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APPLICATION OF THE IUCN RED LIST CATEGORIES TO EVALUATE CMS LISTING PROPOSALS

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Introduction

1. At COP9 the criteria for listing Appendix II species were the subject of a discussion when the basis for inclusion of several species on Appendix II was questioned. The concern was based on a proposal to list a species that was considered common and not threatened, and that therefore did not appear to require international cooperation to benefit its conservation. It was suggested that the criteria for listing under Appendix II were unclear and ambiguous, and should be reviewed by the Scientific Council to ensure consistency with other conventions.
2. The 16th Meeting of the Scientific Council (ScC16), in discussing the Appendix II listing criteria, noted that the Convention text mentioned both “unfavourable conservation status” and “benefiting from international cooperation”. A species therefore need not have an unfavourable conservation status to be listed. The Council also recalled Baker et al. (2002) comparing the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (IUCN 2008) and the CMS appendices. This paper had recommended that the IUCN Red List Categories be used as a tool to support the assessment of the conservation status of migratory species proposed for listing on Appendix I and II. The Scientific Council (ScC11) approved the recommendations of the paper for transmission to the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. However, the report of COP7 contains no record of the recommendations being discussed or endorsed by the Conference of Parties.
3. Criteria for listing species in Appendix I and II remain unclear, and ScC16 requested that ScC11/Doc.6/Rev.2 be revised for consideration at the 17th Meeting of the Council. This paper represents the results of that review, which has primarily focused on the issue of ‘unfavourable conservation status’.

Overview of the IUCN Red List System

4. In the absence of specific quantitative criteria for listing CMS species, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is a key reference on population status and trends, and its use is recommended as guidance to evaluate species proposals submitted by CMS Parties. This document proposes aligning the IUCN threat categories and the requirements for Appendix I and Appendix II established by the Convention.

5. The IUCN Red List System is a hierarchical classification system developed to assess and highlight species of animals and plants under higher extinction risk. First conceived in 1963 and originally used by the IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC), the IUCN Red List System has set a global standard for species listing and conservation assessment efforts. For nearly 50 years the SSC has been evaluating the conservation status of species and subspecies on a global scale – highlighting those threatened with extinction and promoting their conservation.

6. The system was developed to focus attention on conservation measures designed to protect species at risk. Over time, IUCN has recognized that a more objective and scientific system for determining threat status, as well as a more accurate system for use at the national and regional level were needed. The IUCN Red List Categories were reviewed in the early 1990s through extensive consultation and testing involving more than 800 SSC members, and the wider scientific community. This resulted in a more precise and quantitative approach which was adopted by IUCN in 1994 (IUCN 1994).

7. Since their adoption in 1994, the Categories have become widely recognized internationally, and they are now used in a range of publications and listings produced by IUCN, as well as by numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations. Such broad and extensive use has meant the criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure their applicability to a wide range of organisms, especially long-lived species, and species under intensive management.

8. The SSC completed an extensive review of the categories and criteria used to list species on the IUCN Red List in 2000. The review produced a clearer, more open and easy-to-use system. With particular attention paid to marine species, harvested species and population fluctuations, the review refined the effectiveness of the Red List Categories and Criteria as indicators of extinction risk. Extensive consultation and testing in the development of the system, together with its subsequent wide adoption by many government, intergovernmental and non-government organizations, strongly suggest that it is now robust across most organisms.

9. Guidelines for using the IUCN Categories and Criteria were last revised by the IUCN Council in August 2008 (IUCN 2008).

Description of the listing categories

10. IUCN (2008) recognizes the following categories of threat:

Extinct (EX) – A taxon is Extinct when there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died.

Extinct in the Wild (EW) – A taxon is Extinct in the Wild when it is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalized population (or populations) well outside the past range.

Critically Endangered (CR) – A taxon is Critically Endangered when the best available evidence indicates that it meets any of the criteria A to E for Critically Endangered (IUCN 2008, Table 2.1), and it is therefore considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

Endangered (EN) – A taxon is Endangered when the best available evidence indicates that it meets any of the criteria A to E for Endangered (IUCN 2008, Table 2.1), and it is therefore considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction on the wild.

Vulnerable (VU) – A taxon is Vulnerable when the best available evidence indicates that it meets any of the criteria A to E for Vulnerable (IUCN 2008, Table 2.1), and it is therefore considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

Near Threatened (NT) – A taxon is Near Threatened when it has been evaluated against the criteria but does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable now, but is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future.

Least Concern (LC) – A taxon is Least Concern when it has been evaluated against the criteria and does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened. Widespread and abundant taxa are included in this category.

Data Deficient (DD) – A taxon is Data Deficient when there is inadequate information to make a direct, or indirect, assessment of its risk of extinction based on its distribution and/or population status. A taxon in this category may well be studied, and its biology well known, but appropriate data on abundance and/or distribution are lacking. Data Deficient is therefore not a category of threat.

Not Evaluated (NE) – A taxon is Not Evaluated when it is has not yet been evaluated against the criteria.

11. Listing to one of the above categories requires that a taxon be assessed against five quantitative criteria – meeting any one of these criteria qualifies a taxon for listing at that level of threat. The five criteria are described in detail in IUCN (2008), and are:

- A. Reduction in population size;
- B. Geographic range limited either in extent of occurrence or the area occupied;
- C. Declining population size;
- D. Small population size; and
- E. A high probability of extinction.

12. The criteria can be applied at any taxonomic unit at or below the species level. The IUCN Red List Categories are intended to be an easily and widely understood system for classifying species at high risk of global extinction. The general aim of the system is to provide an explicit, objective framework for the classification of the broadest range of taxa according to their extinction risk.

The implications for CMS

13. The Convention provides for the listing of species on both Appendix I and Appendix II, providing a clear indication that both lists were intended to lead to different conservation action by Parties. Appendix I emphasizes the need for habitat conservation, removal of barriers to migration and management of threats (Article III paragraph 4) by a Party or Parties, whereas Appendix II puts the emphasis on international cooperation and the conclusion of agreements.

Criteria for Appendix I

14. CMS requirements for listing species or populations to Appendix I are set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article III:

“Appendix I shall list migratory species which are endangered. A migratory species may be listed in Appendix I provided that reliable evidence, including the best scientific evidence available, indicates that the species is endangered.”

15. It is considered that the IUCN categories and criteria are sufficiently developed and widely understood as to recommend them for use in assessing the appropriateness of listing a taxon to CMS Appendix I. It is suggested a taxon assessed as “Extinct in the Wild”, “Critically Endangered”, “Endangered” or “Vulnerable” using the IUCN Red List criteria should qualify for listing on Appendix I. This principle has already been endorsed by the Conference of the Parties in Resolution 9.20, which states that the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) should be listed on Appendix I unless it is no longer considered by IUCN to be “Critically Endangered”, “Endangered” or “Vulnerable”. It should also be noted that almost all taxa currently listed on Appendix I meet the IUCN Red List criteria suggested (CMS Secretariat 2011).

16. If such an approach is adopted by CMS, it follows that a taxon that does not meet the IUCN criteria for EW, CR, EN or VU should not be considered in principle a suitable candidate for Appendix I.

17. There are currently a few species listed on Appendix I which do not meet the IUCN criteria for EW, CR, EN or VU. Paragraph 3 of Article III provides a mechanism where a species no longer considered to be Endangered can be removed from Appendix I. However, it is noteworthy that to date no species has been removed from the Appendices once listed (CMS Secretariat 2011).

18. It should be further noted that some of the species that will be under consideration for Appendix I listing at COP10 also do not meet the IUCN criteria for CR, EN or VU. Immediate application of the IUCN Red List criteria to these current nominations could be contentious, and it may be appropriate to delay application of the IUCN criteria until COP11.

Criteria for Appendix II

19. CMS requirements for listing species or populations to Appendix II are set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article IV:

“Appendix II shall list migratory species which have an unfavourable conservation status and which require international agreements for their conservation and management, as well as those which have a conservation status which would significantly benefit from the international cooperation that could be achieved by an international agreement”.

20. When assessing the conservation status of a taxon, it seems reasonable to conclude that any species considered to be threatened with extinction has an unfavourable conservation status, whereas those that are not under threat of extinction have a favourable conservation status. Applying such a definition, any taxon assessed as ‘Extinct in the Wild’, ‘Critically Endangered’, ‘Endangered’, ‘Vulnerable’ or ‘Near Threatened’ using the IUCN Red List criteria could certainly be considered to have “*an unfavourable conservation status*”, Only inclusion of the

“Near Threatened” category would appear to be slightly contentious, but given that the IUCN defines NT as “*close to qualifying for, or is likely to qualify for, a threatened category in the near future*”, such a categorization would reasonably indicate a conservation status that is not optimal.

21. However, the IUCN categories and criteria do not necessarily provide guidance on whether a taxon “*would significantly benefit from the international cooperation that could be achieved by an international agreement*”. Such a judgement requires the application of criteria other than those developed for assessing conservation status, and will vary depending on a range of factors that are taxon-specific. Such an assessment is probably best decided on a case-by-case basis.

22. It is suggested that nomination to Appendix II should be seen as a two-stage process. The first stage should be based on conservation status as determined by the IUCN Red List criteria, with migratory taxa with a status of EW, CR, EN, VU or NT ‘automatically’ qualifying for consideration for listing to Appendix II. The second stage would apply to those taxa that are Least Concern. For these, proponents nominating any taxon for inclusion on Appendix II should be required to indicate clearly how the nomination and subsequent development of international cooperation would benefit the taxon, and their intention with respect to concluding an international agreement. Ideally, this will include the proponent taking on the role of Focal Point for the nominated taxon.

23. CMS Appendix II currently includes listings of taxonomic units above the species level, although nominations at the higher taxonomic level have not occurred for the last 15 years. Such listings, particularly where the taxonomic unit contains many species, have proven problematic for some jurisdictions as they have included a number of species that are common, face no apparent threat, and in some cases, are not migratory. Future nominations at a taxonomic level higher than the species level are therefore not recommended.

Recommendations

24. It is recommended that the Conference of the Parties considers the suggestions in this paper and agrees to use the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria as a decision support tool in assessing the conservation status of listing proposals of migratory species to Appendix I and II on the following basis:

- a) a taxon assessed as “Extinct in the Wild”, “Critically Endangered”, “Endangered” or “Vulnerable” using the IUCN Red List criteria qualifies for listing on Appendix I, recognizing that CMS Appendix I species are broadly defined as “endangered”;
- b) a taxon assessed as “Extinct in the Wild”, “Critically Endangered”, “Endangered”, “Vulnerable” or “Near Threatened” using the IUCN Red List criteria qualifies for listing on Appendix II; recognizing that such species can be broadly defined as having “an unfavourable conservation status”, and where it can be demonstrated that the taxon is likely to benefit from concluding an international agreement;
- c) Given that Article IV of the Convention does not require a taxon to have an unfavourable conservation status to be listed to Appendix II, species not at risk of extinction as determined by the IUCN Red List criteria may be listed on Appendix II if a proponent is able to demonstrate clearly:

- i. how the nomination would benefit the taxon;
 - ii. their intention with respect to concluding an international agreement; and
 - iii. a willingness to adopt the role of Focal Point for the nominated taxon and lead the development of a international agreement;
- d) These arrangements to take effect at the 11th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP11).

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