



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



## 16<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

Bonn, Germany, 28-30 June, 2010

UNEP/CMS/ScC16/Doc.13

Agenda Item 5.0

### **MODUS OPERANDI IN CASES OF CONSERVATION EMERGENCIES FOR CMS SPECIES**

*(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)*

1. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) foresees in its text, Article V.5 (m), the provision for “*emergency procedures whereby conservation action would be considerably and rapidly strengthened when the conservation status of the migratory species is seriously affected*”.
2. This mandate is part of the Article V *Guidelines for AGREEMENTS* and applies to CMS Parties that are Parties or Signatories to CMS agreements. It seeks their cooperation to define emergencies and to determine national conservation measures and modalities for assigning responsibility for action.
3. There is no intention to instruct individual CMS agreements to develop *ad hoc* guiding principles related to emergencies. However, there is a need to establish a mechanism that could be activated at the Convention level in an emergency which affects a CMS listed species.
4. There have been situations in the past where CMS has played a role in such emergencies, such as during the mass mortality in the monk seal colony in the Cap Blanc peninsula (Morocco/Mauretania) that took place in 1997 or the outbreak of Avian Influenza (H5N1) in 2005. In these cases, the Convention was instrumental in raising both awareness of the issue and the necessary funding to address the crisis. A more recent example is the severe die-off of 12,000 saiga antelopes (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*) in the Ural population in Western Kazakhstan in mid-May 2010 (amounting to one third of the population). The UNEP/CMS Secretariat has been proactively investigating the matter to try to understand the cause of the event and playing a coordination function in liaising with and connecting relevant local authorities and experts to promote exchange of information and a common line of action.
5. However, CMS has so far acted on a case-by-case basis without either an agreed standard procedure or a specific COP mandate. It is thought that it would be beneficial for the Convention itself, and ultimately for the species concerned, to establish a protocol and a small emergency fund to facilitate a fast response at an international level.
6. While it is not easy to define criteria for classifying an event as an emergency, especially in a global context with many different taxa and groups of species to be assessed, it is considered that emergencies can be recognized when:

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- A significant reduction in numbers or range size of a CMS-listed species or of any of its populations has been observed, projected or inferred; the reduction is irregular and/or sudden (within one generation or one year, whichever is shorter) and is likely to result in a significant deterioration of the species' conservation status;
  - Emergency response should not be dependent on whether a country is a CMS Party, party to a CMS Agreement or has signed none of these instruments;
  - Conditions have been observed, projected or inferred, which are known to lead to such a decline in conservation status, such as natural phenomena ( disease outbreaks, periods of exceptionally cold weather or prolonged droughts); or anthropogenic disasters ( major poisonings, toxic pollutions or oil spills).
7. The emergency procedure would include the following steps:
- a. In case of an emergency the UNEP/CMS Secretariat would contact focal point/s, agreement contact point/s and scientific councillor/s in the country/ies affected by the case to review available information and collect further data, as appropriate. If the country is not a Party, relevant wildlife authorities and national NGOs should be contacted.
  - b. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would notify appointed councillor/s on the specific taxonomic group/region/issue, as appropriate.
  - c. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would notify the Chair of the Scientific Council, of the Standing Committee and regional representatives of the Standing Committee, as appropriate.
  - d. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would establish an emergency response group composed, as appropriate, of focal point/s and scientific councillor/s in the country/ies, appointed councillor/s on the specific taxonomic group/region/theme and experts in the species and/or issue, as well as other relevant stakeholders, e.g. NGOs and scientists.
  - e. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would call for one or several teleconference(s) of the emergency response group to assess the situation and discuss next steps. With the agreement of the CMS Executive Secretary or the Officer-in-Charge, financial support from an emergency fund (established by COP) will be made available to send a small emergency mission team to travel to the area of the emergency, if the relevant Party/Range State agrees and if the experts consulted recommend doing so.
  - f. . The emergency mission team will stay in regular contact with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat while travelling and assessing the situation, if possible.
  - g. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would undertake urgent fund raising for addressing the emergency situation seeking support from UNEP, Parties, IGOs, NGOs and relevant donors.
  - h. On the basis of the results of the on-the-spot appraisal (the emergency mission team would have to prepare report and recommendations) the emergency response group would decide on further steps to be undertaken.
  - i. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat would follow up decisions of the emergency response group, for example by notifying Parties and relevant stakeholders (e.g. through the Standing Committee); by assisting stakeholders in implementing mitigation measures and raising funds for implementing mitigation measures.

**Action requested:**

- Scientific Council members are invited to consider the need for an emergency procedure along the lines set out in this paper. Based on a positive evaluation from the Scientific Council, further consideration will be given to the elaboration of a Resolution describing the emergency procedure and the establishment of a small emergency fund to be submitted to CMS COP10.