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**OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW UP TO THE
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES 2015-2023**

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document responds to COP13 CMS/Decision 13.5 by suggesting options for a possible follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 (SPMS). It draws substantially on the assessment of the implementation of the existing SPMS, lessons learned and examples of approaches in other biodiversity-related Conventions, that are presented separately in document UNEP/CMS/StC53/Doc.11.

The Standing Committee is recommended to take note of the suggested options for follow up to the SPMS 2015-2023, and to provide advice on the development of suitable proposals that may be submitted to COP14 for consideration.

OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW UP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES 2015-2023

Background

1. At the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 1994, a “Strategy for the Future Development of the Convention” was agreed, and subsequently the Parties at COP6 in 1999 (Resolution 6.4) adopted the first full Strategic Plan for the Convention, covering the period 2000-2005. The rationale was expressed as a need “to reassess conservation priorities and to envisage new directions for the Convention’s work in order to ensure that they correspond to the most pressing requirements”, and to “maintain clear focus and guidance” for implementation activities by Parties and the bodies of the Convention. With this, the CMS mirrored developing practice among most multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) at the time.
2. A new Plan for 2006-2011 was adopted by COP8 in 2005 (Resolution 8.2), aiming to “*set the general goal, objectives and targets ... to ensure a coherent and strategic approach to the Convention’s implementation at national, regional and global levels*”; and also to indicate the Convention’s contribution to meeting the globally agreed target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.
3. The Parties at COP10 in 2011 agreed to extend the application of the Plan to 2014, in order to give sufficient time for the elaboration of a new Plan for 2015-2023, which could take account of an assessment of the implementation of the existing Plan and the review of the future strategies and structures of the “CMS Family” (the “Future Shape” process). In Resolution 10.5 the COP accordingly established a Working Group with the task of drafting the Plan for 2015-2023, and set out its terms of reference. The Resolution also adopted a rolled-forward and updated Plan for 2006-2014.
4. Under the direction of the Working Group, the Secretariat in mid-2012 commissioned two reports to support this work. The first report reviewed the 2006-2014 Plan, stakeholder experiences and implementation evidence, and distilled lessons and recommendations for the future Plan. The second report presented proposals for 2015-2023. Assisted by these, the Strategic Plan Working Group developed successive drafts of a Plan, which were also informed by wider consultations and the input received in response from many Contracting Parties, partner organisations and the CMS Scientific Council.
5. The result of this work was the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (SPMS) 2015-2023, which was adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (COP11, Quito, 2014) as Annex 1 to [Resolution 11.2](#)¹. As a Strategic Plan for migratory species, rather than simply a plan for CMS, the SPMS was designed to be a guiding framework for all work supporting the conservation of migratory species, including the work of the entire CMS family of instruments and the contributions made by other frameworks and processes of the global biodiversity community as a whole. The goals and targets were based substantially on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, with adaptations to relate them specifically to the purposes of migratory species conservation.
6. Through the same Resolution 11.2, the Conference of the Parties decided to keep the implementation of the SPMS under review at its regular meetings. An assessment of the implementation of the SPMS to date has been provided to the Standing Committee separately in Document UNEP/CMS/StC53/Doc.11.

¹ Superseded by CMS/Resolution 11.2 (Rev.COP12)

7. One notable feature of the period covered by this review is the way in which CMS priorities have increasingly been linked to wider global priorities. Examples include formal collaborations and joint work programmes with other MEAs, the incorporation of key issues of relevance to migratory species in the draft Global Biodiversity Framework, and a strong reflection of CMS priorities in the 8th replenishment of resources for the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8, 2022-2026). This trend provides a robust foundation for a future CMS strategic planning mechanism that would encapsulate these linkages and opportunities for synergy; but would also give a clear agenda for achieving the specific objectives of CMS itself, based in particular on the Convention's strengths relating to use of the best available science regarding migratory species.
8. The Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting (COP13, Gandhinagar, 2020), in its Decision 13.5(b), requested the Standing Committee to "*consider, taking into account the experiences for the development of the current Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023, available options for a follow up to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 and take a decision on next steps*".
9. In addition, in Decision 13.4(b)-(c), the Secretariat was requested to compile information on approaches adopted by other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements in defining strategic objectives and strategic planning, and to compile information on lessons learned from experience in implementing, monitoring and assessing previous strategic plans, in particular the SPMS and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The response to these requests is provided in Document UNEP/CMS/StC53/Doc.11. Decision 13.4(d) then requested the Secretariat, based on the information and analysis mentioned above, to provide recommendations to the Standing Committee for its consideration. These recommendations, in the form of options to consider (in line with Decision 13.5(b)), are provided in the present document.
10. The Standing Committee at its 52nd meeting in September 2021 noted that outcomes expected from the fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15, now to take place in December 2022) concerning the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework would be an important consideration in the development of a follow-up to the SPMS, as would the results of major environmental assessments and developments in other intergovernmental fora. A timeline for work to follow on this was also considered.
11. Against this background, the present document sets out a number of broad options for consideration, both in terms of the type of product that might be developed to follow the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 and the process for undertaking the work required. It also provides a set of questions to help in framing the Standing Committee's consideration of these options. An updated timeline of potential action steps is also included.

Options for a follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species

12. Many possibilities could in theory be considered for ways of following up the SPMS. To support a focus on practical choices, however, the Secretariat suggests the following five options as a basis for discussion. Some likely advantages and disadvantages of these (there may be others) are also highlighted.

OPTION 1 – Dispense with the need to have any Strategic Plan, and rely on working instead with other mechanisms such as Programmes of Work, COP Resolution mandates, partnership agreements and/or other mechanisms.

Advantages: A potentially significant saving in the time and resources that would otherwise be expended on developing, negotiating, monitoring and reporting on a plan. Avoiding the risk of creating materials that make little practical difference to CMS implementation by many Parties.

Disadvantages: Loss of the unified expression of strategic direction and positioning of CMS/migratory species conservation in wider policy arenas, as well as a basis for grounding implementation priorities for Parties, stakeholders and the Secretariat, as discussed in the Document UNEP/CMS/StC53/Doc.11.

OPTION 2 - Roll forward the end-date of the existing SPMS, with minimal other changes to its content.

Advantages: This would avoid investing in a process to develop a new vehicle, would avoid Parties and others having to embrace a revised definition of CMS priority objectives, and would allow future national reporting cycles to be directly comparable (thereby showing trends) with data from previous triennia.

Disadvantages: Given the close linkage between the existing SPMS targets (and national reporting framework) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and given that the latter are to become obsolete, this scheme would be severed from the future global scheme that will prevail instead under the new Global Biodiversity Framework, and harmonisation of reporting with other MEAs would be more complicated to achieve.

OPTION 3 – Revise and update the SPMS, defining a suite of targets that visibly evolve from the previous ones, but are no longer anchored in the expired Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Advantages: This would maintain some degree of continuity from the SPMS (for example allowing consistent replicability of certain trend indicators over time), while also avoiding the Plan as a whole being framed by a global regime that is no longer applicable.

Disadvantages: Potentially a difficult “hybrid” solution that is neither full continuity nor a freshly defined new set of priorities.

OPTION 4 – Develop a new Strategic Plan with the same philosophy as the SPMS in terms of linking to the global biodiversity agenda, but now framed as a set of migratory species “sub-targets” for the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Advantages: Strong policy and political resonance with wider processes, including potentially with funding opportunities. Will demonstrate the CMS contribution to the global Framework. Potential benefits in terms of harmonised reporting efficiencies. Key concepts can be “borrowed” from the GBF without needing to be reinvented by CMS.

Disadvantages: This would again yoke the CMS strategy to a framework that is determined outside the CMS, and while the strengths of that framework may translate into strengths for CMS, any weaknesses of it may do so too. The CMS Parties’ sense of enfranchisement in determining the future direction of the Convention may be compromised.

OPTION 5 - Develop a new Strategic Plan based first and foremost on priorities defined by the objectives and needs of CMS.

Advantages: This would allow a scheme of strategic objectives to be defined according to the objectives of the Articles of the CMS Convention itself, along with the most recent scientific evidence regarding priority areas for action. This would reinforce the legal imperatives defined in the Convention, and provide a strategy that could endure unchangingly, unaffected (for example) by periodic reinventions of other international schemes of biodiversity conservation priorities. A reporting regime based on this could also be stable and consistently repeatable indefinitely into the future. There could be a significant emphasis in this on the science-based rationale for the priorities of CMS. If the follow-up is for a defined time period (as CMS and other MEA Strategic Plans have typically been), there could be an emphasis on whichever issues are regarded as most important for focused effort during this particular period – either because of the degree of urgency or because of a window of opportunity to make “step-change” gains. Numerous targets of the current SPMS could also be retained. The Plan would be able to articulate the key ways in which CMS implementation contributes to other global agendas, e.g., on biodiversity, climate change and land degradation and restoration.

Disadvantages: The amount of work required to develop this approach will depend on other considerations, such as the number of targets and indicators, and how they would be used.

Possible components of the content of a successor to the SPMS

13. If one of the options suggested above for a successor to the SPMS is favoured, it would be useful at the outset to identify also the most logical structure of key sections that should be included in it. As an initial discussion suggestion, these might for example include content on:
- The purpose of the Plan
 - Context (CMS mission/vision)
 - Context (history of strategic planning in the Convention)
 - Context (threats and pressures facing migratory species)
 - Key priority areas for conservation action
 - Key priority areas for attention in terms of knowledge and research
 - Governance issues, implementation responsibilities and accountability
 - Synergies and harmonisation with other processes
 - Outreach and awareness
 - Monitoring, reporting, evaluation and review.

Process for developing the work required

14. The Standing Committee may wish to advise on the process it envisages as the most appropriate one for progressing the work required. Considerations in this respect would include:
- Whether to propose the setting up of a Party-led Working Group, stakeholder consultation processes and consultancy support in a similar way to the process that was adopted for developing the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023;
 - Whether instead to propose a more streamlined and economical approach involving (for example) the preparation of draft texts by the Secretariat, and consultation among a small “reference group” of selected Parties/Standing Committee members;
 - Whether to establish a timeframe that would work towards adoption of an SPMS successor instrument at COP14 in 2023, or to envisage instead a more extended process that would lead to decisions at a later date.

Questions for the Committee

15. The Standing Committee is invited to discuss the following questions:
- a) Should a successor plan to the SPMS 2015-2023 be developed? If so, which of the options suggested above (or any others) is preferred?
 - b) What are the most important elements to include in any successor plan to the SPMS 2015-2023? Does the list in paragraph 13 above cover these, or are there others/ are any of those that are listed unimportant?
 - c) To what extent should any successor plan to the SPMS 2015-2023 be a “living document” that would be reviewed and updated during its period of applicability? What process/processes should be in place to ensure that this happens?
 - d) What would be the preferred relationship between objectives in any successor plan to the SPMS 2015-2023 and the information to be provided by Parties in national reports to the COP?