

## International Action Plan to Tackle the African-Eurasian Vulture Crisis

- Following population declines of 95 per cent in Africa and Asia in recent decades, most vulture species in Africa, Asia and Europe are now threatened with extinction
- An international Action Plan being developed for 15 species of Old World Vultures extending to 124 range countries
- The overarching Action Plan will be applicable throughout the ranges of all species and aims to promote a step-change in collaborative international conservation efforts

*Bonn, 16 February 2017* – An International Action Plan for vultures is being developed at an expert meeting convened by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in from 16 to 19 February in Toledo, Spain. The plan aims to prevent the further decline of vultures which are nature's primary scavengers, providing indispensable ecological services as carrion feeders and disposers of disease-carrying carcasses.

“Populations of vultures have plummeted across the world as a result of poisoning, habitat loss, reduced food availability, electrocution and collision with power lines”, said CMS Executive Secretary Bradnee Chambers. “This action plan covers 15 vulture species and extends across three continents. It aims to halt further decline and thus generate significant economic and human health benefits.”

A single international action plan covering multiple species that occur in more than 120 countries is a new approach, which will complement and build upon existing conservation initiatives. This umbrella strategy for scavengers facing the same threats and using the same habitats is required to promote a major step-change in the conservation efforts for this spectacular group of birds.

The first draft of the Action Plan includes the most up-to-date population status reports of the species and a detailed analysis of the threats that are affecting these important birds. In India, vultures are poisoned by diclofenac used for veterinary purposes, while in Africa, the scavengers are intentionally targeted by poachers to cover up their activities so the authorities are not alerted to the location of their crimes. Some birds are also poisoned for their body parts to be used in witchcraft. The Action Plan includes solutions to address the most imminent threats.

Another objective is to reduce vulture mortality caused by electrocutions at power poles and collisions with power infrastructure, including wind farms. Tackling wildlife crime and illegal trade in vulture parts should help restore populations, particularly in Africa. Restricting, and in some cases prohibiting, the use of toxic chemicals including certain pharmaceutical drugs should prevent their unintentional death. Strong legislation and law enforcement are necessary to implement these measures.

This Multi-species Action Plan has been developed in cooperation with experts in different regions to understand the differing threats and to engage people in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

A final version of the Action Plan will be submitted to the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS to be held from 23 to 28 October in Manila for adoption.

### NOTES TO EDITORS

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*For more information and to arrange interviews, please contact:*

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