



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



MEETING TO CONCLUDE THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE ASIAN HOUBARA BUSTARD (*Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii*)

Nairobi, Kenya, 23 and 25 November 2005

UNEP/CMS/HB/5

Sixth Revision December 2004

ANNEX 2 DRAFT ACTION PLAN

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Parties shall take all appropriate measures to implement and enforce the provisions of this Action Plan to conserve the Houbara and its habitat. Such measures should be consistent with relevant international treaties and should, as far as possible and appropriate, provide for incentives and sharing of economic benefits with affected local communities and users.

Parties shall integrate such measures into national biodiversity strategies, plans or programmes and adopt or update national species conservation plans in the light of this Action Plan. They shall seek to consult and assist each other in achieving the goals of the Agreement, where appropriate, by harmonising relevant strategies, plans and programmes.

1. Species Conservation

1.1 Legal Measures to Conserve Wild Populations

1.1.1 Parties shall take regulatory and other effective legal measures, consistent with the Agreement and the provisions in this Action Plan, to control and manage the taking of Houbara within their territory. The object of such measures shall be to maintain or restore Houbara to a favourable conservation status and to ensure, on the basis of the best available knowledge of population dynamics, that any taking is sustainable.

1.1.2 Such legal measures shall, subject to paragraph 1.1.3 below, in particular:

- (a) prohibit any taking of Houbara during their various reproductive and rearing stages and during their return to their breeding grounds if such taking would have an unfavourable impact on the conservation status of the populations concerned;
- (b) prohibit trapping of adult and sub-adult Houbara and egg collecting, except as specifically authorised under paragraph 1.1.4 below;
- (c) regulate methods of taking;
- (d) establish limits on taking, where appropriate;
- (e) prohibit the possession, utilisation, transport, exchange or display of or trade in Houbara and their parts and derivatives which have been taken or otherwise obtained in breach of measures established pursuant to this Action Plan;
- (f) prohibit international trade in Houbara and their parts and derivatives except where such trade is carried out in accordance with the rules established pursuant to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); and
- (g) provide adequate controls to ensure that the above prohibitions or restrictions are observed and properly enforced.

1.1.3 Parties may grant exemptions to prohibitions established pursuant to paragraph 1.1.2 (a)-(e), irrespective of the provisions of Article III, paragraph 5, of the Convention, where there is no other satisfactory alternative, for the following purposes:

- (a) scientific research, education, re-establishment and the breeding necessary for these purposes;
- (b) the taking and keeping or other judicious use of small numbers of certain birds, under strictly supervised conditions, on a selective basis and to a limited extent; and
- (c) enhancing the propagation or survival of the populations concerned.

Such exemptions shall be precise as to content and limited in space and time and shall not operate to the detriment of Houbara. Parties shall as soon as possible inform the Agreement Secretariat of any exemptions granted pursuant to this provision.

1.1.4 Where viable populations of Houbara exist, trapping and egg collecting may be authorised to accommodate the needs of traditional subsistence users. Authorised trapping and egg collecting shall be strictly limited in numbers according to the conservation needs of the populations concerned and properly monitored and controlled by the responsible authorities.

1.2 Emergency Measures

Parties shall, in close cooperation with each other whenever possible and relevant, develop and implement emergency measures, when exceptionally unfavourable or endangering conditions to Houbara occur anywhere in the Agreement Area.

1.3 Re-introduction or Release

1.3.1 Parties shall exercise the greatest care when re-introducing Houbara into parts of their traditional range where they no longer exist, or when releasing Houbara into areas that already hold free-ranging Houbara for one of the following purposes:

- (a) increasing Houbara numbers in an area or in a population;
- (b) returning Houbara to the wild following confiscation and/or rehabilitation; or
- (c) supplementing the numbers of Houbara available for lawful sustainable falconry.

1.3.2 Parties shall endeavour to develop and follow a detailed re-introduction plan or release protocol, as appropriate, based on appropriate scientific studies. Re-introduction plans or protocols shall be integrated, where appropriate, with national and international action plans. Such plans and protocols shall, *inter alia*, consider the health status and genetic origin of the Houbara to be released, and assess the activity's impact on the environment. They shall be made widely available. The planning and implementation for all re-introduction and release programmes should follow the *IUCN Guidelines for Re-introductions*. Provision must be made for adequate post-release monitoring to evaluate survival and to guide future releases.

1.3.3 Parties shall inform the Agreement Secretariat before implementing any re-introduction or release programmes. They shall endeavour, wherever possible and appropriate, to coordinate such programmes with other Range States to avoid duplication of effort or conflicts of interest.

1.3.4 Parties shall publish or otherwise make available the plans, methods and results of all Houbara re-introductions and release programmes.

1.4 Captive Collections

1.4.1 Houbara may be kept in captivity, in accordance with the conditions laid down in this paragraph and with relevant international obligations, for the following purposes only:

- (a) scientific research and education;
- (b) captive-breeding or captive-rearing programmes for re-introduction or release for the purposes listed in paragraph 1.3.1 (a)-(c);
- (c) rehabilitation; or
- (d) holding or care following confiscation.

1.4.2 Captive specimens may originate from lawfully-taken wild adult or sub-adult birds, including chicks, lawful egg collection or captive-breeding or from Houbara of any origin that have been confiscated by the competent authorities due to unlawful taking, possession or trade.

1.4.3 Parties shall establish a registration system for existing and new captive collection facilities. Prior to registering any facility, the competent authorities must take into consideration:

- (a) the origin of the specimens to be held in captivity;
- (b) the purpose and duration of the captivity;
- (c) the availability of suitable conditions with regard to space, light, climate, access to food and water, general sanitary conditions, and access to necessary veterinary care;
- (d) the fate of captive specimens and their offspring; and
- (e) the availability of necessary resources.

1.4.4 The competent authorities shall monitor captive collection facilities to ensure that they are properly managed. Procedures shall be established to close down collection facilities which are unauthorised or which cease to comply with the above-mentioned conditions. Special attention shall be given to managing Houbara confiscated from unauthorised collections, particularly where the genetic origin or health status of individuals is not known. Where necessary, and in accordance with the precautionary principle, the permanent captive care or euthanasia of such specimens should be provided for.

1.4.5 Parties shall undertake and publish national inventories of all captive collections of Houbara within their territory and regularly make available information on the status of such collections.

1.4.6 Parties shall inform the Agreement Secretariat in advance of all captive collection projects and shall endeavour, where appropriate, to coordinate such projects with other Range States.

2. Habitat Conservation

Key Houbara habitats shall be conserved and, where appropriate, restored by means of protected area instruments or other measures and incentives. Local communities and interested parties shall be consulted and involved in developing and implementing appropriate measures.

2.1 Habitat Inventories

2.1.1 Parties, in liaison where appropriate with competent international organisations, shall undertake and publish national inventories of the habitats in their territory which are important to Houbara and they shall endeavour, as a matter of priority, to identify all sites of international importance for such populations.

2.1.2 Parties shall also endeavour to compile and publish existing historical records, whether written or oral, of the former distribution of Houbara within their territory.

2.2 Habitat Conservation and Management

2.2.1 Parties shall endeavour to establish protected areas to conserve habitat important to Houbara and to develop and implement management plans for these areas, enforced by trained staff. Protected areas shall be representative of the whole range of natural and semi-natural Houbara habitats, such as partly cultivated land, steppes, semi-steppes and grasslands.

2.2.2 Parties shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to confer special protection on sites that provide internationally important breeding, wintering and stop-over areas for migrant Houbara or sites that contain resident Houbara. Based on available data and internationally coordinated plans, a network of protected areas shall be established throughout the species= range in which Houbara shall be strictly protected.

2.2.3 Parties shall endeavour to conserve all Houbara habitat in their territory and to avoid its degradation or loss. For this purpose, they shall endeavour to develop appropriate strategic, regulatory or incentive measures to:

- (a) promote or restore traditional land-use practices in appropriate areas to maintain habitats favourable to the living requirements of Houbara;
- (b) establish in intensively farmed areas set-aside and extensification schemes in order to minimise overgrazing and vegetation clearance; and
- (c) implement special protection measures for Houbara breeding areas. Farmers and shepherds shall be informed of the presence of Houbara on the land they use and they shall be encouraged to adapt the timing of their agricultural practices to avoid disturbing the birds during the breeding season.

2.3 Habitat Rehabilitation and Restoration

2.3.1 Parties shall endeavour, where feasible and appropriate, to rehabilitate or restore areas of former importance to Houbara, particularly as breeding habitat.

2.3.2 In degraded areas which are essential for the re-establishment or maintenance of viable Houbara populations, appropriate legal measures shall be taken where practicable to protect such sites and to provide for their restoration.

3. Management of Human Activities

Exploitation of Houbara shall be carried out on a strictly sustainable basis and it shall be fully controlled by the competent public authorities. Disturbance and other threats to the birds shall be avoided as far as possible.

3.1 Hunting and Falconry

3.1.1 Parties shall cooperate to ensure that their hunting legislation implements the principle of sustainable use, taking into account the full geographic range of the Houbara populations concerned, their seasonal distribution and life history characteristics.

3.1.2 Within one year after the entry into force of the Agreement, Parties shall review, and where necessary amend, their hunting legislation or regulations to conform with the following requirements, namely to:

- (a) prohibit any hunting of Houbara during the breeding season (March to June inclusive);
- (b) prohibit any hunting in strictly protected areas;
- (c) prohibit hunting of any populations believed to be in danger of extinction or for which there is insufficient information to reliably assess population status, in accordance with the precautionary principle;
- (d) prohibit or restrict hunting in sensitive areas or during specified periods, identified in consultation with other Parties, to protect isolated resident Houbara populations or migrant Houbara during stopover or passage;
- (e) endeavour to phase out the use of firearms to hunt Houbara [by 20--]**; and
- (f) reduce, and where possible eliminate, illegal taking of Houbara and unlicensed falconry.

Parties shall inform the Agreement Secretariat of the results of this review and the progress achieved to amend relevant legislation or regulations. A further review of national legislation should take place within three years after adoption of the guidelines provided for in paragraph 6.2.1 below.

3.1.3 Parties shall cooperate with a view to developing a reliable and harmonised system to collect harvest data to assess the annual harvest of Houbara. They shall provide the Agreement Secretariat with estimates of the total annual take for each population, if such data is available.

3.1.4 Parties shall encourage hunters and falconers, at local, national and international levels, to form clubs or organisations to coordinate their activities and contribute to the conservation, including sustainable use, of Houbara, where appropriate by developing codes of conduct or other voluntary measures.

3.2 Eco-tourism

3.2.1 Parties shall encourage sensitive and appropriate eco-tourism development, where appropriate, while avoiding sensitive sites or core zones of protected areas.

- 3.2.2 Eco-tourism initiatives shall wherever possible be developed as collaborative management programmes with local communities. Benefits derived from such programmes shall accrue, at least in part, to local communities and to Houbara conservation programmes.

3.3 Other Human Activities

- 3.3.1 Parties shall ensure, as far as practicable, that sectoral policies, programmes and projects are compatible with the conservation of Houbara and take into account the Houbara's special sensitivity to disturbance and habitat encroachment. Factors which impede Houbara migration shall be identified and, wherever possible, reduced or eliminated.
- 3.3.2 Parties shall promote high environmental standards in planning and land management to minimize isolation or fragmentation of Houbara habitats. Infrastructure construction, mining, afforestation, irrigation and conversion of rangelands shall, as far as possible, be avoided in areas of importance to Houbara populations. An environmental impact assessment shall be carried out for potentially damaging projects in accordance with national legislation and viable alternatives shall be considered. Assessment results shall be made publicly available.
- 3.3.3 Where projects or activities destroy or damage Houbara habitats or cause long-term disturbance to populations, the competent authorities shall require appropriate compensation to be made.
- 3.3.4 In cases where human disturbance threatens the conservation status of Houbara, Parties shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to minimise the level of threat. Suitable measures may include establishing disturbance-free zones, especially during breeding season.

3.4 Use of Economic Measures

- 3.4.1 Parties shall encourage public authorities, political decision-makers at all levels, the private sector and land users, such as farmers, shepherds, landowners and hunters, to cooperate to develop economic activities to support conservation of Houbara and associated biodiversity on which such land users and local communities depend. Activities shall be designed to build support among communities and user groups for Houbara conservation measures and should consider compensation for any significant losses incurred from such measures.
- 3.4.2 Parties shall consider establishing a licensing system for exploitation of Houbara in their territory. Licence fees shall be used mainly for the purposes set out in paragraph 3.4.1 and to support habitat conservation measures laid down by this Action Plan.
- 3.4.3 Parties shall endeavour to introduce economic and fiscal measures to discourage activities or practices that damage Houbara habitats or seriously disturb Houbara populations.
- 3.4.4 Parties may consider using the proceeds of any payments made under paragraphs 3.3.3 or 3.4.3 to finance compensatory measures for Houbara conservation, particularly in the areas affected by the damaging projects, activities or practices.

4 Researches and Monitoring

- 4.1 Parties shall cooperate with competent international and national organisations to support research and monitoring projects on all aspects of Houbara ecology, population dynamics and habitats in order to assess the specific needs of the different populations.

- 4.2 Parties shall encourage the establishment, use and sharing of research and monitoring methods. Methods selected shall be standardised, documented, precise and replicable.
- 4.3 Parties shall endeavour to implement or encourage coordinated research programmes, including in particular:
- (a) mapping the distribution, human uses and legal status of Houbara habitats and assessing the productivity of and threats to such habitats and the potential for their rehabilitation or restoration;
 - (b) field surveys in poorly known areas potentially suitable for breeding populations of Houbara;
 - (c) research into Houbara numbers, distribution, sex-ratio, migration and movements, productivity and breeding success, threats to different populations, health and disease status, annual cycles and characterisation of the different sub-populations (morphometrics and genetic);
 - (d) studies on the impact of hunting, trapping and trading and their importance for the local and national economies; and
 - (e) collection, compilation and use of traditional knowledge of local communities.
- 4.4 Parties shall implement regular, coordinated monitoring schemes for Houbara throughout their range and shall collaborate to improve monitoring methods on the status of Houbara. The results of monitoring activities shall be communicated to relevant international organisations to allow Houbara population status, distribution and trends to be assessed.

5. Training, Education and Information

Parties shall:

- (a) where necessary, arrange for training programmes to ensure that all personnel responsible for this Action Plan's implementation, including protected area managers, hunting officials and customs officers, have adequate knowledge to implement it effectively;
- (b) cooperate with each other and the Agreement Secretariat with a view to develop training programmes, exchange resource materials and make their training facilities available to others;
- (c) endeavour to develop programmes, information materials and mechanisms in the appropriate language to improve the level of awareness of the general public on the problems facing the Houbara and the objectives, provisions and contents of this Action Plan. People living in and around Houbara habitats, users of those habitats and local authorities and other decision makers shall be particularly emphasised;
- (d) promote and facilitate the supply and exchange of information between scientists, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, local communities and other interested parties. They shall in particular promote transparency concerning hunting practices; and

- (e) establish regular contact with the media to raise the profile of the Houbara as an outstanding feature of Asian plains and an invaluable asset to the Asian natural heritage.

6. Implementation

6.1 Where Houbara are shared by two or more countries, Parties shall endeavour to establish bi- or multilateral programmes to provide for appropriate coordination of national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities. The Technical Committee should preferably assist in such harmonisation and programming.

6.2 The Agreement Secretariat, advised by the Technical Committee and with the assistance of experts from Range States, and competent international organizations, shall coordinate the development of conservation guidelines to contribute to the Action Plan's harmonised implementation across the Agreement Area and to assist individual Parties in its implementation. The guidelines shall be consistent with guidance adopted under other international instruments. They shall aim at introducing and implementing in practice the principle of sustainable use. The guidelines shall cover, *inter alia*:

- (a) harmonised hunting legislation;
- (b) exemptions specified in paragraph 1.1.3 of this Action Plan;
- (c) traditional subsistence uses;
- (d) emergency measures;
- (e) preparation of site inventories and habitat management methods;
- (f) hunting levels and practices;
- (g) transport and trade;
- (h) reintroduction and release;
- (i) captive collections;
- (j) tourism; and
- (k) monitoring.

The Guidelines shall be reviewed and adopted by the Meeting of Parties.

6.3 The Agreement Secretariat, in coordination with the Parties, shall prepare and periodically update regional reviews covering, *inter alia*:

- (a) reports on the status and trends of populations;
- (b) gaps in information from surveys;
- (c) the networks of sites used by various populations, including the protection status of each site and applicable management measures;

- (d) relevant falconry, hunting and trade legislation in each country;
 - (e) preparation and implementation of national species conservation plans for Houbara; and
 - (f) re-introduction projects.
- 6.4 The Technical Committee shall assess the guidelines and regional reviews and shall formulate draft recommendations and resolutions relating to their development, content and implementation for the Meeting of the Parties to consider.
- 6.5 The Agreement Secretariat shall regularly review potential mechanisms for providing additional resources (e.g., funds and technical assistance) to implement this Action Plan. It shall make a progress report to each ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties.

** Assigning a deadline is suggested to concretise this provision.