



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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Agenda Item 10

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

(Prepared by the Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific Council)

1. The activities and developments under the Scientific Council and its working groups which took place during the 2009-2011 triennium are summarized in this paper.

2. During the past triennium there were three intersessional meetings: the Activity Planning Meeting of the Scientific Council (13 June 2009), the 16th Meeting of the Scientific Council (ScC16, 28-30 June 2010) and the 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council (ScC17; 17-18 November 2011). While the meeting documents and reports provide a detailed account of the meeting substance and discussions, the following paragraphs outline activities on selected themes, incorporating intersessional progress until September 2011. Full reports of all these meetings have been posted on the “Bodies and Meetings” pages of the CMS web-site (www.cms.int) and all the relevant links are listed in Annex 1 of this document.

1. Proposals for amendments to the Convention’s Appendices

3. A total of five species have been proposed for listing on Appendix I, as well as three for Appendix II, whereby one species has been proposed for both Appendices (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.15). The Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) has been proposed for listing on Appendix I by the European Union following the unsuccessful attempt by the Government of Croatia to have the species listed at COP9. The listing on Appendix I is strongly recommended in Resolution 9.20, given that the species is categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, thereby implying an unfavourable conservation status under CMS (UNEP/CMS/Res.9.20).

4. The working group on terrestrial mammals has already considered the listing of one of the species proposed for Appendix II, the argali (*Ovis ammon*) at ScC16. At ScC16 the working group on birds also discussed the listing of the Far-eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) for Appendix I since its status has worsened to Endangered on the IUCN Red List. In addition the bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) had further been identified as a possible candidate for Appendix II. Only the proposals for the Bristle-thighed curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) by the Cook Islands and the Manta ray (*Manta birostris*) by Ecuador will be considered for the first time by the 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council.

2. Thematic and taxonomic working groups

5. The individual working groups under the Scientific Council were tasked with a number of new activities at COP9 (UNEP/CMS/ScCAP/Doc.4) in addition to other duties, the most notable achievements are listed below.

Animal disease

6. Building up on the success of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, CMS and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) launched a Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Disease during a workshop on 27-28 June 2011 in Beijing, China (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.42). The Task Force aims to integrate the healthy management of ecosystems, wildlife, livestock and people¹. It will identify diseases that have an impact on both livestock and migratory wildlife with major implications for food security, sustainable livelihoods and conservation; and find ways to bridge the gaps between wildlife managers and health practitioners. It plans to establish a mechanism for CMS and FAO Parties to respond to the threat of transboundary animal health crises by reporting wildlife morbidity and mortality events.

Bycatch

7. At ScC16, the suggestion of the related working group to narrow the scope of the planned global review of the impact of fisheries on CMS-listed species was accepted. The chair and the Secretariat subsequently agreed revised terms of reference for the study with the donor countries. Carried out by an external consultant, the report (see UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.33 and UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.30) focuses on the potential impact of gill net fisheries on populations of CMS-listed species, as well as mitigation methods and their application in different types of gill net fisheries, with clear recommendations to Parties. The Appointed Councillor for Bycatch who chairs the working group also attended the FAO meeting “*Technical Consultation to Develop International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards*” in December 2010 at which draft guidelines were developed and he was able to represent both CMS and ACAP.

Climate change

8. The extent of the impact that climate change is having on migratory species is becoming increasingly apparent and is of significant concern for the Scientific Council. It is important for Parties not only to focus on assisting migrants adapt to climate change, but also to take into account migratory species in their wider climate change mitigation strategy. A technical workshop on the “Impact of Climate Change on Migratory Species: the current status and avenues for action” was organized by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in June 2011 to assess the current status, review the implementation of CMS’s climate change mandate and to make recommendations for action by CMS Parties. The presentations and report of the meeting are available on a dedicated webpage of the Working Group on Climate Change (Annex I). Further information on an assessment aimed at identifying those CMS species which are most vulnerable to climate change and further progress in implementing Resolution 9.7 can be found in the relevant background document on climate change (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.40).

Flyways

9. A new thematic working group on flyways was set up at COP9 to “act as a think tank on flyways and frameworks, and tasked with reviewing scientific and technical issues for conservation of migratory birds and their habitats” (UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.27). A dedicated webpage has been created (see Annex I), which provides an overview of the progress under the working group, as well as the first meeting of the Flyways Working Group (Edinburgh, February

¹ <http://www.wildlifediseasetaskforce.org/>

2011). Three reviews have been prepared as called for by Resolutions 9.3 and 9.13 (UNEP/CMS/ScC17/Inf.4, UNEP/CMS/ScC17/Inf.4.1-3), not least to assist the Inter-sessional Working Group on the Future Shape of CMS (http://www.cms.int/bodies/future_shape/future_shape_mainpage.htm). Draft policy options for migratory bird flyway conservation/management were already presented and discussed at the 37th Meeting of the Standing Committee (CMS/StC37/8/Rev.1).

Sustainable Use

10. The working group on sustainable use has further assessed the applicability of the Addis Ababa principles to CMS, under the lead of the Chair of the working group, and shall further consult at ScC17 in November 2011.

Working Group on Aquatic Mammals

11. The working group had discussed a draft proposal on the listing of Cuvier's and Blainville's beaked whales (*Ziphius cavirostris* and *Mesoplodon densirostris* respectively) at ScC16 (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.18). The working group suggested that these needed further work before they could be passed to COP. However, final proposals were not formally submitted to the Secretariat. The Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals, who chairs the working group, was also closely involved in the preparation of the extensive reviews carried out in follow-up of Res.8.22 and Res.9.09 (UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.31), as well as the development of the associated draft Programme of Work for Cetaceans (UNEP/CMS/Res.10.15), which is proposed for adoption by COP10. In addition, the chair prepared UNEP/CMS/ScC17/Doc.5 on the taxonomy of *Neophocaena*, which suggests that after the taxonomic split of the Appendix II-listed finless porpoise into two species, both species should be included on Appendix II.

Working Group on birds

12. The working group consulted on the appropriate taxonomic reference to be used to harmonize the bird nomenclature between the Appendices of CMS and CITES, and beyond (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.32). The group further recommend the adoption of the proposed rule for "lumping" put forward by the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council at the ScC16 (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc 14).

Working Group on fish

13. The working group discussed a number of draft proposals for fish submitted by the Government of Paraguay at the ScC16 (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.7). However, final drafts were not formally submitted to the Secretariat. The chair of the working group has prepared a review of migratory freshwater fish, highlighting those that would benefit from listing on CMS Appendices and targeted transboundary conservation action. Out of approximately 15,000 known freshwater fish species, 32 were selected which were known to be transboundary, migratory and had an unfavourable conservation status. This assessment is aimed at improving the representativeness of the CMS Appendices with regards to fish. A draft was already discussed at ScC16 (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.6), a final version has been submitted to COP10 (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.31).

Working Group on Marine turtles

14. In response to the cyclones and flooding in 2011 in Queensland, Australia, unusually high numbers of turtles and dugongs have been washed ashore. The chair of the working group has been heavily involved in addressing this looming wildlife crisis, resulting to a large extent from the destruction of seagrass beds.

Working Group on terrestrial mammals

15. Progress in implementing the concerted action on Sahelo-Saharan antelopes continues, specifically in Niger (www.ass-niger.org) where the remaining habitat of the Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) is threatened by oil exploration. The Action Plan is currently being revised and a status report for individual species covered by the Concerted Action is being prepared by the chair of the working group. Further information regarding the implementation of the envisaged “Memorandum of Understanding concerning conservation measures for Sahelo-Saharan megafauna” is outlined in document UNEP/CMS/Conf. 10.9 and UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.12. The current status of development under the Cooperative Action for the Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) in Central Africa called for by Recommendation 9.5 is being assisted by the production of a gap analysis and further activities as summarized in UNEP/CMS/Conf. 10.9 and UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.12. The development of the Concerted Action on Central Eurasian Aridland Mammals continues well, as outlined in document UNEP/CMS/Conf. 10.9. Progress is being facilitated by the arrival of the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) for Central Asia in October 2010 at the Secretariat, sponsored by Germany. The development of the species proposal for the Argali (*Ovis ammon*) for Appendix II benefited from the JPO assisting negotiations among Range States. Other potential species proposals which were discussed by the working group at ScC16, such as proposals for the tiger (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.19/Rev.2; UNEP/CMS/Conf. 10.12), the cheetah for Appendix II (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.20), the African lion, fish and wild goats, were not formally submitted by a Party to the Secretariat in the end.

3. Future Shape and reviews of policy options for flyways, terrestrial mammals and turtles

16. In order to assist the future shape process (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.20), a number of reviews on the available policy instruments and the potential for future developments have been conducted for several taxonomic groups and flyways. The reviews on terrestrial mammals (UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.15), turtles (UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.16) and flyways (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.23) provide thorough background for more informed decision-making with regards to the future shape of the CMS Family, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

4. Progress on taxonomic matters

17. In an effort which is much welcomed by Parties, CITES and CMS have been aligning their taxonomic references to improve treaty harmonization and to make implementation easier. Following the adoption of specific taxonomic references for marine mammals and terrestrial mammals by COP9, the CITES and CMS Secretariats have further consulted each other, as well as the working group on birds (see above; UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.32) and ACAP (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.17), to harmonize also the taxonomic reference for birds at COP10. Positive feedback has been received from the Scientific Council with regards to the adoption of a specific procedure for “lumping” for a situation where a taxon listed on the CMS Appendices is merged with one or more unlisted taxa as a result of a change of taxonomy (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc 14). The outcome of the envisaged “lumping” is that the taxon listed on the Appendices and the unlisted one(s) are merged and both listed on the respective Appendix or Appendices. It is hoped that COP10 will support this proposal.

5. Criteria for listing CMS Appendix II species

18. COP9 and ScC16 had called for the clarification of listing criteria for Appendix II, since these were unclear, permitting the listing on the basis of either an “unfavourable conservation

status” or on the basis of a species “benefiting from international cooperation”. In order to resolve this, the Appointed Councillor for By-catch has prepared a paper for consideration by ScC17 and COP10 (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.37).

6. Classification of countries as range states

19. ScC15 and ScC16 had highlighted that the classification of range states under CMS was not sufficiently clear for those countries where a species only sporadically occurred. To date, it had been the decision of a country to declare itself a range state according to Article VI. It was noted that “classifying countries as Range State only on the basis of single records of occurrence of a particular species would just be a burden on their administrative and financial resources without bringing any significant contributions to the species conservation.” (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.24). Scientific Councillors had been requested by ScC16 to submit comments to the Secretariat on the matter. The Vice-Chair has amended the paper UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.24 for the ScC17 to facilitate a final decision on how to resolve this issue.

7. Status assessment of CMS Appendix I species

20. The need to assess the conservation status of species listed on the CMS Appendices is included in the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 and has been discussed within the Scientific Council since its 14th Meeting. The matter is of fundamental importance, since Parties require an overview of how listed species are performing and need guidance as to where more or less assistance is required. Such an assessment is not least important to facilitate the down-listing of species, whose conservation status has become favourable, such as the Vicugna (*Vicugna vicugna*), which is currently listed on Appendix I and is listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. To date, however, not a single species has been down-listed from the CMS Appendices.

21. The taxonomic working groups under the Scientific Council had been assigned the task of filling and submitting an agreed fact sheet to illustrate the conservation status for ScC16. Since only two Scientific Councillors actively participated in this endeavour, the Secretariat is currently producing species fact sheets for all Appendix I listed species, based on IUCN Red List data (UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.26). Appendix II listed species are also yet to be assessed, a task which is likely to be much more work-intensive. ScC17 and COP10 will have to decide on the mechanism to set up for regular - and ideally pre-COP - assessments of CMS listed species, preferably in close cooperation with existing conservation status assessments, such as the IUCN Red List or the Living Planet Index.

8. Survey of Scientific Council expertise

22. In order to obtain a clear overview of expertise present within the Scientific Council, a questionnaire was sent out to Scientific Councillors. The brief questionnaire (Annex I of UNEP/CMS/ScCAP/Doc.2; also UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.5/ Annex 1) assesses expertise in terms of taxonomy, geography, individual threats and conservation methods, but also covers languages spoken by Scientific Councillors, affiliation and areas of specialization.

23. Approximately half of Scientific Councillors returned questionnaires, despite the deadline for submission of questionnaires being extended from June 2010 to spring 2011. The Secretariat assessed the questionnaires for discussion at ScC17 (UNEP/CMS/ScC17/Doc.6).

9. Small Grants Programme

24. The programme was created in 1994 and was effective in promoting small-scale conservation and research projects for a variety of taxa (e.g. UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.22). However, since COP8 the budget for small grants has primarily depended on voluntary contributions since the annual budget line of approximately €60,000 could only support a very limited number of small projects. The potential avenues for improving the *status quo* were revised by the Secretariat (UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.43) following the assessment by ScC16 (UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.23).

10. COP10 draft resolutions, which have already been discussed by CMS meetings

25. There are more than twenty Resolutions proposed for adoption by COP10, several more than at COP9. Out of these, a number have already been discussed by ScC16 or the 37th Meeting of the Standing Committee, as indicated by Table 1.

Resolution focus	COP10 Resolution code	Relevant Scientific Council document	Relevant Standing Committee document
<i>Modus Operandi</i> for Conservation Emergencies	UNEP/CMS/Res.10.2	UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.13	CMS/StC37/16
Marine debris	UNEP/CMS/Res.10.4	UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.21 UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Inf.9 UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Inf.9.1	CMS/StC37/21
The Potential Role of Critical Sites and Ecological Networks within the CMS Framework	UNEP/CMS/Res.10.3	UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Inf.15	CMS/StC37/17 CMS/StC37/17.1
Inter-governmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)	UNEP/CMS/Res.10.8	-	CMS/StC37/Inf.7

Table 1: COP10 resolution subjects which have already been discussed by previous CMS meetings

11. Recruitment within the CMS Science Unit, 2009-2011

26. Dr. Borja Heredia, a former member of the CMS Scientific Council from Spain, was appointed as Scientific and Technical Officer in early 2010, and Dr. Aline Kühl took up the position of Associate Scientific and Technical Officer in May 2010 following the creation of the post by COP9. The work of the Science Unit has benefitted on an *ad hoc* basis from the appointment to the Agreements Unit in October 2010 of Ms. Christiane Röttger, Junior Professional Officer for Central Asia, supported by the Government of Germany.

12. Other meetings which the Chair of the Scientific Council attended

27. The Chair of the Scientific Council represented CMS at a number of meetings relevant to the Scientific Council during the 2009-2011 triennium, as outlined in Table 2.

Meeting	Location, date
Expert Meeting on Development of Post 2010 Global Biodiversity Targets	UNEP Headquarters, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya 2-3 October 2009
Third Meeting of Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions (CSAB)	UNEP Headquarters, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya 4 October 2009
Second Ad-Hoc Intergovernmental Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)	UNEP Headquarters, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya 5-9 October 2009
Second African elephant Meeting, CITES/MIKE	UNEP Headquarters, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya 9-11 March, 2009
Extraordinary Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee	Geneva, Switzerland 8 June 2009
Frankfurt Symposium on Gorillas	Frankfurt Zoological Gardens, Frankfurt am Main, Germany 9-10 June 2009
36 th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee	UN Campus, Bonn, Germany 2-3 December 2009
37 th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee	UN Campus, Bonn, Germany 23-24 November 2010

Table 2: Meetings attended by the Chair of the Scientific Council during the 2009-2011 triennium; in chronological order

Action requested:

The Conference of the Parties is invited to:

- a. take note of the activities of the Scientific Council during the past triennium;
- b. appreciate the role played by the Scientific Council in the conservation of migratory species; and
- c. urge Parties to further support the work and activities of the Scientific Council through the provision of necessary resources for various initiatives reviewed and approved by the Scientific Council.

Scientific Council Meetings in the Triennium and Web Links

The reports and meeting documentation for all meetings can be found on the CMS website under the following links:

Activity Planning Meeting:

http://www.cms.int/bodies/ScC/ScC_Subset_Meeting/ScC_Subset_Mtg_docs.htm

16th Scientific Council:

http://www.cms.int/bodies/ScC/16th_ScC_documents_overview.htm

17th Scientific Council:

http://www.cms.int/bodies/ScC/17th_ScC_documents_overview.htm

Working Group on Flyways:

http://www.cms.int/bodies/ScC/global_flyways_wg/gfwg_mainpage.htm

Working Group on Climate Change:

http://www.cms.int/bodies/ScC/climate_change_wg/ccwg_mainpage.htm