



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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SEVENTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
CONCERNING CONSERVATION MEASURES
FOR THE SIBERIAN CRANE (*Grus leucogeranus*)
Bonn, Germany, 10-12 June 2010
Agenda Item 7.4

BRIEF REPORT ON WESTERN/CENTRAL ASIAN SITE ACTIVITY

(Prepared by ICF in consultation with the CMS Secretariat)

I. Background

1. The Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds was formally launched on 18 May 2007, in a special signing ceremony held during the Sixth Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane. Also known as the CMS Siberian Crane MoU, this international agreement brings together all of the Siberian Crane Range States, the International Crane Foundation, as well as the newest MoU partners: Wetlands International, and the Cracid and Crane Conservation and Breeding Centre.

2. The Site Network focuses conservation efforts on sites of international importance for the Siberian Crane along its Western and Central Asian flyways in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russian Federation (western Siberia), Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

II. Site nominations

3. During the CMS MoU6 meeting in Kazakhstan in May 2007, the first ten sites were designated within the Site Network, including five sites from Kazakhstan, two from Iran and one each from India, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Other Range States (Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Russia and Pakistan) also proposed their sites and are working on the preparation of nomination documents.

4. During the site nomination ceremony in Kazakhstan representatives from the five countries were handed provisional certificates. After the meeting, a logo and certificate for the WCASN were developed. The final certificates were handed to representatives of Kazakhstan, India and Iran in Rome, Italy, during the CMS COP9 meeting with short introductions of the designated WCASN sites. Certificates for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan sites were passed to the technical focal points. In these countries, meetings with representatives of local administrations were organized during Crane Celebration events and the certificates were presented to them.

III. Status of nomination of new WCASN sites

5. Before the CMS MoU7 meeting, possibilities for the nomination of new sites were investigated. During the CMS MoU6 meeting, Azerbaijan and Pakistan proposed two sites each for nomination. However Azerbaijan did not submit a Letter of Endorsement to the CMS

Secretariat, and Pakistan provided insufficient information on the proposed sites. Pakistan has since submitted a Letter of Endorsement for the two nominated sites and Site Information Sheets with updated information to the CMS Secretariat. These documents are being reviewed by the WCASN Review Working Group which will make recommendations to the WCASN Committee on the nomination of these sites. Turkmenistan planned to nominate one more site – Tallymerjen & Kelif-Zeyit, however the local administration in that region has changed, therefore the process of endorsement has to be started again. The same situation has occurred for the Russian site “Kunovat” located in Yamalo-Neneytskiy Autonomous Region, where the Governor was recently replaced. Kazakhstan has prepared proposals for two new sites, Sarykopa and Irgiz-Turgai, which can be considered for future nomination.

IV. Increasing the protection level of WCASN sites

6. Since the last MoU meeting in 2007 progress was made on improving the protection level of a number of WCASN sites with support from the UNEP/GEF SCWP. All 5 WCASN sites in Kazakhstan were included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention). In addition, Naurzum Lake System was included as part of a World Heritage Site called “The Saryarka—Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan”. In Zharsor-Urkash Lake System, the Zharsor-Urkash State Wildlife Refuge at the republic level was established, under the management responsibility of Naurzum State Nature Reserve. Since June 2001, Fereydoon Kenar in Mazandaran Province in Iran has been a “Non-Shooting Area”, covering Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran, Eastern & Western Sorkh Rud Damgahs and Fereydoon Kenar Wildlife Refuge, including a buffer zone around each of these areas. The Ramsar site at Bujagh has been extended (500 ha) to cover the whole national park which consists of the whole of the lagoon area, its associated marshes and the marshes and sand flats at the mouth of the Sefid Rud river to the west. Management plans for Naurzum and Urkash Zharsor were completed, the management plan for Fereydoon Kenar was finalized through a significant community participation process, and input was provided to the draft management plan for Bujagh.

V. Atlas of Key Sites for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds in Western/Central Asia

7. The Atlas has been prepared for presentation during the CMS MoU7 meeting with the active participation of country representatives. For the preparation of this publication, Site Information Sheets for designated and proposed sites were used as well as information from the Siberian Crane database, which was created and managed within the framework of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP), and data from the literature.

8. For each country, a brief overview of wetlands used by the Siberian Crane and detailed descriptions of historical and recent sightings of the Siberian Crane along the Western and Central Asian flyways has been prepared. The most important Siberian Crane sites (green squares) and known Siberian Crane sightings are presented in the map for each country (or its part). Each sighting is described in detail in the legend with reference to information sources. Despite the quite comprehensive overview of Siberian Crane sightings, it is possible that some sightings have been missed, especially those described in local publications. Please provide information on any omissions to Elena Ilyashenko.

9. For the most important Siberian Crane sites, experts from the Siberian Crane Range States presented information including maps of the sites, a brief overview of physiographic features, importance for the Siberian Crane with detailed description of all sightings, importance for other crane species and other waterbirds; negative factors for the wetlands, current and proposed conservation measures and the sites’ international importance.

VI. Information exchange

10. A section on the WCASN has been created in the merged SCWP - SCFC website. Guidelines for Site Nomination have been uploaded here and can be used for the preparation of nomination documents for new sites. Information about each site has been included on a separate page with links to photos, maps and other documents. The WCASN webpage address is: <http://sibeflyway.org/flyway-conservation/wcasn>

11. Information on the launch of the WCASN was published in various newsletters, including the CWGE Newsletter. Presentations including WCASN activities were made during the CMS COP9 in Rome (Dec 2008), SCWP Project Completion Workshop in Harbin (Oct 2009), UNEP General Council Meeting in Bali (Press Conference Feb 2010) and others.

VII. Education activities at WCASN sites supported by SCWP

12. Education activities were conducted at WCASN sites in Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with support from the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP). As Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were not involved in project implementation, agreements were signed between ICF and the related organizations in these countries.

13. Booklets with information about the sites were published in all four countries. In Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Crane Celebrations were organized where education and information materials provided by the Crane Working Group of Eurasia and published with the support of SCWP and CMS Secretariat were shared. Turkmenistan also published the poster "Protect Cranes and their Habitats" in Turkmen Language which was shared widely. In the framework of the Crane Celebration, a meeting with the local administration was organized at Durnaly site and the certificate of designation of this site was handed to the Head of Administration. In Uzbekistan a round table on "Presentation of Termez as a wintering site of the Western/Central Asian Site Network" was organized for different target groups: decision makers (regional and local administration, regional branch of State Committee for Nature Protection), stakeholders (frontier guards), hunters, scientific workers of the neighbouring protected area (Surhanskiy Zapovednik), lecturer of Termez state university and local mass media. In Kazakhstan, a Siberian Crane Festival was organized at Naurzum involving nearly three thousand students, teachers, stakeholders and different groups of local people from Karamendy (where the administrative office of Naurzum Nature Reserve is located) as well as from adjacent regions.

VIII. Future support for the development of the WCASN

14. Recognizing that the WCASN was developed as an initial step towards the development of a wider waterbird site network under the CMS Central Asian Flyway initiative, ICF and Wetlands International are working with CMS and UNEP to develop a regional proposal covering part of the Central Asian Flyway which would provide support for the sustainable management of key WCASN sites, the extension of the site network and for addressing the important threat that unsustainable hunting practices pose to the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds. ICF is also seeking funds to support hunter education including some WCASN sites.

Action Requested:

- The Meeting is invited to take note of the report.