Memorandum of Understanding
on the Conservation of
Migratory Birds of Prey in
Africa and Eurasia

Distribution: General
UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/8

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CONSERVATION INITIATIVES UNDER THE RAPTORS MOU

Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU

1. The purpose of this document is to introduce the key conservation initiatives on which the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU has either led or been actively engaged with during the past three years. Several of the initiatives described below will be supported by a separate presentation at plenary or a side-event at the meeting.

Species (Agenda Item 12.1.)

Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*)

2. In November 2011, participants at the 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) recognized that international conservation efforts to halt recent rapid declines in populations of the Saker Falcon required a partnership approach involving all key stakeholders throughout the species' range. The Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) is classified by IUCN as 'Endangered' and is listed on Category 1 (Globally and Near Threatened species) of the Raptors MoU. Securing this agreement was a considerable achievement given the level of controversy that had existed when the species had initially been proposed for uplisting to CMS Appendix I at the previous Conference of Parties (COP9). Importantly, in addition to confirming the uplisting of the Saker Falcon to Appendix I, CMS Resolution 10.28 recognised the need to incorporate sustainable use for falconry purposes into a long term conservation and management plan for the species.

3. In early 2012 the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF)[1] was established, under the auspices of the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU, to bring together Range States, Partners and interested parties, to develop a coordinated Global Action Plan, including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the species. The Task Force proved to be a unique and productive partnership that brought together an enormous amount of knowledge, experience and expertise. The STF reported its initial progress, including development of a WorkPlan 2012 - 2014 to MoS1 of the Raptors MoU (December 2012).

4. In February 2013, a full meeting of the STF took place by teleconference involving 18 participants from 14 countries. Four Working Groups were established to address the following key topics: international policies and legislation; knowledge gap analysis; sustainable use of wild origin falcons; and fieldwork, including methodologies. In addition, the Coordinating Unit commissioned a short study to elaborate a modelling framework to integrate population dynamics and sustainable use of the Saker Falcon, which reported in July 2013.

5. A first draft of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) was published in August 2013. This document formed the basis for detailed discussions at a three-day STF Stakeholders' Action

[1] http://www.cms.int/raptors/en/workinggroup/saker-falcon-task-force

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Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copy to the meeting and not to request additional copies.

Planning Workshop held in September 2013 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Over 70 participants attended from 31 countries, intergovernmental organizations, institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. Deliberations at that Workshop informed the subsequent development of the second draft of the SakerGAP.

6. The second meeting of the Task Force was held back-to-back with the Stakeholders' Workshop in September 2013. The meeting reviewed actions from the first meeting of the STF (held in March 2012), identified key issues from the Stakeholders' Workshop, the timeline required to finalize the SakerGAP and considered options to promote and implement the SakerGAP, including funding.

7. The second draft of the SakerGAP was published in February 2014 and started a two-month period of public consultation. Thirty-eight separate responses were received involving over 200 detailed comments. Subsequently, all these contributions were carefully reviewed and considered to inform development of the third draft of the SakerGAP, which was unanimously endorsed by the 18th meeting of the CMS Scientific Council, alongside the draft Resolution to be presented to CMS COP11. A fourth draft of the SakerGAP was circulated to the STF for final approval in July 2014. Minor improvements were incorporated before the final version[2] of the SakerGAP was produced in August 2014, after almost three years of highly constructive but sometimes challenging discussions. The Coordinating Unit also produced a SakerGAP factsheet, which is currently available in English[3] and Arabic[4], for communication to a wide audience.

8. In November 2014, CMS Parties at COP11 adopted the ten-year SakerGAP along with Resolution 11.18[5] as the basis for action on the conservation and management of the species, with the overall goal 'to re-establish a healthy and self-sustaining wild Saker Falcon population throughout its range, and to ensure that any use is sustainable'. CMS Parties also congratulated STF on its work, especially on the transparent consensus-building approach that had been employed, and decided that the STF should continue with a revised remit: to actively promote the implementation of the SakerGAP; to further develop, refine and implement an adaptive management and monitoring framework; and, to keep under review the option to down-list the species.

9. The first flagship implementation project of the SakerGAP to be taken forward was the creation and development of an online information portal to engage stakeholders within a Saker Falcon Network. This multilingual portal aims to build trust and to raise awareness by linking falconers, trappers, falcon hospitals, conservationist and researchers within a network to exchange information that should enable estimation of sustainable harvest levels for Saker Falcon populations, and also encourage husbandry best practice. The portal will also facilitate a comprehensive data collection and management system to monitor trade in the Saker Falcon. The majority of the funding for the project was generously contributed by the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), which is a Co-operating Partner to the Raptors MoU. In October 2014, the Coordinating Unit concluded a Small Scale Funding Agreement with IAF and the IUCN European Sustainable Use Group (ESUG) to develop the portal over a two year period. A project Steering Group meeting was hosted by the Coordinating Unit in Abu Dhabi in March 2015, and the Saker Online Portal was released live onto the web in April 2015. A formal launch is planned to be held at the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX) in September 2015.

10. The STF identified the need for a Coordinator to be selected and recruited to oversee the implementation of the SakerGAP. The Coordinating Unit has developed Terms of Reference but has

[2] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/SakerGAP_e.pdf
[3] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/SakerGAP_factsheet_e.pdf
[4] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/SakerGAP_factsheet_a.pdf
[5] http://www.cms.int/raptors/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_18_Saker_Falcon_SakerGAP_En.pdf

so far been unsuccessful in attracting a donor to fund the position, which is viewed as critical to ensuring the successful and effective implementation of the SakerGAP. CMS Resolution 11.18 urges Parties, Range States and stakeholders to actively support, including by voluntary financial contributions, the work of the STF.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)

11. The Egyptian Vulture is classified in the IUCN Red List as 'Endangered' and is listed on Category 1 of the Raptors MoU. The Coordinating Unit initiated a project[6] to promote the conservation of the Egyptian Vulture in September 2012, in conjunction with Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB), the national BirdLife partner in Bulgaria. The overall aim was to facilitate development of conservation measures for the Eastern European migratory populations of Egyptian Vultures that are believed to winter in Central and North-Eastern Africa. The Egyptian Vulture Fieldwork Capacity Building Project included field training on species-specific survey, research and conservation methods in Africa and succeeded in building capacity amongst African conservationists from Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. The project concluded in August 2013 and succeeded in broadening the understanding of threats to Egyptian Vultures in key wintering areas, and initiated research in two very little known wintering areas of the species in Western Sudan and Chad, including making rough assessments of the population numbers and limiting factors.[7]

12. In March 2014, the Coordinating Unit continued collaboration with BSBP by concluding a Small Scale Funding Agreement with this pro-active national BirdLife partner to develop a Flyway Action Plan (FAP) for the conservation of the Balkans and Central Asian populations of the Egyptian Vulture. The development of this FAP is being led by BSPB. It exploits synergies between key objectives of the Raptors MoU and BSPB's European Union LIFE+ funded 'Return of the Neophron'[8] project to develop an Action Plan for the population of Egyptian Vultures in the Balkan region, by extending its scope to include the Central Asian breeding populations, which are believed to partially share the same flyway.

13. An Egyptian Vulture Working Group was established involving a wide range of specialists and stakeholders in countries within the species' range, particularly in the Balkans, Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East and Africa. Up-to-date information was gathered and collated about its migration routes, settlements areas, habitat use and the proven threats to the species along the flyway and in the wintering grounds. In addition, questionnaires were issued to all range states within the region and the results compiled and incorporated with the existing information to produce a first draft of the FAP.

14. In April 2015, following an open competition, the Coordinating Unit commissioned consultants from the Vulture Conservation Foundation to review of the implementation of the European Union (EU) Species Action Plan (SAP) for the Egyptian Vulture, since its adoption in 2008. A questionnaire was circulated to all range states covered by the SAP seeking details of the activities undertaken at both national and, in some cases, regional or provincial levels. The main aims were to: evaluate the progress on implementing the EU SAP for the Egyptian Vulture in the EU Member States, and as far as possible in countries that represent the non-breeding range of the species; draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the SAP to date and indicate possible revisions and improvements; and, identify potential synergies and lessons learned that should be considered by those involved in the development of the Flyway Action Plan covering the Balkans and Central Asia.

[6] http://www.cms.int/en/project/capacity-building-support-conservation-migratory-egyptian-vultures-neophron-percnopterus
[7] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/project/EV%20Capacity%20Building%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf
[8] http://www.lifeneophron.eu/en/index.html

15. Jointly organized by BSPB and the Coordinating Unit, an international Action Planning Workshop was held in Sofia, Bulgaria in early July 2015. Over 70 participants from more than 30 countries attended and worked collaboratively to develop and refine the draft FAP, which is due to be finalized for publication before the end of the year. The Coordinating Unit commissioned an expert facilitator from BirdLife (Europe) to guide discussions at the Workshop. Two consultants from the Vulture Conservation Foundation were sponsored by the Coordinating Unit to participate in the Workshop, including by presenting the results of their evaluation of implementation of the EU SAP to ensure that knowledge, experience and lessons learned from the previous action planning process would incorporated into the forthcoming FAP. The FAP will be a pivotal tool to guide future international conservation measures to ensure the survival of the Egyptian Vulture throughout its range.

Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*)

16. The Sooty Falcon is classified as 'Near Threatened' in the IUCN Red List, due primarily to slow or moderate and on-going population declines being suspected. However, information on the species' ecology is fragmented and incomplete, particularly during the migration and wintering periods of its lifecycle. The species is listed in Category 1 of the Raptors MoU.

17. There is a pressing need to gather more accurate and comprehensive information on the species, particularly concerning its global population status and the main threats causing its decline. The Coordinating Unit, in close collaboration with Range States, specialist ornithologists and other interested parties, is leading the development of an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon.

18. In January 2013, a consultant was recruited to promote development of the ISSAP. The consultant worked with the CU to establish a Sooty Falcon Working Group[9], which facilitates international cooperation and collaboration with the key Range States of the species. The Coordinator, supported by the Working Group, reviewed published literature relating to the ecology and conservation of the Sooty Falcon, developed an information resource base, and compiled information for a draft ISSAP. The first draft of a Sooty Falcon ISSAP was circulated in April 2015 to members of the Working Group for comments.

19. The next step is for the draft ISSAP to be revised in light of the comments received and a second draft produced and circulated to all range states for comment. Subject to the availability of resources, there is a tentative proposal for a Sooty Falcon Action Planning Workshop to be held on Madagascar during the first quarter of 2016. The aim is to bring together representatives of range states, specialist ornithologists, researchers and other stakeholders to review and enhance the draft ISSAP into a final comprehensive draft. Signatories to the Raptors MoU, range states of the Sooty Falcon, and interested stakeholders are encouraged to submit offers of voluntary contributions to the Coordinating Unit to support this Action Planning Workshop.

Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Clanga (previously Aquila) pomarina*)

20. The Lesser Spotted Eagle has faced major population declines in large parts of its range due to loss of breeding habitats, grasslands, and arable land suitable for feeding; electrocution by power lines; wind farms; shooting; illegal taking and trade; poisoning; and loss of roosting sites. Romania developed a National Plan for the conservation of the Lesser Spotted Eagle and a guide for the management of its habitats in 2013.

[9] http://www.cms.int/raptors/en/workinggroup/sooty-falcon-working-group

21. During 31 October - 2 November 2013, in the framework of the EU LIFE Project 'Conservation of *Aquila pomarina* in Romania'[10] funded by the European Commission and the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, more than 50 ornithologists from 16 European countries attended an international workshop in Romania to update the European Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser Spotted Eagle. Participants agreed to expand the scope of the European Action Plan to the entire flyway of the species and to seek support from the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU. In March 2014, at the request of the Project Manager of the Romanian project and her counterpart of a corresponding EU LIFE Project 'Conservation of Aquila pomarina in Slovakia'[11], the Coordinating Unit wrote to selected contacts in all range states of the Lesser Spotted Eagle enclosing the revised draft Species Action Plan, population estimates and a questionnaire. Responses received were forwarded on to the Project Managers to incorporate in the Species Action Plan.

Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*)

22. For many decades, Amur Falcons have been known to congregate in Nagaland, northeast India from mid-October to mid-November each year. The state appears to be a critical stop-over site during their annual migration from breeding grounds in Russia, China and Mongolia, to wintering areas in Southern Africa.

23. In 2012, team from a non-Governmental organization (NGO) called Conservation India visited the region during the migration period and documented huge concentrations of Amur Falcons roosting in the area. Despite the fact that the Amur Falcon is covered under CMS and also fully protected by national legislation, the local villagers were harvesting massive numbers of falcons for human consumption, including on a commercial scale with birds being transported to be sold in markets far beyond the villages located near the roosts.

24. A subsequent hard-hitting publicity campaign led by Conservation India to protect the Amur Falcons galvanized support from countries and conservationists worldwide. Participants raised concerns at the 40th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee in Bonn, Germany in November 2012. Shortly after the meeting, Bert Lenten, Acting Executive Secretary, followed up with the Indian authorities by telephone. The Indian Government responded immediately, in concert with the Nagaland Forest Department, to stop the illegal harvest. Implementation and enforcement of existing protection legislation was effectively enhanced, including with armed patrols, but typically such human–wildlife conflicts are complex issues that take time to resolve.

25. In late 2012, the Nagaland Forest Department worked actively with the local communities, supported by non-Government Organisations such as Natural Nagas, the Wildlife Trust of India and Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust. As the result, the village leaders agreed to order a halt to any future harvest of the Amur Falcons forthwith. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the local villages and the Nagaland Forest Department to consolidate this.

26. In September 2013, at the invitation of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the Coordinating Unit developed and funded a proposal for a joint mission to Nagaland to coincide with the presence of the Amur Falcons. The main aims were: to deploy modern technology in the form of lightweight satellite tags fitted to a small number of Amur Falcons trapped in Nagaland to track their migration journeys; to better understand the behaviour and ecology of the Amur Falcon during its presence in Nagaland, along the migration routes and in the wintering areas in Africa; to utilise web-based tools to actively apply the information gained to raise awareness of the international importance of the Amur Falcon and to promote falcon conservation activities, particularly amongst local communities in

[10] http://pomarina.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=EN
[11] http://www.dravce.sk/apomarina/index.php/en/

Nagaland; and, to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of international collaborative actions under the auspices of the Raptors MoU to promote the conservation of migratory birds of prey.

27. The joint mission, co-led by Dr R. Suresh Kumar (Wildlife Institute of India) and Nick P. Williams (Programme Officer – Raptors MoU), also comprised two experts from MME (BirdLife Hungary) and two Forest Officers from the Nagaland Forest Department. On 3 November 2003, the group arrived in the area of Doyang Reservoir in Wokha region. Repeated sample counts of the Amur falcons arriving at their roosting sites revealed more than one million individuals were present. Of 30 falcons captured over the following days, three individuals were selected to be equipped with 5g solar powered satellite tags. The remaining birds were fitted with rings generously provided by the Bombay Natural History Society.

28. The three sat-tagged falcons were released on 7 November 2013 in the presence of the Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force of Nagaland, Forest Officers and local villagers including those involved in harvesting activities in previous years. Following release, all three falcons remained in the area for a few days before restarting their migrations, heading southeast over Bangladesh and out across the Bay of Bengal. All three moved across India and then embarked upon successful two-day journeys over the Arabian Sea to Somalia, before moving down the eastern coast of the African continent to wintering areas in Southern Africa.

29. All three sat-tagged falcons remained in Southern Africa for the winter but the signal from one bird was lost in April 2014[12]. The other two Amurs are still being tracked, some 22 months later. In the interim, both birds left Southern Africa in Spring 2014 and retraced their routes back to Nagaland and beyond to separate sites in Northern China. Data from the sat-tags suggested that both birds bred successfully and then in Autumn 2014 migrated all the way back to Southern Africa along a similar route to the previous year. In Spring 2015, both birds flew back to their breeding areas in China and are currently (September 2015) poised to being their fall migration again. Details here: (http://www.satellitetracking.eu/inds/showmap/?check_143=143&check_145=145).

30. In summary, concerted and collaborative efforts by the Indian Government, Forest Department, Wildlife Institute of India, Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU, NGOs and other stakeholders mean that Amur Falcons now receive a warm welcome in the Wokha region of Nagaland with no harvesting taking place. Reports from other areas suggest some illegal trapping remains so more work is needed to address this. However, the Naga people have demonstrated their willingness and ability to change, but they also need longer support and assistance to develop alternative incomes to enable them to survive and prosper and continue to refrain from harvesting the falcons.

Threats (Agenda Item 12.2.)

Poisoning

31. Poison, in its various forms, has a worldwide impact causing lethal and detrimental sub-lethal effects on wildlife, particularly birds. A considerable number of the species that are significantly affected by poisoning through insecticides, rodenticides, poison-bait, veterinary pharmaceuticals (diclophenac), lead ammunition and fishing weights are migratory birds of prey covered by the Raptors MoU.

32. Adopted at CMS COP10 in November 2011, CMS Resolution 10.26 on minimizing the risk of poisoning to migratory birds requested a detailed assessment to be carried out to identify the scope and severity of poisoning on migratory birds. A Working Group was established under the CMS

[12] http://www.satellitetracking.eu/inds/showmap/?check_144=144

Scientific Council and the Secretariat with the main purpose of undertaking this assessment. In 2012, given the significant threat posed by poisons to migratory raptors, the Coordinating Unit contributed USD 21,000 funding to support this Working Group. The CMS Secretariat recruited a consultant as Coordinator for the Working Group during 2013.

33. The Programme Officer of the Raptors MoU was invited to serve on the Steering Committee of the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group. He participated in a CMS-led technical workshop held in Tunisia in May 2013 to address the impact of poisoning on migratory birds at a global level. The aim of the workshop was to move forward the development of guidelines, which would assist countries in their efforts to protect migratory birds from poisoning. Priority categories and types of poisoning were selected by the Working Group, including linkages and impacts on migratory birds, including raptors. The socio-economic drivers of poisoning were also identified, and the impact of poisons and knowledge gaps were assessed in three major global flyways crossing the Americas, east Asia-Australasia and Africa-Eurasia.

34. Overseen by the Coordinator, the Working Group produced a 'Review of the ecological effects of poisoning on migratory birds'[13] and 'Guidelines to prevent the risk of poisoning to migratory birds'[14], which were presented to CMS COP11 in Ecuador (November 2014). CMS Parties adopted Resolution 11.15 on Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds (UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/Inf.11), including the aforementioned Guidelines. The Resolution proposes the continuation of Preventing Poisoning Working Group until COP12, requests the establishment of Task Groups under the Working Group to address either thematic issues and/or geographical regions to progress its work, and suggests organizing regional workshops in high risk areas/flyways to promote the implementation of the Guidelines. The Coordinating Unit has pledged a further USD 10,000 to support the Preventing Poisoning Working Group.

35. In August 2015, the Secretariats of CMS and AEWA and the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU jointly organized a regional workshop for Southern Africa on preventing poisoning of migratory birds. Hosted by the South African Government and held in Cape Town, the purpose of the workshop was to develop and adopt a regional implementation plan for the CMS Guidelines covering the Southern African region. It was attended by National Focal Points of the three CMS agreements within countries in Southern Africa, representatives from relevant Ministries or equivalent authorities, and key experts from the Working Group.

Power grids

36. Many species of birds of prey are particularly at risk from electrocution due to their habit of selectively utilising power grid structures for perching, roosting and nesting. In view of the serious threat posed to some migratory raptors, and to assist in promoting widespread use of the CMS 'Guidelines on how to avoid or mitigate the impact of electricity power grids on migratory birds in the African-Eurasian region'[15], the Coordinating Unit commissioned unofficial courtesy translations into Arabic and Russian of both the Guidelines and CMS Resolution 10.11 on power lines and migratory birds[16], available on the COP10 webpage[17].

37. In 2013, President Obama launched Power Africa, an innovative partnership to double current availability of electricity in sub-Saharan Africa where more than 600 million people currently lack access. During the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in 2014, President Obama reaffirmed that Power

[13] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Inf_34_Review_effects_of_Poisoning_on_Migratory_Birds_Eonly.pdf
[14] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Doc_23_1_2_Bird_Poisoning_Review_%26_Guidelines_E_0.pdf
[15] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/doc_30_electrocution_guidlines_e_1.pdf
[16] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/10_11_powerlines_e_1_0.pdf
[17] http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/tenth-meeting-conference-parties-cms

Africa's reach extends across all of sub-Saharan Africa and tripled Power Africa's goals to work towards adding 30,000 megawatts (MW) of new, cleaner electricity generation capacity and increasing electricity access by at least 60 million new connections.

38. In 2014, following discussions at the First Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group, the Coordinating Unit drafted a letter for Bradnee Chambers (CMS Executive Secretary) to write to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supporting the concept of the Power Africa initiative but highlighting the importance of taking due account of the needs of migratory species, particularly in relation to the construction of bird-friendly power grids.

39. Subsequently, meetings have been held with officials from USAID and representatives of BirdLife International. Outline plans are being considered for a major conference to be held in Africa in 2016 to bring together government officials, developers, ornithologists and other stakeholders to promote adoption of best conservation practice in the planning, design and construction of power generation infrastructure.

40. Development of the SakerGAP highlighted recent data gathered in Mongolia which exposed the critical threat posed by power grids to the Saker Falcon, and other birds of prey. In December 2014, as part of the 3rd International Festival of Falconry held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, the Coordinating Unit participated in a one-day Workshop to consider this issue. Mongolian government officials and representatives of all the regional power distribution companies attended. It became clear that most of the companies were unaware of the impacts on birds of their power grids and were open to considering future changes in their existing policies, including pole specifications, subject to approvals being granted by the Mongolian ministry. In light of such positive outcomes, a further follow-up meeting is being planned to be held in Mongolia, probably in 2016.

41. The Coordinating Unit represents the Raptors MoU on a multi-stakeholder Task Force on Reconciling Selected Energy Sector Development with Migratory Species Conservation (the Energy Task Force), established by CMS COP Resolution 11.27 on renewable energy and migratory species (UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/Inf.14). The Energy Task Force aims to ensure all energy sector developments are undertaken in such a way that negative impacts on migratory species are avoided. The role of the Energy Task Force is "to facilitate the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process of reconciling energy sector developments with the conservation of migratory species where all developments take full account of the conservation priorities". CMS Resolution 11.27 also endorsed "Renewable Energy Technologies and Migratory Species: Guidelines for sustainable deployment"[18].

42. The CMS Secretariat has established a small advisory group which has developed the key elements of a Work Programme for the Energy Task Force for the triennium 2015 – 2017, as well as outline activities for a consultant Coordinator. The Government of Germany has generously offered a voluntary contribution to support the basic operation and coordination of the Energy Task Force for three years.

Illegal killing

43. Illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds (IKB) have been identified as key factors that threaten the conservation status of migratory birds, such as birds of prey. Such activities also negatively affect conservation actions undertaken and result in adverse impacts on the conservation benefits accrued from legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors.

[18] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Doc_23_4_3_2_Renewable_Energy_Technologies_Guidelines_E.pdf

44. In November 2013, the Coordinating Unit was actively involved in the planning, preparation and participation at a one-day meeting hosted by the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), held in Bonn, Germany. The outcome was the development of a Plan of Action to address illegal bird trapping along the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt and Libya.

45. The Coordinating Unit participated in a Workshop on Capacity Development for Flyway Conservation in the Mediterranean Region, organized by BirdLife International and hosted by BirdLife Cyprus from 21–23 May 2014 in Nicosia, Cyprus. One of the main objectives was to share knowledge, expertise and experiences related to addressing key threats to migratory birds in the Mediterranean region (illegal killing, energy sector infrastructure development, and loss of key stop-over sites).

46. Two key outputs were the development of a common Regional Strategic Framework uniting NGOs under common objectives to protect migratory birds in the region, and establishment of agreed regional level mechanisms to ensure development and sustainability of a Mediterranean network of NGOs working in collaboration to ensure long-term conservation outcomes for migratory bird conservation in the region.

47. The workshop was highly successful in preparing for the development of a strong and dynamic Mediterranean NGO network who are working effectively with local people, national governments and the international community, under a common Regional Strategic Framework to better protect key species, sites and habitats along the Africa - Eurasia flyway.

48. Working with colleagues at the CMS and AEWA Secretariats and BirdLife International, the Coordinating Unit contributed to the development of CMS Resolution 11.16 on The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds (UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/Inf.12) [19]. CMS Parties adopted the Resolution which calls for Secretariat to convene an Intergovernmental Task Force to Address Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean in conjunction with the Secretariats of AEWA, the Raptors MoU, the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan and the Bern Convention, involving the Mediterranean Parties, including the European Union, other interested Parties, including from outside the region, and other stakeholders such as BirdLife International and the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE).

49. The Coordinating Unit is part of the Consultative Group that has been established by the CMS Secretariat to guide the work of the Task Force. The European Union has graciously pledged significant support for this initiative which will allow the establishment of a Coordinator and hosting of the first meeting of the Task Force, tentatively scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2016 in Egypt.

Other initiatives (Agenda Item 12.3.)

African Raptor DataBank

50. Africa has a higher diversity of birds of prey than any other continent: some 169 species occur regularly, 69% of which are endemic to Africa or its associated islands. These various species constitute more than 75% of all raptor species worldwide. More than 60% of the migratory raptors covered by the Raptors MoU occur in Africa. Currently, a huge knowledge gap exists in the distribution and ecology during migration and in the wintering areas for many of these species. Surveys, monitoring programmes and observations are needed over much of Africa in order to collect core information required to establish successful conservation programmes.

[19] http://cms.int/raptors/en/document/cms-resolution-1116-prevention-illegal-killing-taking-and-trade-migratory-birds

51. In 2013, the Coordinating Unit joined forces with Habitat INFO[20], the organization that has pioneered the development of the African Raptor DataBank (ARDB) – a non-profit, citizen science project that aims to inspire and empower birdwatchers and other observers to record and submit information about any birds of prey they see in Africa. The information gathered by the ARDB should help reveal the conservation status of raptors and the state of their habitats throughout the African continent, as well as contributing to the development of the local expertise needed to monitor these indicator species in the future and to implement sound strategies to safeguard them.

52. The ARDB currently holds more than 100,000 records submitted by birdwatchers and other observers throughout Africa. It has been developed to handle a wide range of raptor information, such as nest records, road counts, casual observations and mortality data. The records are collected through online computer applications and in spreadsheet format. The data on migratory raptors gathered through ARDB is particularly important for Signatory States to the Raptors MoU to assist them in developing comprehensive National or Regional Raptor Conservation Strategies. It should assist them in a better understanding of the global significance of the raptor populations and habitat strongholds hosted within their geopolitical boundaries.

53. Furthermore, ARDB is actively raising awareness about raptors and the increasing threats that they are facing. Education is imperative to successfully promoting their conservation, particularly within local communities. Enlisting citizen scientists to engage with the ARDB from anywhere and everywhere in Africa represents a unique opportunity to develop interest, understanding and support for conservation actions. The possibility of future detailed analysis to better identify critically important habitats, particularly along the flyways of migratory raptors, should enable Signatories and other Range States to focus conservation and management efforts to best effect. For management of the human environment and alleviation of disaster risk, it is imperative that we are able to assess the health of ecosystems. Raptors are ideal, easily observed indicators of ecosystem health and the ARDB with the Raptors MoU wish to develop this crucial role.

54. In July 2014, as a direct result of a Small Scale Funding Agreement with the Coordinating Unit, a user-friendly, free-of-charge smartphone application was launched by Habitat INFO, to record raptor sightings offline on phones and tablets anywhere. When a connection becomes available, the observations are uploaded to a data depository server located in Wales, United Kingdom. From here the data will be analysed to model the abundance of each species and to help identify and monitor the health of their habitats across one of the most biologically rich yet vulnerable continents on Earth. Ongoing collaboration between Habitat INFO, The Peregrine Fund and the Coordinating Unit should see a similar high specification offline App launched for Apple iOS devices later in 2015.

55. The Coordinating Unit invites Signatories and other Range States to promote the ARDB project in their countries, including via NGOs. Biologists, naturalists, birdwatchers and anyone interested in raptors, including those visiting from overseas are encouraged to contribute to the development of the most comprehensive database of raptors in Africa by sharing their observations of birds of prey via the ARDB platform. Please visit the ARDB website to discover how to register, submit data, and to access the database: www.habitatinfo.com/ardb .

BirdLife Data Zone – online functionality for the Raptors MoU

56. The BirdLife Data Zone (www.birdlife.org/datazone) is the website through which BirdLife International presents its information on the conservation status of all bird species globally along with the sites identified as being important for their conservation - Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). The website contains factsheets on each species (including species range maps, IUCN Red List status, habitats and threats) and each confirmed IBA (including location, IBA trigger species,

[20] http://www.habitatinfo.com/

protection status, threats and habitats amongst others). It is widely considered by ornithologists and researchers as one of the core online data sources for birds.

57. In September 2015, the Coordinating Unit commissioned BirdLife International via a Small Scale Funding Agreement to develop a suite of online functionality incorporating new fields in the Data Zone relating to the Raptors MoU. As well as increasing awareness of the MoU to a broader audience, access to this functionality will provide valuable scientific and technical tools for Signatories and Range States.

58. This online functionality will allow any user of the Data Zone to use the species search functionality (www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/search) to search for species listed under Annex 1 of the Raptors MoU, either separately or in combination with any of the other available search criteria (taxonomy, IUCN Red List status, country of occurrence, habitats, and/or threats). Similarly, it will allow users to access the IBA search functionality (www.birdlife.org/datazone/site/search) to identify IBAs that have been listed under Table 3 of the Action Plan of the MoU. In addition to the species and IBA search functionality, the BirdLife International Data Zone also contains country profiles (http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/country) that have been developed to summarize the information they maintain at the national/territorial scale to aid use by decision makers, including governments, NGOs and corporates, working at this level.

59. Users will also be able to easily access the available information on threats impacting these species and the habitats that are important for them. This should provide useful context for Signatories preparing their National or Regional Raptor Conservation Strategies and those endeavoring to improve conservation measures for Annex 1 species of migratory birds of prey and Table 3 important sites in their countries. From BirdLife's perspective this project is a valuable way to enhance and elevate their existing Data Zone and to increase its usage and broaden its acclaim.

60. To date, (late September 2015), the development of the species search functionality for all 76 species currently on the Raptors MoU list has been undertaken. The next phase of the project will be completed by the end of March 2016, which will include: Species Factsheet development; integration of the Raptors MoU species list into the Species Information Service (SIS) - the management system used by BirdLife to maintain its taxonomic list and in its role as the IUCN Red List authority for Birds to regularly assess the IUCN Red List status of all birds; IBA search functionality; and, finally developing of the country profiles facility. Should Signatories agree the changes proposed by TAG to the list of Annex 1 species and the Table 3 list of sites in the Action Plan of the Raptors MoU, the contact includes a clause to ensure that the Data Zone will be updated accordingly by the end of the contract (i.e. March 2016).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

(a) Note the contents of this report, including the various activities related to threatened species and the range of wider initiatives being either led or supported by the Coordinating Unit.

(b) Endorse CMS Resolution 11.15 on Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds and urge all Range States to implement the '*Guidelines to prevent the risk of poisoning to migratory birds*'.

(c) Endorse CMS Resolution 11.16 on the prevention of illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds and urge Signatories and Range States to engage and support the Task Force to Address Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean, and other similar regional Task Forces, if and when established.

(d) Endorse Resolution 11.18 and the associated Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP), including by inviting Signatories and Range States to integrate implementation of the SakerGAP into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and/or National or Regional Species Action Plans developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

(e) Endorse CMS COP Resolution 11.27 on Renewable Energy and Migratory Species and the associated 'Renewable Energy Technologies and Migratory Species: Guidelines for Sustainable Deployment', and urge Signatories and Range states to engage and support the Energy Task Force.

(f) Identify sources of financial and in-kind support to ensure the implementation of these CMS Resolutions, in particular the SakerGAP, and also to enable the finalization of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon, including an Action Planning Workshop.