

Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP10) to the Convention on Migratory Species

IFAW opening statement

20 November 2011

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its Secretariat excel in bringing range states, IGOs and NGOs together to create agreements which actively protect wildlife and habitats. As an international NGO active in the conservation of migratory species, IFAW is a partner organisation to the CMS. IFAW's long-standing commitment is to support core functions of the Secretariat and advance the development and implementation of CMS Agreements and MoUs by providing technical expertise and capacity. In particular, IFAW supports CMS Agreements and MoUs (i.e. ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, IOSEA, Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelope, and Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant) and since CoP8, we have helped to develop, conclude and begin the implementation of MoUs concerning: Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region; Dugongs; Manatee and Small Cetaceans of Western Africa and Macaronesia, Sharks and Mediterranean Monk Seal.

IFAW regards the CMS as one of the key global biodiversity conservation treaties and the key mechanism for instigating coordinated, range-wide action for migratory species. We note the success and growth of the CMS family, both in terms of the number of parties and agreements, but also acknowledge the capacity constraints and the challenges this poses. IFAW recognises that both additional core funds and resources for agreements are needed if the CMS and its family of agreements are to continue to achieve their objectives. We call on Parties to formally commit to providing financial contributions to support the implementation of the Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region, and Manatee and Small Cetaceans of Western Africa and Macaronesia.

IFAW supports Resolution 9.13 on the 'Future Shape' of the CMS. The significant growth in the CMS, combined with challenges such as climate change, make such a process timely. While we encourage the development of an efficient 'Future Shape' we are mindful that the protection of migratory species should remain as the underlying priority. We note that limited resources are often a root cause of underachievement and not necessarily the structure of the CMS. We recognise that this is a difficult process but would welcome resolution at CoP10 if possible. Regarding resources, we welcome the increased dialogue amongst MEAs to share capacity and urge all governing bodies to encourage better resourced institutions, like CBD and GEF, to support the CMS in recognition of its tremendous contribution to achieving its priority objectives and targets.

Within the 'Future Shape' process IFAW notes discussion of the ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS areas. It is paramount that the outcome incorporates the highest available standards of marine species protection.

As a member of the working group on CMS listing criteria, IFAW supports increased clarity and consistency in the system and supports the use of IUCN listing criteria. Nevertheless, the IUCN red list is not always up-to-date and even a no threat, data-deficiency or no-



evaluation category in IUCN may not be a guarantee that a species does not require a CMS listing. Therefore, if indications suggest a serious threat or problem for a species or migratory species population the precautionary approach must be applied. The lack of full scientific certainty is no excuse for postponing conservation action. In this regard, we trust that the CoP will incorporate a mechanism to maintain the precautionary approach as part of the listing criteria.

IFAW welcomes the initiative taken at CoP9 to assess the need for CMS involvement in tiger conservation and the communication between the CMS and other stakeholders since then. At the time of the last CoP the Global Tiger Initiative had just been formed. However, there was no high level commitment amongst all tiger range states to address priority threats to tigers adequately nor had the GTF (Global Tiger Forum - the regional governmental body to coordinate action on tiger conservation amongst all range states) adequate capacity or support. Now we have a rare opportunity, where the Parties to the CMS can congratulate the Tiger Range States first and foremost, but also all stakeholders in the Global Tiger Initiative and the Global Tiger Forum, for the new dynamic to save the tigers throughout their range in Asia. This CoP should send a signal of encouragement to ensure that the commitments made are fully implemented. The CMS itself may not need to take any further action now except to maintain good communications with the GTF.

We also welcome the recent development of the shark MoU and the connected development of the conservation plan for sharks, however we suggest the inclusion of all shark species in the threatened categories of IUCN to be included in the CMS annexes. We encourage member states to sign the MoU.

IFAW has been supportive of the Elephant Range States and welcomes the creation of instruments to cover elephant populations in Western Africa. We encourage all signatories to the MoU to put an emphasis on potential synergies with the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) and to adopt the priorities already agreed in the AEAP as the regional priorities under the CMS MoU.

With similar eagerness, IFAW encourages an agreement on Central African elephants and looks forward to seeing the range states taking a lead role in this process. As a partner in elephant welfare and conservation to many range states, IFAW is interested in becoming a signatory to any such CMS elephant agreement.

IFAW believes that climate change may have a devastating effect on some migratory species in the near future. This new challenge makes it imperative to eliminate all avoidable threats like hunting. In this regard, we note that polar bears or hooded seals, for example, are currently on the IUCN red list but not on any CMS appendix and we note that other species, like the harp seals, are not listed on the IUCN red list, but will face serious threats very soon due climate change. We look forward to discussing how the convention can responsibly address the impact of climate change on migratory species.

IFAW strongly commends the Programme of Work on Cetaceans and would be further encouraged if additional resources for this work could be identified. In this context, underwater noise needs regulating. It should be restricted or eliminated rather than avoided and where possible, eliminated from marine protected areas. We also believe that responsibility for mitigation measures should be a government rather than private sector responsibility.

Marine debris is becoming a growing concern for migratory species and we welcome consideration of its impact and we look forward to the speedy development of a CMS response to this threat to marine species.



We would also like to encourage the continued support, evaluation and existence of the instruments on Marine turtles.

Finally, IFAW is pleased to be a participant in CoP10 and acknowledges the proactive role that the CMS encourages NGOs to have in what is a crucial inter governmental fora on conservation.