



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO  
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
CONCERNING CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION  
OF THE BUKHARA DEER (*Cervus elaphus bactrianus*)  
20 November 2011, Bergen, Norway

## REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES

### Agenda Item 1: Welcoming Remarks

1. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema (Executive Secretary, UNEP/CMS) welcomed participants to the First Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning the Conservation and Restoration of the Bukhara Deer (*Cervus elaphus bactrianus*). The Meeting gave an opportunity to create momentum, shape the MoU and lay the foundations for the future conservation and needs of the Bukhara Deer. She acknowledged the great work of WWF in assisting the Range States in the work done since the MoU and associated Action Plan were established in 2002. The ongoing commitment and collaboration of all signatories to the MoU was essential. The arrival in 2010 of Ms. Christiane Roettger as Junior Professional Officer (JPO) had increased the capacity of CMS to serve the MoU. The purpose of today's Meeting was to decide how to build on the good work already done.

### Agenda Item 2: Election of Chairperson

2. Mr. Khairbek Mussabayev, Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Forestry and Hunting of the Ministry of Agriculture, Kazakhstan, was elected as the Chair of the First Meeting of Signatories.

### Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda

3. The agenda (document UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.1/Rev.1: *Provisional Agenda*) was adopted by consensus and is attached as Annex I to the present report.

### Agenda Item 4: Report of the Secretariat

4. Ms. Christiane Roettger introduced documents UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.5: *Report of the Secretariat* and UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Inf.3: *Status of Signatures to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation and Restoration of the Bukhara Deer (Cervus elaphus bactrianus)*.

5. Ms. Roettger reported that the Astana workshop held in February 2011 had discussed the possibility of including Afghanistan in the MoU. She also reported that the last Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP9) in 2008 had adopted Wilson & Reeder as the standard taxonomic reference for terrestrial mammals listed on the Appendices. As a result, the scientific name of the Bukhara Deer in the CMS Appendices had changed from *C. e. bactrianus* to *C. e. yarkandensis*.

6. Ms. Roettger further reported that the support for the JPO position dealing with Central Asia, including the MoU was limited to 2012 and its continuation was dependent on the outcome of the budget discussions at COP10.

7. Mr. Mussabayev said that the JPO position was essential for making the work of the Range States more effective, and that it was important for the Meeting of Signatories to record its formal support for continuation of the post.

## **Agenda Item 5: Reports on MoU implementation**

### **Agenda Item 5.1: Bukhara Deer conservation status within the Agreement Area**

8. Ms. Olga Pereladova (WWF Russia) presented an overview of the implementation of the Bukhara Deer MoU (see documents UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.6 *Overview Report*).

9. Ms. Pereladova gave a brief historical review of the Bukhara Deer, the activities undertaken to restore the species in three Range States between 1961 and 1981, and the 2000-2001 survey which formed the basis for the MoU and development of the Action Plan. The major threats to the deer were fragmentation of habitats; habitat degradation through improper management, illegal logging, fires and grazing by cows; ecological disasters; and poaching (especially outside protected areas). She then summarized the current status of the deer following the measures taken by the Range States and partner organizations under the MoU Action Plan. Since 1999, the overall population had risen from some 350 individuals to an estimated 1,620 in 2010, with successful ongoing reintroductions. The main increase had occurred in Uzbekistan where the population had grown from 350 to some 900 individuals; in Kazakhstan there were 200-400, with an upward trend; in Tajikistan, between 60 and 210, with a stable or increasing trend; and in Turkmenistan, 90-120, again with a stable or slightly increasing trend. She outlined the joint activities that were being taken to improve the situation in areas where there was little or no data on the deer, or where its conservation status was unclear. Other elements of the overview included national, regional and international collaboration, technical and capacity-building support provided to some of the Range States, education and awareness-raising activities and ecosystem and habitat protection efforts, including the implementation of the interstate Econet, a joint GEF/UNEP/WWF project aimed at developing core protected areas, ecological corridors that link core areas, and buffer zones across the Central Asia region.

### **Agenda Item 5.2: Status of MoU and Action Plan implementation**

10. The Signatories and cooperating organizations presented their activities towards implementation of the MoU as well as their priority activities for the years ahead (see documents UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Inf.4 *National Reports from Signatories* and UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Inf.5 *Reports from Cooperating Organisations*).

11. Mr. Alexander Grigoryants, State Committee for Nature Protection, Uzbekistan, said that the Uzbek population had increased, mainly in Bagai-tugai, where, with support of the GEF/UNDP project, the establishment of an adjacent Biosphere Reserve had increased the size of the protected area from 6462,1 to 68717,8 hectares, which supported both Bukhara Deer and Saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*). The reserve supported 500 deer and although the population was stable, food supplies were insufficient, and the reserve was not staffed. In Kyzylkumskii reserve there were problems of flooding along the Amu Darya River, causing deer to move to desert areas where they were vulnerable to poaching. In Zarafshanskii reserve, the first ten deers had been released in 2005 and now it supported 32 individuals. The reserve was surrounded by rural settlements, which, owing to pressures on the human population to survive, had led to incursions. Poaching, linked to illegal felling of forest in the reserve, had resulted in several arrests and prosecutions. Awareness raising activities (meetings, film shows) had been undertaken.

12. Mr. Nurali Saidov, State Enterprise of Natural Protected Areas of Environmental Protection, Tajikistan, said that the Tajik population had increased from 245 in 2006 to 270 in 2011, with about 130 individuals in Tigrovaja Balka Nature Reserve. Five hundred hectares of this state-owned forest were along the border with Afghanistan and it was difficult to obtain accurate counts. There were also some 24 deers in the Farkhorskii region and about 18 in the Khamadonijskii region. The main threat to the deer was primarily illegal hunting, along with illegal grazing and cutting of tugai forests for firewood owing to a lack of electricity in winter. Natural risk factors included disease, predators (for example, wolves) and severe droughts and extreme weather conditions (for example, the exceptionally cold winter of 2007-08) which caused animals to migrate to other areas, including across the border into Afghanistan, making them vulnerable to poaching. Since the establishment of the MoU, and with support from WWF Russia and the Government of Norway, a poor situation had been reversed. However, problems remained: there was no systematic monitoring, a lack of capacity in both protected and forestry areas, and a lack of modern research equipment. The National Strategy and five-year Action Plan for Bukhara Deer was currently before the Environmental Committee of the Tajik parliament. Among its provisions were recommendations on captive breeding, transboundary cooperation with Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, fencing of state reserves near villages, restoration of ranger posts, rehabilitating and re-equipping the research centre at Tigrovaja Balka, establishment of a permanent monitoring programme and the expansion of Tigrovaya Balka and creation of a Biosphere Reserve.

13. Mr. Sergey Yerokhov, Institute of Zoology, Kazakhstan and CMS Scientific Councillor, presented an overview of the history and status of Bukhara Deer in Kazakhstan on behalf of Mr. Ryspek Baidavletov, the Bukhara Deer expert at the Institute of Zoology. The deer had disappeared from its former extensive range in the Syr Darya and Ili river basins, as well as from the Chu river lowlands and mountain and desert areas. The last wild animal was seen in 1956. The factors behind its disappearance were loss of natural habitat, the development of intensive agriculture, widespread poaching and competition for food. Conservation activities had started in 1981 and today there was a national programme on the preservation and reproduction of rare ungulates. A 2011-2013 work plan was currently being implemented, including a regional project in cooperation with WWF and work at a local level in game reserves. The aim was to restore the Bukhara Deer to its former range. This would involve finding suitable areas for release of captive-bred animals. There were existing populations in three places: some 430 deer at Karatchingil; 37 in the Turkestanskii population on the Syr Darya River; and a few animals at the Altyn-Emel National Park. Lack of public awareness of the deer, especially among young people, was a serious threat, but much work was being done thanks to support from WWF Russia and

neighboring countries. The Kazakh Government was now actively managing the process of conserving Bukhara Deer. Recognizing that the measures taken to protect ungulates had been undermined by poaching, meetings with hunters had taken place at which ideas to increase the range of Bukhara Deer had been discussed. Poaching of deer was also being punished.

14. Mr. Mikko Rautianen, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), spoke about the strategic partnership between FAO and CIC which aimed at assisting countries from the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia in conserving their rich biodiversity. The Wildlife Initiative for Central Asia and the Caucasus (WICAC) was launched in 2006 with the aim of strengthening national wildlife legislation and promoting responsible and sustainable hunting that contributed to the improvement of rural livelihoods, based on the Addis Ababa Principles. The main aim of a workshop held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September 2010 was to help the participating countries to develop ways to ensure community participation in sustainable wildlife management. CIC was keen to work with Range States on the conservation of Bukhara Deer.

15. Ms. Pereladova gave a brief presentation on the activities of WWF Russia for the restoration of Bukhara Deer in four Range States in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – between 1999 and 2010. She outlined the scale of work (ecology, behaviour and population dynamics studies; practical restoration activities; monitoring) and the specific actions that had been undertaken in each country. She spoke about the shortage of money and the need to raise funds for conservation programmes. There were some good examples of project funding (for example through GEF, Disney Fund). The Range States were beginning to undertake their own actions: protected areas were being extended or created, the fight against poaching and illegal logging was being stepped up, reintroduction programmes were underway, and awareness raising activities were growing, especially with children. In addition, many micro-projects had been initiated thanks to small-grant funding from the Government of Norway.

16. During the ensuing discussion, the following topics were touched upon:

- Range State priorities over the next five to ten years (see the Executive Summary)
- Measures to deal with fragmented sub-populations of Bukhara Deer
- The risk of inbreeding in isolated populations with no genetic exchange
- The risk of Bukhara Deer becoming a trophy animal for hunters, especially as the range decreased and the population increased
- Establishment of deer farms and release into protected areas
- Genetic studies – with which English, French and Russian experts were assisting
- Ecotourism and Bukhara Deer
- Translocation of deer populations
- Establishment and enlargement of protected areas
- Transboundary cooperation
- Protection for Bukhara Deer migrating from Afghanistan
- The accession of Afghanistan to the MoU
- Provision of alternative grazing regimes for farmers to avoid grazing in riparian forests
- Monitoring throughout the range, including study of areas suitable for reintroductions
- Awareness raising
- Inspections and interception of poachers
- Management seminars/technical meetings to increase capacity and skills

- Strengthening legislation/law enforcement
- Employing gamekeepers
- The possibility of allowing hunting of other species in private reserves to relieve the pressure on Bukhara Deer
- Exchange of best practice on management of Bukhara Deer habitat

## **Agenda Item 6: Expanding the Geographical Scope of the MoU**

17. Ms. Roettger referred to document UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.7: *Expanding the Geographical Scope of the MoU* and UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Inf.7: *Report of the Workshop on the Implementation and Coordination of the Saiga Antelope MoU and other CMS Instruments for Migratory Ungulates in Kazakhstan* and explained the rationale for proposing the involvement of Afghanistan as a Range State under the MoU. While the exact status of Bukhara Deer in Afghanistan was unknown, suitable habitat existed *inter alia* in the transboundary regions with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The addition of Afghanistan as a range state would provide opportunities for improving the monitoring of the species and involve the country in transboundary cooperation with the other Range States to share information and experience and improve conservation in those transboundary areas. The Meeting should consider the usefulness of including Afghanistan in the MoU. This would require an amendment to the MoU which would then have to be accepted formally by all of the Range States.

18. Mr. Mussabayev said that the inclusion of Afghanistan would make for greater efficiency in conserving Bukhara Deer, and that he believed all were in agreement that Afghanistan should be invited to join the MoU. Ms. Roettger said that the CMS Secretariat would facilitate the administrative steps needed to achieve this. The participants discussed the proposal and there was general consensus that Afghanistan was in fact a Range State of the Bukhara Deer and that it would be beneficial if the country joined the cooperation under the MoU. The amendment of the MoU was adopted by the Meeting and attached as Annex II to the present report.

19. Ms. Roettger explained that ideally the amendment to the MoU, allowing for the inclusion of Afghanistan, would be signed immediately after the Meeting, while Range States representatives were together in Bergen. However, in order to sign the amendment to the MoU, the delegates had to provide an official letter of credentials, which indicated that they were fully authorized by their Ministry to sign the amendment. Of the three Range States present, only Mr. Mussabayev, Kazakhstan, had the necessary official mandate. It was therefore decided that he would sign the amendment while the other Signatories would sign at a later stage after consultation and approval of their Ministry.

## **Agenda Item 7: Future implementation and further Development of the MoU and Action Plan**

### **Agenda Item 7.1: Review of the Action Plan** (UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.8: *Review of Action Plan*)

20. Mr. Mussabayev pointed out that since the original Action Plan had been drawn up ten years ago, many of its action points were now obsolete and a review was needed.

21. Ms. Roettger said that many of the Action Plan's objectives had been achieved and it was important to decide how to update it. She asked the Meeting to recommend the best way forward. Following a discussion on the timescale and format of a revised Action Plan, it was agreed that a five-year priority work programme would be developed. The Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) under the Saiga Antelope MoU was referred to as a useful example that could be applied to the Bukhara Deer MoU. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate the appropriate format, using the Saiga MoU MTIWP as a template, by mid-December to collect input from all Signatories and cooperating organizations as well as Bukhara Deer experts and other concerned stakeholders. Comments and input should then be sent back to the Secretariat by the end of January 2012.

### **Agenda Item 7.2: National Reporting and Information Management**

(UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.10: *Draft National Report Format* and UNEP/CMS/BKD1/Doc.11: *Draft National Contact Point Form*)

22. Mr. Mussabayev asked if the present reporting format was satisfactory or whether it needed changing. Ms. Roettger explained that while there had been no standardized national reporting format under the MoU so far, the Secretariat had developed a draft National Report format for consideration at the Meeting. Signatories were invited to provide comments on the usefulness of this format as well as to agree on the periodicity of future reporting.

23. Mr. Sergey Sklyarenko (Kazakhstan Association for Conservation of Biodiversity) thought that a standard format was needed, but that in the present draft National Report format item 6.1 should include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in Bukhara Deer conservation and management, not only government agencies.

24. Ms. Pereladova suggested the inclusion of two sub-paragraphs, one for government agencies and the other for NGOs.

25. The amended National Reporting Format was adopted by the Meeting and is attached as Annex III to the present report.

26. Following discussions on the frequency of reporting, the Meeting agreed that Signatories to the MoU would submit full National Reports every two years. However, Signatories were invited to share all other reports on Bukhara Deer activities in their countries with the Secretariat as soon as they were compiled. The Secretariat would circulate this information to all Range States as well as publish it on the CMS website in order to facilitate information sharing in the interim period between the official national reporting. It was agreed that the date of collection of the next full National Reports would be January 2014.

### **Agenda Item 8: Next Meeting of the Signatories**

27. There was consensus that Meetings of the Signatories should be held every two years, provided that sufficient financial support could be found. It was left to the Secretariat to advise on the date of the next meeting. Ms. Pereladova suggested the possibility of holding Bukhara Deer meetings in the margins of the annual conferences of the Central Asian Interstate Sustainable Development Commission (ISDC), as all Bukhara Deer Range States usually attend these conferences.

### **Agenda Item 9: Any other business**

28. Mr. Rautiainen (CIC) drew the Meeting's attention to a CIC Council recommendation of 8 November 2011 concerning the commercial breeding of animals. He said that special attention should also be paid to the risks involved in captive breeding of Bukhara population restoration projects. The outputs of the CIC meeting, held in Madrid, would soon be available on the CIC website.

29. Mr. Saidov (Tajikistan) asked if it was known whether Afghanistan was ready to sign the MoU. Ms. Roettger replied that there had been no definitive answer but that a formal approach would be made to the Government of Afghanistan.

30. The Meeting produced a summary of the Meeting attached as Annex IV to the present report. The Participants list is contained in Annex V to the present report.

### **Agenda Item 10: Closure of the Meeting**

31. There being no further business, the Chair closed the Meeting at 1155 hrs. on 20 November 2011.