



## First Range State Meeting for the Persian Leopard

Tbilisi, Georgia, 20 – 22 September 2022

UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Report

### REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PERSIAN LEOPARD RANGE STATES

#### Agenda item 1. Opening remarks and introductions

1. The Meeting was opened by Ms. Clara Nobbe, Head of Terrestrial Species Team at the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Mr. Karlo Amirgulashvili, Head of Biodiversity and Forestry Department gave a welcoming speech on behalf of the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Addressing the participants, he said *“I hope that this meeting will serve as a fundamental turning point for strengthening cooperation between Range States of the Persian Leopard”*, he added that two intergovernmental meetings would contribute to implementing this Strategy this year, as the Bern Convention would consider the same Draft Strategy at its Standing Committee meeting in November. He thanked the CMS Secretariat and the authors who had contributed to drafting the strategy for preparing the meeting and said that Georgia was happy to support CMS’ work in the region and to advance the conservation of the Persian Leopard.
2. Mr. Ernst Peter Fischer, the Ambassador of Germany to Georgia introduced himself as the new German Ambassador in the country. He stated that at a time of crises, political and environmental, it was important that UN conventions worked well to protect the planet. The Caucasus region was a biodiversity hotspot that needed to be protected in the face of biodiversity loss and climate change and the Caucasus Nature Fund, which received funding from the German Government, played an important role in this respect. Addressing the topic of the Meeting, he said: *“Germany is delighted to host the CMS Secretariat and to support a large conservation Programme in the Caucasus. The world is losing species at a rate that scientists cannot keep up with and different crises exacerbate this situation. The UN is there to bring people together, who would not normally come together to address common environmental issues, therefore, I urge the experts and the Range States of the Persian Leopard to reach an agreement and to bring the results.”*
3. Then Mr. Muenchmeyer, the CEO of the Caucasus Nature Fund addressed the Meeting. He gave some background on how the Persian Leopard is described in literature from some of the Range States, reflecting the cultural value of this subspecies. He underscored that the Persian Leopard range included places of breathtaking beauty but also places of human conflict and other challenges. He concluded by remembering the colleagues, who dedicated their lives to the conservation of the Persian Leopard and its habitats: rangers, recently killed in Iran, Mr. Nugzar Zazanashvili of Georgia and Mr. Umar Semenov of Russia who passed away in 2020, were remembered with gratitude.
4. Ms. Clara Nobbe addressed the Meeting on behalf of the CMS Secretariat. She thanked the Government of Georgia for hosting the meeting and the Government of Germany for its financial support. *“CMS is all about agreed and coordinated measures aiming to jointly conserve the species, populations of which are shared between countries”*, she said. She invited Range States of the Persian Leopard, who are not yet Parties to CMS, namely Azerbaijan and Türkiye to accede to CMS, thereby improving the chances of Persian Leopard and other CMS-listed species to move safely across national borders. She noted that despite

the current challenges for international cooperation in the region, there were opportunities to increase support for conserving migratory species through the new biodiversity framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Countries were expected to determine national contributions to global biodiversity goals and targets. Ms. Nobbe encouraged Persian Leopard Range States to define specific measures for the conservation of migratory species, including the Persian Leopard and offered CMS Parties support with this task from the CMS Secretariat.

### **Agenda item 2. Election of the Chair**

5. Ms. Salome Nozadze, Senior Specialist at the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture was suggested as the Chair of the Meeting. As there were no objections, she assumed the role of the Chair.

### **Agenda item 3. Adoption of the agenda and schedule**

6. Agenda and schedule were adopted without any comments.

### **Agenda item 4. Presentation of the Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion and its implementation through the National Action Plans.**

7. The floor was given to Ms. Maka Bitsadze, the regional Conservation Manager at WWF Caucasus, who gave a presentation titled "[The Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion and its implementation through National Action Plans.](#)" She provided an overview of the regional strategy, its history and structure, priorities and the main milestones that have been reached in its implementation in the Caucasus ecoregion.
8. Then the implementation of the strategy at the national level in each country through the National Action Plans (NAPs) was presented by an expert from each of the three countries, as listed below. Mr. Igor Khorozyan, consultant in mammal research and biodiversity conservation, gave the talk "[The Process and Progress of the Persian Leopard National Action Plans \(NAPs\) in Armenia](#)"; Ms. Konul Ahmadova, project coordinator at WWF Azerbaijan, presented the "[Status of National Action Plan for Conservation of the Leopard in the Azerbaijan Republic](#)" and Ms. Salome Nozadze gave a presentation titled "[Persian leopard \(Panthera pardus\) in Georgia](#)". The talks can be viewed at the Meeting website under the links indicated above.
9. After the presentations, Ms. Nozadze resumed her role as the Chair and as there were no questions from the audience to the speakers, she asked Mr. Urs Breitenmoser, Co-chair of the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group (Cat SG) to take the floor to present the next agenda item.

### **Agenda item 5. Presentation of the Overview Report on the Status and Conservation of the Persian Leopard across its Range States and of the Draft Range-Wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard**

10. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser explained that the Overview Report ([UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Inf.2/Rev.1](#)) was based on scientific information, contained in peer-reviewed articles, which were published in the Cat News Special Issue for the Persian Leopard and presented its key findings. In particular, he underscored that the conservation of Persian Leopard populations in all Range States, except for Iran, depended on transboundary conservation efforts. He added that this was the reason that CMS and CAMI could play a key role in conserving the subspecies. Ms. Tabea Lanz, Assistant to the Cat SG Co-chair, then presented the process of drafting the Range-Wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard and the structure of this document ([UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Doc.2/Rev.1](#)). Both presentations can be viewed under the following [link](#).

11. The Chair of the meeting thanked the presenters and the experts who had contributed to the creation of the draft strategy and asked the participants if they had any questions or comments to the presenters.
12. Mr. Maarten Hofman, Associate Programme Management Officer at UNEP, said that the draft strategy was an impressive document the creation of which required bringing together an incredible amount of expertise from the whole region. He pointed out that UNEP's work addressed the current crises related to biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. Climate change was an important issue within the Range of the Persian Leopard, which would change the environment the species lives in and would affect the human activities that may in turn have an impact on Persian Leopards. Therefore, he suggested that climate change would need to be taken into account when measures to safeguard Persian Leopards will have been developed within the next ten years, as indicated in the draft Strategy.
13. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser responded to this comment that climate change had been considered as one of the threats in the process of creating the draft strategy. However, no specific activity was formulated that mentioned climate change for two reasons: first of all, the Persian Leopard was a very plastic species, with a high adaptability to varying environmental conditions; secondly, climate change would be likely to exacerbate some existing threats to the species, for example, driven by further intrusion of human activities into the Persian Leopard habitat, and such threats had been addressed in the strategy directly under the specific threats.
14. Mr. Arash Ghoddousi, Research Fellow at the Humboldt University Berlin, added that human-Persian Leopard interactions were likely to be affected by climate change and the topic was covered in the draft Strategy in the respective activities and objectives on human-wildlife conflict.
15. Mr. Bilal Mustafa, Pakistan hub manager at Conservation Optimism, asked two questions regarding the human wildlife conflict and retaliatory killing of Persian Leopards in Pakistan via chat. The discussion of these questions was postponed until the relevant section in the Strategy would be reviewed.
16. The Chair then gave the floor to the Secretariat. Ms. Polina Orlinskiy, Associate Programme Management Officer at the CMS Secretariat, explained the procedure for reviewing the draft Strategy. The Chair added that she would read out each Theme, Objective and Result. Respective sections of the draft strategy would be shown on the screen. In case of comments and suggestions, the floor would be given in the following order: first to the Government representatives, followed by intergovernmental organizations representatives and then to other experts. She then opened the process of discussion and revision of the draft Range-wide Conservation Strategy for the Persian Leopard ([UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Doc.2/Rev.1](#)).

## **Agenda item 6 and 7. Theme 1: Conservation and sustainable management of the Persian Leopard and key wild prey species**

**Objective 1.** *To increase the viability of Persian Leopard and key wild prey populations across the range and ensure their recovery in priority areas*

17. Mr. Maarten Hofman suggested to insert "climate proof" at the start of the Result 1.1. Mr. Hofman explained that based on climate change predictions, the impacts on local communities and on the range of the Persian Leopard will need to be estimated and then the species-specific conservation measures would need to take this into account. However, after some discussion this suggestion was not accepted. Ms. Maka Bitsadze remarked that "climate-proof" was to be explained. Mr. Khorozyan, added that changing Result 1.1 would mean that additional activities under this result should be added and the time allotted for achieving the result may thus also need to be adjusted.

18. Mr. Hofman then suggested that he would come up with a new Activity under this Result with a smaller group of attending experts and would present it later. The Chair agreed to take a new suggestion from Mr. Hofman when it was ready.
19. Then Mr. Bilal Mustafa suggested that under Activity 1.1.1, it was important to include a review of historical information in local languages. He explained that in Pakistan there were many archived resources in local languages regarding the occurrence of wildlife during the colonial time.
20. Mr. Burak Tatar, Senior Specialist at the Department of Wildlife Management of General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest of Türkiye, said that a review of historical information in local languages should be conducted, where possible. Experts Mr. Urs Breitenmoser, Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu, a wildlife ecologist, and Mr. Igor Khorozyan agreed that this was not needed for all Range States. After a discussion and agreement from the Range States and experts, no change was made to this Activity. The rest of the Activities under Objective 1 were endorsed without any comments.

**Objective 2.** *To agree on and implement an effectual and sustainable wildlife management system within and outside Protected Areas to assure the long-term existence of viable Persian Leopard and key wild prey populations in priority areas.*

21. There were no comments or suggestions on this Objective, so the text was endorsed as proposed in the draft.

**Objective 3.** *To perform initial surveys, where needed and implement a reliable monitoring system for Persian Leopard and key wild prey species within and outside Protected Areas to guide conservation measures*

22. Mr. Zalmai Moheb, Senior Scientist at Wildlife Conservation Society in Afghanistan, commented on Result 3.1. He said that surveying all potential Persian Leopard habitats in a country with little financial resources and limited expertise would not be feasible until 2028 and recommended changing the year from 2028 to 2032. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser explained that the Result was not about surveying all potential habitats, but about reporting about the ones that would have been surveyed by 2028. To clarify this point, Ms. Orlinskiy suggested to add “*which had been surveyed*” to the indicator for Activity 3.1.2. The Meeting agreed with the addition. Mr. Ghoddousi suggested “core habitat” mentioned in Result 3.1 needed to be defined. It was agreed that definitions of this and other terms would be proposed by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group Co-chair in the course of the Meeting.
23. On Result 3.3 and 3.4 Mr. Moheb commented that the year by which the Results were to be achieved needed adjustment. Mr. Arif Shamkhi Jaber, Head of Marshes Department and Biodiversity Unit in Thi-Qar Environment Office, Ministry of Environment of Iraq, supported the comment made by Mr. Moheb stating that also in his country the time until 2028 would not be sufficient to conduct such surveys, as mentioned in Result 3.1 and 3.2. Mr. Khorozyan commented that it was to be expected that some Range States would need more time to implement the Strategy than others. Mr. Breitenmoser agreed that this was a general point that would be true for all of the Activities in the Strategy. He suggested that a general approach that would reflect this discrepancy in capacities between Range States would be needed for the entire document.
24. Ms. Clara Nobbe, CMS Secretariat, suggested adding a note that the implementation of the Results would occur in accordance with the Strategy and taking into consideration individual country’s capacities. In relation to Result 3.2, Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu underscored that the locations of core habitats were known in most countries and that they should be surveyed without further delays.

25. Ms. Tanya Rosen, CNF, said that although aware of challenges in implementing the Strategy, including political constraints, she would support leaving the timeframe as in the draft Strategy. This would bring political urgency and catalyze action in her opinion. Therefore, she disagreed with adding an annotation as suggested by the Secretariat earlier.
26. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser offered to have a separate discussion with Mr. Jaber on how to conduct the respective surveys in Iraq with support of the IUCN. Mr. Jaber agreed. The year remained 2028, but was put in brackets awaiting further discussion.
27. For Activity 3.3.2, to adopt and implement standardized guidelines for monitoring Persian Leopards and key wild prey, Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze, representing the NGO Noah's Ark Centre for the Recovery of Endangered Species in Georgia, proposed to add "*promote and facilitate exchange programmes between Range States*", which was approved. To reflect this change "*exchange visits took place*" was added to the list of indicators under this Activity.

**Discussion of Result 3.4** *A Persian Leopard database is established to share Persian Leopard and key wild prey data for in-State and transboundary/international cooperation in conservation by 2028*

28. Mr. Bilal Mustafa suggested that the database should be made public and available in English to enable researchers from across the Range to understand the data. Mr. Burak Tatar, however, stated that it would not be possible for national authorities to share data publicly. In his opinion, research results could be shared, not data. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu explained that the idea was not to share data publicly, but for Range States to share data on Persian Leopards and their prey between their responsible agencies, particularly because the animals often cross borders. Mr. Breitenmoser added that the idea was mainly to share pictures between Range States of animals that live close to national boundaries to be able to identify them on either side of the border. Ideally, it would be a comprehensive database, and Range State agencies should be invited to use it.
29. Taking these comments into consideration, the Secretariat rephrased the Result 3.4 and it was agreed to keep the new phrasing as follows: "*A Persian Leopard database is set up to share the results of surveys of Persian Leopard and key wild prey for the purpose of in-State and transboundary/ international cooperation in conservation by 2028.*" Furthermore, "*where possible*" was added to Activities 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 to reflect the statement that sharing data was not always possible for authorities. The Indicator 3.4.2 on regional databases was modified accordingly to "*The databases are established and Range States are invited to use them.*" Instead of "*the databases are established and functioning.*" Mr. Mengüllüoğlu opposed adding "*where possible*" because in his opinion this would mean that data sharing would not take place. However, the governments agreed to keep "*where possible*".
30. The Secretariat suggested to modify Result 3.5 on preparing national and regional status reports so that it would fit the reporting cycle of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), under which a full report is provided every 6 years and an intermediate report every 3 years (resources permitting). Therefore, the Indicator for the Activity 3.5.1 (*Develop standardised national/regional Persian Leopard status reports, e.g., based on the data entered into the databases*) became: *National/Regional Persian Leopard status reports are available every 6 years with shorter intermediate reports at 3-year intervals, in accordance with CMS CAMI reporting cycles.* Mr. Burak Tatar asked for the initial year to be specified, The Secretariat responded that the next CAMI Meeting would take place in 2026 and the reports would be due in 2025.

**Objective 4.** *To establish and maintain an ex situ population of the Persian Leopard including institutions in all Range States, in order to secure a genetic backup and a source population for future in situ needs*

31. After some discussion of Result 4.1 on rescue centers for Persian Leopards, Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze noted that there were such few individuals of Persian Leopards remaining in a number of the Range States, that it was not feasible to establish a rescue center in each Range

State. Instead, contacts to rescue centers in countries, where such facilities existed were needed. Mr. Khorozyan agreed and proposed to add the words “national/regional” to Result 4.1, which became: *Each Persian Leopard Range State has access to a national/regional properly equipped Rescue Centre with qualified staff (including veterinarians and care-taker) allowing to (temporarily) host injured, orphaned or confiscated Persian Leopard by 2027.*

32. With respect to Result 4.2 on protected area systems to protect priority areas for Persian Leopards, Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze asked what types of protected areas were implied in this result. After some discussion, it was agreed that a definition of protected areas was needed. Also, this definition would be proposed by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group Co-chair Mr. Breitenmoser in the course of the Meeting.

### **Agenda item 8. Theme 2: Conservation of suitable habitats and connectivity**

*Objective 5: To establish and promote effectively managed networks of interconnected protected areas and corridors for the conservation of Persian Leopards in close cooperation with local land users.*

33. Mr. Maarten Hofman, UNEP, suggested that the networks of protected areas should be ‘climate-smart’. The Chair reverted that ‘climate smart’ needed to be defined. She asked whether this addition was necessary given that protected areas were designated based on established procedures, such as those defined by the IUCN or national authorities. Mr. Hofman responded that first an assessment of potential climate change impacts on Persian Leopard movements and range would need to be conducted and then it should be evaluated whether the proposed protected areas were likely to remain effective. He proposed the following definition of climate-smart: *‘Covering sufficient habitat and allowing sufficient movement of leopards to maintain viable populations of leopards and key wild prey populations now and under changing climate conditions’*. There were no objections to including this definition.
34. Ms. Hana Raza, a wildlife conservationist from Iraq, questioned suitability of the term “dispersal net” used in Result 5.3. Other experts suggested that it should be changed to “dispersal routes” and this change was accepted.

*Objective 6. To maintain or restore habitats for Persian Leopard and key wild prey between Protected Areas and across their borders to assure connectivity between (sub) populations.*

35. Mr. Mohammad Farhadinia, research fellow at the University of Oxford, commented that the objective was difficult to understand and needed rephrasing. After some discussion, the participants agreed to remove Objective 6 and to move the Result 6.1 with the respective Activities 6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 to Objective 5, so that they became Result 5.4 with Activities 5.4.1, 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 respectively.

### **Agenda item 9. Stock-taking on the day’s discussions**

36. The Chair summed up the progress made on this day and briefly outlined the tasks for the next day.

### **Agenda item 10. Theme 3: Human Dimension.**

*Objective 7. To mitigate human-Persian Leopard conflicts to allow long-term coexistence of local people and Persian Leopards*

37. Mr. Maarten Hofman, having discussed the matter with several attending experts proposed a new Activity under Result 7.1: *Activity 7.1.0 Conduct a climate risk and vulnerability assessment for local communities to identify the impacts of climate change, land use change*

*and other related factors on the interaction between humans, Persian leopard, its prey species and habitats.*

38. The respective Actors were: *non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and universities, government organizations (GOs), experts, local/regional stakeholders.* The Indicator was proposed as follows: *Climate risk and vulnerability assessment report prepared by 2025.* The activity was accepted and given a medium priority level (2). Mr. Hofman added that the group also proposed including “climate-change predictions” in Activity 1.1.1, and adding a subsequent Activity 1.1.1b: *Based on the climate change predictions and the gathered habitat and occurrence information, conduct a species climate vulnerability assessment and include the resulting climate change considerations in all activities, where necessary.* He proposed actors, indicators and a high priority level which were all accepted, as follows. *Actors: NGOs, research and GOs, invited experts and local/regional stakeholders. Indicators: Species Vulnerability Assessment report, including predictive maps and changes in Persian Leopard habitat is compiled and a high level of priority (3).*
39. Ms. Tanya Rosen commented that the vulnerability assessment should focus on how existing threats to Persian Leopards would be exacerbated by climate change. Mr. Khorozyan said that projecting the effects of global changes at the level of local communities were hardly possible. Mr. Maarten Hofman reverted that on the example of Snow Leopards, the upward shift of human land-use in the mountains was clearly resulting from changing climate, encroaching into Snow Leopard habitat and exacerbating human-wildlife conflicts. Mr. Khorozyan reverted that the Snow Leopard and the Persian Leopard could hardly be compared to each other, as the Snow Leopard was a habitat specialist, while the Persian Leopard was a much more adaptable and flexible species in terms of its habitat and prey preference.
40. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan, Conservator Wildlife at the Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan said that the impacts of climate change could well be felt at local levels. At the species level, it was clear that Snow leopard habitat was at major threat from climate change. With regard to common leopard, he said that it was affected in a different way. Persian Leopard could adapt to different habitats, and even prey. In addition to climate change there were other factors threatening the species, such as habitat degradation, conversion and human-wildlife conflict that all were important threats and needed to be considered together.
41. Mr. Breitenmoser, IUCN, agreed that the response of the Persian Leopard would be quite different from a Snow Leopard, but it would not harm to conduct the assessment. He questioned whether the suitable methods were available to assess Persian Leopard vulnerability to climate change but was open to the idea.
42. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu commented that some climate change effects on predators, such as lynx were already known and included changes in behavior and temporal patterns of habitat use. Ms. Tanya Rosen added that in Kazakhstan one leopard was observed and it was found dead close to a dried-up water source. The cause of death was not established, but one possibility was that it could be related to drought. In relation to Activity 7.1.1 on assessing human-wildlife conflict, Mr. Mengüllüoğlu said that climate change would mostly affect human-Persian Leopard interactions, by changing the temporal patterns of habitat use and human activities and exacerbating the conflicts. He suggested adding “taking into account potential impacts of climate change on these conflicts”, which was agreed.
43. Furthermore, with regard to performing such an assessment, Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze expressed an opinion that it would be important to define how such an assessment should be made in order to get comparable results. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser responded that this would apply to many other activities in the strategy as well. However, in his opinion specifying the methodology should be the next step when project development to implement the strategy will have been initiated.

**Objective 8.** *To ensure long term support of local communities to Persian Leopard conservation by improving their conservation-friendly livelihood and in-volving them in Persian Leopard conservation*

44. Priority rating which was missing in the original draft document for Activities 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 were suggested by Mr. Breitenmoser to be 3 or high and 2 or medium, respectively. These suggestions were accepted.
45. Looking at Activity 8.1.4 (*Develop and implement livestock compensation schemes or livestock insurance where carnivore predation is high*), Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan asked whether incentives for local communities were included in any other Activity of the draft Strategy. Mr. Bilal supported addressing alternative livelihoods in this Activity. Mr. Burak Tatar remarked that changing a livelihood of a community would require more time than foreseen by this Activity (until 2031). Ms. Tanya Rosen supported including conservation incentive mechanisms in this Activity. Mr. Khorozyan remarked that compensation schemes often were not effective, because of the challenges of implementing these. Mr. Arash Ghoddousi supported amending the Activity and suggested rephrasing it to “where livestock depredation is high” and adding “where socially acceptable”.
46. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan commented that in Pakistan communities were not restricted to one particular area, but were mobile, thus defining an area of high depredation was not really helpful. Ms. Hana Reza agreed, that depredation did not need to be high, because even one incident could cause an acute human-wildlife conflict.
47. The Secretariat suggested rephrasing the Activity taking into account the above discussion and the Participants agreed on the following wording: **Activity 8.1.4.** *Develop and implement conservation incentive mechanisms, livestock compensation schemes or livestock insurance in livestock depredation areas, where feasible and socially acceptable.*
48. With regard to Activity 8.2. (*Develop and implement plans for integrative livestock husbandry practices and sustainable rangeland management in priority protected areas and non-protected areas.*), Ms. Niloufar Raeesi, representing Kooch Foundation for Biodiversity Conservation in Iran, commented that in Iran livestock grazing was not legally possible in protected areas. In response to the comment, “where relevant” was added after “protected areas”.

**Objective 9.** *To advance awareness, education and competence of all interest groups involved in or concerned by Persian Leopard conservation to increase their understanding and knowledge base for conservation.*

49. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan questioned the difference between Result 9.1 and Result 9.2. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu explained that Result 9.1 was about education programmes, while Result 9.2 about information sharing. Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze added that an education programme would be developed by an institution targeting a certain group of people.
50. It was then agreed to combine Result 9.1 and 9.2. Mr. Jaber commented that education programmes also needed to be developed for security officers. Mr. Bilal suggested that also including religious leaders as a target group was important. He gave an example that by contacting the religious persons and raising awareness of communities with their help bear poaching was curbed in Pakistan.
51. The Result 9.1 thus was reworded as follows: *Result 9.1 Conservation education programmes and/or information schemes for specific groups (e.g. local hunters, shepherds, school children, rangers, border guards, local police/security officers, local community/religious leaders) are developed, shared, mainstreamed and applied in in the priority areas of Persian Leopard habitats inside and outside protected areas by 2027.*



52. Due to the integration of Result 9.2 into 9.3, former Result 9.3 became the new Result 9.2 and the numbers of the Activities under this result were adjusted to reflect this change.

#### **Agenda item 11. Theme 4: Policy, Legislation and International Cooperation**

**Objective 10.** *To optimize existing policies including communication with local land users, adopt new laws as needed, and strengthen law enforcement (e.g. poaching and illegal trade).*

53. Result 10.1 Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan said that in relation to transboundary populations of wildlife, existing laws could be amended, but creation of new laws would require more time than the suggested timeline of 1-2 years. The text of the Objective was thus amended and became: *To optimize existing policies including communication with local land users, amend existing and adopt new laws where needed, and strengthen law enforcement (e.g. poaching and illegal trade).*
54. Ms. Hana Reza proposed that the year of completion of the Activities under this Objective should be changed to 2026 instead of 2024. This was agreed for Activities 10.1.1 and 10.1.2.
55. Ms. Shirin Karryeva, expert from Turkmenistan, expressed her approval of Result 10.1, because there was no National Action Plan for the Persian Leopard in Turkmenistan, after adopting the strategy it would need to be developed in accordance with this Result.
56. Ms. Mariya Gritsina, expert from the National Academy of Science of Uzbekistan, on behalf of her colleagues from the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of Uzbekistan explained that there was no confirmed presence of Persian Leopards in Uzbekistan and thus they could not comment on this Result and many other Results and Activities of the Strategy, which would be taken into consideration in the future. She added that there had been no research targeting Persian Leopard in the country so far. First monitoring in potential habitat needed to be conducted and that after confirming the species presence, further action could be considered, taking the strategy into account, as applicable.
57. Mr. Aurel Heidelberg, WWF Germany, said that the situation in Range States could be very different and therefore, developing a National Action Plan for Persian Leopards was not feasible for each Range State. He suggested to replace National Action Plans with “National Action Plans and/or other related programmes” as an alternative for those Range States where a National Action Plan was not an option. This phrase was inserted into Result 10.1 and Result 10.2 and related Activities, where National Action Plans had previously been mentioned.

**Objective 11.** *To strengthen international and transboundary cooperation for the conservation of the Persian Leopard and its key wild prey species*

58. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu suggested that the Results and Activities under this Objective needed to apply both in protected and unprotected areas to ensure monitoring in unprotected transboundary areas also took place. No change was agreed to reflect this comment.
59. Mr. Bejan Lortkipanidze commented that joint activities and exchange visits between neighboring countries were very useful, under the initiative of Mr. Nugzar, for example, the joint work with Armenian colleagues was quite successful. The Chair agreed that this was a very important point. She suggested that Participants think about either phrasing a related Activity or including exchange visits into an existing Activity. Mr. Khorozyan said that exchange visits could be addressed under Objective 12, which was about cooperation between GO and NGOs.
60. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu suggested making the Result 11.1 more specific. The Result was then rephrased to: *Transboundary initiatives on monitoring of Persian Leopard and key wild prey species at appropriate levels (e.g. sub-regional, national, sub-national) are in place by 2027.*

61. Mr. M. Farhadinia addressing Activity 11.1.4 to prepare annual national monitoring reports, expressed the concern that too many reports were being requested. For example, in Activity 3.5.1 earlier and in other Activities there were further reporting goals. He thus suggested to change the frequency of reporting under 11.1.4 to once in three years and added a general remark that this strategy should not be asking for an unrealistic number of reports, if there was no capacity to produce them. Mr. Mengüllüoğlu clarified that this report was about the transboundary populations.
62. Therefore, the new agreed text for Activity 11.1.4 became: *Prepare national monitoring reports (at least in transboundary priority areas) every three years and share them with CMS CAMI, other Range States and relevant stakeholders.*
63. Extensive discussion of the draft **Result 11.2. Illegal trans-border trade of Persian Leopard/other species and derivatives is suppressed and prevented wherever it occurs** is provided below.
64. Mr. Zalmai Moheb asked what other species were meant and suggested that “key wild prey species” would be better. Mr. Urs Breitenmoser responded that any other species that was traded illegally across the same borders as Persian Leopard were meant here. Ms. Salome Nozadze in her capacity as a representative of the Georgian Government added that this may already be covered by CITES-related legislation in each country.
65. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan said that as it stood the Result was too broad and “key wild prey species” varied between countries and thus suggested including only carnivore species in this Result. Mr. Burak Tatar agreed that “other species” was too broad.
66. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan then added that he would support deleting “Persian” and keeping “Leopard” as distinguishing sub-species in illegal trade was a challenge. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu suggested not to focus on Leopards but to include all species of wildlife in this Result, explaining that illegal trade needed to be stopped and that if it continued there would also be an illegal market for Leopards.
67. Mr. Muhammad Samar Hussain Khan said that all countries were expected to report illegal trade to CITES mostly on a species level, not sub-species level.
68. Mr. Zalmai Moheb agreed that the strategy should be kept specific to the Leopard. He suggested to add “key wild prey and other cat species”. Mr. Burak Tatar supported only the addition of “other cat species”, not “key wild prey”.
69. Mr. Vaja Kochiashvili, Biodiversity and Forestry Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia supported keeping “wild prey species”. Mr. Jaber disagreed and advised keeping ‘leopards and other cat species’. Mr. Khan reiterated that the list of potential wild prey would be long and supported removing “key wild prey” from Result 11.2.
70. The Chair then asked all Government representatives to express their approval or disapproval of keeping “key wild prey”. All Government Representatives agreed to keep only “Persian leopards and other cat species”, except Georgia and Uzbekistan who were in favour of also keeping ‘key wild prey’ in the Result.
71. Mr. Vusal Gabbarli, representing the Government of Azerbaijan stated that the cat species needed to be defined in the strategy. The following definition was proposed by Mr. Breitenmoser and included in a footnote, as approved by the Participants: “Other cat species in this case are cat species from the same country, the parts and derivatives of which can be confused with leopards.”

72. Also Ms. Shirin Karryeva, independent expert from Turkmenistan agreed that for Turkmenistan, which is not a CITES Party it would be a lot of additional effort, if key wild prey were kept here. She supported leaving only “other cat species” in the text.
73. The Result 11.2 thus became: *Illegal trans-border trade of Persian Leopard/other cat species and derivatives is suppressed and prevented wherever it occurs.*
74. Mr. Mohammad Farhadinia suggested to add a new Activity under the Result 11.3 with the following wording: *Develop a range-wide transboundary conservation plan consisting of ecological knowledge, legal issues, and stakeholder analysis facilitated by the CMS/CAMI and IUCN in partnership with range countries.*
75. Mr. Khan commented that first there needed to be an assessment of feasibility of transboundary cooperation and the development of a plan could be a second step. In response to this comment, the Secretariat exchanged the order of Activities 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 so that “*Identify transboundary landscapes relevant to Persian Leopard conservation initiatives*” became 11.3.1.
76. Mr. Farhadinia added that the establishment of transboundary cooperation needed to be facilitated through CAMI or IUCN, an assessment was needed through CAMI, such as the Transboundary Hotspots Study. The Secretariat added “*taking into consideration the recommendation of the study on Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for CAMI*” to Activity 11.3.1, which was agreed. Furthermore in response to the earlier suggestion of a new Activity from Mr. Farhadinia it was agreed to modify Activity 11.3.2, so it became the following: *Develop, where feasible, concrete, spatially explicit transboundary conservation initiatives (based on common regional conservation strategies/agreements facilitated by the CMS/CAMI and IUCN in partnership with Range States (e.g. ECP; see Activity 10.1.2 & 10.2.2), in a participatory process, taking into consideration the recommendations of the study on Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for CAMI.* Based on the comments above, the following was added to the Indicator for the Activity: *Feasibility questionnaire developed and circulated among Range States, report on feasibility of transboundary conservation prepared.* It was agreed that after these changes adding a new Activity was no longer necessary.
77. Mr. Breitenmoser said that once the implementation of a range-wide strategy was going to start, IUCN could prepare a guidance on reporting under this strategy, keeping it as simple as possible.
78. Taking into account the changes to the preceding Activities, Activity 11.3.3 was adjusted to focus only on implementation, as follows: *Implement the selected transboundary initiatives (Activity 11.3.2) led by respective national governmental bodies.*

**Objective 12.** *To secure international support and funding for the implementation of conservation activities for the Persian Leopard and its key wild prey across their range.*

**Result 12.1.** *Cooperation between governmental, non- governmental and academic institutions for Persian Leopard conservation is established at national level by 2024, and transboundary cooperation is established by 2027.*

79. Mr. Khan remarked that while the Result was currently focusing on the national level, international and regional levels should be added.
80. Mr. Burak Tatar asked what was the difference between transboundary cooperation and international cooperation in this context and suggested that this Result was repetitive. Ms. Maka Bitsadze suggested to move the entire Result 12.1 to Objective 11, which dealt with the international and transboundary cooperation. However, Mr. Khan objected, explaining that this Result should stay under Objective 12 which focused on funding.

81. Mr. Breitenmoser said that donors needed to see project proposals to grant funding and therefore, it should be “project-oriented cooperation”. This suggestion was accepted.
82. The Chair suggested that this type of cooperation needed to be specified further. Mr. Igor Khorozyan suggested to modify Activity 12.1.1 replacing “define cooperation” with “Prepare a project portfolio at national/regional levels”, thus making it more precise. Mr. Burak Tatar suggested that the Activity was not reflecting the Result in this case. Mr. Breitenmoser asked the Secretariat to give an example on how documents such as this Strategy were used to raise funds.
83. Ms. Polina Orlinkiy responded that CAMI Programme of Work and species-specific Work Programmes and Action Plans were used to prepare fund-raising concepts and raise funds on specific topics and activities. CMS Secretariat engaged in fund-raising especially when CMS Secretariat was mentioned as an Actor for a specific activity.
84. Ms. Shirin Karryeva commented that as there was no National Action Plan for the Persian Leopard in Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan could conduct fundraising activities based on this Result and Activity 12.1.1 in order to draft the National Action Plan. Ms. Clara Nobbe suggested not to define what the project proposals should be about.
85. The Chair said that this Result could cover also preparation of a National Action Plan, it could be part of a portfolio, but could also include transboundary initiatives and other projects, if feasible.
86. The Secretariat then adjusted the Activity text in agreement with the Participants, as follows:  
**Activity 12.1.1:** *Prepare a project portfolio at national/regional levels, involving governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions for Persian Leopard conservation, including transboundary initiatives, where feasible.*
87. Discussion of Result 12.2 was opened by Ms. Maka Bitsadze, who suggested to remove “as soon as possible”, as it was not meaningful. *Result 12.2 A broad base of funding from (inter-) governmental and private donors is secured to ensure long term support for Persian Leopard conservation in accordance with the CAMI Programme of Work as soon as possible.*
88. Ms. Tanya Rosen said that only funding from ethical sources should be used. Ms. Orlinkiy responded that ethical was to be defined, otherwise this addition would not be meaningful. Mr. Khorozyan proposed to use the word “compliant” instead of ethical. Mr. Breitenmoser said that the UN had rules for funding sources and that this information could perhaps be included in the introduction to the strategy. The Meeting did not support the addition of any description of the sources of funding.
89. Mr. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu proposed to delete Activity 12.2.4, because the proposed measures were already included in the amended Activity 12.1.1. The deletion was agreed.
90. The Chair concluded that the Meeting had reached the end of the draft strategy document and asked if there were any more issues to discuss in this document. The Secretariat then asked the Meeting participants whether they would agree to rounding up the priority scores to have a score of either 1=low, 2=medium or 3=high for each Activity to make the priority scores easier to understand. This suggestion was accepted and the priority scores rounded up accordingly.
91. A list of definitions of terms, which had not previously been defined, was prepared by IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group members shown on the screen to the meeting Participants for their approval. The list was approved as follows:  
**‘Protected areas’** for the purposes of this document are defined as any area-based conservation measures, e.g. IUCN categories, OECMs, any other gazetted conserved areas.

**‘Core habitat (area)’:** patches of prime leopard and wild prey habitat at least sufficiently large to host the smallest possible breeding population of Persian Leopards.

**‘Key wild prey’:** any wild prey species, which in a local context forms the staple food for Leopard, so any wild prey species, whose decline or absence would threaten the survival of the Leopard and may include, but is not restricted to: Asiatic Ibex, Bezoar Goat, Chamois, East Caucasian Tur, Grey Goral, Markhor, Musk Deer, Mouflon, Red Deer, Urial, West Caucasian Tur, Goitered Gazelle and Wild Boar.

92. On a different topic Ms. Shirin Karryeva raised the question of taxonomy, as the Persian Leopard was referred to by different scientific names by some researchers and in older literature. She asked Mr. Breitenmoser to give an overview of the current taxonomy of the subspecies and he agreed to do so at a later time. The Chair said that the Secretariat had time until the next morning to incorporate all the agreed changes into the Strategy after which it could be viewed again and endorsed by the Meeting. She then continued to Agenda item 12.

### **Agenda item 12. Establishing the Persian Leopard Working Group (PeLeWG).**

93. Mr. Mohammad Farhadinia then presented the background, purpose and structure of the PeLeWG as well as outlined the next steps needed to establish the Group. Mr. Farhadinia’s presentation with detailed information can be found [here](#). He explained that the PeLeWG was proposed at online meetings in 2022, during which the drafting of the Strategy took place. Its primary idea was to enable the experts, who had participated in the drafting process to remain in contact and to form a permanent Working Group, affiliated with the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, similar to the African lion Working group. In order to become affiliated with the Cat Specialist Group, the group needed to fulfil a number of criteria related to its organizational structure, working arrangements, membership and goals. Upon fulfilment of the criteria a cooperation agreement (MOU) between Cat Specialist Group and the PeLeWG would be signed. At the time of the presentation the members of the Persian Leopard Working Group Constituent Assembly were:  
1. Arash Ghoddousi; 2. Deniz Mengüllüoğlu; 3. Emre Can; 4. Hana Raza; 5. Igor Khorozyan; 6. Mohammad Farhadinia; 7. Aurel Heidelberg; 8. Shirin Karryeva; 9. Tanya Rosen; 10. Urs Breitenmoser; 11. Zalmi Moheb 12. Muhammad Kabir.
94. The mission of the Group was to ensure the continued existence of Persian Leopards and their prey in coexistence with local communities in their native habitats. The seven goals of the PeLeWG included collecting and sharing information about Persian Leopards, supporting the authorities of the Range States in developing National Action Plans, monitoring programmes and research schemes, facilitating project development and research and assisting the authorities in preparing Persian Leopard reports for CMS including the reports required by the Strategy at three-year intervals, as well as supporting the Cat Specialist Group in performing the assessment of the subspecies. The membership in the Group was competitive and based solely on the applicant’s experience and skills of working with Persian Leopards and their prey. Fluency in English was an advantage, consideration was also to be given to the group having at least one member from each Range State. The PeLeWG was also to choose a Steering Committee, headed by a Chair and a Vice-chair and consisting of 11-15 members from at least 11 countries, where each Range State was to be represented and no more than two members could be from the same country.
95. At the end of his presentation Mr. Farhadinia asked the Meeting participants, who had participated in the drafting of the Strategy to express interest to join the Group. However, Mr. Ghoddousi and Mr. Mengüllüoğlu stated that further consultation was needed among the group before accepting expressions of interest. Mr. Farhadinia agreed.

### **Agenda item 13. Nomination of the International Day for the Persian Leopard**

96. Ms. Tanya Rosen presented the document [UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Inf.4](#) providing an outline of the process of nominating an international day at the UN General Assembly, which could be

done by a national delegation. The Chair asked the Government representatives whether there were any volunteers to lead on this process. Several representatives responded that they would consider this opportunity.

#### **14. Stock-taking on the day's discussion**

97. The Chair summed up the progress made on the day and outlined the tasks for the next day.

#### **Agenda item 15. Final review and adoption of the Strategy**

98. The Strategy was shown on the screen with changes in track changes mode. Mr. Breitenmoser provided a presentation on the revised taxonomy of the Leopard and explained that the current name of the taxon with the distribution covered by the range-wide Strategy for the Persian Leopard was *Panthera pardus tulliana* (including *cis-caucasica* and *saxicolor*). Full overview is found at the end of the [presentation by the Cat Specialist Group](#). The taxonomic name was added to the introduction part of the document. There were no further comments from the Participants and the Chair declared [the Range-wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard](#) adopted.

#### **Agenda item 16. Procedural arrangements**

99. Ms. Polina Orlinskiy presented document [UNEP/CMS/PL-RS1/Doc.3](#). She asked the participants to review the list of proposed Government focal points for the implementation of the Strategy. In accordance with the CAMI procedures, the CMS National Focal Point (NFP) from the respective Range State was suggested to serve as the focal point for the Strategy, unless an alternative was appointed by the NFP. For Range States, who were not Parties to CMS, she tentatively put down the names of Mr. Burak Tatar for Türkiye and Mr. Vusal Gabbarli for Azerbaijan. Government representatives agreed to confirm the respective suggested focal points via e-mail to the Secretariat. The reporting deadlines had already been discussed and agreed under Agenda item 6 and 7, Activity 3.5.1. The next meeting of Range States was agreed to take place in 2032. In terms of the Species Focal Point for the Persian Leopard under CAMI, there were no suggestions from the Meeting, but it was recommended that Range State representatives should e-mail their suggestions to the Secretariat.

#### **Agenda item 17. Implementation of the Strategy**

100. Under this agenda item, the Participants presented their projects, which could in the future support the implementation of the range-wide Strategy. There was no time for questions at the end of this session, but participants had the opportunity for informal exchanges during the breaks and the excursion. The presentations are available under the following links:

[Conservation of Persian Leopard in Turkmenistan](#) by Ms. Karryeva, independent expert, and colleagues, Turkmenistan.

[Restoring Leopard Population in the Russian Caucasus \(in Russian\)](#) by Ms. Anna Yachmennikova, Senior Expert, Russian Academy of Sciences, WWF Russia and colleagues.

[Ustjurt State Nature Reserve \(in Russian\)](#) by Mr. Zhaskairat Nurmukhambetov, Ustjurt State Nature Reserve Director, Kazakhstan.

[Vanishing Treasures: Protecting Endangered Mountain Species](#) by Mr. Maarten Hofman, UNEP

**ANNEX**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Range States**

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