

**5th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the
CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC5)**

Online, 28 June – 9 July 2021

UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC5/Outcome 11

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON
MIGRATORY SPECIES AND HEALTH**

The Fifth Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC5) held from 28 June to 9 July, decided to establish a Working Group on migratory species and health under the Scientific Council, with the aim of providing a focus for CMS work and involvement in issues related to migratory species and health.

1. Background and purpose

The CMS COP first adopted a resolution on the issue of wildlife diseases and migratory species in 2005. [Resolution 12.6](#) *Wildlife Diseases and Migratory Species* consolidates and updates this and subsequent resolutions. It provides a preamble of the importance of wildlife disease as a conservation threat for migratory species including risks from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in waterbirds, white nose syndrome of bats and high mortality events of saiga antelope and Mongolian gazelle. Moreover, it highlights that wildlife health, livestock health, human health, and ecosystem health are interdependent and influenced by multiple factors, *inter alia*, socio-economics, sustainability of agriculture, demographics, climate and landscape changes.

[UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC5/Doc.6.4.1](#) on Wildlife Diseases and Migratory Species outlines some of the history of CMS involvement in wildlife diseases including the value and work of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds which was established in 2005 in response to emergence of HPAI in waterbirds. In addition to providing recommendations and guidance to Contracting Parties, the Task Force plays a role in outreach to address misinformation. Two other mechanisms established by CMS to address wildlife disease, a Scientific Task Force on Wildlife and Ecosystem Health established in 2011 and a Working Group on Migratory Species as Vectors of Diseases established in 2007 under the Scientific Council were not operational by 2021.

Recognising the drivers of environmental degradation, incursion into wild places, wildlife exploitation and trade and climate change on health, and with global attention on the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of wildlife in pathogen spillover and the emergence of outbreaks of zoonotic origin, there is a need to reactivate the Working Group under the Scientific Council. The Group will provide a mechanism to increase attention to these issues, define a key role for CMS, and advise Parties on the risk of pathogen spillover, future outbreaks and pandemics, and responding to wildlife disease and diseases of zoonotic origin.

2. Role and Scope

The role of the Working Group is to provide a focus for CMS work and involvement in issues related to migratory species and health. It is recognised that there are other expert groups and bodies working on a variety of related issues, including One Health, and the Working Group would not seek to replicate their work, but instead define the niche and role for CMS and help advise Parties in matters related to migratory species, health and disease, including:

- pathogen spillover and zoonotic disease;
- other issues related to health of migratory species populations and ecosystem health;
- Engaging in One Health and other initiatives.

3. Remit

The Working Group will:

- Set and implement priorities for its work, which may include:
 - Reviewing relevant literature and identifying research needs;
 - Analysis of obligations under CMS and its instruments related to wildlife and health issues;
 - Analysis of priorities for CMS Parties in addressing wildlife health;
 - Developing products/workstreams to support CMS Parties;
 - Analyse opportunities for further engagement of the CMS family with ongoing issues around wildlife utilization, particularly for human consumption, and the impact on pathogen spillover and toxins.
- Provide the migratory species focus for wildlife and health issues;
- Provide inputs to other internal and external initiatives such as One Health;
- Support and provide input to the review of migration and wildlife disease dynamics based on the TOR developed by the Sessional Committee at its 5th meeting;
- Liaise and coordinate with other CMS groups working on health such as the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds and the Preventing Poisoning Working Group;
- Liaise and coordinate with other specialist groups and entities working on related issues such as the IUCN Wildlife Health Specialist Group, OIE Working Group on Wildlife, and Wildlife Disease Association;
- Collate sources of information and guidance for Parties on promoting health of migratory species and responding to emerging issues;
- Keep abreast of outputs and developments in relation to wildlife health, and the potential cross-linkages for action to promote One Health and ecosystem approaches to health;
- Consider how best CMS can help to implement some of the recommendations coming from other specialist health bodies such as the One Health High-Level Expert Group (involving UNEP, WHO, FAO and OIE);
- Provide a mechanism for communications and outreach on issues related to health;
- coordinate with other multilateral processes and negotiations on the issues relevant to One Health, incl. pandemic prevention, to ensure input from the perspective of CMS and migratory species.

4. Membership

The membership of the Working Group will comprise members of the Scientific Council, representatives of other relevant MEAs, as well as academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

The following will be invited to contribute to the Working Group:

- Members of the CMS Scientific Council;
- Representatives of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds;
- Representatives of the Preventing Poisoning Working Group;
- Representatives of the Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group;
- Representatives from CMS instruments, including, but not limited to, EUROBATS and AEWA¹;
- Representatives of UNEP, WHO, OIE, and FAO;
- Representatives of other relevant MEAs;
- Representatives from other international wildlife health expert groups including IUCN Wildlife Health Specialist Group, OIE Working Group on Wildlife and Wildlife Disease Association;
- Independent experts which can be co-opted on an ad hoc basis as necessary and appropriate;
- Representatives from NGOs with specialism relevant to migratory species and ecosystem health.

5. Governance

The Working Group will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from amongst its members and will operate by seeking consensus among the Group. The Working Group will report to the Scientific Council on its actions, membership and other related issues.

6. Operation

Meetings of the Working Group will be convened at appropriate intervals, as considered necessary, face to face, funding permitting, or virtually. Between meetings, business will be conducted electronically, which will provide the primary mode of communication.

For effective working on emerging issues, the Working Group will co-opt members with specific expertise and establish task groups as appropriate.

The CMS Secretariat will assist with organisation of meetings and administration of the Group.

The Chair will coordinate the work with the Secretariat on issues such as resource mobilization, outreach and communication.

¹ Noting particularly bats and waterbirds in their role as vectors of some zoonotic infections and the negative responses this can entail.