

## **(Draft) Terms of Reference of the CMS Scientific Council Working Group on Ecological Connectivity**

### **1. Background**

Connectivity is a key word of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the only global legal instrument devoted to the conservation of migratory animals.

Recently, increasing attention and importance are being given to the role that connectivity plays in nature conservation, and in the face of both the ongoing biodiversity crisis and escalating climate-driven ecological catastrophes, the role it plays in the protection and retention of ecological integrity. The need to maintain and enhance ecological connectivity has been recognized by many international processes, such as the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, which adopted Resolution 75/271 "Nature knows no borders: transboundary cooperation – a key factor for biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use", and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CMS (COP13) adopted several Resolutions and Decisions on ecological connectivity.

[The CMS Scientific Council Working Group on Ecological Connectivity has been established by the Fifth Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC - SC5) held virtually from 28 June to 9 July 2021, with the aim of enhancing the scientific understanding of connectivity issues providing advice on these in relation to migratory species.]

### **2. Purpose**

- A. The primary objective of the Working Group is to support the delivery of relevant tasks contained in the Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee (POW).
- B. In addition, the Working Group will support the implementation of relevant Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Scientific Council.
- C. The Working Group will support the implementation of connectivity-related goals and targets of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the further development of its monitoring framework.
- D. The Working Group will provide a platform to discuss and exchange information and scientific findings on ecological connectivity-related matters also with a view to further developing the [CMS Thematic Webpage on Connectivity](#).

A workplan detailing specific activities will be developed for each intersessional period. [A draft workplan for the intersessional period COP13-COP14 is contained in the Annex of this document].

### **3. Membership**

- A. Membership of the Working Group can include both members of the Scientific Council and observers.
- B. The Working Group strives to maintain a balance of gender, regional representation and taxonomic categories of expertise.
- C. The involvement of Working Group members is entirely on voluntarily basis.
- D. If and when needed, experts external to the Working Group and interested in contributing to the objectives of the Working Group may occasionally be invited to join meetings or to support specific tasks.

### **4. Organization of work**

- A. The Working Group will be chaired by the COP-Appointed Councilor for Connectivity. If the Chair has to leave her/his position, a new Chair will be appointed from among the remaining Sessional Committee / Scientific Council members of the Working Group.
- B. The Working Group will mainly operate electronically by communicating via email and possibly making use of a dedicated workspace. Meetings (in-person or virtual) will be mostly held in the margins of Sessional Committee meetings.
- C. The Chair of the Working Group will report on progress to the Sessional Committee.
- D. The CMS Secretariat will support and facilitate the coordination of the activities and the organization of meetings of the Working Group.

### **5. Duration**

The Working Group will stand until the first meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council after COP14, at which point, the Sessional Committee can decide whether the group should continue for the following intersessional period based on COP14 mandate.

## Annex - Workplan of CMS Scientific Council Working Group on Ecological Connectivity for the intersessional period COP13-COP14

The Working Group will specifically:

- A. Support the delivery of the relevant tasks contained in the [Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee](#) (POW) as adopted by its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting which derive from [Decision 13.114](#) being:
- a) review the scope for existing major databases to support relevant analyses and syntheses of information on connectivity, and identify options inter alia for ensuring sustainability and enhanced operability and coordination of such databases for this purpose;
  - b) investigate options for creating relevant data and knowledge holding capabilities and for enhancing analysis capabilities under the auspices of the CMS, in collaboration with suitably qualified institutions and processes;
  - c) investigate and report on the linkages between migratory species connectivity and ecosystem resilience;
  - d) having regard in particular to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species, assess the needs and develop focused objectives for new research on key connectivity issues, including but not limited to climate change, which affect the conservation status of each of the major taxonomic groups of migratory wild animals covered by CMS in each of the world's major land and oceanic regions, and produce a report on the findings of this assessment prior to the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties;
  - e) consider the need for additional guidance within the framework of the CMS on assessing threats to migratory species connectivity in particular priority situations identified by the work described in sub-paragraph (d) above; and
  - f) make recommendations as appropriate arising from the work described in this Decision.
- B. Support the implementation of relevant Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Scientific Council:
- [Resolution 12.07 \(Rev.COP13\)](#) on the Role of Ecological Networks in the Conservation of Migratory Species, especially:
- (Para 13)* support the development of further site networks within the CMS Family or other fora and processes, that identify important sites for migratory species and promote their internationally coordinated conservation and management;
- (Para 24)* work with Parties and international and regional organizations in organizing regional and sub-regional workshops to promote the conservation and management of critical sites and ecological networks among Parties;
- (Para 31)* work closely with relevant organizations such as the European Space Agency and its Focal Points to support new technology developments such as the ICARUS experiment to track the movement and fate of migratory animals globally.
- C. Support the implementation of the connectivity-related objectives of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the further development of its monitoring framework through:
- a. helping to develop or promote meaningful indicator[s] on ecological connectivity in line with the processes agreed by COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
  - b. providing guidance to adequately reflect and implement the connectivity-related objectives of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in CMS workstreams.