

Midterm Review of the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)

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1. Opening and Welcoming Remarks

The meeting was formally opened by welcoming speeches from Ms. Gisela Stolpe, Head of the International Academy for Nature Conservation (INA), Ms. Andrea Strauss, Deputy Head of INA, Ms. Christiane Roettger, Coordinating Officer of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) at the CMS Secretariat, Mr. Thorsten Harder, Head of the staff unit INA, Administration of Vilm and Mr. Oliver Schall, representing the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) followed by Mr. David Mallon (International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission).

2. Workshop Aims and Structure

The facilitator of the meeting, Mr. David Mallon, explained that the objectives of the meeting were to review implementation of activities outlined in the CAMI Programme of Work (POW) so far, as well as to discuss challenges, future needs and priorities until 2020. Priorities should be discussed both in terms of ways to enhance conservation action for CAMI species on the ground as well as with regard to procedural issues for its functioning including reporting, monitoring and preparation for the 13th CMS Conference of the Parties (COP13) in 2020. The workshop would also discuss ways to initiate reviewing of the conservation status of the species covered under CAMI, involving the species focal points (SFPs) for each species as well as other attending experts.

3. Review of Implementation since 2014

This session provided a general overview on implementation so far. The CMS Secretariat highlighted key activities undertaken by or with support of CMS. Government representatives of the attending CAMI Range States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia and Uzbekistan) presented the level of implementation in their respective countries, followed by presentations of projects funded by CMS in the context of CAMI.

The reports of the countries can be found [online](#) and a table with a detailed overview of implementation including inputs also from Range States that could not be present at the meeting (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) will be made available in a separate document.

3.1 Report of the Secretariat: Overview of Activities since 2014

The CMS Secretariat reported that several meetings and outreach events had taken place since the adoption of Resolution 11.24 on CAMI in 2014. Several projects had been supported and implemented, which addressed topics such as reducing the impacts of barriers to migration, sustainable wildlife management, and raising awareness on migratory species. Information material and other products such as the Guidelines for Addressing the Impact of Linear Infrastructure on Large Migratory Mammals in Central Asia (available in Russian and English) were produced and the development of an atlas of the region's infrastructure and distribution of migratory mammals was in the final stages. A detailed overview can be found [here](#).

3.2 Statements from Range States

Representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia and Uzbekistan delivered concise statements on the implementation of the activities in their countries.

Detailed information about the activities at the national level including the concise country reports and presentations can be found [here](#).

3.3 Fence Removal along the Trans-Mongolian Railway

Mr. Lkhagvasuren Badamjav (Mongolian Gazelle Conservation Society, MGCS) presented a project financed through a CMS grant with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and co-funding from the Senckenberg Research Institute. The project aimed at removing the fences along the Trans-Mongolian Railway which are an effective barrier to the movement of Mongolian Gazelles and Kulans. The fence should be removed at selected locations and cameras installed in order to monitor the effect of the fence removal on both wildlife and livestock. The Trans-Mongolian Railroad was fenced to prevent collisions with free-roaming livestock. The construction of under- or overpasses was not realistic due to the very high costs. Many new railroads are being planned in Mongolia and the MGCS had recommended not fencing these railways, at least in places important for wildlife, and to include over- and underpasses where possible. The agreement for the removal of the fences had already been obtained from the relevant authorities.

3.4 Modifying the Border Fence in Kazakhstan for Saiga Antelopes

Mr. Askar Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan State Forestry and Wildlife Committee) presented a project on the modification of the border fence between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to allow Saiga antelopes to move between both countries. CMS had supported the development of recommendations to modify the fence, published in the report “Saiga Crossing Options” in 2013. Following a consultation process involving various stakeholders and authorities, the fence had been modified as well as removed at some locations to let Saiga pass.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that very few sightings of Saiga (females with calves) were recorded in Uzbekistan in the Saigachiy Reserve, south of the border fence. Telemetry studies undertaken by the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK) showed that Saiga did not cross the border due to another barrier, the railroad to the north of the border fence. The availability of suitable pastures (low density of the Saiga population) and the good condition of the habitat might also discourage Saiga from moving southward. It was noted that a new metal fence is being constructed on the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan border. Any necessary modification measures in relation to this fence would be discussed at the Kazakhstan State Forestry and Wildlife Committee.

3.5 Migration Atlas for Central Asian Mammals

Ms. Aili Kang (Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS) presented the migration and infrastructure atlas project, which had been conceptualized and selected for funding by CMS with the support of the FOEN and BMU during a CAMI workshop in 2016. The main outcome of this project would be an atlas, containing maps of the distributions of ten CAMI species in combination with linear infrastructure that hinders the animals' movements. It would also contain recommendations to reduce the impact of such infrastructure on the species. The pdf version of the CAMI Migration Atlas would be published in the near future.

In the discussion that followed, it was highlighted that road kills were one of the most important threats to the Asiatic Cheetah population in Iran. It was also noted that it was important to discuss ways to share the underlying GIS data, which were the basis of the atlas with the contributing experts and other stakeholders. It was highlighted that an enormous amount of infrastructure was

being planned and built in the CAMI region, without recognizing that it may pose a threat to migratory species. Therefore, the atlas should be used as an important awareness raising tool for decision-makers and the private sector. WCS would cooperate with CMS to disseminate the atlas and approach private sector, banks and mining companies to raise awareness on the threats from infrastructure.

It was also mentioned that a project proposal to establish a funding scheme within the IUCN Save Our Species (SOS) Programme was in the final stage of approval. The purpose of the fund was to support implementation of CAMI with a focus on Goitered Gazelle and Snow Leopard. Range States would be invited to apply for grants also incorporating trans-boundary issues and the threats from linear infrastructure.

4. Breakout Groups

Participants split into breakout groups to review implementation of the different objectives of the Programme of Work. The groups were established according to regional representation and expertise covering the different sub-issues under each objective and reviewing the list of actions mentioned under each of them. The groups also discussed progress made and challenges in implementing the activities and provided recommendations on activities that were most urgent and how to initialize implementation of important activities that had not started yet.

4.1 Objective 1. To Address Key Threats and Issues Currently Not (Sufficiently) Covered by Existing Work Programmes and other Stakeholders

Issue 1.1 Illegal Hunting and Trade

Measures to implement almost all the activities under this issue were in progress, carried out by Range State governments with the support of non-governmental organizations in some cases. The assessment of the feasibility of trophy hunting for all huntable CAMI species (1.1.7) has not yet been carried out. More attention is also required considering the possibility of sustainable subsistence hunting (1.1.9), as well as ensuring regular, sound and coordinated monitoring of species (1.1.3). Enhancing coordination and exchange of information on trans-boundary populations was recommended to manage wildlife sustainably. Furthermore, it was recommended that efforts to review and adjust the national legislation to ensure compliance with CITES (1.1.6) should be increased. The group advised to further assess risks and benefits of rotating hunting areas (1.1.10). Although this activity was meant to avoid overuse of certain areas, it might also discourage activities to conserve the species, if the rotation period was perceived as too short for hunters to benefit from the sustainable use the species occurring in that area.

Issue 1.2 Overgrazing and Livestock Competition

The group noted that there was little communication and cooperation between professionals working on nature protection and livestock/pasture management in most countries and organizations. The group thus recommended activities to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation, to raise awareness of wildlife issues among herders and decision-makers, and to promote mainstreaming wildlife considerations into pasture management and land use planning in general. To facilitate this, participants recommended organizing dialogues and meetings/workshops possibly by CMS with involvement of FAO and development aid organizations such as the German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ), subject to available resources.

Issue 1.3 Industry and Infrastructure Development / Barriers to Movement

While several activities to increase awareness on barriers to migration (1.3.2) and to produce species and landscape-specific maps were ongoing or to be completed in the near future (1.3.1) with support of CMS, WCS, ACBK and others, several other activities still required more attention. Promotion and application of knowledge and technical solutions (1.3.3) to reduce barriers to movement still needed to be addressed. The group recommended that CMS Parties propose a Decision to COP13 to create more species- and landscape-specific guidelines to reduce threats from infrastructure. In addition, more action was needed to address policy issues (1.3.4), particularly the establishment of cross-sectoral task forces to address border fences and large infrastructure projects. Outreach activities to address international groups, which define standards and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) were recommended.

Issue 1.4 Good Governance of Natural Resource Management / Policy and Legislation

Implementation of all but one activity under this issue has been initiated and needs to be multiplied and continued in the next years. CMS Parties rarely provided information about CAMI and its Programme of Work to multinational fora (1.4.4). CMS Parties were thus strongly encouraged to do so and to raise issues such as illegal wildlife trade and threats from fences, roads and other infrastructure at the Shanghai Cooperation, the Eurasian Economic Union, the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation and other relevant fora to advance their goals on conserving migratory species. It was recommended to organize small-scale workshops in the region, to involve decision-makers and representatives from the sectors, which drove identified threats (to implement 1.4.5). Best practice policy guidelines tailored to regional needs to address community involvement, illegal hunting and trade, overgrazing, etc. were needed (1.4.6).

Issue 1.5 Human Needs / Community Engagement in Conservation

Measures to engage local communities and to address their needs were mostly implemented by governments and commonly supported by international government agencies, international and national NGOs, sometimes with involvement of private companies. These activities used a variety of approaches and were mostly implemented within national boundaries and thus trans-boundary exchange of experiences was recommended. In addition, best practice guidelines for governments and other decision-makers to start projects that addressed community needs and provided incentives for them to conserve wildlife, including through sustainable use were desirable. Countries with experience in community-based projects included India, Mongolia, Pakistan and Tajikistan. Some activities had started in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Establishment of community-based insurance schemes (1.5.3) was seen as particularly challenging and required feasibility studies (e.g. in Uzbekistan within the Snow Leopard range).

Issue 1.6 Scientific Knowledge

Activities to address scientific knowledge gaps were largely not implemented or not sufficiently implemented. Some activities across Range States of the Snow Leopard had been conducted in the framework of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) and the Population Assessment of the World's Snow Leopards project (PAWS). In addition, activity 1.6.5 to study landscape permeability was ongoing in Mongolia and Kazakhstan. One of the reasons for the poor implementation status was the very limited funding for scientific research, especially in the trans-boundary context. It was recommended to organize a CAMI scientific working group to conduct a knowledge gap analysis (1.6.1) and to make it specific to addressing identified conservation needs. In addition, CMS was encouraged to facilitate trans-boundary cooperation on project development and joint fund-raising activities.

Issue 1.7 Transboundary Cooperation

Several trans-boundary projects were ongoing, such as on Mount Kailash Sacred Landscape, Khangchendzonga National Park, Hissar-Alai (see 1.4.3), more activities were planned by China, Mongolia, India and other Range States. Nevertheless, the specific actions under this issue needed increased attention. The group identified a major need to strengthen the trans-boundary activities outlined in the POW. As of April 2018, implementation had been undertaken only for selected activities and in selected countries. Kyrgyzstan which also hosted the GSLEP Secretariat, was working on promoting trans-boundary cooperation in the region (1.7.4 a). The group recommended to make facilitation of trans-boundary activities the main priority for CAMI, starting with the countries that had a good potential for cooperation. It was advised to direct small-scale funding to support trans-boundary exchange of information, dialogue and joint conservation action.

4.2 Objective 2. To Guide Planning and Implementation of Prioritized Conservation Actions at a Regional Scale

2.1 Snow Leopard and Argali (Mountain Ecosystems)

Participants provided the latest information on national measures to safeguard Snow Leopards and Argali as well as their habitats in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, India, Mongolia, Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Panthera provided information on activities in Tajikistan. The conservation of the Snow Leopard and its habitat had a high priority in all Range States present, whereas Argali conservation enjoyed less attention. Protected areas have been established and/or extended to cover a greater proportion of the Snow leopard habitat in Kyrgyzstan, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and the Russian Federation in recent years. Population monitoring and protection was the focus of many State-run projects. Involving local communities and addressing the human-Snow Leopard conflict was discussed as an important component, which was still to be introduced in many Range States.

Challenges for local community involvement included limited knowledge and capacity to engage local communities and the lack of appropriate legislation to ensure benefits from wildlife use (both consumptive and non-consumptive) for local communities in some countries. Lessons learned from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's community-based conservancies established with the support of Panthera should be shared regionally. Taking into consideration the fact that there were no concrete activities in the CAMI POW on Snow Leopards and Argali because those were already covered comprehensively by GSLEP and the CMS Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali, the group suggested the following action points:

- 1) Scientific studies to determine a) cross-border migration of Snow Leopards and Argali and b) connectivity between identified GSLEP landscapes, using scat analysis;
- 2) Enhance trans-boundary cooperation in the West Tian Shan shared by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, providing technical knowledge and fundraising support to address common issues in the trans-boundary context;
- 3) Enhance trans-boundary cooperation and information exchange on wildlife use between bordering countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, China (tbc), Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan;
- 4) Strengthen cooperation on law enforcement, share information between Range States, involve local communities and raise awareness at all levels on the importance of involving local communities.

It was noted that sharing lessons learned and good practices on community involvement in conservation was needed for the region. In some Range States, community involvement was not yet actively practised, and a learning document was needed to demonstrate the experience of others and allow it to be applied in those countries. For example, in Kyrgyzstan local communities were given the right to detain illegal hunters if caught in their conservancy. They could also make the illegal activity public by taking pictures of the offender to be placed on social media. For Argali, addressing taxonomic issues and the creation of an overview of the current status of implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan were recommended.

2.2 Gobi-Desert –Eastern Steppes Ecosystem (Wild Ass, Wild Camel, Mongolian Gazelle, Goitered Gazelle, Przewalski’s Horse)

Several activities were ongoing to address the impact of linear infrastructure in Mongolia, reflected both in national policy (governmental task force on infrastructure, legislation on the Mongolian standard) and actions on the ground (e.g. above-mentioned project co-funded by CMS and Senckenberg Research Institute to remove the fences along the Trans-Mongolian Railway). However, there was a need for a holistic approach to implement the activities to address this growing threat. It was recommended for Mongolia that a multi-agency working group be established to monitor and discuss solutions to keep the landscapes permeable, led by the Mongolian Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism (MNET). A major issue was the inclusion of wildlife passages in EIA processes for fences, roads and railroads, which had not been addressed to date (activity 2.2.1 c,g, and j).

In relation to the CAMI atlas of migration and infrastructure, it was recommended that the exercise be repeated regularly to keep the maps updated. On the subject of border fence permeability, it was advised that ongoing political discussions on border fence security should include considerations of wildlife. In addition, it was important to ensure that animals were protected on their migration routes and movement corridors to avoid that e.g. poaching undermines the efforts to keep wildlife passages free.

CMS in cooperation with the Mongolian Wild Camel Protection Foundation (WCPF) was currently conceptualizing a research project near the Mongolian-Chinese border to find out more about the actual movements of the camels and address strengthening or expanding the transboundary protected area networks (2.2.5). However additional activities were needed.

A coordinating meeting to address Wild Ass conservation was planned for 2019, which would address the creation of an action plan for the species (2.2.6), starting with national action plans. Activities to establish transboundary cooperation and coordination for the conservation of Przewalski’s Horse (2.2.7) were ongoing between Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. It was recommended to involve the Russian Federation as well.

2.3 South-west Region (Cheetah, Goitered Gazelle, Chinkara, Wild Ass [Kulan/Onager], Przewalski’s Horse, Transcaspien Urial)

The participants provided a brief overview of activities to safeguard Asiatic Cheetah in Iran. Taking into account the current status of the species, the group called for an international meeting to be organized as soon as possible (2.3.5), involving CMS and IUCN to be held in Tehran and for the urgent creation of a high-priority rescue plan to bring the Cheetah back from the brink of extinction.

For the Ustyurt landscape, the group highlighted the importance of keeping wildlife passages between the neighbouring countries free and addressing the existing problems for ungulates, associated with border fences between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The CMS

Secretariat commended the recent actions of Kazakhstan to make the border fence with Uzbekistan permeable for Saiga (see 3.4 above) and the creation of Saigachiy Reserve in Uzbekistan in 2016. The group suggested considering the creation of a trans-boundary nature reserve between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Scientific justification for the creation of several protected areas was in preparation (2.3.7). However, the situation was challenging due to the conflicting interests of nature protection and hydrocarbon extraction on the Ustyurt plateau.

In relation to Kulan, the group recommended to address the steep decrease of the population in Turkmenistan and to encourage dialogue between neighbouring countries (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in particular) and the international community. While national action plans in some Range States were being discussed, there needed to be continued action on the ground throughout the range. Identification of corridors and suitable habitat (2.3.10.) needed more attention. Feasibility of reintroduction to the Alai Valley in Kyrgyzstan had not yet been assessed (2.3.11), while re-introduction into the Central steppe in Kazakhstan, based on the respective feasibility study was ongoing.

The group recommended to develop national action plans for conservation of Goitered Gazelles throughout the range. Poaching (2.3.16) and impacts of infrastructure (2.3.15) were the most urgent threats to be addressed. Reintroduction had occurred only in Kyrgyzstan using animals from Kazakhstan (2.3.13). Some activities to review national legislation on poaching were underway mostly in Iran, whereas this needed to be addressed in other Range States as well. Further, mainstreaming wildlife considerations into EIA of infrastructure planning including fences was recommended. Regarding 2.3.17 and 2.3.18 little information was available for Chinkara conservation, apart from community-based activities of the Department of Environment (DOE) in Iran. The group suggested prioritizing the development and implementation of national action plans for Chinkara and Goitered Gazelles.

2.4 Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau (China, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan)

Overall, there were multiple research studies and conservation activities on the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau in China and India. Many conservation activities focused on Snow Leopards and their prey in China, India, Nepal and Pakistan, whereas other species might require more attention. In China and India all recommended activities to address infrastructure as a threat (2.4.8 and 2.4.9) were ongoing. The group recommended restricting activity 2.4.7 to review of infrastructure development plans to ensure no adverse impact on species of concern in protected areas. Efforts to strengthen protected area networks (2.4.10) including activities to involve local communities (2.4.11) were ongoing both in India and in China.

A multi-species action plan for Qinghai-Tibetan plateau ungulates (2.4.1) had not been developed; however, multiple conservation activities were ongoing. Trans-boundary coordination (2.4.2.) among provinces was being undertaken through regular meetings of administrative authorities in China, while there was less done between countries. A trans-boundary aspect was included in the Khangchendzonga national park project between India and Nepal.

Several studies on ungulate distribution on the plateau had been published (e.g. Schauer et al., 2007, Schaller et al., 2006; Junhua et al., 2013, Zhenhua and Jiang, 2015 Liang et al, 2016, and others). However, no compilation of data or a systematic analysis in a single publication and across all Range States existed at present (2.4.3).

2.5 Bukhara Deer (Tugai Forests of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

None of the activities for the Bukhara Deer had been implemented. In part 2.5.4. was addressed by the existing cooperation between administrations of two nature reserves: Lower Amudarya Biosphere Reserve (Uzbekistan) and Amudarya Nature Reserve (Turkmenistan). Together with UN Environment Office for Europe, WWF Russia and other partners, the CMS Secretariat had submitted a proposal to the International Climate Initiative (ICI) of the German Government to fund implementation of some of the activities. The group recommended CMS to conduct the second Range State meeting and to encourage Range States to develop/update national action plans as well as the regional action plan for Bukhara Deer and revive activities under the CMS Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Restoration and Conservation of the Bukhara Deer (*Cervus elaphus yarkandensis*).

4.3 Objective 3. To Facilitate Knowledge Exchange, Communication and the Promotion of Synergies

Issue 3.1. Knowledge and Data Sharing

The CAMI Newsletter, produced twice a year in English and Russian, was established to raise awareness and exchange of ongoing activities and to establish a practice of information sharing between CAMI stakeholders (3.1.5). Mechanisms of data storage (3.1.1) had not been identified, and neither an analysis of data needs (3.1.3) nor a gap analysis of information sources (3.1.6) had been implemented. The last two activities were given low priority for the coming years. Some data analysis to highlight conservation applications (3.1.4) was done in the process of creating the migration atlas. The group recommended not to implement 3.1.7 to establish an “Asian Scientific Initiative for Conservation of Migration”, which would duplicate some of the ongoing efforts. The CMS Secretariat had started work to determine the feasibility of data sharing within the Infrastructure Atlas project (3.1.2). The group recommended continuing to collect relevant information, such as the species action plans on the CAMI website and to develop the website content further in English and Russian.

4.4 Objective 4. To Support Implementation, Coordination and Resourcing of CAMI

Issue 4.1. Coordination Mechanism for CAMI

Most of the activities addressing coordination of the CAMI had been implemented or were in progress, but continued efforts are required. The CAMI coordinator position (part time) had been established in the CMS Secretariat, CAMI species focal points were identified, thematic workshops were conducted (4.1.4.) as well as an intersessional CAMI members meeting (4.1.5). The participants recommended that the CMS Secretariat continued its coordination of CAMI after 2020, and that Range States should aim to increase the CAMI coordinator position to a full-time post. In terms of CAMI species, focal points were required to reach out to and communicate with the focal points in the governments of the countries (Species Focal Point Terms of Reference). The CMS National Focal Points of CAMI Range States were also part of the Asia regional group represented by Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan in the CMS Standing Committee and the COPs, and communication within this group was a way to better connect government focal points (4.1.6 and 4.1.7).

To ensure national consultation of the POW in relevant ministries (4.1.8), the CMS Secretariat should remind Range States of this activity, by e.g. including the topic in reporting requirements, questionnaires and capacity-building workshops. However, overall it was suggested that CMS engagement in implementing the POW should be scaled down, having trans-boundary cooperation as the main focus of CMS action.

Issue 4.2. Funding Implementation

This issue had been discussed and was relevant for a number of species and issues. So far, co-funding between donor initiatives and governments (4.2.1) was mainly being realized in the framework of GEF-funded projects and in some cases private sector involvement.

Activities to fund conservation through sustainable wildlife use (4.2.2) had been implemented in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan in cooperation with Panthera, some activities also existed in Uzbekistan and via ecotourism in Kazakhstan and private protected areas in Iran. More activities were needed across the region to support the conservation of the species, which could be subject to consumptive or non-consumptive sustainable use. Re-investment of fines into conservation had also begun to be implemented in several Range States, e.g. Uzbekistan and Iran.

State programmes included funding for conservation of numerous CAMI species in Range States such as on Saiga Antelopes, Snow Leopards, Goitered Gazelles, Argali, Kulan, Bukhara Deer and Cheetah for example (4.2.4.). A national action plan for Chinkara was being prepared in Iran. Governments should ensure that all CAMI species were included in the State conservation programmes, which should be developed on the basis of scientific research, which needed more funding.

Re-investing environmental fines in conservation was practised in Iran (4.2.7.), whereas in Kazakhstan a process had started to prepare the relevant legislation. This needed more attention in all Range States.

The CMS Secretariat was encouraged to start implementation of activity 4.2.6 to conduct an 'Inventory' of donors and funding programmes and identify a "champion" for CAMI, to explore funding possibilities through GEF and to seek participation in large private sector initiatives to systematically raise awareness (4.2.11) of CAMI species and to open new funding opportunities. Definition of transparent national regulations and a review of legal frameworks were needed to ensure the following measures could be implemented: 4.2.3. to establish a trust fund, including with funding from mining and hydropower companies and 4.2.13 to include biodiversity conservation measures into the contracts with mining companies.

Breakout Group on Saiga Antelopes

Conservation activities for Saiga were being coordinated with a detailed Medium-Term International Work Programme 2015-2020 under the CMS Memorandum of Understanding for the Restoration, Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga spp.*). The group therefore mainly discussed the situation of the Mongolian Saiga population. A mass mortality event in 2017 caused by the spread of 'peste de petits ruminants' (PPR) disease from domestic animals reduced the population size by 60 per cent in one year, leaving the population of 5,000 animals in Mongolia. A population survey in spring 2018 showed a further reduction to only an estimated 3,000 animals remaining due to the harsh winter conditions leading to low fodder availability. The idea of relocating some Saiga to remote locations to avoid disease outbreaks affecting the entire Mongolian population was discussed. However, reintroduction of Saiga to

remote parts of their former range would mean high costs and stress for the animals so strengthening in situ conservation measures was seen to be more important and effective.

Another critical threat for Mongolian Saiga was poaching for illegal trade. The Mongolian Government was working together with WWF and WCS to combat poaching, but this project had now finished. There was an urgent need to raise funds for the Mongolian Saiga population to prevent further decline of this unique subspecies.

The group further discussed upcoming draft CITES Decisions on Saiga. The group recommended that Range States strengthen the implementation of existing national legislation against illegal trade in Saiga. In relation to Saiga Decision 17.271 directed to the CITES Secretariat, the group also recommended that the CITES Secretariat should provide support for the training of enforcement agencies and for the implementation of Decision 269, which called upon Range and Consumer States to address challenges in controlling illegal trade.

Breakout Group on Equids

Scientists and government representatives of Kazakhstan, China, Iran, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan provided an overview of the current situation and conservation measures for Kulan in their countries. Poaching remained an important threat for the species in all Range States.

Two separated populations of the subspecies *Equus hemionus onager* existed in two protected areas in Iran, 815 in Bahram-e-Goor and 198 in Touran (DOE data of 2017). The current threats to the species included: poaching, vehicle collisions, conflicts with humans, especially in agricultural areas, competition for pasture and water with livestock in the areas surrounding protected areas. The current activities included a workshop conducted for strategic planning and a recent training for conservation activities. Telemetry studies and a questionnaire-based survey had been conducted in Bahram-e-Goor. The main concerns were the total separation of the two populations, the concentration of Onager within Bahram-e-Goor which might exceed the carrying capacity of the protected area, and low level of awareness about the species. The border fence between Iran and Turkmenistan hindered the movement of the populations shared by both countries. More attention for the Touran population and a national action plan for Kulan were needed.

A recent assessment in South Turkmenistan showed that the Kulan population had dropped dramatically in the Badkhyz protected area with only a few animals remaining. Further surveys in the Kulan's range were being prepared. Poaching was probably the main driver of population decline, while drying and salinization of water sources, as well as increasing livestock encroachment and overgrazing in Kulan habitat were also important threats. The group requested the CMS Secretariat and participants of the workshop to bring this situation to the attention of the Turkmen Government, the neighbouring countries and the international community, preferably on a high political level - CMS was seen to play an important role in this regard.

In Uzbekistan, surveys were conducted in 2012, 2013, 2014 and in 2017 in the range of the Kaplankyr trans-boundary population, which confirmed the presence of Kulan in Uzbekistan. The species was listed in the national Red Book as extinct in the wild (0), which should be changed to critically endangered (1). A feasibility study was planned to establish a new protected area near Sarykamysh area within a GEF-Project, where Kulan was one of the flagship species.

In Kazakhstan, a number of activities were underway for Kulan: a national reintroduction action plan had been drafted and Kulan reintroduction to Altyn Dala was initiated and ongoing. It was

also planned to increase monitoring, using SMART in Barsa Kelmes nature reserve and surrounding landscape with support of Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI) project. There was a need to strengthen anti-poaching efforts, to establish a national action plan for Kulan and to increase attention for the Barsa Kelmes population.

In China, the majority of Kulan population inhabited the Kalimaili national nature reserve near the border with Mongolia. The reserve had a management “master plan” in place. A few Kulan were present in Mazongshan, Inner Mongolia. New publications would be published soon.

In Mongolia, a national action plan for Kulan was needed. Population monitoring had been conducted mainly in the south-west and south-east Gobi. In the south-east, 41 collared Kulan provided movement data; it was planned to collar an additional 30 animals. There was a need to extend monitoring efforts to the South Gobi and Great Gobi. Anti-poaching brigades were understaffed, and there was a need to increase the number of anti-poaching units.

5. Priority Topics until 2020

As a result of the plenary discussion on how to prioritize CAMI activities until 2020, the following topics were identified, with the first two ranked as highest priority:

1. Trans-boundary conservation
2. Poaching and illegal trade
3. Rangeland management
4. Private sector involvement

5.1 Transboundary Conservation and Cooperation

There was overall agreement that the following conservation issues needed to be addressed in the context of trans-boundary conservation areas: poaching, barriers to movement (border fences) and enhanced communication, coordination and cooperation between the Range States. Other issues, such as rangeland management, might also be important for trans-boundary populations of animals, depending on the region.

It was recommended that CAMI work should be scaled down to focus the limited resources available on achieving selected high-priority outcomes. The most important role and outcome of CAMI should be strengthening international cooperation on conservation. As a way to prioritize the issues and activities involved in this topic, it was recommended to produce an atlas of transboundary conservation hot spots in the CAMI region by 2020, building on the infrastructure and migration atlas. The aim would be to identify transboundary areas of high importance for conservation. The conservation issues within those areas, such as poaching, infrastructure and others, should be identified and mapped. It was noted that the limited funding available from a few donor countries such as Switzerland and Germany to support CAMI implementation should focus on trans-boundary areas to enhance cross-border cooperation as the main role and expertise of CMS.

The issue of border fences preventing the animals from moving freely across countries and thereby often isolating populations was highlighted as an important one to address. Joint monitoring programmes were mentioned as an important component of trans-boundary conservation. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan would be interested in such joint activities.

CMS should also stimulate implementation of bilateral agreements with relevance to CAMI, as some of them were not being implemented actively. In addition, no assessment of implementation of such agreements was being undertaken in many cases. Participants, however, also noted that it was not the role of CMS to evaluate the effectiveness of bilateral cooperation but to act as a neutral platform and facilitator.

Participants further discussed examples for opportunities to initiate or enhance transboundary cooperation, such between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the conservation of Severtzov's Argali (*O.a. severtzovi*) and between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on the Goitered Gazelle. It was necessary to raise the profile of such projects both internationally and within the country and obtain the support of high-level decision-makers.

5.2 Poaching and Illegal Trade

Several participants mentioned that poaching was among the most important issues to be addressed under CAMI. It was suggested that strengthening anti-poaching efforts should also be part of trans-boundary cooperation. Both poaching and illegal trade were trans-boundary issues and should be part of the trans-boundary conservation project, which had been suggested above (5.1). There were also plans to conduct an anti-poaching workshop in the framework of CAMI, which would be funded by Germany.

5.3 Rangeland Management

It was noted that the issue of overgrazing and range land management was important to address in the future. Multiple opportunities to fund the development of agriculture including pasture management were available for the region and it was suggested to explore possibilities of organizing a meeting with participation of CMS, FAO, UNDP and other international development organizations to streamline wildlife considerations into development strategies and to identify new fundraising opportunities arising from development aid. While there was overall agreement on the fact that range land management was an important conservation issue, especially in combination with pasture fencing in grassland ecosystems, participants also felt that this issue was probably too broad to be addressed adequately by CAMI by 2020 and therefore of lower priority.

5.4 Private Sector Involvement

Several activities of the POW call for a greater private sector involvement, for example, improving EIA processes by including considerations of migratory mammals and raising additional funds with the help of private sector. It was recognized that private sector involvement was an important aspect both to reduce the impact on wildlife and to raise funds for conservation activities, and therefore also a priority for action.

6. Next Steps and Lessons Learnt

Participants discussed what needed to be taken into consideration as lessons learnt from implementation so far and when preparing for the next revision and updating exercise of the POW: It would be useful to undertake an analysis of the feasibility of activities and to condense the information in a realistic way in order to be able to deliver on the activities. It was recommended to reach out to higher level decision-makers to promote the implementation of CAMI whenever the opportunities arose. A revision of the Assessment of Gaps and Needs of Migratory Mammal

Conservation in Central Asia and of the CAMI Programme of Work (both developed in 2014) should be undertaken in 2020, according to Resolution 11.24.

For technical workshops, it was suggested to opt for smaller workshops (possibly focussing on a technical issue or a sub-region), where representatives of relevant ministries and sectors that drive the identified threats should be invited, in addition to the usual CAMI constituency.

The issue of sharing information within CAMI was also raised. It was noted that more information on implementation in the Range States could be posted on the CMS website, such as the English language version of the new Mongolian legislation to reduce and mitigate negative impacts of infrastructure on wildlife. The CMS Secretariat should continue to collect all relevant information on the CAMI website in English and in regional languages as possible and subject to availability of resources.

6.1 Preparation for COP13

In preparation for CMS COP13, which would be held in India in February 2020, participants discussed the opportunity of adding new species on the CMS Appendices and prepare Resolutions or Decisions with regard to CAMI or any particular issue that required special attention.

Adding Species to the CMS Appendices

The representative from Uzbekistan stated the need to list the Urial under CMS. The required information for the Bukhara Urial was already available and he encouraged the neighbouring countries and experts to work together on the proposal to list the species.

The CMS taxonomic reference for mammals (Wilson and Reeder 2005) lists the Urial as several subspecies of *Ovis aries* (*O.a.arkal*, *O.a.cycloceros*), which could possibly lead to confusion with domestic sheep (*Ovis aries aries*). However, the taxonomic reference of CMS should not be an obstacle to listing the species, if the populations proposed for were clearly defined in the proposal.

It was noted that listing of new species under CMS such as the Gobi Bear which has been listed on CMS Appendix I at COP12 did not mean that the species would automatically be covered by CAMI. The species could, however, be added to CAMI with a revision of Resolution 11.24, which contained the POW and the list of all species covered. The question of including new species under CAMI would also be discussed in detail at the next CAMI Range State meeting.

Preparation of Draft Decisions for COP13

Participants discussed what documents were desired by CAMI to be submitted to COP13 to provide a clear mandate for action. Submitting a decision on addressing the threat of infrastructure was suggested. The representative of Kazakhstan offered to take a lead in preparing and submitting a draft Decision on this topic but would have to confirm this with colleagues in the Kazakhstan State Forestry and Wildlife Committee. Several participants offered their support to help Kazakhstan in preparing such a document for COP13.

Furthermore, the meeting agreed that a draft decision on trans-boundary cooperation in the framework of CAMI should be prepared by the CMS Secretariat. It was agreed that the CMS Secretariat should lead the discussion on this activity at the next CAMI Meeting.

6.2 Next CAMI Meeting

The next meeting of CAMI Range States was proposed to be held in 2020 in Mongolia pending the official confirmation of the Government of Mongolia. Participants supported the idea of meeting in Mongolia. The priority topics for the next meeting were trans-boundary conservation hot spots and anti-poaching. Participants also recommended that the next CMS pre-COP meeting in 2020 for Asia should address CAMI issues.

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Annex I. List of Participants

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Annex II. The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)

Central Asian grassland, desert and mountain ecosystems present vast and still inter-connected landscapes, which harbour populations of at least 15 species of large migratory mammals, such as Goitered Gazelles, Mongolian Gazelles, Saiga Antelopes, Kulan, Snow Leopards and others. However, the animals and the integrity of their habitats are increasingly under pressure due to several factors: poaching, development of human settlements, construction of roads and fences, unsustainable land use, mining operations and climate change. Sustainable economic development is a key priority for the region. While aiming to secure benefits of economic growth, the region's Governments strive to safeguard migratory species and their habitats, with 11 out of 14 States being Parties to the UN Environment's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). CMS is the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes. It brings together the States through which migratory animals pass and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures.

The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) is a regional instrument of the UN Environment's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). CAMI (Resolution 11.24) and its associated [Programme of Work](#) (POW) were developed using a participatory approach and adopted by CMS Parties at the Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) in 2014 to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in the wider Central Asian region. CAMI includes 15 species with ranges across 14 countries. As recommended in the Programme of Work (POW), which runs until 2020, there is a need to conduct intersessional meetings for CAMI members every 2½ years (Activity 4.1.5) to review implementation and discuss the way forward.

Further information around CAMI can be found [here](#).