



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU)

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REPORT OF THE INTERIM COORDINATING UNIT

Prepared by the Interim Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU

Introduction

1. The UNEP/CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) came into effect on 1 November 2008.
2. Prior to this, the following two international negotiation meetings were held:
 - Meeting to Identify and Elaborate an Option for International Cooperation on African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors under the Convention on Migratory Species¹ in Loch Lomond, Scotland, United Kingdom, on 22-25 October 2007; and
 - Intergovernmental Meeting to Identify and Elaborate an Option for International Cooperation on African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors under the Convention on Migratory Species² in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 20-22 October 2008. The Meeting concluded two documents: the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia, which became effective upon the signature of 28 Range States.

Establishment of the Interim Coordinating Unit

3. Since those 28 Signatories met in October 2008, a UNEP/CMS Office has been formally established in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) held in Rome, Italy, 1-5 December 2008, accepted a proposition by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to host an out-posted Office of the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. This office was established to host the Secretariat of the UNEP/CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range and the Interim Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU.
4. A Donor Agreement was signed between UNEP and EAD in October 2009 which provided US\$ 3.6 million to fund the operation of the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi for the period from July 2009 to June 2012. This Donor Agreement was extended in December 2011 by a grant of US\$ 4 million to fund the Office for a further three years from July 2012 to June 2015. This extension to the Donor Agreement also includes a pledge by EAD of a similar amount to cover operation of the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi for the following triennium (2015-2018) and beyond, subject to a review of the budget in 2014.
5. The UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi represents a major collaboration between UNEP/CMS and the

¹ http://www.cms.int/species/raptors/report_mtg1.htm

² http://www.cms.int/species/raptors/report_mtg2.htm

UAE to conserve migratory species. The main objectives of the Office are to service and administer secretariat functions related to the two MoUs, including implementation of their respective Action Plans, communication and coordination between Range States and supporting partners, promotion of conservation projects/programmes, provision of technical expertise and development of capacity building initiatives. The facility is also available to service the proposed Agreement on the Conservation of the Houbara Bustard, subject to the agreement of the Parties.

6. The Interim Coordinating Unit (ICU) for the Raptors MoU began practical operations following recruitment of a Programme Officer (Birds of Prey) in August 2009. Unfortunately, the post-holder left unexpectedly after a short time and the position remained vacant until the appointment of the current Programme Officer, who joined the ICU at the end of October 2011.

7. At present (November 2012), the staff compliment of the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi comprises three professional officers and one general staff member, as follows: Programme Officer (Birds of Prey), Programme Officer (Dugongs), Associate Programme Officer and Administrative/Finance Assistant. The positions of Executive Coordinator and another Associate Programme Officer are in the process of being recruited. In addition, the Office has contracted one temporary Team Assistant and one Team Associate for one year. To date the Office has had 3 interns and 3 are currently in service. It is planned that interns will be recruited regularly for periods of 3-6 months for the foreseeable future.

Status of Signatures

8. The following 28 states signed the Raptors MoU on 22 October 2008: Angola, Armenia, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, Gambia, Guinea, Hungary, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and Yemen. South Africa signed the Raptors MoU on 4 December 2008 and Luxembourg signed on 19 July 2010. During the 10th Conference of the Parties to CMS, the ICU welcomed the following 8 new Signatories to the Raptors MoU: Belgium, Denmark, European Union, Germany, Ghana, Italy and Romania on 22 November 2011, and Monaco on 25 November 2011. France and the Slovak Republic signed the Raptors MoU on 14 and 15 May 2012 respectively, during the 5th Meeting of the Parties of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

9. This brings the total number of Signatories to 40 (as at November 2012) out of a potential 130 Range States and the European Union. In addition, 3 Co-operating Partners have signed the MoU: CMS Secretariat (22 October 2008), BirdLife International (4 December 2008) and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (16 December 2011).

10. During the last 12 months, the ICU has been pro-actively engaging with non-Signatory Range States to promote the Raptors MoU. A database of potential contacts within non-Signatory Range States has been established primarily comprising existing Focal Points of CMS, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

11. In addition, the ICU developed a document entitled '*Benefits, Entitlements and Obligation of signing the Raptors MoU*'. This was circulated to all non-Signatory Range States in April 2012.

12. The results of these efforts have been encouraging with expressions of interest to sign the Raptors MoU at some point in the future being received from the following 18 Range States: Bhutan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, India, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Niger, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Syria.

National Contact Points

13. As stated in paragraph 10 of the MoU text, '*each Signatory will designate a National Contact Point for all matters relating to the implementation of the MoU; and communicate the name and address of that contact point to the Coordinating Unit once established*'.

14. The ICU developed and drafted ‘*Terms of Reference for National Contact Points of the Raptors MoU*’. These were circulated to Signatories in April 2012 for comment. Constructive criticism was received from the United Kingdom and this document was revised accordingly to become the current ‘*Guidelines for National Contact Points*’ (Annex I).

15. At the same time, the ICU issued a call to all Signatories seeking details of their National Contact Points (NCP), including requesting reconfirmation by those Signatories that had already identified their NCP and communicated their details to the ICU. To assist Signatories, the ICU developed a standard NCP Nomination Form (Annex II) which was included with that communication.

16. A list of National Contact Points designated by Signatories is published in Annex III to this report. It includes details for 22 (of 40) Signatories. Signatories not included in this list are urged to designate a NCP and to submit their details using the Nomination Form at their earliest convenience.

17. The lists of NCPs will be maintained and updated by the ICU, and will be published on the Resources section of Raptors MoU webpages.

Communications

18. The ICU has communicated regularly with Signatories, non-Signatory Range States and other interested parties, primarily via email. Annex IV presents a detailed breakdown of the main circulations issued by the ICU over the last three years. Following modest activity in 2009 and 2010, the ICU has been circulating documents and other information at an average rate of almost once every fortnight during the last twelve months. These data do not include the many thousands of bilateral communications with Signatories and others, relating to the Raptors MoU and its implementation.

19. The ICU contributed to an A4 colour brochure for the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi that was published online³ and in hard copy in September 2010. It covers the aims and objectives of the office, and includes separate sections about the Raptors and Dugong MoUs.

20. In May 2012, the ICU published a bi-lingual (English and French), colour illustrated leaflet about the Raptors MoU, its mission and function. Copies have been distributed at all subsequent events attended by the Programme Officer.

21. The Raptors MoU webpages (www.cms.int/species/raptors) are hosted as part of the CMS Family website. During the last year, it has been revised and updated on a regular basis. However, no radical changes have been made because the ICU has been contributing to plans by the CMS Secretariat to completely redesign the whole CMS Family website in due course.

22. In an effort to promote better understanding of the Raptors MoU and associated Action Plan within Range States, the ICU commissioned unofficial courtesy translations into both Arabic and Russian of the complete text of the Raptors MoU. These were published in early 2012 and are available on the Resources section of the Raptors MoU webpages. Similarly, Arabic and Russian versions of CMS Resolution 10.28 on the Saker Falcon have been published by the ICU to generate wider support for the Saker Falcon Task Force.

External representation and promotion

23. Over the last twelve months, the ICU has actively promoted the Raptors MoU at a number of international meetings and events, as follows:

- CMS 10th Conference of Parties, held in Bergen, Norway (November 2011);
- International Festival of Falconry, held in Al Ain, UAE (December 2011);
- Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (ARRCN) - 7th Symposium, held in Ganhwa,

³ http://www.cms.int/publications/pdf/Abu_dhabi_brochure_sept2010.pdf

- South Korea (January 2012);
- EURAPMON Workshop, held in Murcia, Spain (February 2012);
- UNDP/GEF/BirdLife Migratory Soaring Birds (MSB) Project Steering Committee Meeting, held in Amman, Jordan (February 2012);
- Pan-African Vulture Summit, held in the Masai Mara National Park, Kenya (April 2012);
- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement 5th Meeting of Parties, held in La Rochelle, France (May 2012);
- Meeting with EURING representatives, held in Frankfurt, Germany (August 2012);
- CMS Workshop on Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region, held in Accra, Ghana (August 2012); and
- Migratory Soaring Birds Project – Strategic Planning Workshop, held in Djibouti City, Djibouti (October 2012) – the Programme Officer was unable to attend in person but instead submitted three separate presentations that were delivered on his behalf by the organisers.

24. To celebrate World Migratory Bird Day 2012 (13 May), the ICU co-organized, with the League for the Protection of Birds (LPO – Birdlife Partner) Aquitaine, a highly successful 'Bird Migration Watch Day' at the Pointe de Grave in Western France. The weather was perfect and almost 50 enthusiasts gathered to witness over ten thousand birds pass over Northwards heading to their breeding areas. This total included almost 200 birds of prey, comprising 7 species.

25. International Vulture Awareness Day was established in 2009 to publicise the need to conserve vultures to a wider audience on the 1 September each year. In 2012, the ICU issued a Press Release explaining the importance of this group of birds, including highlighting the ecosystem services which they provide.

WorkPlan 2012-13

27. Annual WorkPlans for the ICU run from 1 July to 30 June in the following year, to coincide with the funding and reporting cycles established by UNEP and the UAE in the Donor Agreement. Accordingly, the 1st Meeting of Signatories (MoS1) in December 2012 will fall approximately mid-way through the current 2012-13 WorkPlan. Some key conservation initiatives on which the ICU is either leading or actively engaged will be presented under Agenda Item 11.

28. The ICU's forward WorkPlan will be shaped by the outcomes of MoS1, and will depend on the decisions taken with respect to a number of Agenda Items during MoS1. However, some core activities can already be identified which will continue to demand attention, notably:

- Operating the **Coordinating Unit** to provide efficient, effective and timely support to Signatories (and non-Signatory Range States) to promote and assist the implementation of the Raptors MoU and associated Action Plan;
- Supporting Signatories in developing their **National or Regional Raptor Conservation and Management Strategies**. Subject to the outcomes of MoS1 and the availability of funds, the Coordinating Unit proposes organising a number of Regional Workshops (e.g. in Africa, the Middle East and Asia) to enhance technical capacity to develop the Raptor Conservation Strategies;
- Guiding the **Saker Falcon Task Force**, including hosting the Stakeholders' Workshop planned to take place in mid-2013. The aim is to finalize the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) by the end of 2013. Subject to resources, some implementation of the SakerGAP could begin in advance of it being presented to the 11th CMS Conference of the Parties (CMS COP11) in 2014;
- Establishing and implementing development of an **International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon**. In October 2012, the ICU published a call for a Consultant Co-ordinator to assist in the development of Sooty Falcon ISSAP. The closing date for applications is 30 November 2012, with the aim of selecting and recruiting the Consultant to begin work in February 2013;

- Overseeing the current **Egyptian Vulture Fieldwork Capacity Enhancement Project** in North-East Africa to ensure timely delivery of the key project outcomes by the end of 2013. Also, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) has been granted EU Life+ funding to develop an Egyptian Vulture Regional Action Plan for the Balkans. The ICU is actively exploring with BSPB the possibility of establishing a partnership approach to substantially extend the scope of this Action Plan, including hosting a Specialists' Workshop in late 2013 or early 2014;
- Actively contributing to the **Combating Poisoning Working Group (CPWG)** being led by the CMS Secretariat. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), United Kingdom, has been selected as the contractor. As soon as a Coordinator is recruited, work will begin, including preparations for a Workshop later in 2013;
- Progressing a **Networking and Fundraising Strategy** for the UNEP/CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, in conjunction with the Secretariat of the Dugong MoU. Work began in mid-2012 to explore ways of generating funds from individuals and corporates within the Middle East region, to support international conservation projects on raptors and dugongs. Consultants have been recruited to carry out a short-term pilot project during late 2012 and early 2013. Progress will be reviewed at the end of the 1st quarter of 2013, with the aim of assessing the viability of the approach in the future;
- Providing administrative support to the **Technical Advisory Group (TAG)**, if established by Signatories at MoS1 (CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Doc.13.2);
- Maintaining and further developing of the **Raptors MoU webpages** as a key source of information of relevance and interest to Range States. The ICU is actively engaged with the CMS Secretariat to support the complete redevelopment of the CMS Family website over the next 2-3 years, subject to the availability of resources;
- Collaborating with the organisers, other relevant organisations and media partners on two separate **International Awareness Raising Campaigns** - World Migratory Bird Day in May (<http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org>) and International Vulture Awareness Day on 1 September (www.vultureday.org).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Note the contents of this report and to seek any clarifications, if required.
- b) Urge Signatories not listed on Annex III, to nominate a National Contact Point and to supply details to the Coordinating Unit forthwith (in line with Paragraph 10 of the Raptors MoU).
- c) Advise the Coordinating Unit of any additional activities that may warrant inclusion in the WorkPlan for the coming year, including allocation of sufficient resources to implement the work.