



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON THE CONSERVATION OF LARGE MAMMALS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Tuesday 23 - Thursday 25 September 2014, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Doc.4

CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE (CAMI)

Summary

In response to multiple mandates (notably Concerted and Cooperative Actions, Rec.8.23 and Rec.9.1, Res.10.3 and Res.10.9), CMS has strengthened its work for the conservation of large mammals in the central Asian region and developed the concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*.

This document explains the rationale for developing this initiative, outlining:

- (i) the importance of migratory mammals in the region;
- (ii) COP decisions mandating CMS to strengthen its work for their conservation;
- (iii) activities that are being carried out on single species and to address major threats; and
- (iv) an explanation of the concept proposed with the *CAMI* as a regional initiative, including a description of the process to assess conservation gaps and needs and to develop a programme of work as a strategic framework document associated with the *CAMI*.



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CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE (CAMI)

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)

1. The Central Asian region harbours the largest intact and still interconnected grasslands worldwide. It is of global importance for many migratory mammals, which rely on large steppe, desert and mountain ecosystems that still enable essential long-distance movements and ensure their long-term survival. Mass migrants in this region include CMS-listed species such as Saiga *Saiga spp.*, Mongolian gazelle *Procapra gutturosa* and Kulan *Equus hemionus*. The region is one of the world's last remaining hotspots of large ungulate migrations, which are both a wonderful spectacle and a key structuring force for the ecosystems, often referred to as the "Serengeti of the North".
2. While the expanse, remoteness and difficult terrain of the region have still left large parts mostly untouched by modern civilization, migratory mammals are in decline, with some species having undergone dramatic population reductions in recent decades. Saiga Antelope populations for instance have declined by 95 per cent in ten years following the collapse of the Soviet Union due to excessive poaching and trade in the species' meat and horn.
3. The situation is about to deteriorate further since central Asia is not only rich in biodiversity, but also rich in oil and gas, metals and coal. Numerous long-distance railways and road networks are being constructed to provide the infrastructure for the large-scale extraction of natural resources and economic development, leading to widespread destruction and fragmentation of grasslands and ecosystems. Poaching, habitat degradation from overgrazing by livestock and conversion to agriculture, overhunting, illegal trade and potentially climate change put further pressure on the animals. Because many populations are already small, the impact of these various threats is likely to be further exacerbated.
4. There is thus an urgent need for science-based and internationally coordinated conservation measures across Range States, ensuring the survival of the species, their migrations and habitats, as well as sustainable benefits to people.

Concerted and Cooperative Actions: Central Eurasian Aridland Mammals

5. Most of the terrestrial migratory mammal species occurring in the region are already listed on the Appendices of the CMS. These include the Bukhara/Yarkand deer *Cervus elaphus yarkandensis* (which is listed on both Appendix I and II), Wild camel *Camelus bactrianus*, Wild yak *Bos grunniens*, Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and the Snow leopard *Uncia uncia*, which are listed on CMS Appendix I. The last four of these are also designated for Concerted Action, thereby prioritizing these amongst all Appendix I species for particular attention (UNEP/CMS/Res.10.23). A further six species, the Saiga Antelope *Saiga spp.*, Kiang *Equus kiang*, Argali *Ovis ammon*, Mongolian gazelle *Procapra gutturosa*, Goitered gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*, and the Kulan *Equus hemionus* are listed on CMS Appendix II with the last four being designated for Cooperative Action (UNEP/CMS/Res.10.23).

6. With Recommendations 8.23 and 9.1, CMS Parties recognized that most Eurasian migratory mammals are in a “profoundly unsatisfactory state of conservation” and that the region’s “arid lands, with their exceptional natural and cultural heritage and their unique migration phenomena, are a crucial area for the action of the Convention”. The Recommendations also requested the Scientific Council, in cooperation with the Secretariat, the Government of Mongolia and other concerned Parties to pursue the Central Eurasian Aridland Concerted Action and associated Cooperative Action, including the development of an Action Plan and status reports for all species concerned. This Concerted and Cooperative Action constitutes the main reference for developing the proposed *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*, which is described in more detail below.

Existing single-species instruments

7. A number of activities and instruments have been developed under CMS for the conservation of single species. Through the Memoranda of Understanding concerning the Saiga Antelope and the Bukhara Deer, CMS is already working together with many countries and organizations in the region to enhance the conservation of those species and their habitat and to tackle common threats, such as from overexploitation, illegal trade, infrastructure development and habitat loss. See also document UNEP/CMS/StC41/18 for more details on the activities to implement these MoUs.

8. The Secretariat, in cooperation with range states and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) has also initiated the development of an international single-species action plan for the conservation of Argali *Ovis ammon* following the listing on Appendix II at COP10 (see Action Plan as UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Inf.3). Discussions are ongoing to identify a suitable coordination mechanism to support implementation of the Action Plan, possibly in the frame of the *CAMI* (see also UNEP/CMS/StC40/Doc.21.a Annex).

Addressing common threats to migratory mammals in the region

9. In addition to activities focused on single species, the Secretariat has been active to address urgent and major threats faced by all or most of the species, such as overexploitation and illegal trade. The CMS CITES Joint Work Programme 2012-2014, for example, covers close collaboration on the Saiga Antelope and Snow leopards, as well as a suite of other illegal trade matters (UNEP/CMS/StC38/Doc.3). CMS has also been particularly active to address the rapid growth of linear infrastructure in the region in order to understand and reduce its impact on migratory mammals.

10. Together with the German and Mongolian Governments, CMS organized a workshop to address the impacts from mining and infrastructure on migratory mammals, resulting in a Declaration of Intent and associated Action Plan. Under the Saiga MoU, a study has been initiated to assess the impact of a border fence and railroad construction in Kazakhstan on Saiga and develop recommendations for mitigating these. Conservation guidelines to mitigate the impact of linear infrastructure on migratory mammals in Central Asia are currently being developed and will be tabled for adoption at COP11 (see UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Inf.Doc.4).

The CMS Future Shape Process

11. In addition to these regional, species- and instrument-related mandates, the decisions taken by CMS Parties on the Future Shape of CMS have also been guiding the work of the Secretariat in central Asia. With Res.10.9 on future strategies and structure of CMS and the CMS Family, CMS Parties adopted a set of prioritized activities to strengthen the Convention's contribution to the worldwide conservation, management and sustainable use of migratory species over their entire range.

12. The following activities, annexed to Res.10.9 and covering the nine-year mandate of the Future Shape, are of particular relevance with regard to the work of the Convention in central Asia, and for developing the CAMI:

- ***Activity 2:*** Improved partnership working, including to encourage more NGOs and private sector to become engaged in Agreements and MoUs (2.2);
- ***Activity 8:*** Identify opportunities for cooperation and coordination at the local and regional level through the creation of synergies based on geography, including to regionalize conservation efforts by having local coordinators with assistance from UNEP, NGOs and MEAs, leading to greater presence in each of the regions if appropriate. (8.1 and 8.2);
- ***Activity 11:*** Seek opportunities to coordinate meetings between institutions, working groups and across the CMS Family agreements;
- ***Activity 15:*** Enhanced collaboration between CMS agreements via Secretariats or via merger of agreements based on either geography/ecology or on species clusters, including cooperation and coordination between agreement programmes and projects based on species clustering, thematic issues or geography as appropriate (15.1);

The concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*

13. Against this background, the Secretariat has worked towards reconciling the different mandates in order to use available synergies and achieve more efficient implementation, resulting in the concept of a regional initiative, provisionally called the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)*. CAMI follows up from the Future Shape process calling for geographic synergies and cost-effective implementation of overlapping mandates. Due to a strong emphasis on synergies, it aims to strengthen collaboration with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, NGOs and other bodies engaged in large mammal conservation in the region.

14. With funding from the Swiss Government and the European Union via the GIZ, the Secretariat was able to initiate a process which aims at developing a programme of work (POW) as a strategic framework document by ensuring participation, input and support of Range States and other relevant stakeholders. The provisional working title *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* was chosen as a common reference for this process, which includes the following activities:

- 14.1 Conducting a gap analysis and needs assessment, including status reports of selected central Asian migratory mammals to obtain an overview of the situation in the region and

to identify priorities for conservation as input for the POW¹. The final report is available as UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Inf.Doc.1

14.2 Based on the assessment, development of a POW as a coherent regional strategy to guide implementation of CMS and its instruments and mandates (see UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Doc.5)

14.3 Organization of the stakeholder meeting to review, finalize and approve the POW, including identification of priority activities, possible coordination arrangements and financial mechanisms to support sustainable implementation, and to review the associated Draft Resolution (see UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Doc.6).

15. In November 2013, the CMS Secretariat in close cooperation with the GIZ Regional Programme for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Central Asia, commissioned two consultants to undertake the gaps and needs assessment and to draft the POW. This assignment comprised a participatory consultation and review process with Range States and stakeholders, including online questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, group discussions and national stakeholder meetings in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The GIZ, within the framework of the EU-sponsored FLERMONECA project², has hired national ERCA coordinators in five countries to facilitate national consultations and to support all other CMS related activities.

Discussion on the taxonomic and geographic scope

16. Due to the limited financial and human resources available for the gaps and needs assessment, priority species were selected with a particular focus on CMS-listed species. Currently, the initiative covers the above mentioned eleven mammal species which are already listed on the CMS Appendices. In addition to the CMS-listing, further selection criteria have been developed, resulting in the identification of three additional species to be covered, and which are not yet listed on the CMS Appendices:

16.1 Chiru *Pantholops hodgsonii*. Selection criteria: Long distance migrant in central Asia with transboundary populations.

16.2 Przewalski's horse *Equus ferus przewalskii*, Tibetan gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*. Selection criteria: Species with one or more potential transboundary population that share more or less the same range as the CMS-listed species and which face similar threats; in short, species, the addition of which would probably mean little extra effort in terms of their conservation.

17. The distribution of those species comprises the following 14 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, INDIA, IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF), KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN,

¹ National stakeholder meetings took place in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in May 2014. Organizing these meetings was possible due to the presence of the GIZ in these countries, which provided essential in-kind and financial support.

² The EU Regional Project Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) implemented by GIZ consists of the following components (1) Forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG); (2) Ecosystem Restoration in Central Asia (ERCA); and (3) Environmental Monitoring in Central Asia (MONECA). The project aims at two objectives: enhancing the regional cooperation between the Central Asian countries as well as between the Central Asian countries and the EU in the fields mentioned. Supporting the implementation of the CMS is a core issue of the ERCA component.

MONGOLIA, Nepal, PAKISTAN, the Russian Federation, TAJIKISTAN, and UZBEKISTAN³. For the Cheetah, only Asian populations are being considered. Two other species, the Kulan and in particular the Goitered gazelle also occur in more countries, with the range of the Goitered gazelle extending to the Caucasus and West Asian region, including the Arabian peninsula. These regions are however not covered by the current frame of the initiative, due to the many ecological, historical, socio-economic and political differences which make it more difficult to kick-start effective regional cooperation and implementation of a joint POW (see also UNEP/CMS/CAMI/Inf.1).

18. While with these 14 countries, the POW already covers a vast geographic area, the overall concept of the initiative is meant to be open, inclusive and participatory, leaving room and potential for spill-over effects and inclusion of further countries, depending on the interest of the countries as well as on available financial and human resources.

19. The gaps and needs assessment only focused on ten countries, excluding Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The reason for this is that while several of the selected species also occur in those four countries, with only few exceptions, these populations are rather small. Furthermore, due to financial and time constraints, it was necessary to keep the amount of information and complexity of issues and stakeholders involved at a manageable level. Assessing conservation gaps and needs to the appropriate level of detail in all 14 countries, was beyond the human and financial capacities available for the assignment.

Coordination requirements

20. As explained above, the *CAMI* aims at more efficient implementation of existing instruments and mandates. Its successful implementation will depend on the long-term commitment of the governments concerned, including the provision of adequate financial and in-kind resources. In addition, coordination is required to stimulate and maintain progress in implementation. Options for establishing a coordination mechanism might include outsourcing technical coordination to partner NGOs and/or a committed Range State, or setting up a working groups consisting of range states and other stakeholders.

21. Regardless of which option for coordination will be chosen, all such arrangements will require a certain level of official administration, supervision and guidance from the Secretariat, currently provided by the Officer for Central Asia, whose contract however expires by December 2014. After that, the capacity of the Secretariat will not allow taking up this task and therefore the establishment of the post of an Officer for Central Asia as of 1 January 2015 will be proposed for adoption by COP11. The Secretariat is grateful for the voluntary funding provided so far that allowed all recent activities undertaken in the region and is in the process of seeking *Champions* for the implementation of *CAMI*.

Conclusion

22. The concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* has been developed to strengthen the implementation of CMS and its instruments and to thereby improve the conservation of migratory mammals and their habitat in central Asia. The initiative includes the development of a gap and needs assessment and a programme of work through a full participatory

³ Countries in capital letters are Parties to CMS as of 1 May 2014.

consultation process with Range States and stakeholders, including national stakeholder meetings as well as a meeting of the Range States.

23. The concept of the *CAMI* and the associated Draft Resolution were discussed at the 18th Meeting of the Scientific Council in Bonn, Germany (1-3 July 2014), which broadly welcomed the initiative and supported the associated Draft Resolution with minor amendments.

24. Through this *CAMI*, the Secretariat aims at achieving multiple objectives, including

24.1 implementation of various Concerted and Cooperative Actions for a number of species, including Rec.8.23 and Rec.9.1;

24.2 strengthen implementation of existent species MoUs and Action Plans, such as on the Saiga Antelope, the Bukhara Deer and the Argali;

24.3 implementation of several activities outlined in Res.10.9 on the Future Shape of CMS and the CMS Family; and

24.4 Streamline human and financial resources available for servicing MoUs and implementing above mentioned mandates both within and outside the Secretariat.

Action requested:

The Meeting is invited to:

(a) Take note and comment on the progress made towards implementing the Convention and its instruments in central Asia, and the concept of the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative*.