



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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13<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
Gandhinagar, India, 17 - 22 February 2020  
Agenda Item 26.2

**EUROPEAN EEL**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Summary:

This document is submitted in connection with Concerted Action 12.1 on the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). At the Third meeting of the Range States to the European Eel in June 2019, participants requested the submission of a document to COP13, outlining potential next steps.

The document contains a draft outline of an Action Plan and a non-exhaustive list of the threats, challenges and emerging issues facing the species for consideration by the COP. Draft Decisions are presented for possible adoption.



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## EUROPEAN EEL

### Background

1. The Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting (COP11, Quito, 2014) included the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) in Appendix II.

### First Range State Meeting and Adoption of Concerted Action

2. The CMS Secretariat and the Sargasso Sea Commission organized a First Range States [Workshop](#) on the European Eel in Galway Ireland in 2016, to review the conservation status of and existing management measures for the species.
3. Representatives from 11 Range States and scientists from more than 10 countries attended, including those with expertise on the American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*). The meeting focussed on the gaps in scientific knowledge relating to the species and its conservation needs and discussed the case for developing a CMS instrument. It concluded that a second workshop that included additional Range States, particularly from North Africa, would be valuable.
4. The Government of the Principality of Monaco, together with the Sargasso Sea Commission and the Secretariat, submitted a proposal for a Concerted Action for consideration by COP12 in 2017. It was adopted with some amendments as [UNEP/CMS/Concerted Action 12.1](#). A report on its implementation can be found in UNEP/CMS/COP13.Doc.28.1.1
5. The Concerted Action includes five activities, chief among them convening a second Policy Meeting of Range States to explore all options that might help to strengthen conservation efforts for the European Eel.

### Second and Third Range State Meetings

6. The [Second Meeting](#) of Range States was organized by the Secretariat and the Sargasso Sea Commission, with support from the Principality of Monaco and the World Maritime University (WMU), and took place in Malmö, Sweden, 15-16 May 2018. The meeting considered information on activities taking place related to the assessment, conservation and management of the European Eel, within and beyond the EU. Following presentations from experts, country representatives, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved in eel conservation, delegates identified certain gaps and opportunities as well as advantages to having stronger international cooperation for the conservation of European Eels.
7. The meeting highlighted the necessity of taking into account all threats affecting eels throughout their life cycle and throughout their range including the High Seas. The group identified a number of areas which would add value and complement current efforts and recognized the need to include all Range States and destination countries of traded specimens.

8. The meeting concluded that: ‘there is a potential for international cooperation to address gaps and challenges in European Eel conservation. In this context, the CMS as a global mechanism could address many of these issues. Based on the above modalities, there is a potential for CMS to begin consultations on setting up such a mechanism for more coordinated and comprehensive European Eel conservation. A negotiation process for strengthening international cooperation should take into consideration ongoing reviews of European Eel policies, including those taking place in the EU, the GFCM, CITES, IUCN and ICES. Consideration should also be taken of the need to reinforce action as soon as possible given the species’ Critically Endangered conservation status.’<sup>1</sup>
9. A [Third Meeting](#) of the Range States to the European Eel was convened in Malmö, Sweden, 25 – 26 June 2019, organized by the Secretariat and the Sargasso Sea Commission, and partially funded by the Government of the Principality of Monaco. Twenty-four Range States including the EU, as well as representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Convention on the Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the WMU, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the IUCN Anguillid Eel Specialist Group and the General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean (GFCM) and NGOs also attended the meeting.
10. Countries discussed the need for greater transboundary cooperation, especially between EU countries and those outside of the bloc. The potential role that CMS could play in this was debated. Experts and Range States outlined the main threats facing the species and elaborated possible areas for action that could be undertaken within the CMS context.
11. The meeting reached a consensus that it was premature to consider a draft legal agreement at this stage, and that other options should be explored.
12. Rather than a legally binding agreement, many Range States were in favour of developing a Single Species Action Plan, or similar instrument, for the species. The Secretariat suggested to the meeting that a Single Species Action Plan might suit the needs of the Range States and provided a draft outline of an Action Plan, which could be used for the European Eel. This outline is attached in Annex 1.
13. The CMS COP has adopted a number of actions plans over the years, for a variety of taxonomic groups. Action Plans can take many forms, encompassing a single species<sup>2</sup> or multiple species<sup>3</sup>. They can be adopted by CMS COP<sup>4</sup>, by its Standing Committee or by the Range State Parties themselves. They can also be developed as a CMS instrument, such as a legally binding Agreement<sup>5</sup>, or a non-legally binding MOU<sup>6</sup>, or can stand alone under the Convention<sup>7 8</sup>.
14. The meeting also elaborated a list of threats, challenges and emerging issues facing the species, which could form the basis of the threats section of the Action Plan. This list is attached in Annex 2.
15. In order to allow for proper consideration, and consultation, the Range States requested that a document containing these elements be brought to COP13 for consideration.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cms.int/en/document/outcomes-meeting>

<sup>2</sup> [Single Species Action Plan for the Loggerhead Turtle \(\*Caretta caretta\*\) in the South Pacific Ocean](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures](#)

<sup>4</sup> [International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali](#)

<sup>5</sup> [ASCOBANS Species Action Plan for North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Sharks MOU Conservation Plan](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Action Plan for the European Roller](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Action Plans for Birds](#)

Recommended Actions:

16. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
- a) consider and provide any guidance on the list of threats and challenges, developed by the Third Meeting of the Range States to the European Eel, and contained in Annex 1;
  - b) review and provides recommendations on the draft outline of an Action Plan, contained in Annex 2;
  - c) review and adopt the Decisions contained in Annex 3.

**ANNEX 1**

**OUTLINE OF A SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN  
WHICH COULD BE ADAPTED FOR THE EUROPEAN EEL**

**1. Biological Assessment**

- i. Taxonomy
- ii. Distribution/range
- iii. Migration patterns
- iv. Population trends

**2. Threats**

- i. Xx
- ii. Xx
- iii. Xx
- iv. Xx
- v. Xx
- vi. Xx

**3. Threat prioritization / Risk Matrix**

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Not Significant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Almost Certain					
Likely					
Possible					
Unlikely					
Rare/unknown					

**4. Policies and Legislation relevant for Management**

- i. International Conservation Status
  - i. IUCN status
  - ii. CITES Appendices
  - iii. CMS Appendices
- ii. Relevant IGOs/RIEOs by Country

Country	CITES	CMS	EU	GFCM	?
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	

- iii. National Legislation relevant to the European Eel Table.

**5. Framework for Action**

- i. Goal: xxx
- ii. Objectives, Actions and Results:

These objectives and corresponding actions and results are set out in the tables below for all threats identified for the European Eel. Threats are prioritized according to the risk matrix

- iii. Timescales
  - i. Immediate to be completed with the next year
  - ii. Short to be completed within 3 years
  - iii. Medium to be completed within the next 5 years
  - iv. Long to be completed within the next 10 years
  - v. Ongoing currently being implemented and should continue
  - vi. Completed completed during preparation of the Action Plan

Threat 1. XXX (*Risk ranking: very high*)

Objective 1: xxx			
Result	Action	Priority	Timescale
1.1 xxx	1.1.1 xxxx	xxx	xxx
	1.1.2		
	1.1.3		
1.2 xxx	1.2.1		
	1.2.2		
Objective 2: xxxxx			

Threat 2. XXX (*Risk ranking: medium*)

Objective 1: xxx			
Result	Action	Priority	Timescale
2.1 xxx	2.1.1 xxxx	xxx	xxx
	2.1.2		
	2.1.3		
2.2 xxx	2.2.1		
	2.2.2		
Objective 2: xxxxx			

Threat xx. Etc.

## 6. References

**ANNEX 2****THREATS, CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES FACING THE SPECIES<sup>9</sup>**

The Third Meeting of the Range States to the European Eel elaborated a non-exhaustive list of the threats, challenges and emerging issues facing the species, which could form a part of any future instrument, including an action plan.

**Direct Threats****1. Climate change**

- a) Changing oceanic conditions
- b) Identify research needs
- c) Scope for collaboration to fill knowledge gaps
- d) Identification of risks and solutions
- e) Changes to inland and transitional waters
- f) Identify research, management and conservation needs
- g) Scope for collaboration to fill knowledge gaps
- h) Identification of risks and solutions

**2. Disease / Parasitism**

- a) Knowledge sharing on best practice for disease management
- b) Wild and cultured
- c) Non-listed anguillid species
- d) Virus / bacteria / helminths
- e) Herpes? / Restocking
- f) Invasive species – e.g. *Anguillicola crassus*

**3. Pollution**

- a) Knowledge sharing
- b) Pollutant type
- c) Lipophilic toxicants
- d) microplastics
- e) Acute effects
- f) Direct mortality / morbidity
- g) Chronic effects
- h) Toxicant build-up in migrating fish

**4. Obstacles to migration / hydropower / pumps**

- a) Saline, transitional and fresh waters
- b) Upstream and/or Downstream
- c) Hydropower / dams / weirs - barrier
- d) Pumps / turbines - mortality
- e) Transboundary collaboration – within/outside EU
- f) AMBER?
- g) Guideline generation
- h) Range State Surveys?

<sup>9</sup> Reformatted from Annex 3 to the [Report](#) of the Third Meeting of the Range States to the European Eel, 25 – 26 June 2019

**5. Habitat loss / degradation**

- a) Changes in water quality and/or quantity
- b) Reduced resources
- c) Increased competition
- d) Impacts on growth
- e) Transboundary conservation and management
- f) Additional benefits for biodiversity, habitats and communities
- g) Habitat loss map? What is potentially restorable?
- h) Case studies – Erne Catchment
- i) Identify partners to build on existing efforts e.g. GRID Arendal
- j) CMS Decisions on Ecological Networks

**6. Unsustainable exploitation**

- a) Knowledge sharing e.g. NDFs; best practice; novel tech for enforcement / collection of catch data
- b) Shared objectives e.g. reducing fisheries mortality
- c) Shifts in demand – matching with exploitation to reduce surplus
- d) Transboundary – Baltic exploitation
- e) Legal
- f) Illegal

**7. Predation and competition**

- a) Impact of non-native/introduced species
- b) ‘Competing’ conservation initiatives – birds beat fish; fish pass does not mean eel pass;
- c) Multi-species benefits should be considered

**Additional Emerging issues**

**8. Seabed mining**

**9. Shipping – potential oil spill / noise**

**10. Sargassum collection**

**ANNEX 3**

## DRAFT DECISIONS

**CONSERVATION OF THE EUROPEAN EEL****Directed to Parties that are Range States to the European Eel:**

13.AA Parties that are Range States to the European Eel are urged to:

- a) Provide guidance to the Secretariat on the structure and scope of the proposed Action Plan for the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) by 31 May 2020, so that a draft can be prepared, circulated and finalised in time for submission to the Standing Committee at its 51<sup>st</sup> or 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting.
- b) Provide funding for the development of the Plan, including the convening of a Range State Meeting to finalize it.

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

13.BB Request the Standing Committee to adopt the Action Plan, if provided to the Standing Committee, at its 51<sup>st</sup> or 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**Directed to Intergovernmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations**

13.CC Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organizations are urged to:

- a) Provide expertise and funding for the development of the Plan, including the convening of a Range State Meeting to finalize the plan.

**Directed to the Secretariat**

13.CC The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:

- a) Develop a draft Action Plan for the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), following guidance provided by Range State Parties.
- b) hold consultations among the Range States and relevant IGOs and NGOs, on the draft Action Plan, by correspondence and if funding permits, by convening another meeting of Range States.
- c) Submit the draft plan to the Standing Committee at its 51<sup>st</sup> or 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting for adoption, or, if not finalised in time, to COP14.