Central Asian Flyway initiative. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the CMS, ICF, and the Kazakhstan Forest and Hunting Committee for hosting the meeting and to hard working and skilled translators who contributed to high productivity of work during the meeting.



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Full Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Siberian Crane Range States

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Agenda Item 1: Greetings and Welcoming Remarks

1. The Deputy Chair of the Committee on Forestry and Hunting of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Khairbek Mussabayev, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to Kazakhstan; noting that Kazakhstan has become a signatory to 22 international conventions and agreements and is currently implementing five important wildlife conservation projects. He thanked CMS and ICF for their trust to host the meeting and for bringing representatives from 20 countries together. Mr. Mussabayev then introduced Mr. Douglas Hykle of the CMS Secretariat.

2. Mr. Hykle also welcomed the delegates and thanked the hosts for their warm hospitality and strong logistical support. He reminded the delegates that the first meeting was organized 12 year ago in Moscow to launch this ambitious project, followed by four additional range state meetings. He invited everyone to read the report of the Fifth Meeting of the Signatories and to give special thought to developing ways to continue this work after the end of UNEP/GEF funding in just two years. Mr. Hykle also urged the governments of the signatory countries to follow up on their commitments, to fulfil and even increase their pledges to support the Siberian Crane conservation efforts so that we could see more of these beautiful birds in the wild.

3. The ICF Co-founder, Dr. George Archibald, thanked CMS and organizers for their hard work to put together this meeting, and congratulated Mr. Mussabayev and his agency with successful work on CMS and UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (the UNEP/GEF SCWP). He emphasized the importance of working with local people to prevent hunting of cranes, especially in Central and Western Asia where the Siberian Crane populations had almost disappeared. Dr. Archibald expressed hope that these populations may be restored by the "Flight of Hope" project: human led migration of captive-raised cranes, taking North American experience with Whooping Cranes as a model.

Agenda Item 2: Signing Ceremony

4. Mr. Hykle explained that at the previous meeting in Moscow representatives of the Cracid and Crane Breeding and Conservation Centre (CBCC) in Belgium and Wetlands International (WI) had expressed their wish to sign the Siberian Crane MoU as co-operating organizations and had subsequently received the approvals from their Boards of Directors. Mr. Hykle invited Mr. Luud Geerlings to sign on behalf of the CBCC and Mr. Taej Mundkur on behalf of WI. A group photo was taken and interviews given to mass media.

Agenda Item 3: Election of Officers

5. The participants elected Mr. Mussabayev (Kazakhstan) as Chair of the meeting. Mr. Mussabayev thanked all delegates for their trust, participation, and efforts to save the Siberian Crane. The governmental representative of India, Mr. Anmol Kumar, was elected as Vice Chair.

Agenda Item 4: Adoption of the Agenda and meeting schedule

6. The Secretariat introduced provisional agenda (document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/1/Rev.1) and annotated agenda and meeting schedule (UNEP/CMS/SC-6/2). The final list of meeting documents is reproduced as Annex 3 to this report. The list of participants was updated during the meeting and appears as Annex 1.

7. The agenda was adopted without amendment and is reproduced as Annex 2 to this report.

Agenda Item 5: Opening statements

8. The Chair invited opening statements from governmental delegates.

9. The representative of Russia stated that after the 14 years of joint efforts the focus now should be on specific activities and develop feasible practical program that can be implemented.

10. The representative of Azerbaijan reported that his government was determined to fulfil its responsibilities under the MoU, thanked the organizers of the meeting, and expressed hopes to see tangible results in near future.

11. The representative of India reported that his country, being faithful to its obligations, had created a large number of protected wetlands and will protect more in near future.

Agenda Item 6: Report of the Secretariat

12. Mr. Hykle explained that the report of the Secretariat was composed of the Agenda items 6.1 (Status of Signatures) and 6.2 (List of designated competent authorities and national focal points). Documents supporting this item are UNEP/CMS/SC-6/4 (Report of the Secretariat) and information documents UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/1, UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/3, and UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/4.

Agenda Item 6.1: Status of signatures

13. Mr. Hykle noted that since Afghanistan signed the Siberian Crane MoU on 22 June 2006, 100% participation of SC Range States had been achieved.

Agenda Item 6.2: List of designated competent authorities

14. Mr. Hykle circulated the Provisional List of Administrative Focal and Technical Points for the Siberian Crane MoU, with a view to ensuring that the SCFC, as well as all MoU participants and partners were well-informed about the names of the respective Focal Points. Ms. Elena Ilyashenko (SCFC) presented the list as of 2004 (compiled after the MoU5 meeting in Moscow) and requested participants to update the list and fill in the gaps. Official delegates from Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and ICF confirmed their Focal Points. Due to lack of the official delegate from Afghanistan no focal point for this country could be appointed at the meeting. Technical focal points are still to be appointed by Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, WI and CBCC. The meeting took note of the Secretariat report and the Chair asked all governmental representatives to confirm Focal and Technical Points officially after returning home. The updated version is reproduced as Annex 4 to this report.

Agenda Item 7: Review of MoU and Conservation Plans Implementation

15. The Chair invited Ms. Claire Mirande, the UNEP/GEF SCWP Director (ICF) to present,

on behalf of the Secretariat, this portion of the Secretariat's overview report addressing the conservation status of the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and the status of the MoU and Conservation Plans' implementation. This agenda item was continued after lunch break to allow Range States and other MoU partners to present their most significant achievements and problems. The relevant documentation for this Agenda Item included Documents UNEP/CMS/SC-6/5 (Review of MoU and Conservation Plan Implementation) and UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Report/Annex 5/Add.1 (Revised Overview Report).

Agenda Item 7.1: Conservation status of Siberian Cranes within the agreement area

16. Ms. Mirande, as technical advisor to CMS, presented a report on Conservation Status of the Siberian Crane within the Agreement Area for the eastern, central, and western populations as a summary of the information received and available as of 14 May 2007. The information provided in the draft Overview Report was reviewed and amended during the following discussion. Recent results of crane counts were reported and major threats to all three populations described (oil and gas exploration, illegal hunting, prolonged drought in the Amur River basin, major water engineering projects, conflicts between farmers and waterbirds, loss of status and funding for Federal Wildlife Refuges (Zakazniks) in Russia under the Ministry of Agriculture, avian influenza). Ms. Mirande invited the Signatories, collaborating organisations and observers to contribute their comments after her presentation.

17. The meeting took note of this portion of the Overview Report as presented by Ms. Mirande as well as the additional information and guidance on how it could be improved.

Agenda Item 7.2: Status of implementation

18. The Chair invited representatives of all 11 Siberian Crane Range States and cooperating organisations to present brief reports on highlights, problems, gaps for 2004-2007 and priorities for 2007-2009.

19. Iran reported on three successful release projects including satellite tracking in 2004, 2005 and 2007 (in cooperation with ICF and OCBC); considerable improvements on conservation of Siberian Crane wintering site (Fereydoon Kenar) including its designation as Ramsar site; awareness raising programs including the Annual Crane Celebration; implementation of the UNEP/GEF SCWP activities in synergy with MoU Conservation Plan; improvement of protection of the site through hiring more locals guards and establishment of infrastructure; improvement of management system through establishment of a new environment protection office for the site and training on development of management plans.

20. Among the implementation challenges Iran listed lack of specific financing for implementation of the Siberian Crane MoU activities; lack of operational coordination for implementation of the Conservation Plan; lack of regular monitoring and tracking; insufficient capacity building and training for technical staff; and insufficient equipment (such as PTTs).

21. Iran's priorities for the next 3 years were identified as follows: inclusion of the Western Population into the hang glider (Flight of Hope) project; development of bilateral agreements between countries inside flyways, e.g. Iran and Russia for experts exchange; establish a new crane breeding center or strengthen OCBC to provide more effective captive breeding and release programmes; establish a Trust Fund to implement key activities and identify international donors to support the trust fund; organize an international Crane Conference in 2008/2009; ensure that the MoU Signatories are sharing their educational/awareness materials; ask CMS/MoU for more support to the release programs (with PTTs), especially in the Western Flyway; increase involvement of local stakeholders in implementation of the Conservation Plan; strengthen capacity building and training for technical staff especially on new capture and release techniques; focus on development of management plans for all sites; and support applied research at all sites.

22. The lesson learned by Iran was that the time is precious and cannot be wasted in the light of only several birds left in the Western Population; the Conservation Plan should be

concise, realistic and feasible – a dynamic document applied by authorities; participation of local stakeholders in implementation of the Conservation Plan is crucial. Iran had also proposed additional measures, such as designing an efficient and easy reporting format to use between two MoU meetings; establishing direct communication between MoU Secretariat and National Focal Points; establishing flyway working groups and appointing coordinator(s) for each flyway; prioritizing Conservation Plan activities to address long term, short term and/or urgent problems; strengthening synergy between the UNEP/GEF SCWP and CMS MoU; developing national projects to help implement the Conservation Plan.

23. Kazakhstan reported that with the ratification of the Ramsar Convention by Kazakhstan in 2007 the Naurzum Nature Reserve lakes will obtain status of the wetland of international importance and there is now a possibility to establish a biosphere reserve. Preliminary research activities had been conducted; and strategies and an Action Plan for conservation activities had been developed, including education programme on wetland biodiversity, public awareness strategy, training programme, strategy on social development and education programme on alternative livelihoods for local communities.

24. Among other implementation highlights (under the UNEP/GEF SCWP work plan) – two resource centers had been established and are working; crane information network has been created; numerous textbooks, modules, booklets, calendars and other materials were published for educational activities among all ages (classes, lectures, seminars, round tables, training workshops) on wetland biodiversity, conservation, and problems of wildlife management; developing GIS vector maps and atlases of project sites; conducting training workshops for trainers of higher educational institutions, school teachers, and local communities on education and development of alternative livelihood projects at all UNEP/GEF SCWP sites and in Kostanay in 2005-2007; updating, publishing, and distributing 10 technical reports; producing video film about Crane Day activities in Kazakhstan; establishing of website <http://www.scwpkaz.kepter.kz>; Crane Day Festival was celebrated in regional center Kostanay and in 11 villages at all UNEP/GEF SCWP sites.

25. Major challenges in Kazakhstan are grass fires and illegal hunting (in spring at Lake Zhansura rows of hunters are shooting ducks at the same time). Kazakhstan named international cooperation, education and awareness, and establishment of two new specially protected areas as its priorities for 2007-2009.

26. Lessons learned included: 1) before baseline knowledge has been acquired and capacity has been built the team has to rely upon its own resources only; 2) close cooperation with local authorities and employees of the reserve proved to be very productive and mutually beneficial; 3) if your team believes in the project goals, the people will be happy to help and be involved in exciting and relevant activities. For additional measures to implement the MoU and Conservation Plans successfully across the Siberian Crane distribution range, Kazakhstan proposed to extend the period of the UNEP/GEF SCWP implementation in order to complete all project plans at all project sites.

27. India reported that its government and people have taken a number of measures to bring back the Siberian Cranes to India (last sightings are 6-7 years old). Under the India Wildlife (Protection) Act (first established in 1972) the highest degree of legal protection is provided to the wintering habitats of Siberian Cranes, especially at Keoladeo National Park, which has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Ramsar Site, and a Wetland of National Importance; two new possible wintering sites for Siberian Cranes have been identified (Etawah Mainpuri Wetlands, which is being considered for designation as Conservation Reserve and the state government is developing a management plan for these wetland sites under special provisions of Sarus Crane Protection Society, designating 100,000,000 rupees to protect Etahwa-Mainpuri area; and Banni Grasslands, which the Government of India is preparing a proposal to designate as Ramsar site and the state of Gujarat is considering to declare it a Protected Area); a protocol has been signed between the Government of India and the Russian Federation, which includes Conservation of Siberian Cranes.

28. The biggest challenge for India is to bring back the Siberian Crane either through assisted migration with common cranes or repeating the earlier experience of bringing

captive bred Siberian Cranes to Keoladeo Ghana to fly back with Eurasian Cranes. Another major challenge – provide water influx to the wetlands especially in Keoladeo National Park.

29. India set the following priorities for 2007-2009: bring back the Siberian Crane to its former wintering grounds; ensure maintenance of ecological characteristics of important wetland sites which were the wintering grounds for Siberian Cranes; and develop a participatory Siberian Crane Conservation Plan for implementation by the range provinces in India.

30. The lesson learned was the importance of networking and sharing experience & information for conservation and management of globally migratory species. For additional measures, India proposed serious consideration of possible assisted migration of Siberian Cranes to former wintering grounds for central population and prioritize the conservation of the central and western population of Siberian Cranes.

31. Pakistan reported that there were no confirmed sightings of Siberian Cranes in Pakistan during the past two decades. In 2001-2003, there were 12,000 cranes in captivity. 4-5 thousand cranes captured annually. The provincial wildlife departments, Pakistan Forest Institute, and WWF-Pakistan are conducting surveys of cranes in crane hunting areas; Pakistan Wetlands Programme has initiated surveys on captive breeding of cranes that revealed that the hunting pressure on cranes was increasing while the wild crane populations migrating through Pakistan were on decline.

32. Major steps taken by Pakistan since 2004 were legal and protective measures (executive order to ban crane shooting in Sindh and Punjab provinces issued by the Federal Government and implemented; negotiation are under way to ban spring trapping of cranes in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan through crane hunters/local communities network; provided incentives for captive breeding – the government has exempted cranes hatched in captivity from possession license fee, but need to establish special captive breeding program); conservation and education (organized a crane working group of Pakistan, Crane Festivals in NWFP and in Lakki, informal meetings with local people; strengthened wildlife clubs and provided training for local leaders and members; distributed additional 1000 copies of Bateman's poster; initiated trans-boundary collaborative program between Afghanistan and Pakistan; followed-up reported sighting of the Siberian crane at Wasta Lake in Balochistan addressed crane conservation in Zhob through the proposed collaborative program of the ICF, International Flamingo Foundation and WWF-Pakistan), establishment of reserves and refuges (a Crane Refuge has been established over an area of 20 km of prime crane habitat at the confluence of Kurram and Gambeela Rivers in Lakki District; a Crane Information & Conservation Centre is being established near Kurram Bridge in Lakki; community crane reserves will be established at key staging areas, resting and feeding grounds along migration route).

33. Turkmenistan reported that video films on Siberian Crane, prepared by ICF and other countries, have been translated into Turkmen language and shown before the autumn and spring migrations of cranes; a video film about flyway and wintering of Common Cranes in Turkmenistan produced and shown on the national TV; meetings with students, hunters and farmers, children art contests (as part of international art exchange), and Crane Celebration organized to draw attention of local people to the problems of Siberian Crane conservation; the Bateman's poster has been distributed widely; surveys and counts of Eurasian Cranes and other waterbirds were regularly carried out on the wetlands of South Turkmenistan; and the key site "Durnaly" has been nominated for inclusion into WCACSN.

34. Among the implementation challenges Turkmenistan named were difficulties in providing adequate protection to cranes along the flyways and in wintering areas. Priorities for the next 3 years were to enhance public awareness using all available means, including mass media, to work closer with local authorities; translate into Turkmen language, publish and distribute V. Flint's book "101 Questions About Cranes"; continue annual surveys and counts in the the areas of the highest concentration of cranes; annually celebrate "Crane Day"; nominate the second site for WCACSN in 2008; and announce the year 2009 as the "Year of Crane" in Turkmenistan.

35. Uzbekistan reported that in their country hunting cranes is banned by law and fines for poaching are high so specially protected areas not needed. Public awareness campaign had been successful as well as Crane Celebration; questionnaire about cranes (in Russian and Uzbek languages) distributed among hunters, wardens and villagers along with Crane Day stickers, Bateman's poster in Uzbek language, and special T-shirts; maps of wintering sites along Amu Daria River developed. There were no sightings since the last MoU meeting although people have been trained to spot a Siberian Crane; in Termez area Eurasian Cranes winter close to people. There are also other smaller wintering sites that can be considered as sites to restore wintering grounds through releases.

36. Azerbaijan reported that since 2003, 27 national park refuges and reserves have been established creating a system of protected territories and increasing the protected area to 1,000,000 hectares (10% of the country area); Azerbaijan President received a diploma from European Union for environmental efforts; to save the Siberian Crane is a priority for the Ministry of Natural Resources of Azerbaijan. Potential sites to restore the wintering grounds for the Siberian Crane are Shirvan National Park and Gyzyllagach State Nature Reserve. Major threats are poaching, unsustainable water balance (Shirvan National Park), deeply rooted local cooking traditions to use meat of waterbirds, and low level of ecological and environmental education of local people. Priorities for 2007-2009 are to stop poaching, regulate water balance in Shirvan National Park, conduct intensive public awareness campaign among local people, and provide alternative livelihood for them.

37. Afghanistan reported on wintering sites of Siberian Cranes in northern (mainly around Amudaria River Valley), central (Parwan, Bamyan and Kapisa), southern (two potential wetlands – Dashte Nawor and Abe Estada) and southwestern (around Harirod) parts of the country. All are small wetlands and agricultural lands. 'Save the Environment – Afghanistan' (SEA) is the only nationally managed conservation NGO engaged in biodiversity conservation since 1999. Since 2004, a presidential decree banned hunting of cranes and their habitat disturbance, an Environmental Act introduced and governmental Environmental Protection Agency was established. Implementation highlights were identification of migration routes and surveys of cranes resting areas; site based education program; publication of posters in local languages; lectures and events at schools and universities; seminars and teacher training for small groups; education program and crane exhibit at Kabul Zoo; work of conservation education team in Shurtepa District (crane wintering area in the Amu River basin) in March 2006; participatory crane conservation program (using the bird flu alert to slow down hunting during migration); crane survey in the Amu River basin (used Bateman's poster). Schools and health clinics have become major sites for conservation education. Religious verses proved to be efficient in disseminating the conservation message. Major challenges are lack of public awareness, lack of hunting regulations, ruthless hunting, conversion of wetlands to agricultural lands, use of chemicals in agricultural lands and in wetlands for trapping cranes and other waterbirds, water pollution, lack of conservation strategy, poverty and unemployment among local people, lack of political lobbying and funding for conservation issues.

38. Mongolia reported that since the 2004 meeting the public awareness campaign about Siberian Cranes had been intensified, as well as crane surveys, which resulted in 70 Siberian Cranes sighted in 2004-2006 (five birds – in previously unknown areas); population monitoring has been conducted 2-3 times every summer in protected areas and other parts of Eastern Mongolia funded by the government and international projects. In 2005 the government adopted a law that attached monetary ecological value to wildlife species (the Siberian Crane ecological value was raised to \$170-290 US); staff of the Onon-Baljinsky National Park (OBNP) increased from one to seven people, the government provided financial support of \$20,000 US, and the management plan for OBNP is in progress; experts from Mongol Daguur Nature Reserve and Onon Baljinsky Strictly Protected Areas have been working together with Russian partners from the Daursky and Sokhondinsky Nature Reserves and Chinese colleagues from Dalai Lake SPA, exchanging experience and information; plans have been made to establish a Mongolian-Russian jointly protected area "Onon Baljinsky – Sokhondinsky" and to include OBNP in the North East Asia Crane Working Group (NEACWG); in 2004, all 22 lakes in Khurk River Basin as well as Buir and Ganga Lakes

have been pronounced as Ramsar sites.

39. Major implementation challenges have been 1) lack of financing for training, research, monitoring, awareness and conservation activities; 2) difficulties in protecting the Siberian Crane summering area due to the prolonged and extreme drought combined with presence of cattle and people who also compete with waterbirds for water resources. Priorities for the next 3 years are to continue research, monitoring and public awareness activities; locate international and local finding sources to improve protection and monitoring in crane summering areas.

40. Russia reported on 70% completion of activities under the Conservation Plan for 2004-2007 in West Siberia (partly completed 25%, not done 5%). Implementation highlights in West Siberia: the Siberian Crane Conservation projects were widely covered by central and regional television channels using three video films and some video clips produced by the Sterkh Foundation and West Siberia TV companies; the work has begun on a new film about the Siberian Crane and people involved in Siberian Crane conservation and restoration programmes; successful and well-attended Siberian Crane Festival in Salekhard; Crane Celebration conducted at 6-8 sites annually along the Siberian Crane flyway; numerous publications and printed materials produced and distributed; monitoring of threats to the Siberian Crane conducted at the UNEP/GEF SCWP sites and at Astrakhan Nature Reserve in Volga River Delta; aerial surveys conducted in 2005-2006 using helicopter, planes, and ultralight aircraft; the Siberian Crane Questionnaire distributed in 2006 resulted in new reported sightings from Yamalo Nenetsky Autonomous Region (5 pairs in spring, 3 singles and 1 pair in summer) and from Tyumen Region (3 sightings in summer and 3 in autumn).

41. Under the reintroduction project, six cranes were raised by cross-fostering technique, 19 cranes reintroduced at stopovers, and 4 cranes on wintering grounds in Iran. In 2006, ground-truthing for the Flight of Hope project has begun with two Siberian Cranes and two Eurasian Cranes led from Kunovat to the south of West Siberia. A new regional nature park (over 800,000 ha) is being established as a buffer zone of the Kunovatsky Federal Wildlife Refuge (320,000 ha).

42. Among implementation challenges cited: problems with expanding protected areas for Siberian Cranes; need to develop fund raising skills and actively seek funding; official nomination of 4 proposed sites for the WCASN; administrative reform and destruction of the system of federal wildlife refuges (zakazniks); insufficient funding for monitoring and PTT marking; lack of contacts between the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russian Federation (including CMS Focal points) and CMS Secretary.

43. Priorities for the next 3 years are to complete the nomination procedure and begin implementation of activities at sites approved for the WCASN, assist in solving the federal wildlife refuges problem, continue the Siberian Crane monitoring and reintroduction programs, and take full advantage of the CMS Secretariat mechanism in negotiations with MNR and regional administrations.

44. In Yakutia, major threats to the Siberian Crane population are revival of deer farming and restoration of the Yana-Indigirka population of reindeer (which cause disturbance to nesting cranes and destruction of nests and eggs), shrinking of some most suitable nesting habitats, and plans for industrial development in 2010–2020. Priorities for 2007-2009 include continued monitoring of the Siberian Crane at the UNEP/GEF SCWP sites (Kytalyk and Middle Aldan), search for new habitats, expansion of specially protected areas and optimization of their protection, and environmental education.

45. China reported the following implementation highlights: participatory approach was applied in the development of site management plans; trans-agency coordination and cooperation mechanism basically established; flyway network monitoring system established and proved to be effective, reasonable and feasible; diverse forms of public education activities conducted to raise more attention to the conservation of cranes and their habitats; infrastructure improved.

46. Major implementation challenges: unstable staff structure and lack of job assignments, lack of the high quality equipment for ecological surveys and monitoring, and

water shortage still being the biggest challenge for the wetlands in the NE China. Priorities for 2007-2009 are to empower the local staff to raise funds, support adoption of the national legislation on wetlands conservation and incorporation of the proper water distribution into the regional watershed planning, take advantage of the national policy related to rural development to conduct community pilot activities, continue promoting cooperation and coordination mechanism between different agencies, enhance sharing and exchange of information among range states and within the country, and improve the equipment inventory and staff capacity building.

47. Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center reported on their activities that included coordinating the captive breeding programme, fundraising for and financing of operations at OCBC, organizing and financing all release programmes, and fundraising for field research in China and Russia. Among challenges CBCC listed developing efficient cooperation among captive breeders, lack of comprehensive socializing programme for non-compatible birds, placing birds in EAZA institutions that are also willing take on fundraising responsibilities, and developing long term cooperation with Chinese and Russian partners. Current partners are EAZA members directly involved in captive breeding programme, OCBC, Parc Paradisio (Belgium), and Zoo Cologne (Germany).

48. Wetlands International (WI) reported on activities directly linked to CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane. WI sees its role in coordination, training, and monitoring. The flyway level activities for waterbird and wetland habitat conservation included the UNDP/GEF Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project (in Central Asia/Russia) under the Africa-Eurasia Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Action Plan coordination and implementation, leadership and participation in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), avian influenza surveillance and monitoring work, International Waterbird Census (IWC), and Waterbird Population Estimates. Specific actions in range states of the species (Russia, China, India, Iran, and some other) included support to the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project and participation in the WCASN Site Review Working Group.

49. Implementation challenges cited for the CAF and EAAFP Programmes: lack of economic strength in range countries to finance its activities, high human pressure and development drive, low level of support for wetland management, climate change and predominant drought. Among recent CAF initiatives – successful second regional meetings of stakeholders in June 2005 and completion of the CAF Action Plan; under EAAFP – development of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy (1996-2006) and launch of the EAAFP (November 2006, Indonesia). WI developed objectives for the IWC, provided coverage for the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) and produced Waterbird Population Estimates. Priorities to address in 2007-2009 are to improve the knowledge-base, strengthen international collaboration, implement conservation action plans, raise awareness, mainstream habitat conservation into national development plans, address livelihood issues of people dependent on wetlands, and develop local capacity.

50. OCBC (Russia) reported on numbers of Siberian Cranes raised in 2004-2006 (10, 7 and 3) by 3 different techniques (parents, surrogate parents, and isolation). Breeding facilities had been renovated with financial support from the CBCC. In 2004, seven chicks and three yearlings raised at OCBC have been released in the south of Tyumen Region; two chicks and two yearlings – in Volga River Delta. One of Siberian Crane released in Tyumen Region in 2004 was injured and captured in Bashkiria in 2005, and then shipped back to OCBC; another Siberian Crane released in 2003 in Kunovat River Basin was injured and captured in Chelyabinsk (the Urals) and later, in 2006, and later also shipped back to OCBC. Two Siberian Cranes were raised for the “Flight of Hope” release project. Two Siberian Cranes were shipped to Fereydoon Kenar damgah in Iran in January 2006: one of them was released with a PTT, the other was kept in captivity until autumn 2007). OCBC is participating in the EARAZA programme to share captive breeding experience and create a network of breeding centers; 11 aviculturists from nine EARAZA zoos have been trained at OCBC. Under cross-fostering programme, four Siberian Crane eggs were placed in the Eurasian Crane nests at Kunovat in 2005; two eggs transported to Kunovat and had to be returned to OCBC in 2006. OCBC took the lead in preparation of the fourth edition of the

International Studbook for the Siberian Crane that listed 326 birds kept in 40 institutions of 10 countries in 2005. OCBC research activities included studies of crane morphology, molting, genetics, developmental biology, embryo genesis and incubation, egg morphology, parasitology, bioacoustics, and ethology. OCBC conducted conservation education programme (including annual Crane Celebrations), participated in production of five documentary films about the Siberian Crane, and organized 12 television programs about cranes.

51. ICF presented an Overview Report on implementation under seven categories: capacity, sustainability, conservation plans, management plans, monitoring, releases, and communications. It was explained that the Overview Report had been compiled from the national report forms submitted prior to the meeting, along with additional information available to the UNEP/GEF SCWP Regional Coordination Unit. National report forms have been received from all 11 Range States and summarised in ICF's presentation. The Revised Overview Report is attached to this report as Annex 5. It was emphasized that ICF and CMS have limited capacity; need to improve support and coordination for countries under MoU and increase involvement by countries; establish working contact between CMS Secretariat and National Focal Points; provide help to SCFC whose workload is increasing (e.g., WCASN) and ensure that flyway level coordinators work closely with SCFC; improve tracking and communication between meetings; receive co-financing commitments from focal points in range countries; develop training strategy to fill gaps.

52. Under sustainability, ICF reported on lesson learned from the UNEP/GEF SCWP making the Siberian Crane the flagship species for wetlands and waterbirds, relevant to countries which no longer have Siberian Cranes; to achieve sustainable financing, need to have adequate funds to implement monitoring, research, education, and other activities (ICF followed up on Iran's proposal to consider establishment of International Trust Fund or national in each country). For Conservation Plans, ICF proposed to target a limited number of activities that are feasible, linked to measurable conservation outcomes, and address threats; to implement efficient management plans on Siberian Crane sites, stronger involvement of local stakeholders must be achieved. Monitoring programme needs better coordination between countries and is hindered by its high costs (especially of PTTs), inaccessibility of many important areas, and lack of high quality equipment and adequate training. Under release programme, possible next step is to develop human-led technique (from Kunovat to Eurasian Crane wintering area in Uzbekistan) and work out problems in flyway before bringing to India. To develop and implement communications strategy, ICF hired two part time Communications Coordinators under GEF who also help with some CMS activities and are preparing a photo library to share with all range countries. Among other important issues to be addressed, ICF named water policies in range countries, interagency cooperation, and bilateral agreements to facilitate cooperation.

53. In the ensuing discussion, assistance from ICF and CMS in establishing the Trust Fund and in facilitating bilateral agreements between range countries was welcomed (due to certain bureaucratic stereotypes it is not possible to invite experts from other countries if there are no official agreements between countries).

54. There were no further comments on, or proposed amendments to, the format of the Overview Report.

Agenda Item 8: Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Conservation Plans

Agenda Item 8.1: New Conservation Plan Structure

55. The SCFC Elena Ilyashenko introduced the new structure of the Conservation Plans (CP; Document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/6) that would be easier to work with and have six programmes instead of four:

1. Reduce mortality,
2. Monitoring and research,
3. Increase numbers and genetic diversity,

4. Protect and manage habitats of importance for the Siberian Cranes,
5. Increase public awareness and ecological education, and
6. Enhance national and international cooperation and information exchange

It will also help avoid redundancies and produce more concise CPs. Comments were invited on the new structure.

56. The meeting participants proposed to make the CP structure more generalized and easier to fill out, to eliminate excessive paper work. A comment was made that the plans should not specify what film or poster to produce (the more films and posters, the better). Mr. Archibald proposed to develop a consolidated program for the ultralight project that would be very well integrated and not split by countries and Ms. Mirande responded that the way to do it is to put this program under Flyway level activities. Mr. Hykle asked everyone to think about activities after the UNEP/GEF SCWP and to look closely at the CP structure in small groups. Mr. Mussabayev proposed to create a work group on CP structure. The meeting has approved the proposed structure in general, to be revised in small groups; each flyway group will designate a representative for the CP Working Group who will work with the SCFC to fine tune the CPs.

Agenda Item 8.2: Reporting and Information Management

57. Mr. Hykle introduced the general concepts of national reporting and information management using an advanced on-line reporting system for the Marine Turtle MoU as a model. CMS aimed to address the issue that most people consider reporting a waste of time, thinking that their reports are not going to be used. The idea is that people will be coming to the meeting with all reporting information already in the system, which would make the overview at the meeting much easier. Questions were developed for 80 specific activities (very close to the Siberian Crane CP structure) for the marine turtles. Since the Marine Turtle MoU embraces over 30 countries it was impossible to have paper-based reporting system and decided to switch to on-line system, so that countries could update their information at their convenience and any user could view the report at any time.

58. Due to the more sophisticated analytical tool it was easier to generate reports on all kinds of issues and activities. Criteria were developed to monitor country performance and achievement of outcomes, revealing how the program is doing overall. The purpose of the performance matrix was not so much to judge each country's performance, but to evaluate all Range Countries' collective performance.. The system works very well; it is very easy to generate paper copies from the website, meaning much less work for the secretariat. However, it took much time to create the software, and the software requires reprogramming to adjust to changing situation or priorities. This system was developed for the Marine Turtle MoU with a goal to use it as a model for other MoUs and to make it easier for CMS to collect information. Mr. Hykle asked the meeting to weight pros and cons of building a full online system for the Siberian Crane MoU that has fewer signatories; and to consider if there is enough time and money to develop this system. A draft reporting template was circulated a week before the meeting; and the delegates were asked to give their comments.

59. Ms. Ilyashenko presented the new structure of on line reporting (Document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/7) similar to the CP template but activities are replaced with specific questions related to activities and invited the meeting to comment.

60. The meeting suggested having a standard template for reporting, but not switching to a full on-line reporting system due to excessive labor, time, and monetary costs involved. It was considered easier to extract and email information from a Word template and put it on the CMS and SCFC websites. The reporting template should match the new Conservation Plan template approved by the meeting. The conservation plan and the reporting template have to be enhanced to build in more activities relevant to each country, using the Siberian Crane as a flagship for wetland conservation as a whole. Creation of a project database on the basis of the existing non-interactive the UNEP/GEF SCWP database and need to improve information flow from the countries was discussed. Some funding for this had been provided by CMS for SCFC but additional funding is required to maintain the database and reporting

system, to provide continuity after the UNEP/GEF SCWP funding ends. CMS would own the database, the Range States would own it through CMS; and ICF would have a significant role in this.

61. It was noticed that the existing database needs improvement, especially because it will be used in different languages. The representative of China expressed an opinion that, since the MoU was signed between countries, it would be better for CMS to request countries to assign an agency in each country to provide and update information to ensure continuity after the GEF project. Mr. Hykle and Ms. Mirande commented that a common level of responsibility should be established in each country to provide information and that governmental and technical focal points should coordinate this work in each country. Mr. Archibald suggested making clarifications for countries that currently do not have Siberian Cranes, that they will conduct conservation work on other species (Eurasian and/or Demoiselle Cranes), which would lead to the return of the Siberian Cranes to their countries.

Agenda Item 8.3: Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds (WCASN)

62. Ms. Elena Ilyashenko, Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator, and Mr. Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International, gave an update on the development of the WCASN, referring to the Report of the Meeting to Endorse the WCASN, India, 2005 (information document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf-9) and post meeting activity. They presented the concept of the WCASN, which focuses on:

- 1) Sites of importance for conservation, recovery (or re-introduction) of Siberian Cranes;
- 2) Current or historical Siberian Crane sites which are also important for other migratory cranes and waterbirds; and
- 3) Involving local people in conservation efforts at the sites.

63. The WCASN is an integral part of the Siberian Crane MoU, providing a means for the protection of migratory waterbirds and their habitats along the Siberian Crane migration routes. As such, Range States that historically held Siberian Cranes but with no current records can still participate. It is intended that the site network will secure breeding, staging, and wintering sites for waterbirds across the flyway. Ms. Ilyashenko provided an update on post meeting activity on the development of Guidelines for Preparing Site Nomination Documentation including facilitation of the procedure for site nomination (documents UNEP/CMS/SC-6/8 with Annex), and reviewing nominated sites.

64. Mr. Taej Mundkur, chair of the Site Review Working Group (SRWG), presented results of the SRWG meeting on 14 May 2007. The SRWG reviewed 15 Site Information Sheets presented by Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The SRWG recommended 10 sites for approval by the Site Network Committee (5 from Kazakhstan, 2 from Iran, 1 from India, 1 from Turkmenistan, and 1 from Uzbekistan). The Site Information Sheets for these sites were prepared according to the Guidelines for Preparing Site Nomination Documentation, responded to the criteria and qualifiers for site selection, and were submitted along with an appropriate Letter of Endorsement by the responsible government agencies. Site Information Sheets for one site from India and two sites from Pakistan did not respond to the requirements of the Guidelines, therefore it was recommended that these should be improved and additional information should be provided on these sites. Site Information Sheets for two sites from Azerbaijan were not supported by an official Letter of Endorsement and therefore could not be recommended for approval.

65. The Site Network Committee (official Range States representatives) approved the 10 sites recommended by the SRWG, recognizing that there was a good basis for establishing the site network, and that sufficient information was provided to formally accept the nominated sites during a ceremony at the meeting., additional sites have been proposed for nomination by some countries to strengthen the site network; and the meeting urged the respective governments to finalise the documentation for site nomination and to provide official letters of endorsement as soon as possible, in order to allow their formal inclusion into the network.

66. Some delegates remarked that WCASN needs a significant funding source that might be found elsewhere, such as in the Gulf States or UAE in particular. The Range States were invited to contribute to this network as well. The proposed or nominated sites were presented country by country and discussed. Government representatives from each Range State confirmed their sites. The WCASN site list and plans for nominations during the coming 3 year period were endorsed by the meeting (conditionally for countries, whose governments have not yet sent their official letters of endorsement for sites).

Agenda Item 8.4: Relationship with other processes and initiatives

Agenda Item 8.4.1: UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (UNEP/GEF SCWP)

67. The UNEP/GEF SCWP International Technical Advisor, Crawford Prentice, presented an overview on the progress in the UNEP/GEF SCWP implementation, how the project will transit into the CMS MoU and the implications of such transition. The Mid Term Review, conducted in June 2006, concluded that, despite the overall low delivery level, the project has learned some valuable lessons and has made many remarkable advances as illustrated by each country's "highlights" shown in Mr. Prentice's presentation to the meeting. Regional activities for Phase 2 include: support countries to fast-track delayed activities, develop a communications strategy, present results at major meetings (CMS, Ramsar, etc.), support WCASN development under CMS MoU, support site network development under EAAFP, data inputting to regional database/GIS, expand Crane Celebrations into East Asia, respond to emerging issues, partnerships to support site management (effective Site Management Committees), transition to CMS MoU, and continued support for SCFC role after project (WCASN coordination, regional database/GIS maintenance, website, newsletters, communications, Crane Celebrations & awareness activities, flyway workshops and events, and coordination with Crane Working Group / EAAFP). GEF Project links with the CMS MoU Conservation Plans have been demonstrated: protection and management of habitats for the Siberian Crane, all GEF site level activities, national level activities (extension of protected area systems, policy & legislation improvements, training), as well as participation of CMS leaders in the UNEP/GEF SCWP Steering Committee and the UNEP/GEF SCWP input to CMS MoU conservation plans.

68. The meeting noted that the UNEP/GEF SCWP countries are expected to remain committed to co-financing related activities after the GEF project ends. China has established a national monitoring system for wildlife disease and will continue funding it at \$60,000 annually; two the UNEP/GEF SCWP sites (Xianghai and Zhalong) have been included in the national wetland restoration project as pilot sites and the government had already committed 2 million USD (1 million/site) to restore these wetlands.

69. In Kazakhstan, new wildlife refuges established by the UNEP/GEF SCWP will be financed by the government and monitoring will be continued at all four project sites at the government's cost; training will be conducted to provide sustainability; local communities and organisations are already sponsoring Crane Celebrations and co-financing is expected from the Ministry of Education; under the UNEP/GEF national wetlands project a Biodiversity Fund has been established (\$100,000 currently) and will be financed from international and governmental sources, plus commercial structures and NGOs.

70. Iran has been trying to shift GEF activities budget to the governmental budget from the beginning of the UNEP/GEF SCWP; the government has been paying for maintenance of facilities and staff salaries; a Trust Fund has been established (financed both by the government and NGOs).

71. Russia reported on funding being provided by the Academy of Sciences of Yakutia and regional Yakutia Ministry for Nature Protection (this co-financing is expected to continue after the UNEP/GEF SCWP project); by regional governments in West Siberia (Yamalo-Nentskiy District is taking on financing of the newly established protected territories; same for Konda-Alymka). The idea of the Trust Fund for CMS MoU should be developed and explored.

Agenda Item 8.4.2: East-Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)

72. Taej Mundkur of Wetlands International (WI) described the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) focusing on the progress over the last few years; he identified linkage to CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane (Documents UNEP/CMS/SC-6/9). Objectives of this partnership are to develop and implement of Site Network activities, raise public awareness about importance of birds for local communities, enhance and share knowledge by conducting research and monitoring, provide training and management for capacity building, and protect endangered species using flyway approach to recovery. Under linkage to the Siberian Crane MoU, the Strategy had recognized the CMS Siberian Crane MoU as providing a mechanism for conservation of threatened species and their habitats. Between 1997 and 2006, the Crane Working Group provided: the mechanism for coordinating activities in the Eastern Flyway of the Siberian Crane, including cooperation with the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project, and implemented conservation actions for the North East Asian Crane Site Network in Russia, China and Mongolia. From 2007, the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Site Network for all migratory waterbirds has incorporated within it the North East Asian Crane Site Network. Crane populations and sites will continue to receive adequate attention. The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands project through actions for the Eastern population will contribute to the implementation of conservation priorities for migratory waterbirds and their habitats. These will be conducted synergistic manner with the Flyway Partnership within the overlapping geographic remit of the MoU.

73. The meeting took note of the report and launch of the EAAF Partnership, requested representation of the MoU at the annual meetings of the EAAF Partnership through the CMS Secretariat and ICF, and requested the CMS Secretariat and ICF to develop a paper on opportunities for synergy between the MOU and EAAF Partnership for presentation to the next Meeting of the Range States. It was noted that, although there have been many discussions about keeping species-specific networks separate due to focus on a charismatic species, a single network will help governments to take action where necessary rather than going through a cumbersome process of dealing with several networks. However, in order not to lose the work that some species-specific networks have started and led, the specific sites should be listed as being important for different species groups.

Agenda Item 8.4.3: Central Asian Flyway (CAF)

74. Mr. Douglas Hykle (CMS) gave an overview of a CAF Action Plan and the establishment of an interim coordination mechanism. Building cooperative links between the CAF Action Plan and the MoU, including the development and implementation of the Conservation Plans for the Siberian Crane's West and Central Populations has been discussed. Coordination priorities for 2007-2008 include designing and maintaining a website to promote awareness of the CAF initiative amongst all Range States, CMS, AEWA, major international/bilateral funding agencies and partner organizations on ongoing activities, issues of concern, upcoming events, etc. Mr. Hykle emphasised the importance of CAF to the Siberian Crane MoU since its vast agreement area overlaps with the MoU Range States. Some of the CAF sites of international importance will be included in the WCASN, which is envisaged to eventually become part of a wider regional network for migratory waterbirds under CAF.

75. The meeting requested to develop a plan for future interaction between CAF and the Siberian Crane MoU and WCASN. Support for the CAF action plan and establishment of the CAF site network is needed from governments and other institutions in the Range States.

Agenda Item 8.4.4: Ninth Meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties (CMS COP)

76. The CMS Secretariat briefly informed the meeting about the Ninth Meeting of the CMS COP to be held towards the end of November 2008 in Rome, Italy. The COP meeting will discuss possible Siberian Crane MoU and UNEP/GEF SWCP inputs into the CMS COP. During the COP Meeting it will also be decided if CMS will allocate additional funds for the next CMS Siberian Crane MoU7 meeting.

Agenda Item 8.4.5: World Migratory Bird Day

77. Mr. Mundkur announced the Second World Migratory Bird Day on the weekend of 12-13 May 2007 and briefly explained its goals, with over 50 countries participating in more than 100 locations around the world. The meeting did not identify feasible possibilities for MoU and the UNEP/GEF SCWP inputs into the World Migratory Bird Day activities in 2007 due to closeness in time to the Siberian Crane MoU6 Meeting, but the event will be celebrated in some of the Siberian Crane MoU countries such as Uzbekistan.

Agenda Item 8.5: Conservation Plan (2007-10) development

78. Participants split into five flyway level working groups - one for Eastern Population, two (a Russian-speaking group and an English-speaking group) for Western and two for Central Populations, - to discuss specific activities and priorities for their populations. A draft flyway level conservation plan (in the new structure) was distributed to each group (Document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/6). Instructions were given in particular to consider issues related to reporting, new structure of the conservation plan, and develop a list of activities aimed to ensure sustainability of the actions at the end of the UNEP/GEF SCWP. The groups were advised to focus on activities that are achievable and feasible and those that will have measurable outcomes and to pay special attention to cross-cutting issues for each flyway and between flyways – financing, monitoring, WCASN, Flyway Focal Point, management plans, involvement of stakeholders. A summary of key decisions had to be presented next morning by three flyway groups. Working group members had been identified as well as a facilitator, reporter, and timekeeper for each group.

79. Each working group revised draft flyway level conservation plans for each population. Russian- and English-speaking groups for Western and Central Flyways worked separately for the sake of time and easier understanding. They then united and prepared joint reports. Draft lists of activities for 2007-2010 were developed for all 3 populations and corresponding priorities defined.

Flyway level working group reports

80. The Eastern Flyway working group reported on slow progress due to language barrier. Based on the format difference between the Conservation Plan and the Progress Report, the group simplified entries of progress or results achieved in 2004-2007 in CP by showing only major achievements in CP and presenting details in the Progress Report. Based on the actual situation and common characteristics of the different countries along the eastern flyway, the group designed major activities for the next three years according to the recommendations given by the meeting. They filled in the gaps in CP template; edited some materials, added some new activities, and defined priorities (reduce mortality, monitoring and research and establish model sites). Mortality factors and threats are numerous across the Eastern Flyway (deterioration and reduction of habitats due to expansive development, illegal hunting, water management issues, etc.).

81. The Western Flyway working group also reported on their proposal to amend the Conservation Plan and reporting templates as well, indicating the necessity to assign a coordinator to collect input from 11 countries. They also evaluated whether the Conservation Plan is sufficient to reflect the end of GEF project, to provide for sustainability and ensure smooth transition after GEF. Activities have been drafted for each country as well as specific flyway activities for 2007-10, such as nominating and confirming sites for WCASN.

82. The Central Flyway group had not suggested any amendments to CP and reporting format; one item was added under research and monitoring; possibilities of establishing Trust Funds in all countries have been discussed (the group made a special note about a need of greater transparency of fund flow); Gopi Sundar (India) was proposed to play role of coordinator.

Incorporation of revisions into drafts for each flyway

83. The working groups reported on their revised conservation plans for 2007-10 based on the feedback received from the meeting. Among most important additions were: 1) Maintain, extend and regularly contribute to the database for the Siberian Crane currently maintained by the UNEP/GEF SCWP and ICF; 2) Promote or take into account avian influenza surveillance at important crane sites and complement activities of other agencies to strengthen surveillance of avian influenza in migratory waterbirds at network sites and other important crane sites; 3) Begin implementation of the Flight of Hope Project (study suitable for SC wintering grounds of Eurasian Cranes and conditions along the migration route from south of west Siberia to Uzbekistan). The Range States agreed in principle to the proposal to set up international Trust Fund to sustain activities after GEF funding under MoU, with a view to raising money for specific projects. Some specific considerations for the Trust Fund were submitted: contributions from Range States to the Trust Fund should not be mandatory; there should be transparency and fair distribution of resources; and consideration should be given to increasing the annual contribution to CMS from the Range States concerned, instead of seeking separate contributions for the Siberian Crane MoU Trust Fund.

84. The Central Population group proposed that an annual progress review would be conducted at an annual meeting within each range country, organized by the country's MoU Focal Point; a formal letter from CMS Secretariat was requested to assist the formalization of the annual meeting process. They also proposed to set up a networking mechanism among the range countries that would include sharing research data and educational materials. It was also suggested to prioritise the CP objectives (instead prioritising the items under the objectives), improve training of personnel and protection of important sites, appoint two Flyway Coordinators (one for Russian speaking range states, another – for English speaking countries), and consider a possibility of individual governments setting up special website about their role and participation in the CMS MoU and WCASN. Eastern Population group reported on over 50% changes made in activities for China and giving much more attention to threats in Russia, Mongolia and China.

Finalization

85. All three flyway working groups presented their completed conservation plans on future activities. The meeting participants had formally endorsed the revised conservation plans that will be placed on SCFC website for final minor revisions.

Agenda Item 9: Next Meeting of the Signatories

86. Mr. Hykle asked the MoU Signatories to consider the desirability of continuing to hold future stand-alone MoU meetings. The meeting confirmed that this would be desirable. He recalled that Iran, India, Russia, USA and Kazakhstan had already hosted Siberian Crane MoU meetings. Initially, there were annual meetings, then moved to a two year cycle, and now to three years between meetings, which should be the maximum interval. Therefore the end of 2009 looks like the latest time for scheduling the MoU7 meeting. Before scheduling the next meeting, the participants were asked to look at a list of relevant meetings planned for 2009-2010, to avoid conflicts or to use the possible opportunity to hold back-to-back meetings. Mr. Hykle also reminded the Signatories that it is preferred by the Secretariat to receive several proposals to host the meeting and the sooner the host country is identified, the better. Mr. Hykle invited Range States to consider hosting the Seventh Meeting and to make pledges for financial or in-kind support to the meeting.

87. Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan delegates expressed possibility to host the meeting after consultations with their governments. China, Russia and Iran agreed to approach their governments only if no other country had committed to host. The Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center made a definite invitation to host the MoU7 in Belgium. Mr. Hykle noted that the MoU received more potential offers to host than at the last meeting and offered to arrange a formal letter from the CMS Secretariat to the Range States governments and partner organizations soliciting formal offers to host the meeting. This letter would specify what is needed in terms of organization and financial support. A

possibility of conducting the last the UNEP/GEF SCWP Steering Committee Meeting and the MoU7 Meeting back-to-back in 2009 was discussed. The time frame for that meeting has been tentatively set as mid-late 2009; however, until the Ninth CMS COP Meeting in November 2008 it will not be known if CMS will allocate additional funds to organize the CMS Siberian Crane MoU meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Launch Ceremony for Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds

88. Mr. Hykle invited the meeting to discuss the procedures for receiving nominations between the meetings which requires finalization and endorsement of the WCASN terms of reference (TOR). If a country (like Azerbaijan) only misses a letter of endorsement it will be very easy – as soon as the letter has been delivered the nominated site(s) will be included in the site network. The terms of reference for the Site Network Committee and Site Review Working Group were presented by CMS and endorsed by the meeting.

89. Mr. Hykle opened the network launch ceremony and expressed hope that each participating country will arrange ceremonies at local level to dedicate their sites. He reminded the participants that this ceremony was a result of several years of hard work by many people and a very good demonstration of synergy to establish this network as a common goal. The WCASN is building on the strengths of the existing crane site network in North East Asia (NEACWG). The representatives of the five countries were been invited to come forward and receive the certificates for the approved sites; photographs were taken of the ceremony and a press release was issued subsequently.

90. Ms. Elena Ilyashenko, SCFC, presented each of the nominated sites approved by the Site Network Committee on behalf of the Secretariat. Five sites from Kazakhstan (Naurzum lake System, Zharsor-Urkash Lake System, Kulykol-Taldykol Lake System, Tyuntyugur – Zhansura Lake System, and Ural River Delta and Coastal Zone of Caspian Sea); two sites from Iran (Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran and Sorkh Ruds Ab-bandas and Bujagh National Park); one site from India (Keoladeo-Gana National Park), one site from Turkmenistan (Durnaly, which means “Crane Motherland”), and one site from Uzbekistan (Termez, which has potential for reintroduction of the Siberian Crane) were officially dedicated.

Agenda Item 11: Review of Meeting outcomes

91. Ms. Mirande, ICF gave a presentation on key outcomes and main conclusions of the meeting for review and endorsement by participants, which form the basis of the Executive Summary of this report.

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

92. The Chair invited the meeting to raise any other issues not covered under the previous agenda items. No such issues were raised.

Agenda Item 13: Closure of the Meeting

93. There being no other business, the Chair concluded by saying that the meeting had considered all issues effectively. On behalf of the host country, he thanked the CMS Secretariat and ICF for the logistical and substantive preparations, all the participants for their active attendance and valuable contributions, and the translators for their efforts. He also expressed a hope that in near future all his colleagues who work so hard to protect the Siberian Cranes will be able to enjoy the sight of live cranes. On behalf of organizers from abroad, Mr. Hykle thanked the hosts and presented them with small tokens of appreciation. The meeting was declared closed at 13.00 on Friday, 18 May 2007.



Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Sixth Meeting of the Range States,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, 15-19 May 2007

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Annex 2



**Memorandum of Understanding Concerning
Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane**

**Sixth Meeting of the Range States,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, 15-19 May 2007**

AGENDA

1. Welcoming remarks (Host Organization and Secretariat)
2. Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by Wetlands International and Cracid & Crane Breeding and Conservation Center, Belgium
3. Election of officers
4. Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule
5. Opening statements
6. Report of the Secretariat
 - 6.1 Status of signatures
 - 6.2 List of designated competent authorities and focal points
7. Review of MoU and Conservation Plans' implementation
 - 7.1 Conservation status of Siberian Cranes within the agreement area
 - 7.2 Status of implementation
8. Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Conservation Plans
 - 8.1 New Conservation Plan structure
 - 8.2 Reporting and information management
 - 8.3 Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds
 - 8.4 Relationship with other processes and initiatives
 - 8.4.1 UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project
 - 8.4.2 East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
 - 8.4.3 Central Asian Flyway
 - 8.4.4 Ninth Meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties
 - 8.4.5 World Migratory Bird Day
 - 8.5 Conservation Plan (2007-10) development
9. Next meeting of the Signatories
10. Launch Ceremony for Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds
11. Review of meeting outcomes
12. Any other business
13. Closure of the meeting



Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Sixth Meeting of the Range States,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, 15-19 May 2007

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Agenda Item(s)	Title of Document
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/1/Rev.1	4.0	Provisional Agenda (as at 8 May 2007)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/2	4.0	Provisional Annotated Agenda and Meeting Schedule (as at 8 May 2007)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/3/Rev.1	4.0	List of Documents
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/4	6.0	Report of the Secretariat
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/5	7.0	Review of MoU and Conservation Plan Implementation
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/5/Add.1	7.0	Overview Report
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/6	8.1.2 8.5	Draft Conservation Plan Template for the Western, Central and Eastern Populations of the Siberian Crane (2007-2010)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/7 + Annex	8.4	Draft Template for the Submission of National Reports (2007-2010)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/8 + Annex	8.3	Site Nomination Guidelines for the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/8/Add.1	8.3	Status of Nominations for the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/9	8.4.2	East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
Information Documents		
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/1	6.1	Status of Signatures to the MoU concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/2		Provisional List of Participants
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/3	6.2	List of Designated Competent Authorities and Focal Points
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/4	6.2	Designated Competent Authority and Focal Point Form
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/5	7.0	Full Report of the Fifth Meeting of Siberian Crane Range States (Moscow, Russian Federation 26-29 April 2004)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/6	7.0	MoU concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane and Conservation Plan

Symbol	Agenda Item(s)	Title of Document
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/7		Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and Appendices
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/8		Provisional Agenda: Heads of Delegations Meeting
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/9		Report of the Meeting to Endorse the Proposed Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes (and Other Waterbirds)
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/10		Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway
UNEP/CMS/SC-6/Inf/11		Conserving Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia: A New International Initiative (Leaflet)



Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Sixth Meeting of the Range States,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, 15-19 May 2007

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Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Sixth Meeting of the Range States,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, 15-19 May 2007

OVERVIEW REPORT

(Prepared by the International Crane Foundation (ICF) on behalf of the CMS Secretariat)

1.0. Introduction

1. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the Secretariat shall prepare an overview report compiled on the basis of information at its disposal pertaining to the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*).

2. National reports by the Signatories are a primary source of information for the overview report. The Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator provided reporting templates to all MoU signatories and co-operating organizations having signed the MoU. As of 16 May 2007, the Signatories from the following Range States had submitted their national reports to the Secretariat: Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. ICF submitted report as cooperating organization. Other information available to ICF was also used in the form of data and project reports, conference proceedings and published materials.

3. The structure of this report follows the format used by other MoUs under CMS auspice. Section 2 addresses the conservation status of the Siberian Crane. Section 3 addresses the implementation of the Conservation Plan. In this section corresponding action points from the Conservation Plan are indicated where appropriate. This report does not repeat the information provided in the national reports. It only summarizes the main issues.

2.0. Conservation Status of the Siberian Crane

Overview

4. The Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) is listed as Endangered in the IUCN, Red Data Book. The remnant western and central populations are considered Critically Endangered. Because of its dependence on wide expanses of shallow wetlands, habitat loss or deterioration in China due to high human population pressure is the greatest threat to the eastern flock. In western and central Asia, widespread hunting is believed to have caused dramatic decline of the two flocks in recent decades although other causes of mortality should be monitored and investigated. Of the world's 15 species of cranes, the International Crane Foundation considers the Siberian Crane at the highest risk of extinction, although their numbers slightly exceed that of the Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*, now at about 2,800 birds) and far exceed those of the Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*, at about 235 birds in the only self-sustaining wild flock). *G. japonensis*, although threatened on the mainland of Asia, is increasing in Japan, and *G. americana* has slowly and steadily increased from a critical low of about 15 birds in the 1940s.

Eastern Population

Numbers and Population Trends

5. The eastern population of Siberian Cranes that breed on the tundra of Yakutia, Russia, between the Lena and Kolyma Rivers (Kytalyk Resource Reserve), has a narrow migration route to staging areas in northeast China, and from there along the coast of China to the Yellow River Delta, before migrating overland to Poyang Lake along the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. Winter counts at Poyang Lake Nature Reserve, conducted by the Jiangxi Wildlife Management Bureau, reveal about 3,000 birds and the numbers of brown-colored juveniles in autumn have indicated good productivity. If wetlands and continued protection are provided, the population has potential for increase.

6. Researchers at the Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolithozone (IBPC) in Yakutia, who conduct annual surveys of the Siberian Cranes on their breeding grounds, have evidence that the crane population has increased in recent decades to 7.34 - 7.79 bird/km² in 2007. Their work has also revealed that the Indigirka River Valley in the east of the breeding range is an important breeding area as well as a migration corridor, especially near the village of Khonuu in Momsy Region. South of the breeding grounds, new evidence shows that the valleys of the Middle Aldan River and the Maya River Valley are important migration corridors. And in China, an important new staging area (800 cranes in 2007) was recently discovered at the Huanzidong Reservoir in Liaoning Province close to where the migration corridor meets the seacoast.

7. In China, work has concentrated at four staging areas in the northeast (Zhalong, Momoge, Keerqin and Zianghai National Nature Reserves (NNRs)) and at Poyang Lake. The wetlands of the staging areas are threatened by drought, upstream diversions of water for human use, and development of former wetlands. Comprehensive research at Poyang Lake on the relationships among water depth, turbidity and the production of plants on which Siberian Cranes feed in winter is helping to elucidate potential effects of the damming of the Yangtze and the five tributary rivers that sustain the ecosystem. Wetlands in eastern Mongolia and northern China serve as summering areas for low numbers of non-breeding Siberian Cranes.

Potential and Actual Threats

8. The breeding grounds of the eastern population are relatively undisturbed. Oil, however, has been discovered in and near the breeding grounds, and oil exploration and development pose a significant threat. Oil exploration in Mongolia also poses a threat to unprotected Siberian Crane habitats, as the cranes are sensitive to the human disturbance associated with this industry, which is nearly impossible to control.

9. The loss and degradation of wetland habitats is of greatest concern at critical staging areas, migration stopover sites, and wintering grounds. In particular, the diversion of water resources for human use from rivers supplying key wetlands within nature reserves is a cause of major concern in the semi-arid climate of northeastern China. The wetlands of the staging areas are threatened by drought and development of former wetlands. Although several of the Eastern Population's major staging areas in northeastern China are protected by nature reserves (principally the Zhalong, Momoge, Xianghai and Keerqin NNRs), many others in the flyway remain unprotected. At the same time, there is limited available information about the migration route on which to base future protection efforts. Moreover, Siberian Cranes may use different migration routes in the spring and fall.

10. The threat to migration habitats is greatest in China's eastern provinces. In northeastern Mongolia, prolonged droughts in the Amur Basin, which may be exacerbated by global warming, can have significant impacts on Siberian Crane wetland habitats. Recent climatic conditions in Yakutia have left rivers and lakes shrinking, causing wetlands to become more accessible to hunters.

11. In eastern Yakutia (taiga area in Kolyma River Basin), there is a threat of lead poisoning due to intensive hunting, especially in spring. Two immature Siberian Cranes in the Amga River area died due to ingestion of lead shot. Further research is needed to better define the most critical areas. Major water engineering projects could have significant impacts on the

main wintering grounds of the species in the Yangtze Valley.

Central Population

Numbers and Population Trends

12. In the early 1970s about 75 Siberian Cranes wintered at Keoladeo National Park (KNP), India. Although the productivity of the population was relatively strong over the next three decades as evidenced by numbers of juveniles, the population continued to decline to just a single pair in 1996. Siberian Cranes have not been sighted in India since the winter of 2002-03. However, birds have been sighted by researchers on the breeding grounds in Russia (Kunovat Wildlife Refuge) since 2002, and local people in and near the breeding grounds have reported Siberian Cranes in the Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomous Region. Up to 12,000 Eurasian Cranes in the population that winters in India have been wintering in recent years along the Amudaria River lowlands in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There is a possibility that Siberian Cranes are also wintering in that region.

Potential and Actual Threats

13. Siberian Cranes are strictly protected on their breeding grounds in Russia and on their wintering grounds in India. However, hunting along the migration route is considered to be the primary factor responsible for the demise of this population. The recovery of the population can only be achieved by carefully introducing captive-reared cranes into the flyway. Protection of the cranes as individuals and the conservation of key wetlands throughout their range are fundamental before efforts can be initiated to restore the population by introducing captive-reared birds into the flyway.

14. Illegal hunting is attributed to poor awareness and poor living conditions in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In addition, there is concern that exceptions to hunting laws are made for special visitors to protected areas. It is also a concern that the growing restriction on hunting due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is leading to increased illegal hunting.

15. The loss and degradation of wetland habitats is a growing concern resulting from recent declines in water level due to climate change and prolonged drought. Habitat changes have also been attributed to specific factors such as water diversion from illegal dams at Naurzum Nature Reserve (NR), fires in northwest Kazakhstan, and oil and gas development in Kunovat Wildlife Refuge.

16. In West Siberia of Russia, the status of protected areas has been significantly impaired by the loss of status and funding for federal wildlife refuges (zakazniks) under the Ministry of Agriculture. Conflicts are growing between farmers and waterbirds due to crop damage by the birds in the southern part of west Siberia.

Western Population

Numbers and Population Trends

17. Likewise in Iran, the number of Siberian Cranes wintering at their traditional site (waterfowl trapping complexes near Fereydoon Kenar) has declined from about 12 birds in the mid-1990s to just two lone males in the autumn of 2006. Shooting is not allowed inside the trapping areas; however, outside such areas, there is a possibility that cranes might be shot. The wetlands of Azerbaijan are an important resting area for these Siberian Cranes during their migration. It is suspected that, after the collapse of the former-USSR, uncontrolled hunting might have resulted in losses of Siberian Cranes in Azerbaijan and in other areas along the west side of the Caspian.

18. Although it appears that the central population has been extirpated and that the western population wintering in Iran has been reduced to just 1-2 birds, as many as seven cranes have been observed in recent years at the Naurzum wetlands of northwest Kazakhstan. These wetlands have been important historic resting areas for Siberian Cranes that migrate both to India and Iran. During the winter of 2001-02, three Siberian Cranes were reported in

Jordan. There have been reports of 4-7 cranes during migration in Azerbaijan. Perhaps there is also an undiscovered wintering area for Siberian Cranes in the Middle East.

19. Satellite transmitter (PTT) studies of Lesser White-fronted Geese have indicated they use the valley of the Tigris River in Iraq, just northwest of Baghdad, as a wintering site. These geese also use the Naurzum wetlands of Kazakhstan as a staging area during migration. Perhaps, as conditions allow, a search in Iraq for the missing Siberian Cranes is warranted.

Potential and Actual Threats

20. The threats in the western population closely parallel those in the central population. Hunting along the migration route is considered to be a significant factor responsible for the demise of this population. Again, the recovery of the population can only be achieved by carefully introducing captive-reared cranes into the flyway as the causes for the decline of the wild population are addressed.

21. Illegal hunting in this region is also attributed primarily to poor awareness and poor living conditions, especially in Dagestan and Azerbaijan. However, there are again concerns that exceptions to hunting laws are being made for special visitors to protected areas. Here it is also a concern that restrictions on hunting due to HPAI are leading to increased illegal hunting. HPAI risk in Iran may lead to a government ban on construction of fencing and duck trapping in damgahs. If the tradition of live duck trapping is lost, there is a risk of poaching in damgahs by hunters in response to the establishment of the Non-Shooting Area near Fereydoon Kenar. If this happens, the Siberian Cranes will lose the security they currently enjoy on these private lands.

22. Similarly to the central population, the loss and degradation of wetland habitats is a growing concern resulting from declining water levels due to climate change and prolonged drought. Habitat changes have also been attributed to specific factors such as oil and gas development in West Siberian staging areas and to fires in the Astrakhan Nature Reserve. In West Siberia, the status of protected areas has been significantly reduced by the loss of status and funding for federal wildlife refuges (zakazniks) in Russia under the Ministry of Agriculture. The western population is also affected by the growing conflict between farmers and waterbirds due to crop damage in southern part of west Siberia.

3.0. Implementation of the Conservation Plan

23. The following sections summarize information received as of 14 May 2007 on implementation progress since the Fifth Meeting of the Range States in 26-29 April 2004.

Objective 1. Reduce Mortality in the Remaining Populations

1) Increase public awareness

24. The Siberian Crane video produced in English and Russian by ICF and shared during the previous meeting was translated into the Farsi, Uzbek, Pakistan and Mongolian languages. This film was broadcasted on national TV in almost all Range States. Additional films were produced by countries in national languages and shown on national TV: "Flight of Hope" and "White Crane from Legend" in **Russia**, "Ak Durna" in **Turkmenistan**, a film about the Siberian Crane migration along the western flyway by Mani Mirsadeghi of **Iran**, and a documentary film about the Siberian Crane and other threatened species of birds in **Mongolia**. Information programmes were aired on television addressing crane conservation including footage relating to the 2005 Siberian Crane release programme in **Iran**, Siberian Crane monitoring in Yakutia, and migration and wintering Eurasian Cranes in the Durnaly site in **Turkmenistan**. Interviews about cranes were given on national TV and radio channels for information programmes in **Uzbekistan**, **Turkmenistan**, and **Russia**. In **China**, Jiangxi TV reported on the 14th "Love Bird Week" activity held in Nanchang City in April 2005; the Channel I and News Channel of CCTV reported on the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP) in **China** national level in August 2006.

25. Articles about Siberian Cranes and related activities were published in a variety of

publications including conference proceeding (“Waterbirds around the World”, two issues “Crane of Eurasia”), magazines, newsletters (ICF Bugle, China Crane News, CMS Bulletin, electronic Siberian Crane Flyway News, Newsletter of the Crane Working Group of Eurasia (CWGE), Kazakhstan Ornithological Bulletin), national and local newspapers (information on crane migration in Mongolia; “Flight of Hope” project in **Russia**, and Crane Celebration). The book “Most Important Wetlands of Northern **Kazakhstan** (inside of Kostanay and western part of Northern Kazakhstan Regions)” was translated into English and prepared for publication. A “Siberian Crane Conservation Strategy” prepared by staff of the IBPC was also translated and prepared for publication. A monograph on the Siberian Crane is in final stages of preparation by IBPC with articles by authors from different Range States.

26. A variety of education and information materials was produced and distributed at the flyway level, as well as on national and site levels. The Siberian Crane poster by Robert Bateman in 12 national languages was produced in **India** through funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is still shared during education events, with schools, local agencies, and nature conservation organizations and used as a prize during event, such as Asian Children Art Exhibition in **Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan** and **Kazakhstan**. A new Siberian Crane poster was prepared in Russian and English for the current MoU6 meeting for distribution among participants. Siberian Crane posters were also produced and distributed at national levels in **Pakistan, Afghanistan** and **Iran**. Stickers on the Siberian Crane in Farsi, Chinese, Yakutian, English and Russian were distributed among different target groups including hunters. A colorful and highly informative booklet on Siberian Cranes and wetland conservation entitled “Lily of Birds” under the framework of the MoU and the UNEP/GEF SCWP was produced in Russian and English for distribution at the CMS MoU6 meeting. Booklets about the Siberian Crane and related activities were prepared on the national level by **Iran, Mongolia** and **Kazakhstan**. A booklet “101 Questions about Cranes” by Vladimir Flint in Russian was distributed widely in countries where Crane Celebrations were organized. Countries produced materials on the national level as posters, stickers, and buttons, which were shared among different target groups including hunters.

27. Different education events were hosted at international and national levels. The Crane Celebrations initiated by the CWGE in 2002 became a traditional event in 8 countries, including **Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan** and **Iran**. The number of people involved in this celebration is increasing from year to year. Information on the Crane Celebration was published in national and local newspapers and broadcasted on national TV. The CWGE provided countries with information and education materials (booklets, posters, buttons, stickers, book “Materials for Crane celebration”, bookmarkers, calendars, etc.). Some of materials were translated into the Farsi, Pashto, Dari, Turkmen, Azerbaijan and Uzbek languages. Countries also produced materials for this event. In the frame of Crane Celebration 2006 the Asian Children Art Exchange Exhibition was held with participation of children from Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The winners’ art was exhibited by the International Crane Foundation, Moscow Zoo, Zoological Museum of the Moscow State University, as well as in the countries themselves.

28. **Mongolia** also organized Crane Celebration independently. Entertaining and effective Crane Festivals were organized in Salekhard (Yamalo-Nenetsky A.R.) in 2005 and in Naurzum in 2006. Countries also organized crane conservation shows as well as art, essay and quiz competitions; and training workshops for teachers, hunters, students, border guards and others.

29. Local people, especially guards, are involved in waterbird monitoring in **Iran**, where the release programme at Fereydoon Kenar is conducted in close cooperation with local trappers. In Pakistan the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) Wildlife Department and WWF-Pakistan has established school wildlife clubs in crane hunting areas. Winter children’s camps were conducted at Poyang NNR with funds from the WWF-Yangtze Programme; and two summer camps were conducted at Xianghai NNR with co-financing from the Luce Foundation, which includes representatives from four North-Eastern China sites of the UNEP/GEF SCWP. Paintings from the local students of Keerqin NNR were exchanged with the students of USA with support from ICF and Beijing Brook Education Center in late half of 2006.

30. Under the framework of the UNEP/GEF SCWP strategy on awareness raising and education plans for eco-tourism activities are developing in **Iran, China, Kazakhstan** and **Russia**. The community participatory plan related to wetland restoration in Poyang Lake Basin in **China** was accepted at the experts' workshop in 2006.

31. The NWFP Wildlife Department in **Pakistan** has established the Crane Conservation Centre in Kurram Valley and needs pairs of birds for display in captivity. In Iran, a guard station and education center has been partially constructed located in the Oja Kaleh, a forest patch near FDK Non-shooting Area for education goals.

2) Assess hunting pressure and other mortality factors along the migration route

32. In **Pakistan** the Federal Government has issued a directive to ban hunting of cranes. Through WWF and other NGO efforts, section 144 of Pakistan was imposed in Zhob this year to ban hunting during the migration season. In **Iran** hunting is regulated under the Department of the Environment (DoE) management system and since 2005 no hunting permit has been issued due to the risks of avian influenza. In **Kazakhstan**, in connection with the threat of the spread of avian influenza in 2005, spring hunting was prohibited and the terms of autumn hunting were shortened and postponed. In 2006 the terms of spring hunting were shortened.

3) Study Cranes along the migration route (Siberian Crane Monitoring)

33. Regular monitoring is conducted by most Range States on breeding, migratory, or wintering sites. Aerial surveys were conducted in West Siberia and ground surveys – in Yakutia. All important sites in northern **Iran** (including Siberian and Eurasian Crane wintering sites) are under the full coverage of the mid-winter waterfowl census in cooperation with international organizations such as WIWO. In **China** three wintering surveys were conducted in the winters of 2004, 2005 and 2006, and an aerial survey was conducted in the winter of 2005 in the Poyang Lake Basin under UNEP/GEF SCWP. On migration stopovers, regular monitoring was conducted in the Astrakhan Nature Reserve (Russia), in the Naurzum NR (Kazakhstan), and in Punjab and NWFP by the NWFP Wildlife Department and WWF-Pakistan.

Determine autumn migration routes, wintering areas and spring migration routes of the remaining flocks, as well as summering areas of juvenile Siberian Cranes.

34. In **Iran** in 2004 ground surveys were conducted in Khorasan Province in northeast Iran to search for alternative Siberian Crane wintering grounds in Iran. Special attention was paid to a site near Turkmenistan's border. The surveys showed that near Turkmenistan's border and along the Hari Rud River there is no habitat suitable for cranes to winter or stop over. A number of wetlands in the central and southern **Kazakhstan**, including Irgiz and Turgay downstream, have been studied within the framework of Birdlife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) programme; investigation of Shily Lake was included into autumn monitoring programme 2006, where sightings of Siberian Cranes were recorded; a short-term investigation of Sarykopa Lake was made before in 2004-2005; complex studies in the Ural Delta and Kurgaldzhinsky NR have been conducted by the national Kazakhstan UNDP/GEF Wetlands Project, but special observations regarding Siberian Crane have not been made; and a survey of the northeast coast of the Caspian Sea was conducted with financial support of oil companies by the employees of the Institute of Zoology in the framework of the IBA programme. In **Mongolia** on the Siberian Crane summering sites there is no financial support so limited monitoring was conducted during other research. Questionnaires were provided by **Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan** and **Russia**. As a result some information about Siberian Crane sighting in Russia (In West Siberia and in Yakutia) and Kazakhstan was received, but no information was received from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

35. With ICF support, and during the Asian Census of Waterbirds, ground surveys were conducted in **Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Pakistan** and **Iran**. In Uzbekistan in the south of the Surkhandarya Region ecological conditions of wintering

Eurasian Cranes, including threats, were investigated, with the purpose of possible introduction of captive bred cranes to this territory. Spring migration routes of the Eurasian and Demoiselle Cranes in southern Uzbekistan have been tracked. Daily monitoring on wintering cranes established movement between the Uzbekistan and Afghanistan border. It was concluded that existing conditions in Termez do not guarantee safety of the potential Siberian Cranes wintering sites.

36. PTT activities were conducted by DoE in the winters of 2003/04 and 2006/07 in cooperation with ICF and Oka. Two released birds were marked with PTTs, but tracking ceased shortly after the cranes started migration. In **China** Poyang Lake NNR staff tried to capture Siberian Cranes in December of 2006. Unfortunately, no birds were caught due to various reasons. The major problem is lack of financial resources to hire experienced local people and procure all necessary equipment for catching. In Yakutia during the last two years PTT marking was planned, but not conducted because of lack of an appropriate license for using a foreign technique. Under the framework of the UNEP/GEF SCWP, the monitoring plan for Siberian Crane in China was completed in August of 2004, which was also accepted at the experts' workshop in Hefei of Anhui Province in late July 2004. Meanwhile, the monitoring plan was updated annually according to the actual monitoring situation and some potential sites were also identified.

37. All sightings of the Siberian Crane have been studied in **Kazakhstan** and **Mongolia**; the information has been submitted to the SCFC immediately. In **Russia**, where Siberian Crane sites are difficult to access, investigations of reported sighting requires additional funding.

Main challenges:

a) The location of Siberian Crane migration routes is still a big gap. Problems with PTT permits prevented determination of spring migration stopovers along flyways, juvenile summering areas, and winter movements at Poyang Lake. In West Siberia the inability to locate and capture wild birds prevented searching for alternative wintering sites, probably out of known Siberian crane area – perhaps in Jordan and Iraq, or for gathering important information on alternate migratory resting areas.

b) The vastness and inaccessibility of Siberian Crane habitat makes air and ground survey very expensive.

Develop and enforce effective rules and regulations for crane protection

38. Most Range States have gaps in this activity. One of the goals of the UNEP/GEF SCWP is to improve legislation on the Siberian Crane sites. But even in project countries this activity is at an early stage.

Objective 2. Increase numbers and genetic diversity

39. To date there are several centers where Siberian Cranes breed in captivity. Information is available in the fourth edition of the International Siberian Crane Studbook prepared T. Kashentseva from Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC) and R. Belterman from Cracid and Crane Breeding and Conservation Center (CBCC) in April of 2006. The main captive centers are the ICF, OCBC, and CBCC. These three centers have strong Siberian Crane captive populations and can produce chicks for a release programme. For the reporting period only OCBC produced eggs and chicks for release programmes. During 2004-2006 20 chicks were reared using isolation rearing techniques. Young birds from 5 months to 1.5 years of age were released in 2004 in Astrakhan Nature Reserve (4), in Belozersky Wildlife Refuge (south of Tyumen Region) (7), and in the winter of 2006/07 in Iran (2). In 2005 four eggs were also placed into the nests of wild Eurasian Cranes in West Siberia.

40. Concurrently, the OCBC, the All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection (ARRINP), and the Sterkh Foundation, are researching techniques for restoring the migration route by training captive-reared Siberian Cranes to follow ultra-light aircraft using a model that shows promise for restoring a migratory flock of Whooping Cranes in eastern North America. In 2006 four Siberian Cranes and two Eurasian Cranes were lead from Kunovat to

Belozersky Wildlife Refuge. ICF brought two aviculturists and one veterinarian to the US to assist with and train under the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership.

41. A programme “Cranes of Eurasia” was organized under the Eurasian Association of Zoos and Aquaria (ERAZA) with the goal to increase the number of captive centers for Siberian Cranes mostly for education purposes. Under this programme OCBC trains the staff of other zoos and later cranes can be transferred to these zoos. A Crane Education Center with captive facilities was constructed in Kurram Valley in **Pakistan**. Kabul Zoo in **Afghanistan** also prepared facilities to keep Siberian Cranes.

Main challenges

- a) CBCC has a very good breeding population. There are challenges to transfer eggs for release programmes due to strong veterinary regulations related to avian influenza.
- b) Facilities in Kabul and Kurram Valley will be available to keep Siberian Cranes. Training for Pakistan and Afghanistan staff to keep and breed cranes is needed.
- c) Poor monitoring of released birds is due to lack of finance for PTT and radio tracking.
- d) Weak interest and support from countries where suitable wintering sites and migration stopovers can be established.

Objective 3. Protect and Manage Habitats

Protect and manage breeding, migration and wintering areas

Improve Protection of Protected Areas

42. Improving protection of protected areas has primarily been conducted through the implementation of the UNEP/GEF SCWP. In **China**, Nanjishan NNR was submitted as a candidate national nature reserve in late 2005. A decision by the China State Council is still awaited. Duchang Provincial NR was established in 2005.

43. In **Russia** it is planned to expand the borders of Kuolyima-Chappanda and Chukichiya-Alaseya Republic Resource Reserves (RRRs). However, it is not enough to prepare only Yakutian-level documentation. It is also necessary to prepare corresponding federal legislation on protected areas. In **Mongolia** a separate protection administration was appointed in the Onon-Baljinsky National Park (OBNP) in 2006 with a staff of seven people.

44. In **Iran** a Non-Shooting Area was established around the four damgahs of Fereydoon Kenar, Esbaran, and two Sorkh Ruds. Expansion of the Kiashar Ramsar site to the entire Bujagh National Park is included in the UNEP/GEF SCWP 2007 activities and is currently under survey and review by the DoE provincial department. Some of the rice fields inside the national park have been purchased by DoE and the other areas are under negotiation with the locals.

45. In **Kazakhstan** documents on Zharsor-Urkash Wildlife Refuge have been prepared, agreed, and a solicitation letter to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the establishment of a wildlife refuge has been signed by regional authorities. Establishment of Zharsor-Urkash Wildlife Refuge has been included into the state programme to develop Especially Protected Natural Territories (EPNT) for 2007-2009. Work on documentation for Kulykol Lake Wildlife Refuge has been included into the UNEP/GEF SCWP workplan for 2007-2008. All borders for expanding the Naurzum NR have been agreed, a responsible agency developed a land map project, and demarcation of borders on land was made.

46. In **Uzbekistan** the area of the sanctuary near Dengizkul was increased as a result of creating a militarized zone. The territory in the Amudarya River Valley (Termez site) has now been declared an Important Bird Area (IBA). In Pakistan the national UNDP/GEF Wetlands Project has initiated activities in the Central Indus Wetland Complex.

47. Nomination documents for Naurzum and Zharsor-Urkash in **Kazakhstan** and for Keerqin NNR in **China** were prepared to include these territories in the Ramsar Site List. It is planned to prepare Ramsar documentation for Momoge NNR, but more basic information is needed on

wildlife, plants and hydrology. In **Russia** nomination documents for Kytalyk RRR as a World Heritage site was prepared and submitted to WWF-Russia. Afterwards it was decided to nominate only the Elon site, but not the entire territory of Kytalyk RRR.

Site Management Plans

48. Securing protection through collaboration with local communities is a priority activity. In **China** the site management plans were developed with the participation of site management committees and the provincial advisory groups. Since 2005, the UNEP/GEF SCWP budget was rephased in China to establish a provincial advisory group in Heilongjiang Province. In **Iran** through the UNEP/GEF SCWP, site management committees were established at the local level involving local stakeholders in discussions on decision making for the project. The head of the Iran Wildlife Experts Groups was invited to related meetings of the National Project Advisory Group as a member. To date no specific proposal has been received to establish a local hunting NGO. Local Damgah owners are cooperating with DoE under a partnership programme in order to secure the safety of the area. Four trappers associations were established under the UNEP/GEF SCWP (one for each damgah); through these association the relations with the trappers has improved; eight local guards have been employed through the UNEP/GEF SCWP and they are currently being supported by DoE. In **Kazakhstan**, also under implementation of the UNEP/GEF SCWP, the Naurzum and Zharsor-Urkash Site Management Committee has been organized. Every year the Naurzum NR organizes a volunteer fire brigade in agreement with local authority.

49. Management plans for Siberian Crane sites were developed mostly under implementation of the UNEP/GEF SCWP. In **China** the master plan for Poyang Lake NNR was approved by the State Forestry Administration in April 2006. It was adopted through participatory approaches. Mid and long-term management plans for Zhalong NNR were developed in November 2006 after extra expert input, which was also adopted by participatory approaches. It includes community co-management, public education, monitoring and scientific research, water management, etc. In 2004 and 2005, Zhalong wetlands were approved for and received water release from the Dongsheng Reservoir. As follow-up, a water resource management plan and wetland restoration plan for Zhalong was developed in late 2005. For Zhalong, Qiqihar Water Bureau conducted water monitoring since the inception of 2005. The main contents include measuring the water income and outcome of Zhalong wetlands, water level change at 5 optimal sites and water flow velocity. In March of 2006, the water supply plan for Zhalong wetlands has been incorporated into the regional water distribution plan of Nenjiang River with support from the Songliao Water Management Commission (SWMC). Sector management plans including community participatory plan, expansion of the existing eco-tourism plan, water resources co-management plan and public education plan were developed for Xianghai NNR in Phase I of the UNEP/GEF SCWP implementation. The water co-management plan for Xianghai and Keerqin NNRs was developed in late 2005. Meanwhile, China's National Coordination Unit (NCU) has been actively promoting the establishment of a long-term water supply mechanism for Xianghai and Keerqin NNRs through coordination with the SWMC and related provincial governmental departments. In addition, one flowing dam project was constructed in the entrance of Huolin River to Xianghai Wetland, which can slow the velocity of the water flow through the wetlands and ensure the water can flow into wetlands under 35 m/second. For Xianghai NNR, the water monitoring was conducted with the relationship study between water level, plants and waterbirds. Meanwhile, some hydrological data was also collected from the related hydrological monitoring stations. For Momoge and Keerqin, the management plans were initiated in 2006 under UNEP/GEF SCWP implementation. In **Russia** (Eastern Siberia) a management plan for Kytalyk RRR has not been developed because of a lack of unit guidelines. In March of 2007 Yakutia NCU staff attended a training workshop on site management planning. In **Iran** management plans for project sites are currently under development. The completed plan will be reviewed, discussed and approved by the site management committee. A national consultant under the UNEP/GEF SCWP established the basis to develop a co-management agreement. In **Kazakhstan** the first draft management plan of the Naurzum NR has been prepared. Waterbird and lake water level monitoring has been made.

Applied research

50. In support of site management applied research was conducted mostly on UNEP/GEF SCWP sites. In **China** under support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-ConocoPhillips *SPIRIT of Conservation Migratory Bird Program*, ICF worked with Chinese researchers and conservation institutions to conduct a three-year project focusing on endangered cranes and wetland ecosystems along the east China flyway, which is the co-project for the UNEP/GEF SCWP in China that has conducted larger scale monitoring in the large scale. The relationship study between waterbirds, plants and water levels at Poyang Lake is being continued under the UNEP/GEF SCWP since its inception in 2003. In 2005 and 2006, the China NCU allocated additional funds to employ two ICF consultants to provide further technical support for this project. So far, the database is completed and the primary results have been compiled. In addition, the monitoring plan was revised and updated in late 2006. In **Iran** the DoE has currently supported student projects for Protected Areas of Iran; a trapping study was developed under a national consultancy for the UNEP/GEF SCWP during phase I, the second phase of this study, reviewing the socioeconomic condition, will be conducted in 2007. Development of a monitoring plan for FDK is included in the 2007 workplan of project implementation. In addition DoE and the project support proposals on ecological studies for the Siberian Crane habitats.

Impact of Human Development

51. Monitoring and assessing the environmental impacts of human development on important habitats for the Siberian Crane, including possible impacts of climate change, were undertaken under UNEP/GEF SCWP implementation. In **China** the study on the relationships between reed harvest and crane roosting and breeding at Zhalong was conducted by the NE China Forestry University, one consultant was employed to conclude the former study results, which indicated that the impact of reed harvest on crane roosting and breeding is not significant. Therefore, this study was replaced by the birds and plants monitoring at Zhalong, together with the suggestion by ICF consultant Dr. Su Liying. In **Iran** a national consultant has been contracted under the UNEP/GEF SCWP to assess the grazing condition at Bujagh National Park and proposed a grazing plan. It was determined that climate change may be the reason for the movement of some of the wintering sites northward. In **Kazakhstan** the studies on biodiversity, socio-economics, and grazing are partially completed at Zharsor-Urkash site. Information on socio-economic situation in the catchment basin has been collected; full investigation of dams, water reservoirs and the condition of the riverbed has been made; water balance of the Naurzum Lakes has been defined; real water consumption needs of the population living in the catchment area have been calculated and, in some cases, alternative sources of water supply have been defined. Monitoring of the lakes water level has been made. Recommendations for water management planning and justifications to remove unnecessary dams and construction of water release facilities at remaining dams have been prepared. Preliminary agreement with water users has been made and preparation of a basin agreement (within the framework of Naurzum Lakes Basin), which will be made through the basin council established at Tobol-Turgay Basin Water-economic Department, has been started.

Capacity Building

52. During the reporting period a number of training workshops were provided for different target groups by countries involved in the UNEP/GEF SCWP sites as well as other Range States. In **China** six training courses were organized in 2004, five in 2005 and three in 2006. 80% of targeted participants completed training courses planned under the UNEP/GEF SCWP. Since 2005, the China NCU strictly complies with the guideline of the post-evaluation of training courses in the Operations Manual and conducted the level 1 evaluation after each training course. After 6-12 months of the training course level 2 evaluations were implemented. In **Russia** (Eastern population) annual training workshops are provided for Yakutian UNEP/GEF SCWP staff with help of the Ministry of Nature Protection. The Head of the Allaikhovskiy Region is responsible for training of rangers. In **Mongolia** the educational training is being conducted on Special Programmes in OBNP. The training is beginning with

rangers and local people. In **Iran** different types of training, including community liaison, management planning and conservation legislation, were provided to the local guards through UNEP/GEF SCWP. In **Uzbekistan** in Termez, located near the Uzbekistan and Afghanistan border meetings and conversations were held with commanders of divisions and special training was also conducted for frontier guards, conversations held with farmers, workers of a pump station and the machine operators working in the territory of wintering cranes. Training was also provided for hunters and inspectors. Also a seminar on cranes was held for frontier guards.

53. Capacity building was improved for UNEP/GEF SCWP sites. In **China** Hongqi protection station was newly established in Xianghai NNR in late 2004. Meanwhile, two old stations were refurbished in 2004. So far, the current five protection stations operate very well. The integrated building for Keerqin NNR was established in mid-2006 and put into operation in late 2006. The Guest House for Momoge NNR was completed and put into operation in 2004, and the Natural Museum for Momoge NNR was accomplished and put into operation in May of 2006.

54. In **Iran** the funding provided through the project is an incentive for the associations to expand their trust fund and invest in small scale businesses. The number of local guards at Fereydoon Kenar has increased to eight, being supported by the UNEP/GEF SCWP and co-financed through DoE. A new DoE office has been established (in Babolsar) for direct management of the Fereydoon Kenar Non-shooting Area. In **Kazakhstan** a field station for biological studies at Naurzum NR is being constructed with the purpose of facilitating research work, attracting foreign specialists and cooperation. Financing of the Naurzum NR from the national budget has increased more than three times since 2003. Twenty-four staff inspectors were additionally employed in 2006 and new vehicles and equipment were acquired. The law of RK does not allow the region's authorities to support organizations, which are financed from national budget. In Zharsor/Urkash the Regional Society of Hunters and Fishermen hired two inspectors in Druzhba Village, near Zharsor-Urkash site. Preparation of the plan on ecotourism development is included into the workplan for project Phase II (2007-2008). Organization of studies is restrained by lack of ornithologist-specialists.

Buffer zone management

55. Few Range States manage buffer zones and external threats for protected areas critical for the Siberian Crane. In **Mongolia** the local ranger controls the OBNP and its buffer zone together. In Khurkh Khuiten Valley one ranger is financed by Khentii Province. This area is included in Ramsar sites and North East Asian Crane Working Group (NEACWG). In **Kazakhstan** defining buffer zone of Naurzum NR and demarcating its borders has been fully completed. A map with a list of users and indication of sites located in the protection zone has been prepared.

Objective 4. Enhance International Cooperation

1) Enhance International Cooperation

Improve exchange of information and technical expertise

56. The Siberian Crane MoU administered by CMS, is a vital vehicle for Central Asian countries within the wide range of the Siberian Cranes to work together for the conservation and restoration of these iconic birds. Researchers, educators, officials and enthusiasts now have the opportunity to join forces not only to help the Siberian Crane, but to demonstrate that people from a diversity of cultures can work together for the common good.

57. All Range States send information about Siberian Crane sightings immediately for exchange of information on a flyway and global level. The Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator (SCFC) collected and shared this information to all interested people and agencies. All information received was published in the electronic Siberian Crane Flyway News (SCF News) which is shared generally twice each year. Some countries nominated contact persons to collect the sightings and observations and share it with the SCFC. Nominations for contacts

in other countries are pending.

58. A regional database was created in 2004 and updated continuously. Four training workshops on this database were held – one in Kazakhstan for all project sites, two in China and one in Iran. Information about Siberian Crane sightings for the 6 last years was entered into the database. Basic information on wetlands was inserted to database, but it should be expanded and translated in English for some sites from Russia.

59. A Siberian Crane Flyway Coordination website was created, but it has been challenging to maintain it since it is difficult to find a person who can agree to update it for the low salary currently budgeted. The SCFC docs not have enough time to update it personally and additional staff and financial resources need to be secured. Now, after hiring of two part-time communication persons for UNEP/GEF SCWP, this problem can be addressed.

60. Most countries submitted reports on the Conservation Plans implementation by the required deadlines. The CMS Secretariat and ICF are collaborating to develop new on-line report format for presentation in the MoU6 in Almaty.

61. Since 2005, the China NCU developed monthly and the quarterly progress reports and distributed them to all interested individuals and organizations. The China NCU actively provided technical support for any representative to participation in MoU meetings, especially to prepare the national report.

Capacity building

62. A Regional training workshop on data management was held in September 2004 in Kostanay City, and the Regional training workshop on site management planning and other issues in China in March 200X, both in the frame of the UNEP/GEF SCWP project's implementation.

63. The first training workshop was organized by NGO "Naurzum" in Kazakhstan. **IR, AZ, KZ, RU** representatives took part in this training workshop. The management plan workshop was organized by Jiangxi Wildlife Management Bureau. **AZ, IR, KZ, RU** and **CH** representatives attend this training workshop.

2) Raise funds to support a comprehensive conservation programme supporting MoU Implementation

64. Based on contacts developed by CMS, ICF secured a US\$10 million, six-year grant with the goal to "Secure the ecological integrity of the network of critical wetlands needed for the survival of the Siberian Crane, migratory waterbirds and other globally significant wetland biodiversity in Asia". Activities focus on the eastern and western populations. An additional US\$12 million in co-financing was secured. Over US\$1 million additional co-financing was secured from sources including the NEACWG, CBCC, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation/Conoco-Phillips, the Doris Duke Foundation, the Luce Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding (TMU), the Sharp Foundation, and the Indianapolis Prize.

65. ICF has supported work in **AF, AZ, IR, IN, PK, TU, and UZ**. ICF also supported small projects to publish information and training materials. CMS and NEACWG supported participation in international seminar, workshops, and meetings.

66. The Sterkh Foundation, located in Salekhard, Russia, has supported studies on the breeding grounds of the western and central populations, and is spearheading a restoration programme for these populations. The gas/oil company ITERA supported the "Flight and Hope" project to lead migration.

67. WWF-Pakistan is working on various proposals to different donors to seek funds for crane conservation programmes in Pakistan. Some proposals were submitted to other donors as well (Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, IUCN, Sir Peter Scott Fund, etc). The NWFP Wildlife Department secured funds to establish the crane center in Lakki.

68. Uzbekistan has searched through different embassies and firms with negative results.

69. In Mongolia every year the government provides US\$20,000 as financial support for

OBNP. A staff of three rangers was also financed by Ministry of Nature Protection. Rangers and researchers working in protected areas are financed by the Government.

70. In Yakutia, the IBPC has secured co-financing from the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) for needed equipment and research. Funds have been secured from a power company, insurance company and arranged discounts for project staff at the "Sterkh" Hotel.

3) Development of the Western/Central Asia Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds (WCASN)

71. Plans to develop the WCASN were developed at a series of meetings including "Waterbirds around the World", CMS MoU5, the Fifth Steering Committee Meeting of the UNEP/GEF SCWP.

72. The "Meeting to Endorse the Proposed Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and Other Migratory Waterbirds" was held in New Delhi on 13 June 2005. Site nomination criteria and procedures to nominate and approve sites were developed and endorsed. It is proposed that the WCASN be launched at the MoU6 Meeting.

73. The Ranges States have nominated the following sites to be reviewed and possibly endorsed at the MoU6 meeting.

Afghanistan – no sites nominated

Azerbaijan – Shirvan National Park, Kyzyl-Agach Nature Reserve were proposed, but official letter of endorsement was not submitted

Iran – Fereydoon Kenar Non-Shooting Area, Bujagh National Park

India – Keoladeo-Gana National Park, Etawah-Mainpuri

Kazakhstan – Naurzum Lake System, Ural River Delta, Zharsor-Urkash Lake System, Tyuntyugur-Zhanshura Lake System and Kulykol-Taldykol Lake System

Pakistan - Taunsa Barrage (Punjab), Thanadar Wala (NWFP) were proposed, but nomination sheets were not submitted

Russia – Kunovat River Basin, Kondo-Alymka Rivers Basin, Belozersky Wildlife Refuge were proposed, but nomination sheets and official letter of endorsement were not submitted

Turkmenistan – Durnaly

Uzbekistan – Termez

74. Only Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan submitted official nomination letters from the government to officially nominate the sites.

4) Strengthen national and international coordination

75. **CH, MN, and RU (Eastern population)** participate in NEACWG activity which to date is working under the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). Before 2004, four additional Chinese sites were accessed for inclusion in the NEACWG, later Mongolia prepared documentation to include OBNP to the NEACWG. Some important places in OBNP were already listed as IBAs. In Russian no new sites were nominated including for the NEACWG.

76. **UZ, AZ, RU, TU, KZ** participate in CWGE activities by submitting information for the Newsletter and collecting papers, participating in conferences and in Crane Celebrations.

77. Uzbekistan participated in the Central Asian IBA project coordinated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and NABU (Birdlife Germany). Within the framework of the project "IBAs of Central Asia" activities have been carried out to propagate Siberian Crane and other species of cranes. The Termez site in the Amudarya River Valley, Uzbekistan was official nominated for the IBA list regarding cranes.

78. Uzbekistan also participated in preparing maps for the UNEP/GEF ECONET project supervised by WWF-Russia. It gave recommendations about wetlands' international value to maintain water and waterbirds birds, including in the territory along the Amudarya (Termez)

and Lake Achinskoe in the Kashkadarya Region.

79. Russia cooperated closely with China under the UNEP/GEF SCWP. In August 2006 two persons from its project staff visited Yakutia to jointly conduct a breeding survey. IBPC in Yakutia cooperated with the RSPB, Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ), ICF and US Fish and Wildlife Service. IBPC hopes to contact Lei Fu-Min, Institute of Zoology of Chinese Academy of Science.

80. Mongolia is working very closely with administration and specialists of the Russian-Chinese-Mongolian International Nature Reserve "Daguur". Specialists of the Mongolian part of this international nature reserve and OBNP work together with Russian Daursky and Sokhondinsky NRs, and Chinese "Dalai Lake" Specially Protected Area colleagues. To develop the working relationship Mongolian specialists visited each other to exchange experience and information. In the future it is planned to establish a Mongolian-Russian joint protected area.