



Federal Office  
for the Environment  
Switzerland

## Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

### Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum

Bonn, Germany  
10-12 June 2010

#### Agenda Item 1: Greetings and Welcoming Remarks

1. Mr. Bert Lenten, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary UNEP/CMS, opened the meeting by welcoming the delegates to the United Nations (UN) Campus and the former German parliamentary offices. He thanked the Governments of Switzerland and Germany, the International Crane Foundation (ICF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for their financial support as well as ICF and the CMS Secretariat for organising the meeting. Mr. Lenten noted that the Siberian Crane Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was the first of 18 MOUs concluded under CMS. The challenge resulting from implementing so many MOUs had resulted in the "Future Shape" process. The long standing support from ICF and funding through a GEF project were the key elements that had determined the success of the Siberian Crane MOU. As the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP) was now coming to a close, it was necessary to agree on the next steps to be taken for the conservation of Siberian Cranes. More work needed to be done in order to ensure stable and viable crane populations throughout their range. Mr. Lenten pointed out that the development of the Critical Site Network Tool under AEWA, which was also funded by GEF, could contribute to this work.

2. The ICF Co-founder, Dr. George Archibald, thanked the CMS Secretariat and ICF for their hard work to organise this meeting. He expressed his regret that the meeting had to be postponed and thanked the CMS Secretariat for hosting it now in Bonn. Dr. Archibald noted that there could be reason to be pessimistic as no Siberian Cranes had been observed in India since 2002 and no cranes turned up at Fereydoonkenar in Iran in winter 2009/10. There was, however, evidence that there were still some birds in West Asia. He thanked Russia for its reintroduction work and all those involved in the SCWP, which had achieved a lot for the protection of Siberian Crane habitats and the establishment of a

network of critical sites. Many historic sites were better protected, which was an important precondition for reintroduction programmes. Dr. Archibald emphasized the importance to address hunting, which was the main cause for losses of Siberian Cranes in West Asia, and was threatening also other endangered bird species. He noted that Crawford Prentice, ICF, was working on a strategy to deal with hunting in the region. Dr. Archibald congratulated China and the SCWP team for their wetland and water management in and around Poyang Lake. He also expressed his concerns about the plans of the Provincial Government to build a dam across the lake and to raise the water levels as this might have negative impact on the lake system, which is the most important habitat for the last viable population of Siberian Cranes.

#### Agenda Item 2: Election of Officers

3. The participants elected Mr. B.C. Choudhury (India) as Chair of the meeting. Mr. Choudhury thanked all delegates for their trust. The governmental representative of Iran, Mr. Sadeghi Zadehan was elected as Vice Chair.

#### Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda and Meeting Schedule

4. Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF, introduced the provisional agenda (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/1/Rev.2), the annotated agenda and the meeting schedule (UNEP/CMS/SC-7/2/Rev.2). The final list of meeting documents (UNEP/CMS/SC-7/3) is reproduced as Annex 3 to this report. The list of participants was updated during the meeting and appears as Annex 1.

5. The agenda was adopted with few amendments. Mr. Douglas Hykle, CMS Secretariat, proposed to present the synthesis review of the Secretariat after the discussion on the national reports, highlighting most important aspects of the national reports. The agenda as adopted is reproduced as Annex 2 to this report.

## **Agenda Item 4: Opening statements**

6. The Chair invited opening statements from governmental delegates. There were none.

## **Agenda Item 5: Report of the Secretariat**

7. Dr. Marco Barbieri, CMS Secretariat, explained that the report of the Secretariat (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/4/Rev.1) covered the Agenda items 5.1 (Status of Signatures (UNEP/CMS/SC-7/Inf/2) and 5.2 (List of designated competent authorities and national focal points (UNEP/CMS/SC-7/Inf/5).

### **Agenda Item 5.1: Status of signatures**

8. Dr. Barbieri noted that the CMS Secretariat was servicing most MOUs, including the Siberian Crane MOU as secretariat and depositary. As depositary, it was maintaining the list of signatories and the original documents. Since the Sixth Meeting of Signatories of the Siberian Crane MOU (MOS6) there had been no new signatures and the number of Signatories remained at 11 (Afghanistan had been the last to sign the MOU in 2006). Three organisations had signed the MOU as cooperating organisations (ICF, Cracid & Crane Breeding and Conservation Center (CBCC), and Wetlands International). Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF, noted that CBCC had now taken over Vogelpark Walsrode and changed its name into Weltvogelpark Walsrode. BirdLife International (BLI) was suggested to become a collaborating organisation to the MOU. Since BLI was unable to attend this meeting, Mr. Hykle mentioned that the CMS Secretariat would explore the interest of BLI to sign the MOU.

### **Agenda Item 5.2: List of designated competent authorities and focal points**

9. Dr. Barbieri noted that paragraph 4 of the Siberian Crane MOU invites Signatories to nominate a competent authority and person as a Focal Point (FP) for the MOU. Document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/Inf/5 reflected the latest information that was available to the Secretariat about these focal points. Mr. Barbieri asked if any updates were required. The official delegate from Pakistan noted that a new Inspector General for Forestry had been appointed as Administrative FP a few days before the meeting and that name and contact details would soon be submitted to the Secretariat. The representative of India announced that the new Administrative FP was expected to relinquish his post shortly. For the position of Technical FP, questions about which organisations should be involved (Natural History and Bombay Ornithological Society) still needed to be addressed. The Chair announced that the deadline for updating the information on the Administrative and Technical FPs would be the end of July. The updated list of FP is attached as Annex 4 to this report.

## **Agenda Item 6: Review of MoU and Conservation Plans Implementation**

10. The Chair invited Ms. Elena Ilyashenko, CMS/ICF Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator (SCFC) to present, on behalf of the Secretariat, the portion of the Secretariat's overview report (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/5) addressing the conservation status of the Siberian Crane. It was decided that the second portion of the overview report regarding the status of the MOU and the implementation of the Conservation Plans would be presented after the reports of the range states.

### **Agenda Item 6.1: Conservation status of Siberian Cranes within the agreement area**

11. Ms. Ilyashenko presented the report on the conservation status of the Siberian Crane within the agreement area for the eastern, central, and western populations as a summary of the information received and available as of 7 June 2010. She referred to document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/5, prepared by ICF on behalf of the Secretariat.

12. The Chair thanked Ms. Ilyashenko and noted that the overview report included both good and bad news. He pointed out aspects of the reintroduction programmes and invited the range states, collaborating organisations and observers to contribute their comments. The information provided in the draft overview report was reviewed and amended by participants during the following discussion. Dr. Alexander Sorokin, Russia, commented that the Siberian Crane was a priority species in Russia. Western and Central Asian flocks of the Siberian Crane still bred in West Siberia. Their numbers were low but stable over the last 20 years. Unfortunately, there was not enough money to conduct aerial observations. With regard to the eastern population, he noted that climate change was not likely to become a major threat because while some sites might become unsuitable for the cranes, others might evolve as new habitat at the same time. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan, Iran, noted that ten Siberian Crane chicks were released in Fereydoon Kenar, however, only one bird completed the annual migration. The chicks joined wild birds but satellite tracking data suggested that they did not complete the migration. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan concluded that the release technique was still problematic and he suggested further discussions. Mr. Evgeny Bragin (Kazakhstan) did not agree that the problem was the release technique but suggested that there was a lack of information for vast areas of the range. Furthermore, the received data could not be verified as they often relied on anecdotal sightings of Siberian Cranes with Eurasian Cranes far from the traditional migration routes. Mr. Sorokin, Russia, replied to Mr. Bragin's comment regarding the sightings of Siberian Cranes among Eurasian Cranes. He suggested that the results of the reintroduction program could be improved if Siberian Cranes were released into flocks of Eurasian Cranes. Siberian Cranes seemed to adapt to Eurasian

Cranes and learn their migration routes. He agreed that monitoring of populations of Eurasian Cranes would greatly contribute to Siberian Crane monitoring. While it is not possible to track all Siberian Cranes with PTT, efforts to monitor key routes should be undertaken. This will help in monitoring released birds.

### **Agenda Item 6.2: Overview of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project achievements and lessons learned**

13. The Chair invited Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF and Director of SCWP, to report on the SCWP achievements and lessons learned. Ms. Mirande informed that the achievements **at site level** included the establishment of site management committees, and community participation as well as the development of projects at selected sites in China, Iran and Kazakhstan. Management plans had been developed for most project sites, following the Ramsar Convention's approach for participatory, science-based management. Some immediate threats to Siberian Cranes were mitigated, including the removal of an exploratory oil well inside a protected area at Konda Alymka (West Siberia, Russia) and working with an oil company at Momoge (NE China) to monitor and reduce operational impacts on wetlands. Achievements **at the national level** included the upgrading of the conservation status of protected areas and the expansion of their size; provision of water for wetlands, wetland restoration, capacity building, monitoring, and awareness programs. Achievements **at the regional level** included creation of a regional database and website, improvement of capacities, monitoring and applied research on Poyang Lake, strong cooperation with regional flyway initiatives, official launch of the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds, enhanced waterbird monitoring along flyways, better connections between countries through exchange of staff and coordinated surveys, and regional public awareness programmes. Overall, the project had increased the security of the network of key wetlands for the Siberian Crane and millions of other waterbirds. The management of wetlands was linked to water resource management policies and allocation of funds to purchase water rights, the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds were strengthened through improvements of national policies, legislation and plans.

14. The many lessons learned during the implementation of the SCWP were documented in project reports and the UNEP Biodiversity Issue Paper BD/001 "The Experience of UNEP/GEF and Partners in Flyway Conservation". It had become clear that for flyway conservation, long-term projects and long-term commitment were needed. Due to their complexity, flyway projects required a long start-up time and conservation solutions needed to involve diverse stakeholders, who had very different priorities and needs. In building such in-

volvement and enlarging alliances, care was needed in communicating about conservation threats and conflicts in order to include multiple players in the solutions. Given the diverse audiences, who must be involved in solutions to waterbird and wetland conservation, communication must be a vital component. The SCWP was completed in December 2009. Its final report "Safe Flyways for the Siberian Crane" was released at the 11th UNEP Governing Council Meeting in February 2010 and was made available through the project website. Hard copies were made available to all participating organisations including the CMS Secretariat.

15. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, expressing the official position of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology (MNRE), pointed out that he still had not received an official report on the project and MNRE representatives had not been invited to the project completion workshop. Therefore, the MNRE had no idea of the accomplishments of the project. As an expert, he highlighted two aspects in relation to the SCWP. First, in West Siberia, where the Siberian Crane was a priority species, the species was disappearing from its breeding grounds; and second, in Yakutia, the population was stable and even growing. Concerning the Yakutia component, SCWP achieved very good results and the outcomes exceeded the expectations, especially in the southern migration stopover sites. But unfortunately, there were no such achievements in West Siberia. Local administrations of the Yamalo-Nenetsky and Tyumen regions that were involved in the implementation noted that the objectives of the SCWP were not achieved. Mr. Crawford Prentice replied on the first point that a popular publication was compiled and produced by ICF and involved countries at UNEP's request. This publication was a comprehensive technical evaluation of the project including all four countries, showing positive outcomes and examples. UNEP was content with the report and an independent Terminal Evaluation of the project was planned to be undertaken within six months to one year under UNEP's coordination. Ms. Mirande noted that copies of the final report were shipped to all four National Coordination Units for distribution to governmental agencies and project partners. Copies were presented to governmental representatives of all four countries at the UNEP General Council Meeting in February 2010. The document was available online (UNEP/CMS/SC-7/Inf/12) at : [http://www.cms.int/species/siberian\\_crane/RS7\\_Bonn/Inf\\_12\\_Wings\\_Across\\_the\\_Continent\\_Eonly.pdf](http://www.cms.int/species/siberian_crane/RS7_Bonn/Inf_12_Wings_Across_the_Continent_Eonly.pdf).

16. Mr. Qian Fawen, China, thanked ICF for all the coordinating efforts during the past six years, on all site, local, and central government levels. In China, officials at all levels understood the importance of the project. He mentioned that after the completion of the SCWP, China would be happy to participate in another international project to continue the conservation efforts



for the Siberian Crane, especially in North East China. Ms. Mirande thanked Mr. Qian Fawen for his comments and verified that these ideas will be put on the table for consideration by ICF in fundraising and planning, and that ICF is definitely looking for other funding opportunities. She acknowledged the efforts of all SCWP national teams by handing out certificates of participation on behalf of ICF and UNEP.

### **Agenda Item 6.3: Status of MoU Implementation**

17. The Chair invited attending representatives of all Siberian Crane range states and cooperating organisations to present brief reports on highlights, problems, gaps in the implementation of the MOU during the period 2007-2009 and their priorities for 2010-2012.

18. Mr. Arzu Mustafayev, Azerbaijan, presented the country's position in the conservation and protection of Siberian Cranes. Since 2005, after the avian flu, hunting of birds had been totally banned. The enforcement of the ban was under strict government control. During the past few years, Siberian Cranes had been closely monitored along their entire flyway in Azerbaijan. It was however difficult to verify the collected information since the data came from independent researchers such as Azerbaijan Ornithological Society (AOS) (Elchin Sultanov) and from staff of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and included observations from sites where Siberian Cranes historically had never been sighted. Observation of six Siberian Cranes in Kyzyl-Aghach State National Reserve (SNR), for example, had to be confirmed. There was a need to establish a comprehensive monitoring programme in order to render the monitoring activities more effective. For the next three years Azerbaijan hopes to organise training sessions with Iran.

19. Dr. George Archibald, ICF Co-Founder, asked about the possibility to verify the sightings of the six Siberian Cranes in Azerbaijan. Mr. Mustafayev noted that the relevant information was received from Mr. Abbas Abbasov, a ranger of Kyzyl-Aghach SNR, who had taken a picture of these cranes at an island. Unfortunately, the ranger did not submit that picture to him before his departure to the meeting because of an illness. The SCFC likewise did not receive the information from Mr. Elchin Sultanov, director of AOS. Mr. Mustafayev promised to get the picture of these six cranes from Mr. Abbasov after returning to Azerbaijan. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, suggested that these six cranes could be birds that had been released in autumn 2009 in Astrakhan by Yuri Markin, Director of Oka SNR.

20. Replying to a question from Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan (Iran) about the cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan. Mr. Mustafayev noted that Siberian Cranes were sighted every year very close to the Iranian border. Cooperation on the ministerial level and on the EPA level,

as well as information exchange between colleagues across the border as soon as cranes were observed, would have helped to organise regular monitoring.

21. Mr. Qian Fawen, China, reported on the implementation of a study analyzing the relationship between water level, water plants and waterbirds in the Poyang Lake Basin. The results of the study contributed to the evaluation of the environmental impact of the dam construction project at the mouth of Poyang Lake. He also reported on the monitoring of Siberian Cranes and other cranes by the National Bird Banding Center (NNBC) under the mechanism of the Northeast Asian Crane Sites Network with financial support from SCWP; the preparation for publishing three books on waterbirds breeding in the Songnen Plain, flyway monitoring of waterbirds, and wintering waterbirds at Yangtze River; maintenance of the water level for the wetlands in Momoge National Nature Reserve (NNR), which were the most important stopover sites for Siberian Cranes with financial support from Jilin Forestry Department; supplying water to the wetlands of Zhalong NNR, which were traditional stopover site for Siberian Cranes with financial support from the Heilongjiang Provincial Government; research for a water supplement plan, the results of which were to be applied to the water supplementation of the Zhalong wetland; community participation pilot projects and public education activities at SCWP sites of Zhalong, Xianghai, Keerqin, and Poyang Lake from 2007 to 2009, which greatly improved the awareness and involvement of local communities in wildlife conservation; and the improvement of water quality after the implementation of the SCWP.

22. Challenges for the implementation in China included the continuing water shortage that impacted on the sustainable availability of flooded wetlands at NE China; scientific research for the evaluation of the dam construction project in Poyang Lake so that the government could make the correct decision; strengthening of monitoring, especially at Poyang Lake, through training on monitoring techniques and providing binoculars and telescopes.

23. China's priorities for the next three years were identified as follows: wetland monitoring, especially the dynamics of water levels in key wetlands for Siberian Cranes; strengthening of the monitoring of the flyway and wintering sites of Siberian Cranes, especially at some new stopover sites in northern Liaoning Province; research on population dynamics, wintering distribution, habitat selection and other aspects of Siberian Crane ecology at Poyang Lake, which should be addressed in the evaluation of the dam construction at Poyang Lake. Another priority includes the organisation of an international workshop for the conservation of Siberian Cranes in the following two years; the strengthening of information exchange and fundraising to support conservative activities under the MOU.

24. For China, lessons learned included that different education strategies should be applied to different target groups; workshops and training courses were the usual tools to raise public awareness; community pilot projects were necessary for public participation in conservation; sufficient funding and time as well as the involvement of experts were seen to be the three most important aspects for success.

25. The participants discussed the Chinese proposal to organise an international workshop for the conservation of Siberian Cranes. Mr. Qian Fawen specified that it should be an international crane workshop, where government representatives, field practitioners (such as nature reserves staff) and the media should attend. Mr. Hykle suggested considering the possibility of convening the next Siberian Crane MOS8 in China. Mr. Prentice supported this idea indicating that this could also relate to the plans of building a dam across the Yangtze River. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands only recently published a report that outlined a number of recommendations with respect to the dam project for the attention of the Chinese government. Mr. Qian Fawen mentioned that China would be prepared to convene such a meeting in China, in Nanchang specifically, in order to involve the Jiangxi provincial government in the meeting. Participants suggested that the Chinese government should consider all possible alternatives before starting to implement this huge project. To this effect, participants discussed the possibility of drafting a statement by the end of the meeting that should be sent to the Chinese government on behalf of the MOU meeting.

26. Mr. Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International, gave compliments on China's presentation and its great work within the SCWP and beyond for the conservation of the Siberian Cranes. Water management issues go beyond the responsibility of the State Forestry Administration (SFA) and the Siberian Crane could be used to bring together the different ministries in China to discuss these issues. Mr. Mundkur emphasized the need to integrate strongly the conservation activities on the flyway level and those on the local, basin level. There is a need to focus on flyway issues for both flocks, especially with regard to climate change. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, thanked China for its great work and noted that Poyang Lake was also very important to Russia, as it was the wintering site not only for cranes but also for waterfowl and waders. MNRE had prepared a bilateral agreement to protect migratory birds in both countries. Russia had such agreements with USA, Korea and other countries. So it was very important to sign an agreement on migratory bird conservation with China, especially for Poyang Lake. Mr. Qian Fawen agreed that such an agreement was very important and assured that SFA was supportive and that it was just a matter of time until such an agreement would have been signed.

27. Mr. B.C. Choudhury, India, reported that his government has a lot of interest in a national wetland site list. Sites with possible sightings of Siberian Cranes should be protected. The Bombay Ornithological Society and the new Center for Ornithological Studies started a new project to create a database for Siberian Crane sites and sightings. All bird sightings were being reported to this Center. India had been recording data for the last 60-70 years, historical Siberian Crane sites had been identified, and a national wetland sites list had been established. Keoladeo Ghana National Park was a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mr. Choudhury proposed to include the Etawah-Mainpuri site into the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds (WCASN). India was exploring the possibility for a Siberian Crane breeding and reintroduction programme. Dr. Archibald gave a brief summary about their work to restore the water levels in Keoladeo National Park. Mr. Choudhury confirmed that three projects were being considered by the government, including the transportation of water from two rivers and all sewer water from nearest town to the Keoladeo NP. The government had made good experiences in other places, and was able to create a new sanctuary for birds.

28. Mr. Sadeghi Zadehan, Iran, reported on two successful release projects, which included satellite tracking in 2007 and 2008 in cooperation with ICF and the Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC). He furthermore mentioned the considerable improvements in the protection of Siberian Crane sites including the expansion of the Kiashahr Ramsar Site to the Bujagh National Park in 2009, the improvement of the protection of this site through hiring more local guards, establishing infrastructure, as well as improving the management system through a new environment office for the site and conducting training on the development of a management plan. Awareness raising programs included the organisation of the Annual Crane Celebration and the World Migratory Bird Day, and the implementation of education activities at WCASN sites, such as establishing an education center in Fereydoonkenar with financial support of the Iranian government. The international cooperation was being improved by signing a bilateral agreement between the MNRE of the Russian Federation and the Department of Environment of Iran to protect wild species, including the Siberian Crane. Iran had become a CMS Party in 2008.

29. The main implementation challenge in Iran was the low number of Siberian Cranes at wintering sites. Other implementation challenges included the lack of specific MOU-related financial resources that could be used for the implementation of Conservation Plan (CP) activities; lack of "operational coordination" for the implementation of the CP; lack of financial resources for regular monitoring and tracking; insufficient training

for technical staff, especially on new techniques; and insufficient availability of technical tools such as PTTs.

30. Iran's priorities for the next three years were identified as follows: mobilize financial support for the release program (with PTTs) especially in the Western Flyway; involve local stakeholders in the implementation of the CP; improve capacity building and provide training for technical staff especially on new capture and release techniques; develop management plans for all sites; support applied research studies at all sites; and exchange educational/awareness materials with other range states. Additional measures for the CP implementation in Iran included: direct communication between the CMS MOU Secretariat and the National Focal Points; establishment of flyway working groups and appointment of a coordinator/s for each flyway; prioritization of the CP activities into long term, short term and/or urgent activities; follow-up to the SCWP activities within the MOU; and develop national projects to support the implementation of the CP.

31. As a lesson learned, Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan mentioned that time was running quickly and that the CP should be (as far as possible) more concise, realistic and feasible to implement. It should be a dynamic document applied by authorities. The participation of local people in the implementation of the CP was seen to be very important.

32. Ms. Mirande, ICF, thanked Iran for the great work and commented that the lack of coordination for Siberian Crane activities was a very important issue for all conservation groups working with this species. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, reiterated the high value of the work in Iran and noted that the range states should set realistic goals, which should have a practical focus. He emphasized that the bilateral agreement between Russia and Iran on the protection of biodiversity and the environment was very important, as it not only mentioned tigers and leopards, but also the Siberian Crane. The agreement itself did not provide for funding, but presented a good basis for further development of funding agreements. Oka State NR was giving birds for the Education Center in Fereydoon Kenar. Dr. Sorokin also suggested that Siberian Cranes were still wintering in Iran, maybe along the eastern border with Afghanistan, as Siberian Cranes had been there in the past. Therefore, good monitoring was needed in that area. Iranian Mesopotamia was mentioned as another possible area to look for Siberian Cranes.

33. Mr. Batdorj Bekhbat, Mongolia, reported that since the last CMS MOS6 in Kazakhstan in 2007, the public awareness campaign about Siberian Cranes had been intensified. It included broadcasting of videos about Siberian Cranes and other threatened birds on Mongolian national TV; publishing information about Siberian Cranes' migration and summering grounds in national

and foreign newspapers and magazines; organisation of eight training sessions on monitoring of avian flu for local people, who work in the environmental, veterinarian and government sector of 12 provinces, as well as international training on ecological education; organising children art competitions in Mongolia, China and Russia and student ecological camps in cooperation with Russia for the winners of the competition. During the reporting period, Mongolia strengthened the international cooperation through the organisation of joint monitoring of Siberian Cranes, Swan Geese and other threatened birds, and by organising international trainings and events.

34. Mongolia set the following priorities for 2010-2012: continue research, monitoring and public awareness and look for international and local funding opportunities to improve the protection and monitoring in protected summering areas of Siberian Cranes. Ms. Mirande, ICF, noted that ICF had little communication with Mongolia since the last meeting in 2007, so it was very interesting to see all the good work and achievements in Mongolia and to know how the country was going to accomplish goals in the future.

35. Dr. Evgeny Bragin, Kazakhstan, reported that regular monitoring of the known stopover sites of Siberian Cranes in the Kostanay Region was conducted annually during spring and autumn migrations within the framework of the SCWP. Ground surveys included counts of waterfowl, description of ecological features of lakes, water levels, and threats. Regular inspections (two or three times per week) of the Siberian Crane stopover sites were conducted on Naurzum Lakes together with distribution of questionnaires and interviews of hunters and fishermen; a correspondent network was created among gamekeepers, hunters, fishermen and other local people for collecting information; public awareness was increased through community involvement and education activities under the SCWP, including the organisation of annual crane celebrations and especially the Siberian Crane Festival in Naurzum, and the participation in other international ecological events; pilot projects on the reconstruction of water reservoirs on the Naurzum-Karasu River in the basin of the Naurzum Lake System, development of ecological tourism in Naurzum, and other projects were implemented by local NGOs.

36. Other highlights of implementation activities included the improvement of the legislation on wetlands conservation at the national and international levels, as well as integrating the concept of «Important Bird Areas» and a procedure for including Biosphere Reserves into the Law of Protected Areas (PAs) of Kazakhstan; increasing protection level of PAs (four SCWP sites were designated as Ramsar sites and Naurzum and Kurgaljino SNRs were included in the "Sary-Arka – the steppe and lakes of Northern Kazakhstan" World Heritage Site); creation of new PAs (Zharsor-Urkash Wildlife Refuge



and Akzhaiyk Sanctuary), including five Siberian Crane sites in WCASN; improving management and funding of wildlife refuges through linked management with nearby nature reserves or national parks; preparation of management plans for Naurzum, Kurgaljino SNRs and Irgis-Turgai Refuge by the Forest and Hunting Committee (FHC); improving the hydrological regime of lakes and quality of water, optimizing the withdrawal of water in accordance with necessities; and observance of requirements of nature protection legislation in Kazakhstan through establishing a Public Basin Council and signing a Basin agreement on separate rivers or waters systems with involvement of all interested parties.

37. Major challenges in Kazakhstan included: water storage; poor management in rivers and lake basins; irregular monitoring due to a lack of financial support; and insufficient capacity building and funding. Kazakhstan's priorities for the next three years would focus on the reintroduction programme; expansion of the protected area network; management improvements; and a monitoring programme for the Siberian and Eurasian Cranes.

38. As lessons learned, Kazakhstan mentioned the following issues: 1) permanent monitoring during the whole migration season at the one-two stopover sites that were regularly used by Siberian Cranes (especially Naurzum Lakes) was more effective for searching the species, taking into account the critically low number of Western and Central Asian flocks and monitoring experience during the last few years; 2) similar monitoring is important at Eurasian Crane migratory congregations (on Zharsor-Urkash Lake System and possibly in Uzunkol District), especially if the release of captive-reared juvenile Siberian Cranes into Eurasian Crane flocks in Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge in Russia continues; 3) the development of a correspondent network to better monitor the stopovers of Siberian Cranes was considered useful as ground surveys did not work due to shortage of people and funds.

39. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, thanked Kazakhstan for the systematic approach to the activities under the Siberian Crane MOU. He noted that Kazakhstan had a very wise system of protected areas, good legislation, and effective governmental efforts. Russia could only dream about real protection of key bird areas. Dr. Sorokin agreed with Kazakhstan's proposal to intensify activities under the reintroduction programme. Mr. Mundkur, Wetlands International, agreed with Dr. Sorokin comments and added that even though the SCWP had been concluded, there was still the UNDP/GEF Kazakhstan Wetland Project. Mr. Mundkur asked how these two projects complemented each other to protect biodiversity and how the national funding was coming into place. Mr. Bragin replied that although a trust Fund for Kazakhstan's Biodiversity and a council were established under the UNDP project, in practice little money was available

and did not promote conservation work in Kazakhstan except for small regional Akimat level projects, of which all but one were socially oriented. Environmental protection in Kazakhstan is not considered important officially and therefore there are no funding opportunities in Kazakhstan for the Siberian Crane monitoring.

40. Mr. Samar Khan, Pakistan, reported that Demoiselle and Eurasian Crane were still found in Pakistan, but Siberian Cranes had not been sighted for the last 20 years. The main challenge in Pakistan was traditional hunting and live capture of cranes as pets. To mitigate the hunting impact, Pakistan suggested captive breeding. People in the relevant areas live according to their tribal rules and it is difficult to enforce national laws in these regions. The captive breeding programme could reduce the hunting pressure on cranes by providing a source of birds and reducing demand for wild caught birds. The tribal people maintain cranes in captivity very successfully and are keeping them as pets and for food. Training in captive breeding is desired. He emphasized that law enforcement was also very important.

41. Ms. Anastasia Shilina, Russia, reported on the aerial and ground surveys in the Kunovat River Basin and Konda and Alymka River Basins. Activities in Russia also included the distribution of questionnaires among hunters and other local people; improving legislation by increasing the fine for illegal killing of a Siberian Crane to US\$5,200; creating a new protected area "Zhuravlinyi" under management framework of the regional nature park "Synsko-Voikarskiy" (about 200,000 ha) in the Kunovat River Basin, which was expected to serve as buffer zone for Kunovatskiy Federal Wildlife Refuge; conducting public awareness including annual Crane Celebrations, developing the "Siberian Crane in a Suitcase" education programme (7 plastic model of Siberian Crane were produced and given to YaNAR, Tyumen Oblast and Kazakhstan for their Crane Day Celebrations at all key sites); organising the second Siberian Crane Festival in Salekhard; regular publishing of information in newspapers and magazines and broadcasting on TV programmes; conducting reintroduction programmes in the Kunovat River Basin, Astrakhan SNR in Russia and in Fereydoon Kenar in Iran; preparation of the "Flight of Hope" project with financial support from oil and gas companies (ITERA and "Petroresurs").

42. Among implementation challenges Ms. Shilina cited the insufficient participation of other international organisations in the Flight of Hope Project and inadequate financing of this project. Priorities for the next three years were the continuation of the Siberian Crane monitoring programme including air and ground surveys and questionnaires; realization of the Flight of Hope Project; continuation of the reintroduction programme in breeding and wintering grounds and also in migration stopover sites. A positive lesson learned

for Russia was the good contacts and cooperation between colleagues from governmental organisations and NGO's of Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

43. Participants expressed thanks and commented on Russia's report. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan, Iran, expressed doubts that increasing the fine for killing Siberian Cranes would have been effective. He noted that a similar measure was not working in Iran because people did not have the money to pay the fines anyway. If they could not pay, they should have gone to jail but that was not feasible due to humanitarian reasons. Dr. Sorokin was sure that for Russia such measures were very important because in the past the fine was low and no criminal charges were filed. Now the fine is high and involves criminal charges and the real threat of going to jail.

44. Dr. Sorokin reported on the presumed killing of two Siberian Cranes in West Siberia. On 19 May a pair of Siberian Cranes landed near Kondinskoye village in Khanty-Mansyisk (near the Konda-Alymka site) and stayed there for several days near a lake. The people in the village were very excited since they all knew Siberian Cranes, which is considered a sacred bird that brings happiness to whoever sees it. After several days these two birds disappeared, and it is suspected that they were shot. People admitted being at the site where they practiced shooting at empty cans. Based on their behavior around people, the Russia colleagues wondered if these might be the two 3-year old Siberian Cranes that were released near Kunovat in 2009. The birds in Kondinskoye looked similar to these two birds. They had contact with people but it is not known where they spent the winter. Their plumage condition was very good. The released birds had three bands each. These birds did not have bands, although they could have been lost. Their origin remains unknown. Dr. Sorokin added that he discussed this case with the Prosecutor General and was assured that the criminals will be found.

45. Mr. Eldar Rustamov, Turkmenistan, passed regards to the participants from Mr. Djumamurad Saparmuradov, Deputy Minister of Nature Protection, who could not attend the meeting. He then reported on the annual census of cranes along the flyways and wintering grounds. Monitoring was conducted in sites with suitable habitat for the Siberian Crane, especially in the Kelif and Meana-Chaacha Wildlife Refuges where Siberian Cranes were sighted in the past. Activities also included public awareness raising by involving the Birdwatcher Club of the Turkmen State University and students in the annual Crane Celebration events and monitoring of IBAs; the distribution of posters about two WCASN sites in Turkmenistan in Turkmen language; production and broadcasting of the film "Durnaly is Crane Paradise", which features the first WCASN designated site in Turkmenistan; reports on

CP implementation on the website of the Ministry of Nature Protection, distribution of the Crane Working Group of Eurasia (CWGE) Newsletters, the CWGE proceedings as well as the book "Important Bird Areas of Turkmenistan" that was published in three languages in 2009 in Ashgabat.

46. In terms of implementation challenges, Turkmenistan mentioned the lengthy procedure for approving all nature conservation actions at different administrative levels; uncontrolled hunting and poaching; poor crane monitoring during their irregular visits at the wintering grounds and administrative difficulties to get clearance to visit important sites for Siberian Cranes located in the state border area. Priorities for the next three years in Turkmenistan included the nomination of another site to the WCASN, "Tallymerjen & Kelif-Zeyit"; increasing public awareness among different groups including hunters; continuing the annual surveys and counts in the areas with the highest concentration of Eurasian Cranes at sites where sightings of Siberian Crane are most likely to be seen, as well as at sites in the southern part of Turkmenistan on the border with Iran; and participation in the Flight of Hope Project initiated by Russia.

47. As lessons learned, Turkmenistan mentioned that involving student musical groups in Crane Celebrations and other events had been very successful and that public awareness activities raised the interest of hunters in monitoring, training as well as sharing and collecting information. The effectiveness of the various events in the country increased through the participation of the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection.

48. Mr. Maxim Mitropolskiy, Uzbekistan, reported on public awareness campaigns. These included the successful organisation of Crane Celebrations, education activities within WCASN, and trainings for hunters. A pair of Siberian Cranes from OCBC has been received at the Tashkent Zoo for education purposes; and a network of observers had been created to obtain more information about Siberian Crane sightings. There were four Siberian Crane sightings during the last three years but three of them were not confirmed; the fourth observation was made by a professional ornithologist at Aydarkyul, which is a Ramsar site. Annual monitoring was conducted during the migration season and at the wintering ground of Eurasian Cranes in Amudaria Valley, especially during the extremely cold winter in 2008. Another implementation highlight is Uzbekistan's participation in the Flight of Hope Project initiated by Russia.

49. Uzbekistan's priorities for the next three years include the nomination of Talimarjan in the WCASN, increase of public awareness among hunters through the implementation of a grant from the Mohamed bin-Zayed Conservation Fund; participation in the Flight



of Hope Project together with Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; and continued monitoring of wintering Eurasian Cranes in the Amurdaria Valley.

50. Mr. Geer Scheres, CBCC, gave a brief introduction about their work. CBCC had undertaken intensive fundraising, which has resulted in support for the Oka Crane Breeding Center and the Flight of Hope Project.

51. Comments and recommendations were made and taken into account to revise the Overview Report and the Conservation Plans. Important highlights included needs to: assess the Conservation Plans for important gaps; look for ways to improve performance and not just focus on acquiring additional resources; be more strategic in addressing key threats and consider focusing on specific locations; improve enforcement of legislation; specify the locations and timing for monitoring more precisely in order to make best use of capacities; put the database on-line and make it more user-friendly and accessible; monitor birds post-release; maintain protection status initiated under SCWP and assess and improve protection in the other seven countries; transfer awareness programs to other key areas; continue to improve likelihoods of local people; increase allocations of funds by governments.

## **Agenda Item 7: Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Conservation Plans**

### ***Agenda Item 7.1: Responding to hunting along the Siberian Crane flyways and its impact on waterbird populations***

52. Mr. Crawford Prentice, International Advisor, reported on the results of a consultancy arrangement between CMS and ICF aimed to conduct a review on sustainable waterbird harvesting practices and to propose options for a strategy to develop sustainable hunting practices for waterbirds in Western/Central Asia (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/8). The range states were asked to consider and refine these options as part of the Conservation Plans for the Siberian Crane. Mr. Prentice also identified a few actions addressing hunting for their possible inclusion in the Conservation Plans: prioritize hunting in Western and Central Asia as the main threat; identify specific national and regional actions that help establishing frameworks for sustainable hunting; identify hunting organisations and other partners for collaborative actions; identify demonstration sites in "hotspots" where projects can be developed or continued.

53. The Chair thanked Mr. Prentice and invited the range states to comment. Dr. Sorokin noted that areas where hunting is a problem could be identified. There was a need to build on the SCWP outputs in areas where this project was not very effective. He also noted the sen-

sitivities of local people to outsiders, who were telling them to change their traditional practices. He shared the good news that a new initiative was about to be launched and an expedition was expected to take place in July-August 2010 with support of the Upper House of Parliament. The expedition was expected to focus on the Red Data Book and involve Kazakhstan, where hunting was affecting birds migrating to and from Russia. It was also possible to involve other countries such as Azerbaijan. He expressed his hope that these ideas will materialize. Dr. Bragin, Kazakhstan, informed that Kazakhstan's government was trying to tackle hunting problems. Training programmes were in the pipeline with the help of Finnish goose specialists. Hunting quotas needed to be based on population and stock estimates. Some of the published figures were questionable. There was a need to develop a sound scientific basis to set realistic quotas. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan, Iran, proposed to coordinate closely among the different countries in order to ensure species were protected across their range. Mr. Samar Khan, Pakistan, informed that the relevant government agencies were planning to review the laws in view of the international obligations under CMS and CITES. The main challenges included various traditional customs and political problems relating to the war against terrorism. Crane hunting in tribal areas was a traditional sport and not done for subsistence purposes. National and provincial hunting management authorities were cooperating, and hunters found with dead cranes had been arrested and punished. Pakistan was trying to harmonize the law internally in order to meet international obligations. Mr. Rustamov, Turkmenistan, reported on some poaching, although traditionally cranes were considered as sacred birds. Mr. Mitropolskiy, Uzbekistan, informed that relevant governmental agencies were expected to review legislation and consider further penalties and actions as there were some reports on poaching of rare species. Mr. Prentice thanked the participants for the valuable comments and requested them to submit written comments as well.

### ***Agenda Item 7.2: Challenges of the Siberian Crane reintroduction to West/Central Asia***

54. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan, Iran, reported about the challenges of the reintroduction programme in Iran. Ten captive-reared juveniles were released at Fereydoon Kenar. Some started to migrate, others did not. Four of them were marked with PPTs but only one worked throughout the full cycle showing the breeding grounds in West Siberia. The remaining three transmitters stopped working soon after releasing the birds and it was not clear what happened to the birds after the transmission stopped. None of the banded Siberian Cranes returned to Fereydoon Kenar. Potential problems included the health condition of the juveniles (the birds might have been too weak or too tame) and tech-

nical problems with the transmitters. It was a huge effort to rear birds at OCBC and if these birds could not complete their migration or survive in the wild, the viability of the project was under question.

55. Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF, proposed the establishment of a scientific group for discussing the problem. Problems had occurred with delays in obtaining the permits needed to start releasing birds in early winter. There had been some success with bonding wild and released birds, but it is likely that the released birds were not able to keep up with the wild birds during migration. Rearing birds in one place and releasing them in another could also lead to a lack of imprinting of the natal site.

56. Dr. Alexander Sorokin, Russia, reported on the implementation of the Flight of Hope Project and its challenges. In 2006, a test flight from North West Siberia to the Kazakh border was undertaken. The Ultralight aircraft (deltaplanes) turned out to be too powerful. The take off velocity was too high and the chicks could not follow the plane. Some changes were made such as using different engines and reducing the weight of the plane. The next step was to conduct a ground survey on the migration routes from Kunovat River basin to the Eco-center "Jeiran" in Uzbekistan. The routes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were evaluated in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, a ground expedition (11,000 km) went from Southern Siberia (Belozersky Wildlife Refuge, SCWP site) through Kazakhstan with support from E. Bragin and the FHC, to the Eco-center "Jeiran" in the Bukhara Region in Uzbekistan. In 2009, the Uzbekistan part of the Kyzylkum Desert was surveyed together with colleagues from Uzbekistan. Two Siberian Cranes raised at OCBC were brought to the Eco-center "Jeiran" in 2009. A special pen was built for them, they were monitored closely in order to obtain information about how they fed and adapted to the site.

57. The challenges of the Flight of Hope Project included the lack of financing; problems with crossing international borders (customs, CITES, veterinary papers), and special training for the pilots. The team that should fly with the birds had to be organised and this needed funds. The financial crisis hit even the oil companies, which were still supporting the project but on a smaller scale. The migration needed to be completed by mid October due to the weather conditions, so the schedule was very tight and early hatched chicks were needed. In the past chicks were already available in early-mid April but that was now happening a month later, which was a problem. As Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation were about to sign a no-custom treaty, at least crossing the Russian-Kazakh border was expected to become easier.

### **Agenda Item 7.3: Updating reporting and information management**

58. Mr. Douglas Hykle, CMS Secretariat, asked Ms. Ilyashenko to inform about reporting and information management and asked Signatories to give some feedback on the reporting mechanism (document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/7 + Annex). Ms. Ilyashenko noted that it was easy to compile the overview report on MOU implementation by using the national report template approved by the MOS7 in Almaty. This template was much better than previous ones and provided for short and clear answers. More details could be obtained from the reports, and when preparing the Conservation Plans it was no longer necessary to request range states to specify details.

59. Participants (Dr. Sorokin, Russia, Dr. Bragin, Kazakhstan, Mr. Samar Khan, Pakistan, and Mr. Purev, Mongolia) proposed to simplify the national report template and to remove duplications. The Chair invited Signatories to submit their proposal to simplify the format in writing.

### **Agenda Item 7.4: Future activities under Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds**

60. Ms. Elena Ilyashenko, SCFC, reported on activities under the WCASN (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/9) and presented the draft WCASN Action Plan (AP) (document UNEP/CMS/SC-7/7), which covered a subset of actions under the overall Conservation Plans. Since the official designation of 10 sites in five countries during the last MOS6 in Kazakhstan in May 2007, only Pakistan submitted nomination documents for two sites: the Thanedar Wala Game Refuge and Taunsa Barrage. Turkmenistan and Russia had encountered administrative obstacles in the nomination process due to a re-organisation of the local administration. Uzbekistan had proposed one and Kazakhstan three more sites for inclusion in the shadow list of the WCASN. Since the MOS6 in Kazakhstan, progress was made on improving the protection of a number of WCASN sites. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns were implemented within the framework of the SCWP. All Siberian Crane range states were involved in the preparation of the "Atlas of Key Sites for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds in Western/Central Asia" in Russian and English languages. This publication was available in printed form and on CD.

61. The WCASN Action Plan was focusing on the designated sites in six countries (Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), on supporting new nominations, and on regional actions to service the site network such as website development, information sharing, fundraising, etc.

62. Participants discussed the procedure to nominate sites for WCASN. The Chair proposed that range states

should be reminded to designate sites regularly. He also noted the division between Federal and Provincial government responsibilities and communications. This is often a bottleneck. Federal agencies imposed obligations. Provincial agencies had management responsibility and were worried about financial implications. Provincial agencies are happy if federal agencies impose obligations and then provide financial support. Azerbaijan requested to simplify the procedure of nomination and the delegate was requested to give specific suggestions on this issue.

### **Agenda Item 7.5: Relationship with other processes and initiatives**

#### **Agenda Item 7.5.1: East-Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)**

63. Mr. Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International, gave a presentation about EAAFP on behalf of Roger Jaensch. He described its structure, objectives and activities such as annual meetings that are used to exchange experiences and build up cooperation on common projects. Some of the activities under EAAFP were relevant for the Siberian Crane. The last meeting had taken place in February 2010 and the next one was scheduled for December 2010 in Cambodia. New sites that might be added to the EAAF site network included Momege and Zhalong NNRs in China as well as several others in Russia and Mongolia.

64. Mr. Mundkur noted that four Russian sites were already suggested during the implementation of the Asian-Pacific Migratory Bird Strategy. After this initiative has moved under EAAFP in 2007, all governments were asked to reconfirm their sites. Russia designated six sites to this network although official confirmation was still awaited. Dr. Sorokin promised to follow-up with the Russian governmental agencies in order to obtain this confirmation. Mr. Qian, China, commented that the EAAFP had a supportive attitude towards the nature reserves and the Chinese government intended to nominate more sites. Mr. Mundkur noted that all sites mentioned in his presentation were relevant to the Siberian Crane. He encouraged the Chinese government to nominate as many sites as needed to adequately protect waterbirds.

#### **Agenda Item 7.5.2: Central Asian Flyway (CAF)**

65. Mr. Marco Barbieri, CMS Secretariat, briefly described the geographic scope of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) initiative, which includes 30 countries. The CAF area overlapped in the Western part (16 countries) with the geographic coverage of the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). The CAF covered 272 migratory waterbird populations and 182 species that were breeding, migrating and wintering within the region, including 29 globally threatened and near-threatened species.

66. Mr. Barbieri noted that the CAF initiative was not active at the moment. The Secretariat was focusing on the finalization of the legal and institutional aspects concerning CAF. There has been little progress in the initiative, because the CMS Secretariat lacked capacities to follow-up. The situation was expected to improve with the entry on duty of a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) in October. As the CAF Action Plan fully covered the flyway of the Central and Western Asian flocks of the Siberian Crane, there was scope to consider linking the two instruments. This included the possible development of a single species Action Plan as well as the establishment of a CAF site network.

#### **Agenda Item 7.5.3: African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**

67. Mr. Sergey Dereliev, AEWA Secretariat, mentioned the possible synergies between AEWA and the Siberian Crane MOU. Mr. Dereliev highlighted several points:

- 1) The Siberian Crane was one of the critically endangered species covered by AEWA. However, AEWA still had few Contracting Parties among the MOU range states: only Uzbekistan was a Party. Turkmenistan had started a process to join AEWA. An incentive to range states to become Parties to AEWA was the Small Grant Fund of the Agreement, which was providing grants for conservation projects in the range of 25,000 Euros.
- 2) AEWA had already undertaken several activities in the Central Asian region:
  - a. Over the last three years, about US\$70,000 had been allocated to Central Asian countries, the Caucasus and Arctic Russia;
  - b. The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) training kit has been translated into Russian;
  - c. Though Kazakhstan was not a Party to AEWA, it was a range state of the Lesser White-fronted Geese, which was an important species for AEWA. Norway had already sponsored a workshop on the species in Kazakhstan. Azerbaijan is another important range state of the species and could also benefit from close collaboration with AEWA. There was a great overlap of the flyways of Siberian Cranes and the Lesser White-fronted Goose, which further highlighted the potential of linking the Siberian Crane MOU and AEWA. There were also plans to convene a symposium to develop an adaptive harvest management plan for the Pink-footed Goose.

Mr. Dereliev concluded by asking the Signatories to work closely with AEWA and to seriously consider the great opportunity of creating synergies between the Siberian Crane MOU and the geese initiatives.

68. Mr. Dereliev, AEWA, informed that the AEWA Secretariat would like to support the process of accession to



AEWA (e.g., through such actions as Moscow workshop and bilateral discussions during this meeting, and while visiting Kazakhstan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose workshop). The minimum contributions of AEWA Parties are set at Euro 2,000, raising the minimum from a few hundred. This proposal was put forward by African countries. While the contributions usually are not the reason to delay accession to the agreement, it is often the procedures that are problematic. Mr. Dereliev mentioned that he will be available to provide more information on ratification during his travel in Russia and Kazakhstan. AEWA would like to see more Siberian Crane MoU countries become a Party to AEWA. Funding up to US\$25,000 is available for new Parties. While Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Iran would be eligible to join AEWA, the agreement does not cover India, Pakistan, China, and Mongolia. There might be some possibility to extend AEWA to cover CAF, which would then include these other countries as well.

69. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, informed the participants that in spring 2010, an AEWA workshop had taken place in Moscow, and the MNRE was seriously considering cooperating with AEWA more closely, also taking into account the work under the Siberian Crane MOU.

#### **Agenda Item 7.5.4: World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)**

70. Mr. Florian Keil, AEWA, informed that the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) had been organised annually since 2006 after the occurrence of the avian flu. Each year more participants join the initiative, which was becoming increasingly popular and has grown greatly over the last four-five years. More than 100 events in 40 countries were registered on the WMBD website in 2010. WMBD managed to focus attention through the media on specific topics. The event took place every second week of May, generating more than 100 articles in the media. Activities of WMBD also included an international photo competition on critically endangered species. In 2010, the campaign's theme was "Every Species Counts". WMBD was led by AEWA and CMS, other partner organisations included BirdLife International, Wetlands International, EAAF Partnership, and the Rarest Bird Project. The Government of Germany provided funding to the AEWA Secretariat for the organisation of the WMBD. CMS supported the campaign including covering costs associated with the distribution of posters and other information materials throughout the world.

#### **Agenda Item 7.5.5: Integration of MoU with Regional Flyway Programmes**

71. Mr. Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International, gave a presentation on the conservation and sustainable management of migratory waterbirds and the wetlands along the flyways of Siberian Cranes. He outlined

opportunities for broader collaboration with Wetlands International (WI). Major regional activities of WI include the International Waterfowl Census, the UNEP/GEF "Wings Over Wetlands" (WOW) Project, support to the EEAFP, the Wetlands and Livelihood Programme, and the CMS Flyway Working Group. The WOW project produced: 1) Critical Site Network Tool, which combined information on critical sites for waterbirds (including cranes) from various sources such as Wetlands International, BirdLife International, IUCN and other data bases; 2) WOW Flyway Training Kit ([www.wow.wetlands.org](http://www.wow.wetlands.org)), which was also translated into Russian; 3) training modules linked to climate change (in collaboration with WWF, Conservation International, Wageningen Cooperative Programme on Wetlands and Climate). Mr. Mundkur also presented the work of the CMS Flyway Working Group, established within the CMS Scientific Council with the initial tasks to: 1) review scientific/technical knowledge on migratory bird flyways and conservation initiatives, and identify major gaps; 2) review existing administrative/management instruments for migratory bird flyways globally; and 3) propose policy options for flyway conservation/management, which should feed into the Intersessional Process Regarding the Future Shape of CMS. Priorities for Siberian Crane and habitat management were: 1) to strengthen the framework of the CAF and the WCASN as well as to develop a new GEF project proposal for CAF implementation; 2) to strengthen the EEAFP and EAAF Site Network and develop a regional EAAF Flyway project; 3) to recognize arctic wetlands as critically important yet very fragile wetland areas and address threats from oil and gas industry, etc.

72. In concluding agenda item 7.5, Mr. Hykle, CMS Secretariat, noted that AEWA was a well established and well-funded mechanism with a lot of technical advantages and financial incentives for its Parties. He was pleased to see that a number of Siberian Crane MOU range states could become Party to this agreement. Several other initiatives were also relevant to Siberian Crane conservation, and range states had to evaluate the benefits of becoming closer integrated with these initiatives.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Future funding of MoU activities**

73. Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF, presented the following fundraising priorities: Siberian Crane MOU meetings; the position of the SCFC; SCFC activities including strengthening of the WCASN, regional database maintenance and online publication); and CEPA (Crane Day events and materials, publications, newsletters, website).

74. Ms. Mirande noted that funding was a problem due to the economic crisis, which has increased the competition for limited resources. Countries needed to contribute more to the activities of the Conserva-

tion Plans. She called on participants to be creative and to make joint efforts. CMS and ICF were ready to continue fundraising to support travel of delegates attending future MOU meetings; however Signatories should make efforts to support at least one of their delegates. It might be useful to consider hosting future meetings in conjunction with other flyway initiatives (i.e., the Crane Working Group under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership or Central Asia Flyway initiative as it develops).

75. Ms. Mirande informed about the funds received over last three years: a) CBCC supported OCBC operations; b) the Swiss Government supported the MOS7 in Bonn; c) research at Poyang was supported from various sources. Pending funds include: a) the UK Darwin Initiative for climate change adaptation planning at key wetlands in NE China and Eastern Russia (rejected in 2009 with positive comments, was going to be re-submitted in 2010); b) Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund proposal for developing collaboration between conservationists and hunters (\$25,000 submitted, \$20,000 approved). Some GEF-5 (PIF) proposals were pending in Eastern Russia and China (sustaining wetland ecosystem services during conditions of water scarcity and climate change in cooperation with SFA, the proposals was expected to be submitted soon) and in West/Central Asia (together with CMS and Wetland International) to develop a PIF proposal on migratory waterbird conservation on the flyway level linking the Central Asia Flyway (CAF) and WCASN for Siberian Cranes and other migratory waterbirds. Those possible grants required matching funding and countries needed to allocate portions of their GEF STAR allocations, other cash, or in-kind contributions. Potential sources for matching funds included Trust for Mutual Understanding (supports CWGE to address spring hunting); hunting organisations (CIC, FACE); Food and Agriculture Organisation; US Fish & Wildlife Service (Critically Endangered Species Fund – NE China); some Embassies, for example, Finnish Embassy in Teheran; private sector and insurance and oil companies that had made donations in the past. It was suggested to add fundraising to the capacity building programme on both regional and national levels.

76. Ms. Mirande made reference to the discussion on the concept of an International Trust Fund (ITF), which was unanimously endorsed by the range states and cooperating organisations at the MOS6 in Kazakhstan in 2007. The ITF was expected to promote priority conservation actions and outcomes as identified in the Conservation Plans, and to help raise the profile for this long-term international effort. Potential funds for the ITF could come from multiple sources such as governmental and non-governmental organisations, private sector and other donors. The ITF could attract donors that might otherwise not support ICF and other signa-

tories with targeted fund-raising efforts. Some donors might prefer supporting International Government Organisations (IGO) rather than a Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as ICF. Questions concerning the viability and the capacities of establishing such an ITF in the current economic climate remained.

### **Agenda Item 9: Conservation Plan (2010-2012) development**

77. Participants split into three flyway working groups, one for the Eastern Population (China, Mongolia), one for Western Asian flock (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia), and one for Central Asian flock (India, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; Afghanistan was not present and it was foreseen to consult with this country later). Ms. Ilyashenko, SCFC, had provided draft Conservation Plans for each flyway group (document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/6). The flyway groups were asked to identify future activities and priorities, focusing on activities that were achievable and were expected to produce measurable outcomes. Special attention was to be given to cross-cutting issues such as financing, monitoring, WCASN, Flyway Focal Point, management plans, involvement of all stakeholders, etc.

78. Each working group was expected to revise the respective draft flyway conservation plans and to present a summary of key decisions at the second day of the meeting. In the meantime, the CMS Secretariat (Mr. Hykle, Mr. Barbieri), ICF (Mr. Archibald, Ms. Mirande), WI (Mr. Mundkur) and CBCC (Mr. Scheres) discussed opportunities for fundraising. At the end of the session the film "White Crane: Dance in the Sky" was displayed, which had been produced by the international oil company "Petro Resource" (Sweden, Canada, and Russia) in 2009. The film dealt with the release of Siberian Cranes in Astrakhan and was broadcasted on Astrakhan Regional TV in 2009.

#### **Conservation Plan 2010-2012 development – Guidelines for Flyway Working Group**

79. Before the presentations by the flyway working groups, participants discussed the general development of the Conservation Plans. Mr. Hykle, CMS Secretariat, proposed that countries should identify specific areas or threats that they needed to focus on in terms of monitoring and surveys (e.g., they should identify the type and scale of survey needed). This would allow countries to use limited resources more efficiently. He suggested building on the results of the last three years. Ms. Mirande, ICF, added that there is only limited capacity for the implementation of management plans and that there is a need to discuss how to improve this situation. For each country, key actions should be identified to address threats regardless of the funds that would be needed to implement them. The Conservation Plans should consist of concise, feasible, and

measurable actions. There was a need to include these detailed actions now because after the meeting it will be more difficult to obtain the necessary information from all range states. The Conservation Plans could be used as the basis to approach national governments for funds. Actions should be as specific as possible. At the same time a balance between specific actions and general recommendations would be needed. The Chair, India, proposed to prepare a prioritized wish list for the Conservation Plan. National governments should be able to implement the first priorities with their own resources while the following priorities would increasingly depend on additional resources through fundraising. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, commented that it is difficult to fill in specific actions for three years. Instead, general expressions would be more useful for governments. When it is difficult to report on the implementation of too specific activities on the wish list, this would affect the credibility. If priorities were to be expressed for the plans, they could be used to discuss them with MNRE to get funding, but they should not be too detailed. He also proposed that after completing the first draft, the Conservation Plan should be sent to the countries for a more detailed elaboration. Mr. Mundkur, Wetlands International, proposed to start with a wish list for what needs to be done, what is feasible and what are the next steps. There is a need to keep the goal of Siberian Crane conservation in focus and to set ambitious objectives. Priorities should be identified quickly in order to mobilize the funds needed.

#### **Priority actions of the Signatories and cooperating organisations**

80. The Chair proposed to spend another 45 minutes on the elaboration of the Conservation Plans (e.g., on hunting priorities). He then asked the Signatories to prioritize four or five actions from their overall wish list of actions (See the Executive Summary for detailed list of priority actions).

81. Mr. Hykle suggested that it would be most straightforward to produce an executive summary of the priorities discussed at the MOS7. The executive summary could be prepared prior to the full meeting report in order not to lose the momentum of the meeting.

#### **Financing**

82. Ms. Mirande, ICF, presented the result of the discussion about fundraising with the CMS Secretariat, ICF, WI, and CBCC. For the previous six years there had been some funding flexibility through the SCWP, which had, however, come to conclusion. CMS only had very limited resources. Some short term funding needed to be raised in order to be able to keep the SCFC position.

83. The separate International Trust Fund has been discussed for the last three years. While a trust fund within the UN system would be cumbersome, espe-

cially if the sums were small, it could be established as a budget line on the CMS budget. Some countries were keen to channel their voluntary contributions for the conservation work on the Siberian Crane through CMS. As an alternative, ICF would be able to establish a dedicated fund to manage contributions.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Next meeting of the Signatories**

84. The Chair asked the Signatories to consider the desirability of continuing to hold stand-alone MOS meetings in the future and the possibilities for financial or in-kind support to hold such meetings. Mr. Hykle noted that four of the range states (Iran, India, Russia, and Kazakhstan) had already hosted a MOS in the past. The possibility of combining the MOS with other meetings was discussed. Initially, Signatories had met annually, then moved to a two year cycle, and most recently to a three years period, which was agreed to be the maximum interval. Therefore, the next meeting, MoS8, was expected to be scheduled in 2013.

85. China expressed its interest in hosting MOS8 in combination with a scientific meeting focusing on the accomplishments of the SCWP and the importance of Poyang Lake. The precise timing and the different options had to be discussed. The possibility of holding a scientific or technical meeting back-to-back with EAAFP meetings also deserved to be explored. Mr. Hykle invited the Signatories to consider hosting the Eighth Meeting and to make pledges for financial or in-kind support to the meeting. The CMS Secretariat will send out letters to all signatories (states and organisations).

86. Mr. Sadeghi Zadegan, Iran, thanked the Swiss Government, CMS and ICF for their support to the organisation of the present meeting. He expressed regret that the meeting scheduled to take place in Iran in March was cancelled when all arrangements were in place because of problems with a single visa. He recalled that there had been visa problem in 2001 for an Iranian delegate but the meeting had gone ahead. He considered the incident closed and thought it was time to look ahead.

#### **Agenda Item 11: WCASN Dedication Ceremony for newly nominated sites**

87. Ms. Elena Ilyashenko, SCFC, informed the meeting that as of 12 June 2010 ten sites had been officially designated in the WCASN by five countries: Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Four sites were proposed for a shadow list of WCASN: three in Kazakhstan (Turgai Irgiz, Sarykopa and Tengiz Kurgaljino) and one in Uzbekistan (Talimarjan Reservoir). She provided details for each site, including the criteria under which it had been chosen, its location, historic importance for Siberian Cranes and current importance for other species, such as Eurasian and Demoiselle



Cranes, Greater Flamingo, Dalmatian Pelican, Lesser White-fronted Goose, and White-tailed Eagles.

88. Mr. Mundkur, Wetlands International, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the WCASN Nomination Review Working Group (RWG), reminded participants about the administrative structure of WCASN. He referred to the WCASN Guidelines (document UNEP/CMS/SC-6/8 + Annex). The RWG had been established at MOS6 in Almaty and there was a need to confirm membership for 2010-2012. Mr. Mundkur gave an overview on the tasks of the WCASN Committee and its WCASN RWG. To strengthen WCASN activities, priority actions (on the basis of the three-year conservation plan), annual planning, and on-line reporting had to be developed and implemented.

89. Mr. Mundkur presented a brief report of the RWG concerning the sites newly nominated for inclusion in the WCASN. Pakistan had submitted all necessary documents and had completed the sites information lists for both nominated sites – Taunsa Barrage and Thanedar Wala Game Refuge. Some further technical information was sought from the Focal Point of Pakistan. The RWG had recommended to the WCASN Committee that the two sites from Pakistan meet the technical criteria for designation. Pakistan was requested to provide a scale map and photographs of the Taunsa Barrage to the Secretariat for records and publicity purposes.

90. Dr. Sorokin, Russia, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the WCASN Committee, reported that the Committee had formally approved the two sites in Pakistan that were recommended by the WCASN RWG. He reported also that the Committee in the period between MOS6 and MOS7 had limited activities and could take on more work. He wished that the nomination and acceptance procedures would move more quickly. With regard to the confirmation of membership in the WCASN Committee and the WCASN RWG, he suggested that the group simply carries on as before and that the work could be done by email.

91. Ms. Ilyashenko presented information about the review of the nominations for the two proposed sites in Pakistan. Both are Ramsar sites, potential Siberian Crane stop-over sites, and both had problems with traditional hunting of cranes. Mr. Barbieri then called the key people to the podium for the ceremony of the site designation: the Chair of the WCASN Committee (Dr. Alexander Sorokin), the Chair of the MOS7 (Mr. B.C. Choudhury), and the CMS Executive Secretary (Ms. Elizabeth Mrema). Mr. Barbieri opened the Ceremony and Dr. Sorokin, Mr. Choudhury, and Ms. Mrema handed certificates to Mr. Samar Khan, the official representative of Pakistan.

## **Agenda Item 12: Conclusions: Discussion of meeting outcomes and confirmation of next steps**

92. Ms. Claire Mirande, ICF, summarized the conclusions of the meeting and the key activities for range states, CMS, ICF, WI, and CBCC. The deadline for the completion of Conservation Plans was set on 15 July for countries and on 1 September for ICF/CMS. Elena Ilyashenko will try to post the Conservation Plans on the website by 15 October. Priorities per country were summarized in a PowerPoint presentation.

## **Agenda Item 13: Any other business**

93. Participants discussed a statement drafted by ICF on behalf of the range states on the situation at Poyang Lake. The participants accepted the statement by recognizing that it does not represent the view of the Chinese Government and that the Chinese representatives did not associate with endorsing the statement.

94. Dr. Archibald, ICF, informed about a publication by Dr. Carey Krajewski proposing that the Siberian Crane should be listed in its own genus as *Leucogeranus leucogeranus*. He noted that this emphasizes the taxonomic uniqueness and ancient lineage of the Siberian Crane.

95. Mr. Geer Scheres, CBCC, invited all participants to visit the Weltvogelpark Walsrode near Hannover and to attend a two-day meeting on crane captive breeding and trade on 14-15 June.

## **Agenda Item 14: Closure of the meeting**

96. There being no other business, the Chair concluded by saying that the meeting had considered all issues effectively. He thanked the CMS Secretariat and ICF for the logistical and substantive preparations, all participants for their active attendance and valuable contributions, and the interpreters for their efforts. He also expressed the hope that the Conservation Plans will set up the MOU activities for the next three years and that all activities will be implemented and not only stay a wish list. He thanked the range states for electing him the Chair of the meeting. Claire Mirande, ICF, warmly thanked the hardworking and skilled staff and interns at the CMS Secretariat and the interpreters. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, CMS Executive Secretary, thanked Germany, Switzerland, ICF, GEF, Wetlands International, the range states, CMS staff, and the interpreters. She highlighted the important work that is done to improve the status of the Siberian Crane and the need to realize promises and to move to the next priorities. This is not always easy because funding is a challenge but she pointed out that the Secretariat is committed to assist in finding sufficient resources, including in kind and staff time. She agreed to the statement from Iran and suggested to forget the past and move on. The meeting was declared closed at 16.47 on Saturday, 12 June 2010.