

**52<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT  
PROGRAMME (UNEP)  
FOR THE 52<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE CONVENTION ON THE  
CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS).**

# **Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The report is submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for consideration by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), to be held virtually from 21 to 29 September 2021. It provides information on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the Convention and on its programmatic cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention since the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held from 15 – 22 February 2020 in Gandhinagar, India up until July 2021.

2. Building on the previous report provided to the Conference of Parties at its 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.9), section II of the present report provides updates on programmatic collaboration between UNEP and the Secretariat of the CMS on the implementation of outcomes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS. Section III of the present report provides information on administrative and financial management support provided to the Convention.

## **II. Programmatic support provided to the Convention on Migratory Species**

### **A. Programmatic support and other areas of cooperation**

3. UNEP continues to support the coherent implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in line with paragraph 89 of the Rio+20 outcome document and in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This includes the support for the work and implementation of the CMS and the family of instruments under the Convention. The outcomes of the meetings of the governing bodies of UNEP and of the family of Convention instruments provide an overarching framework for mutually beneficial cooperation. In addition to periodic dialogue and information sharing between UNEP Executive Director and the Heads of the UNEP-administered MEAs, the Executive Secretaries of the global UNEP-administered MEAs regularly engage with UNEP's Senior Management Team. On a technical level, there are several mechanisms in place to promote regular dialogues between UNEP and the MEAs, including the meetings organized through the MEAs' Focal Points Network, which offer an opportunity to discuss work relevant for strengthening programmatic cooperation among the MEAs and UNEP. In this context, UNEP initiated in December 2020 the Network of MEAs Gender Officers and Focal Points to share gender-related information such as seminars, publication announcements and capacity building opportunities.

4. In April and May 2020, UNEP hosted four virtual discovery workshops for UNEP-administered MEAs with a view of collecting inputs for the preparation of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025.

5. The overall theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals", calls for strengthened action to protect and restore nature and the nature-based solutions to achieve the SDGs in three dimensions (social, economic and environmental). It also provides Member States and stakeholders an opportunity to take ambitious steps towards building back better and greener by ensuring that investments in economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to sustainable development. Due to the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic and based on consultations with Member States and stakeholders, it was decided that UNEA-5 would take place in a two-step approach. While the first session (UNEA-5.1) was conducted virtually on 22-26 February 2021 with a focus on urgent and procedural decisions; the second session (UNEA-5.2) is scheduled for 28 February- 2 March 2022 and will focus on substantive matters.

6. Consequently, UNEA 5.1 adopted three decisions (5/1 on Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions, 5/2 on Medium-term strategy for 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 and 5/3 on Adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly), while resolutions are tabled for adoption during the second session (UNEA 5.2). Pre-session working and information documents are reports on progress achieved in the implementation of previous assembly resolutions. Twenty-one progress reports were submitted by the Executive Director of UNEP to UNEA 5.1. Out of these, 9 are particularly relevant for CMS, as

they have linkages to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015–2023 and to resolutions that have been adopted by the Conference of the Parties (CoP). Those are:

- **UNEP/EA.5/7** Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure: Report of the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/8** Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/6 on marine litter and microplastics: Report of the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/10** Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/10 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation: Report of the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/21** Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wild products: Report of the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/INF/8** Information on implementation of resolution 4/11 on protection of the marine environment from land-based activities: Note by the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/INF/9** Information on implementation of resolution 4/12 on sustainable management for global health of mangroves: Note by the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/INF/10** Information on implementation of resolution 4/13 on sustainable coral reefs management: Note by the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/11** Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/15 on innovation in sustainable rangelands and pastoralism: Report of the Executive Director
- **UNEP/EA.5/INF/11** Information on implementation of resolution 4/16 on conservation and sustainable management of peatlands: Note by the Executive Director

## **B. UNEP COVID-19 Pandemic Response**

7. In May 2020, UNEP launched a study in coordination with UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats on options, opportunities and barriers for accelerating a transition to multilateralism in a virtual setting, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, UNEP again approached the MEA Secretariats to assess the experience and lessons learned with regards to virtual meetings and, accordingly, prepared a revised study. The latter provides general guidance on how interactive inter-governmental meetings can be held virtually, in a manner that respects the legal framework for such meetings, and looks at (i) the terminology for such meetings; (ii) highlights the principles that through practice have emerged to guide inter-governmental meetings; (iii) examines the requirements set by Rules of Procedure that need to be met for virtual inter-governmental meetings to be properly constituted; and (iv) provides standard operating procedures for the conduct of virtual meetings, that include practical guidance – such as managing internet connections, decision-making, report writing, interpretation, overcoming the digital divide and possible revisions to Rules of Procedure.

8. In July 2020, UNEP and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), with input from CMS Secretariat, published a report assessing the root causes and spread of the coronavirus and other zoonotic diseases that are transmitted between animals and humans. The report, available [here](#), notes that 60 per cent of the 1,400 microbes known to infect humans originated in animals. The report also offers a set of practical recommendations to help policymakers prevent and respond to future disease outbreaks.

## **C. Support for CMS media and outreach work**

9. UNEP supported the media and outreach work of the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), in October 2020, which directly contributed to the outcomes of COP13 and CMS efforts to promote the uptake of ecological connectivity and migratory species needs in future agenda on biodiversity. The result of these outreach activities can be found [here](#). Additionally, UNEP supported the upgrade of CMS Family websites and other areas of CMS Secretariat work on information management, communication and awareness-raising. These websites help showcase the work of Parties, raise awareness, and provide up-to-date policy and scientific information that can be used by Parties for their planning and reporting activities. As of July 2021, the upgrade is still ongoing and is planned to be completed by December 2021.

## **D. Support for strengthening cooperation, coordination and synergies between the Convention on Migratory Species and other biodiversity-related conventions**

### **Environmental Treaties Programme - Realizing synergies for biodiversity**

10. The project “Realizing synergies for biodiversity under the Environmental Treaties Programme”, started at the end of 2017 and was designed to support countries in implementing environmental treaties and improve international environmental governance in order to achieve the SDGs and other globally agreed environmental goals. Consistent with UNEP’s MTS and PoW 2018-2021 and the priorities set under the environmental governance sub-programme to increase coherent implementation of environmental treaties, the project has achieved many milestones for the groundwork to promote synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs. It has increased visibility and awareness of the topic of synergies globally, through engaging with MEA Secretariats, responding to MEA cooperation and synergies decisions, communicating on global biodiversity challenges, supporting development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, enabling enhanced access to synergy tools, and sharing of scientific knowledge to meet global biodiversity goals and targets.

11. Throughout this work, support has been provided to MEAs, including CMS Secretariat and its Parties, with respect to implementation of the Convention at the national level and to participating in international discussions on promoting cooperation and coherence among the biodiversity related conventions. Amongst others, this has been achieved through: (1) providing input documents for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, (2) supporting cooperation among the communication officers of the biodiversity-related conventions, (3) preparing and disseminating guidance materials related to enhancing synergies, and (4) providing some support for regional and national level work to benefit from implementing the objectives of multiple biodiversity-related conventions in a synergistic manner.

### **The Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT)**

12. The Data and Reporting Tool for MEAs (DaRT) developed by UNEP provides private and secure national working spaces for Parties to effectively use synergies in the field of knowledge and information management for national reporting to biodiversity-related conventions.

13. CMS Resolution 11.10 (rev.COP13) on Synergies and Partnerships, in paragraph 25, urges Parties to establish close collaboration at the national level to develop coherent and synergistic approaches across the conventions, for example, by harmonizing knowledge management and national reporting by making use of the Data Reporting tool (DaRT).

14. As a follow-up to the resolution, the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 (CMS Resolution 11.02) has been included in the strategy section of the DaRT. The correspondence between the CMS goals and targets and the Aichi Targets (according to Resolution 11.02, Annex A) can now be experienced in an interactive way. The AEWAs Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (UNEP/AEWA/MOP7/Res. 7.1), which is mapped to the CMS targets, the Aichi targets, and the Sustainable Development Goals is also integrated in DaRT and accessible for countries with a national DaRT working space. The interactive mapping of the goals and targets highlights the correspondence between the CMS targets and targets of other biodiversity-related Conventions.

15. The mapping between global and regional targets supports Parties in linking their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and national indicators with those adopted by Conventions. Such a mapping between targets was established for Cameroon, adopted by National Focal Points of biodiversity related-conventions during a national workshop for the operationalization of DaRT (23-25 June 2021, Douala, Cameroon) and integrated in their national DaRT working space. This supports the government to develop coherent and synergistic approaches across the conventions, increase effectiveness of national efforts adopted the mapping between their NBSAPs and facilitate upcoming national reporting obligations.

16. In support of Parties in establishing correspondence between global, regional and national targets, an extension of the mapping of CMS goals and targets to the one of other Conventions including the SDGs would be welcomed. Resources from Switzerland, EU and MEA Secretariats have allowed for the simultaneous development of the Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT) for MEAs and increased use of the Online Reporting System (ORS). Both tools are being developed together with Parties and Secretariats. The DaRT media campaign launched a video and web story during the International Day on Biodiversity 22 May 2021 including social media hashtag #ForNature support.

## **The Second Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework - Bern II**

17. The second Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Bern II) was organized by UNEP and convened as live virtual sessions and an open written forum between 18 January and 2 February 2021 with the generous support of the government of Switzerland. The workshop generated contributions from 13 MEAs Parties and Secretariats of the biodiversity, chemicals and wastes, and drought and desertification related conventions to strengthen cooperation and coherent implementation of conventions with respect to biodiversity. The final workshop report was submitted by UNEP as an information document to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s subsidiary body meetings of SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3, that were held between 3 May and 13 June 2021.

18. During the workshop, the CMS Secretariat and Party representatives of the Standing Committee provided substantive inputs on how migratory species, pathways and connectivity between ecosystems need to be strengthened in the targets and monitoring system of the biodiversity framework. The co-leads of the Bern II workshop, the EU and Cambodia, presented the final workshop report and outlined the high relevance to conventions including CMS in the operationalization of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2030 Agenda including the SDGs. The Executive Summary of the report included conclusions that relate to several common issues that can benefit the discussions of CMS governing bodies including common indicators, integrated approaches in capacity building, financial mechanisms, mainstreaming biodiversity, reporting monitoring and review.

### **E. Technical and scientific support from the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)**

#### **Conservation status of migratory species<sup>1</sup> and Application of Article III of the Convention Regarding International Trade in Appendix I-listed Species<sup>2</sup>**

19. In support of the implementation of COP13 Decisions 13.17 and 13.24-26, UNEP-WCMC was commissioned by the CMS Secretariat to undertake a series of activities. These included developing a framework for a review of the conservation status of migratory species; developing criteria and methodologies for a rapid assessment of Appendix I species to provide further insights on (i) the impact of direct use and trade on the conservation status of Appendix I-listed taxa, and (ii) possible implications on eligibility for inclusion in Appendix I; and preparing a template for in-depth case studies on the status of individual Appendix I species. These outputs were presented to, and the proposed approaches agreed by, members of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council at their 5th meeting (in July 2021). Further work to produce elements of the conservation status report, the rapid assessment of Appendix I species, and the in-depth case studies for selected Appendix I species will be undertaken throughout the remainder of 2021 and early 2022.

#### **Communications and knowledge management**

20. UNEP-WCMC is providing support to the CMS Secretariat with regards to the development of communication and information tools to improve the use of data for the conservation of migratory species. This includes upgrades to the CMS Family website and considerations for improved data visualisations.

### **F. African Elephant Fund (AEF)**

21. The African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) was adopted by African elephant range States in March 2010, in the margins of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CMS COP12 endorsed the African Elephant Action Plan as the principal strategy for elephant conservation through Resolution 12.19.

22. The African Elephant Fund (AEF), established to support the implementation of the AEAP, is a partnership venture between 38 African elephant range States, donor States, UNEP, the CITES Secretariat, and the CMS Secretariat, which are working together to curtail the growing threats to elephant populations.

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<sup>1</sup> See Decisions 13.24 to 13.26

<sup>2</sup> See Decision 13.17

23. Decision 13.99 on the African Elephant Action Plan, adopted during CMS COP13, requested the Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (West African Elephant MOU) to consider replacing their Work Programme with the AEAP and implement the MOU through the AEAP and the AEF structure.
24. At CMS COP13, the AEF Secretariat convened a meeting with the CMS Range States on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The Secretariat briefed the range States on the operational modalities and implementation mechanisms of the AEF.
25. To date, AEF has implemented 39 projects in the African elephant range States. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down implementation of several projects, 6 projects were completed within the past year. Highlights of project achievements since CMS COP13 include: training of park rangers on antipoaching techniques and use of Spatial, Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) software in Nigeria, which has improved enforcement capacity; use of SMART software to accurately estimate elephant populations and establish elephant corridors, which has ensured elephant conservation in the entire landscape in Zimbabwe; in Togo, local communities have been trained on the use of technologies for elephant management and alternative income generation, hence reducing human-elephant conflicts; a solar-powered electric fence has been constructed along the Dedza Salima Forest boundary in Malawi, which is contributing towards the restoration of elephant habitats; and, in Kenya, training manuals for scenes of crimes and monitoring have been developed and training of lab personnel on analysing difficult samples and genotyping has been conducted, further improving the country's enforcement capacity.
26. In 2020, the AEF Secretariat issued an emergency call for proposals to provide funding to the African elephant range states to address elephant conservation challenges related to COVID-19. During its 6<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting, the AEF Steering Committee approved a package of COVID-19 projects, of which the implementation of 10 projects is ongoing, while several others are being initiated.
27. The AEAP is also in the process of undergoing review. Several consultative meetings and discussions have been held to gather views and expert opinions on the recommended revisions to the Plan. IUCN and the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) have both provided detailed technical inputs on what should be considered when updating the AEAP. These reports have informed part of the discussions by the African elephant range States who have shared their views on the current Plan and proposed changes. Discussions will continue with the new AEF Steering Committee.
28. The twelfth meeting of the AEF Steering Committee is tentatively scheduled to be held virtually in September 2021. The agenda for the meeting will include, but not be limited to, a review of the progress made in the implementation of the AEAP, the review and assessment of ongoing and pending projects from range States, and the discussion and possible adoption of the Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference governing the operations of the AEF.

## **G. United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA)**

29. UNEP facilitates the network of MEA Secretariats in the context of InforMEA, the United Nations Information Portal on MEAs, which provides a one stop shop for comprehensive access to information on MEAs and international environmental governance. In addition to treaty texts, InforMEA provides access to over 40 courses on International Law and MEAs, Conference of Parties decisions, national plans and reports, laws, court decisions, and how these relate to the achievement of SDGs.
30. About 70,000 users per month access this Portal, about a third of them coming from government institutions and over 80 percent are satisfied or extremely satisfied with how the information supports them in their work. The rate of satisfaction is even higher for over 40,000 registered learners on the platform who come from over 190 countries. The Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species continues to provide support as an active member of the InforMEA Initiative. This includes advice on outreach and visibility, Interoperability and data exchange, eLearning, all of which seeks to enhance the way information from Parties can be accessed.
31. Content on the portal relating to the Convention on Migratory Species is available in the Convention's treaty profile,<sup>3</sup> the biodiversity section of the website, and the online learning tool. The eLearning Portal hosts the Course for the National Focal Points of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and has over 1,000 enrolments. Under the semantic

management workstream, the CMS Secretariat has been actively engaged in the development and maintenance of the CMS taxonomy which is available on the semantic management system.

32. The registered learners on the InforMEA portal have collectively received 10,000 certificates of completion to date. Over the past year 22 diploma courses, including a diploma focused on biological diversity, have been launched and have attracted over 2,000 enrolments to date. Thanks to the contributions made by the CMS Secretariat and other MEAs secretariats, users can now search across 13,000 governing body decisions, 10,000 national reports and 1,000 implementation plans, alongside events, ratification information and information on national focal points. The portal further benefits from its partnership with the ECOLEX website, which provides access to over 150,000 laws (from FAO), 50,000 literature references (from IUCN) and 3,000 judicial cases (from UNEP).

33. The CMS Secretariat also actively participated in the eleventh meeting of the InforMEA Initiative Steering Committee, which was held virtually on 26th November 2020, and welcomed the Whaling Commission (IWC) to the Initiative. The 11<sup>th</sup> InforMEA Steering Committee had to adapt to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and took a different form in 2020 by being held virtually. Nevertheless, participants discussed a range of issues, exchanged experiences, and provided a series of recommendations to guide the work of InforMEA over the next year, as the programme embarks on its third phase.

34. As a way of stimulating dialogue and information sharing among the national focal points and other government officials of biodiversity and chemicals and waste related conventions, UNEP and the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston organized a 5-week online Course on the Implementation of MEAs held between November and December 2020. The course brought together 37 national focal points or experts of biodiversity and chemicals and waste-related conventions from five African countries to exchange information and share experiences on the effective implementation of MEAs. The online course was attended by five government officials affiliated with CMS. Among the original content produced for the course were video interviews with convention Secretariats, including the CMS Secretariat, on the best practices and challenges of implementation. Additionally, the AEWAs Secretariat joined the course's live session for Module 4 on synergies. The online course also utilized existing materials from the InforMEA learning platform.

## **H. Great Apes Survival Partnership**

35. The UNEP-led Great Apes Survival Partnership secured funding from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany to support transboundary collaboration for the conservation of the critically endangered Cross River gorilla. The CMS is contributing to the project and overseeing a commissioned analysis of the implementation of the Convention and the Gorilla Agreement provisions through national legislation in Cameroon and Nigeria. The Oban and Okwango landscapes in Nigeria received UNESCO biosphere status. The governments of Cameroon and Nigeria are discussing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for transboundary collaboration. They are in the process of preparing the nomination for the Cross River- Korup-Takamanda World Heritage Site (CRIKOT).

36. The Vanishing Treasures project, funded by Luxembourg with EUR 9 million for the period 2018-2022, aims to protect three mountain flagship species (the mountain gorilla in Uganda and Rwanda, the snow leopard in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the Bengal tiger in Bhutan). Its second objective is to enhance the climate resilience of mountain communities and ecosystems by applying climate-smart conservation and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in support of sustainable livelihoods and land use. The Great Apes Survival Partnership is implementing the mountain gorilla component of the project.

## **I. Protection of seagrass ecosystems, important to several migratory species such as turtles and dugongs**

37. Seagrass provides food and habitat to several charismatic migratory species, such as turtles and dugongs. These species, despite being listed in the red list of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as being endangered and vulnerable, respectively, can act as flagship species (ambassadors) for the protection and conservation of seagrass meadows. The migratory nature of these species means that international cooperative activities across jurisdictional boundaries within their migratory ranges are vital to their survival.

38. In June 2020, UNEP published a global report on the importance of seagrass ecosystems to the environment, to biodiversity and to people. The report, titled "Out of the Blue", can be downloaded [here](#). The report highlights that almost 30% of original seagrass area has been lost since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century

due to anthropogenic activities and at least 22 of the world's 72 seagrass species are in decline. The main threats to seagrass include urban, industrial and agricultural run-off, coastal development, dredging, unregulated fishing and boating activities and climate change. Seagrass loss has profound impacts on critical marine species, including migratory species such as turtles and dugongs, as well as on delivery of critical ecosystem services to humans including food security from fisheries, carbon sequestration and protection of shorelines.

39. Recognizing the importance of seagrass ecosystems to carbon sequestration and storage, UNEP also released guidelines for “protecting seagrass through payments for ecosystem services: a community guide” and “opportunities and challenges for community-based seagrass conservation”, which can both be downloaded [here](#). These reports provide important information on the potential for carbon projects for communities living next to seagrass areas. The guidelines are currently being implemented with UNEP's support in coastal communities in Kenya.

40. UNEP and the Nairobi Convention have also produced “Guidelines for seagrass ecosystem restoration in the Western Indian Ocean region”, which can be downloaded [here](#). The guidelines provide detailed information on the best practices for restoring seagrass ecosystems and are currently being implemented in areas of Mozambique that are critical for sea turtles and dugongs.

41. Furthermore, a small grants programme for conservation and restoration of coastal ecosystems in collaboration with the International Coral Reef Initiative will be supporting further seagrass restoration and carbon projects in 2021 and 2022.

## **J. Regional Cooperation**

### **Migratory Species Focal Area of CounterMEASURE II Project (Promotion of action against marine plastic litter in Asian and the Pacific)**

42. In partnership with the Government of Japan and in support of the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter and the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision”, UNEP implements the project “Promotion of action against marine plastic litter in Asia and the Pacific” (CounterMEASURE II). This project generates scientific knowledge on plastic pollution in the Ganges, Mekong and selected rivers in Sri Lanka and shares the knowledge to inform policy and decision-making processes at local, national, regional and global level. In response to CMS Resolutions 12.20 and Decisions 13.122 to 13.125, the CMS Secretariat and UNEP have joined efforts to understand the impact of plastic pollution on freshwater migratory species such as Ganges river dolphin and Mekong Giant Catfish.

43. The report “Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Aquatic, Terrestrial and Avian Migratory Species in the Asia and Pacific Region” has been finalized in July 2021, in collaboration with the National Oceanography Center (NOC), UK. In cooperation with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Australia, an assessment will be published shortly on plastic hotspots in the terrestrial and freshwater environment in selected sites in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam and priority intervention areas for preventing, combating and removal of accumulated plastic pollution in identified areas of high importance for migratory species. For the Mekong, protocols for riverine monitoring for macroplastic, microplastic and microplastic in fish are being developed in cooperation with the Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat. Under the Ganges focal area, a report is under preparation focusing on the status of knowledge on the trends, scope and impact of plastic pollution on CMS-listed species in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems of India. Furthermore, UNEP India Country Office has held discussions with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) of the Government of India on taking up two activities in support of the priority area of the impacts of pollution (air, water and marine debris) identified in India's CMS CoP Presidency strategy. These include: 1) Developing a monitoring framework for plastic pollution in riverine wetlands in India in support of India's commitments during its Presidency for the development of wetland management plans and their conservation; and 2) Supporting the national programme ‘Project Dolphin’ announced by the Government of India on August 15, 2020, through focused studies on the impacts of plastic pollution on vulnerable habitats and species in the Ganges River basin.

### **Support to the Government of India on CMS Conference of Parties Presidency Strategy**

44. UNEP supported the Government of India in the development and revision of India's COP Presidency Strategy for the triennium 2020-2023. Several rounds of meetings have been held between UNEP India Country Office and the MoEFCC on its implementation. Particularly, discussions have been held on furthering India's commitment made on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) for training and capacity building of 30 range states, dovetailing priorities of multiple conventions including CMS,



CITES, UNFCCC, UNCCD , areas of cooperation on CounterMEASURE II and India's CMS CoP Presidency strategy, India's national programme 'Project Dolphin', MoU for a transboundary Protected Area mechanism between India, Nepal and Bhutan and the recruitment of non-parties to the convention. Post CMS COP13, UNEP India Country Office has also engaged with both the CMS Secretariat and the MoEFCC regarding activities related to the COP Presidency.

#### **Support to National Stakeholder Consultations on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in India**

45. Theme-based national stakeholder consultations have been organized by the Government of India on identifying relevant existing indicators, baselines, baseline dates and appropriate methods for monitoring changes in biodiversity, indicating gaps and filling such gaps for a monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. UNEP India Country Office is participating in the ongoing national consultations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and has provided inputs on relevant indicators in the context of India, particularly relating to proposed component and complementary indicators on Goal A (connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems) and Target 6 (reduction of pollution from all sources). The final inputs (report) of UNEP India Country Office to the MoEFCC, Government of India on the monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be submitted after consultation with UNEP Regional Office of Asia and Pacific in August 2021. This activity supports the implementation of UNEP/CMS/Resolution 13.1, i.e., Gandhinagar Declaration on CMS and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

#### **Webinars on wetlands as ecological connections and reconciling linear infrastructure development with biodiversity conservation in India**

46. UNEP India Country Office in collaboration with Wetlands International – South Asia organized a webinar titled, "Wetland as Ecological Connections in the Central Asian Flyway" on 2 September 2020, to discuss pathways for the conservation of high ornithological value wetlands using an ecological network approach. The webinar brought together relevant stakeholders and experts including the CMS Secretariat, the Government of India, wildlife conservation organizations in India and international development agencies. UNEP India Country Office in collaboration with IUCN organized a webinar titled, "Building synergies and linkages between biodiversity and infrastructure development" on 10 March 2021, to discuss pathways for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in linear infrastructure planning and enhancing connectivity conservation. Recommendations from the webinar were released as a part of a partner's webinar series report on World Environment Day 2021. The activity supports the pursuance of UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.11 (Rev. COP 13) on flyways and UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.26 (Rev. COP 13) on "Improving ways of addressing connectivity in the conservation of migratory species."

### **III. Administrative and financial management support provided to the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species**

47. UNEP led COVID-19 Pandemic liquidity situation assessment - In 2020, UNEP continued to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on funding and programme delivery as well as ensuring that required administrative support was effectively provided. Consultations between UNEP Corporate Services Division and the Secretariat reviewed the inflow of contributions, generation of PSC as well as expenditure trends, and suggested prudential measures as necessary, to meet programmatic and staff related expenses. Overall, the assessment revealed that funding was sufficient to cover the expenses.

48. Umoja - the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tool that has been implemented since 2015 to process all administrative transactions within a common platform for the entire United Nations Secretariat. Umoja has been implemented in phases, in 2018, the Implementing Partner module was rolled out. This module enhances transparency and accountability in the selection of partners with whom the United Nations Secretariat engages with to execute its mandate.

49. Beginning 2021, additional modules have been rolled out to complete the implementation of Umoja as a one-stop solution for all administrative processes. These modules, collectively known as the Integrated Planning and Management Reporting (IPMR) tool include; (a) budgeting tool (b) programmatic view that incorporates SDGs and Gender markers, (c) Management tools that measure and record performance as well as highlight any existing funding gaps and finally (d) Dashboards that present visualization tools of captured data for reporting purposes.

50. UNEP will continue to engage the Convention to ensure adequate representation, training and incorporation of its requirements resulting in a successful implementation.

51. The roll out of the IPMR tool has so far led to an increase of Umoja license fees that are settled by respective MEAs. The increase in the license fee for the year 2020 was significantly higher than previous years due to the new cost distribution methodology decided by UNHQ, which is based on the number of registered users per entity.
52. At the 13th Conference of Parties meeting held in Gandhinagar India in 2019, Parties requested UNEP to provide alternative modalities that make it easier for parties to settle small amounts in a convenient way. UNEP is consulting UN HQs for alternative modalities of effecting payments within the established security arrangements as well as rules and regulations. CMS Secretariat will advise parties on the outcome of this initiative once finalized.
53. **Delegation of authority** - On 18 December 2018, the Secretary General of the United Nations issued a new framework for the delegation of authority effective January 2019 (ST/SGB/2019/2). The objective of the new framework is to transfer centrally held authority closer to the point of service delivery. On 4 November, UNEP adopted an updated delegation of authority policy and framework (DAPF), in line with that issued by the Secretary General. Once UNEP's 2019 DAPF was finalized, UNEP Corporate Services Division initiated the process to prepare UNEP's draft updated DAPF for MEA Secretariats. The final consultation meeting was held with the UNEP Executive Director and the MEA heads on the 14th July 2021, DAPF for MEA Secretariats is expected to be approved by the Executive Director shortly, with effective date to enter into force 1st of September 2021.
54. **Financial advisory unit for the multilateral environmental agreements** - The Executive Director decided to provide extra administrative coordination to the MEAs secretariats through the establishment of a dedicated unit within the Corporate Services Division and under the supervision of the Division Director. Support provided by the unit includes budget administration, audit coordination and risk management, backstopping of administrative staff, and treasury functions for multilateral funds. The MEA advisory unit provided backstopping for Finance and Budget staff to Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS) Secretariat for 10 months since September 2020.
55. **Programme support costs** - In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217 and United Nations procedures stipulated in the administrative instruction on programme support accounts (ST/AI/286), programme support costs are charged on all extrabudgetary resources at a standard rate of 13 per cent to recover the incremental costs incurred while supporting activities financed through such resources. The amount of programme support resources available in any given year is dependent on the income generated for that purpose in the previous year. The administrative staff and activities of the CMS Secretariat are funded through programme support resources, which in recent years have been insufficient to meet expected obligations. The Executive Director has requested heads of office to reconsider any requests for programme support cost waivers that would substantially reduce programme support resources.
56. In order to respond to the changes in the structure of administrative costs following the launch of Umoja, UNEP is in the process of reviewing the existing Programme Support Cost (PSC) policy within the framework of existing financial regulations and rules of the United Nations. Inputs will be sought from all MEA Executive Heads including CMS. Once finalized, it will be shared with all parties through the respective Executive Directors reports, usually submitted to COPs, in the section on administrative and financial matters.
57. **Settlement of contributions** - The United Nations Secretariat adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in 2014. Umoja implements strict IPSAS-based liquidity management, which requires that cash be available for the settlement of payments. Parties are therefore encouraged to settle their assessed contributions in full early in the year to guarantee continuity of operations under the Convention on Migratory Species. Those Parties that are in arrears are requested to engage with the Convention Secretariat on settlement modalities.
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