



Memorandum of Understanding
on the Conservation of
Migratory Birds of Prey in
Africa and Eurasia

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**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING
OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE RAPTORS MOU**



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Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia

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Executive Summary

Held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and generously supported by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), on behalf of the Government of the UAE, the Second Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to the Raptors MoU brought together thirteen members of the TAG and four observers for an intensive four-day meeting. Professor Des Thompson (European Region - UK) chaired the meeting, supported by Vice-chair Dr Salim Javed (Middle East and North Africa Region - UAE).

Mr. Nick P. Williams, Head of the Coordinating Unit, began proceedings by presenting a short overview of progress achieved in implementing the Raptors MoU since the previous TAG meeting held in Edinburgh, Scotland in January 2014. Key achievements included: increasing the number of Signatories to 51; adoption of CMS Resolution 11.18, including the associated Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP), at the 11th meeting of the CMS Conference of Parties (COP11) held in Ecuador in November 2014; preparations towards an International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon; supporting the development of a Flyway Action Plan for the Egyptian Vulture covering the Balkans and Central Asian populations, including a workshop scheduled to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria in July 2015; ongoing development of an offline App for the African Raptor DataBank (ARDB); and, working closely with the CMS Secretariat on a range of crosscutting issues concerning threats to migratory birds, including poisoning, collision and electrocution involving power grids and illegal killing, trapping and trade.

A concise yet comprehensive update was provided on behalf of the CMS Secretariat by Mr. Borja Heredia, Head of the Avian Species Team. The presentation focussed on the several important CMS Resolutions that had been adopted by Parties at CMS COP11. Threats to migratory avian species, including birds of prey and other related issues were covered in Resolution 11.9 on World Migratory Bird Day; Resolution 11.14 on the Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways; Resolution 11.15 on Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds; Resolution 11.16 on The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds; and, Resolution 11.27 on Renewable Energy and Migratory Species.

Leads of the eight Working Groups, formed at TAG1, presented reports of their group's activities since TAG1. Most of the rest of the meeting was spent in break-out sessions, with participants working in small groups considering the above topics. Plans were prepared for developing the Final Report of the Interim TAG to be presented at the Second Meeting of Signatories (MOS2) to the Raptors MOU, scheduled to be held in Trondheim, Norway in early October 2015.

TAG members enjoyed a field trip on the third day of the meeting. The group visited three sites: Al Wathba Nature Reserve, including a guided tour conducted by specialist staff from EAD; Jebel Hafeet near Al Ain where an appetizing buffet lunch was provided at the Mercure Hotel, with spectacular views across the desert into Oman, enhanced with close fly-bys of Egyptian Vultures; and, nearby Zakher Lake, a currently unprotected oasis literally teeming with birds.

More break-out sessions followed on the final morning. Later in the last plenary session a TAG WorkPlan was finalised for the period running up to MOS2, and a short session on horizon scanning for future threats to birds of prey was presented by Mr. David Stroud (Chair of the Technical Committee of the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)).

Finally, the Chair conducted a tour de table allowing participants to raise any remaining issues. He then thanked TAG members for their concentrated efforts over the preceding days, the Coordinating Unit for preparing the papers and organising the meeting, and, not least, EAD for their immense support of the Coordinating Unit since the Raptors MOU had come into effect in 2008.

1. Welcome and Introductions

1. Lyle Glowka, Executive Coordinator of CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, opened the meeting welcoming delegates and introducing Nick Williams, the Programme Officer responsible for the Raptors MOU (Coordinating Unit), Des Thompson Representative of Europe - United Kingdom) the Chair of the Technical Action Group (TAG) and the Vice-Chair, Salim Javed (Representative of Middle East and North Africa - United Arab Emirates).

2. Mr Glowka was pleased to be able to announce that agreement had been reached to extend the arrangement by which the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) hosted the CMS Office on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He expressed his thanks to the UAE. He also recognized the considerable assistance and support provided to the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU by other countries and organizations, including Norway, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, the European Union and BirdLife International.

3. Much progress had been achieved in 2014 and it was hoped that the momentum would be maintained. The Raptors MOU now had 51 Signatories, with the most recent countries to join being Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The year 2015 was also important, with the Second Meeting of the Signatories (MOS2) scheduled to take place in October in Trondheim at the kind invitation of the Norwegian Government.

4. Key initiatives were also making progress. The Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) had been adopted at the eleventh CMS Conference of Parties (COP11) in November 2014 following a three-year process involving extensive consultation and negotiation. Attention was now being turned to the Egyptian Vulture. The aim was to ensure that threats relating to raptors were mainstreamed into the work of CMS; poisoning, illegal killing and trade and the effects of renewable energy deployment were all on the Convention's agenda and were highly relevant to the Raptors MOU as well.

5. Mr Glowka closed his remarks by reiterating his thanks to EAD for its support and to the CMS staff in Abu Dhabi who had helped prepare the current meeting.

6. The Chair added his words of welcome and thanks and pointed out that the meeting faced a particularly ambitious agenda. The Vice-Chair welcomed the participants to Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates and expressed his satisfaction that the hosting agreement had been extended, which meant that the fruitful cooperation between EAD and CMS would continue for a further period.

7. Mr Williams conducted a tour de table inviting participants to introduce themselves.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

8. The Chair invited comments on the draft agenda. There being none, he declared that the agenda was adopted as presented.

3. Update since the First Meeting of TAG

9. Mr Williams (Coordinating Unit) gave an overview of the progress achieved by the Raptors MOU since the first meeting of the TAG held in Edinburgh in January 2014.

10. Five further countries had become Signatories bringing the total to 51 which represented 40 per cent of the Range States. Mr Williams was optimistic that in the run-up to MOS2 further countries would sign and there were indications that several were indeed interested in doing so.

11. CMS COP10 had established the Saker Falcon Task Force and a Stakeholders' Workshop had taken place in Abu Dhabi. A draft of Global Action Plan for the species had been developed and circulated for wider discussion. A second draft had followed and over 200 comments had been received. A third draft had been submitted to the CMS Scientific Council in July 2014 and a final version prepared for submission to COP11. Professor Colin Galbraith, Chair of the Task Force, had presented the document to the Conference, which adopted the Plan and the accompanying Resolution 11.18¹ unanimously. Securing agreement had been a considerable achievement given the level of controversy that existed when the issue had first been raised at CMS COP9. The Resolution combined elements relating to the sustainable use of the species with conservation and management activities. The next step was to ensure that the SakerGAP was implemented.

12. Progress had also been made on the development of an International Single Species Action Plan for the Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*). Subject to resources being available, a workshop is being planned for early 2016 probably to take place in Madagascar and a consultant would be hired to consolidate and elaborate a draft text.

13. As of October 2014, the African Raptor DataBank (ARDB) held 105,890 records and was a useful tool in shedding light on the conservation status of birds of prey in the region. Given the limited availability of internet connections across much of the continent, two offline Apps were being developed, co-sponsored by the Coordinating Unit. An Android App was already freely available and a similar App for iPhone was expected to be launched before the end of the year. It was hoped to inspire more people and to enable them to contribute to the conservation of birds of prey in Africa by reporting their observations to the ARDB.

14. The Coordinating Unit was working with Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds (BSPB), the BirdLife International partner in Bulgaria, on the Egyptian Vulture. BSPB had received funding through the EC LIFE+ programme for a project in the Balkans and had developed partnerships to help train people in African countries, although some difficulties had been encountered in places where civil unrest made it difficult for outsiders to travel. Satellite tagging was being undertaken. A Flyway Action Plan covering the Balkans and Central Asian populations was being developed, co-sponsored by the Coordinating Unit. It was planned to hold an action planning workshop for 60 or so experts in Sofia, Bulgaria in July 2015 to consult and further refine the Flyway Action Plan.

15. The Coordinating Unit was working closely with colleagues at the CMS Secretariate in Bonn on cross-cutting threat to migratory birds, such as poisoning, illegal killing, and electrocution, as these were particularly relevant to raptors.

16. Robert Kenward (Observer - IUCN) said that a SakerGAP Flagship Project, an online information portal, was about to be launched, primarily funded by the International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) with a contribution from the Coordinating Unit. He reminded the participants that a Steering Group meeting for this project would be held in the margins of TAG2, to which observers were welcome. Thanking the IAF and IUCN for their respective contributions to the success of the SakerGAP negotiations, Mr Williams said that efforts were being made to raise funds to engage a coordinator to oversee implementation of the SakerGAP, the duration of which was potentially as much as ten years. He felt that the project was more likely to succeed with a dedicated person or organization behind it. Various options were being pursued but no firm sponsors had yet come forward.

17. Mohammed Shobrak (Expert - Saudi Arabia) expressed his thanks to the Coordinating Unit and explained that the Saudi Wildlife Authority was tracking Saker Falcons. Mr Williams added that similarly satellite tracking of Egyptian Vultures was being undertaken, with BirdLife International funding a young biologist to do the work. Mr Williams himself was working with colleagues in Oman

¹ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_18_Saker_Falcon_SakerGAP_En.pdf

and it was hoped that several people involved would be able to attend the forthcoming workshop in Sofia in early July 2015.

18. André Botha (Expert - South Africa) asked for details of members of the Sooty Falcon Working Group. He had tried to communicate with contacts in all Range States but some had not replied. Ideas of further people to be invited to become involved would be welcome. The amount of data available for Africa was far from complete and it would require a huge effort to fill the gaps. There were also a large number of major problems to tackle, the main one being poisoning.

19. Mr Javed said that Egyptian Vultures were being monitored and tagged in the UAE with a view to ascertaining their use of habitat and informing decisions on designating protected areas.

4. Report of CMS 11th Conference of Parties

20. Borja Heredia (CMS Secretariat, Head of the Avian Team) gave a report on the key outcomes of the CMS COP which had been held in Quito, Ecuador in November 2014.

21. He described the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi as an important hub of activity for the Convention and the decisions taken at COP11 increased the scope for possible collaboration between the TAG and other organs of the Convention. Cross-cutting issues included the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species, World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), concerted actions for species, ecological networks, climate change and the deployment of renewable energy technologies.

22. The Strategic Plan for Migratory Species was not exclusively focused on the Convention and its instruments and would be complemented by the production of a companion volume setting out how it might be implemented, including a set of indicators.

23. WMBD was a major annual campaign for awareness-raising and was organized by CMS and AEWA (African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement). The theme for the 2015 campaign was "Energy – make it bird-friendly". The dedicated website had been revamped and was about to be launched to initiate the campaign.

24. The Saker Falcon had been identified as one of the priority species to be included under CMS Concerted and Cooperative Actions.

25. The Convention's interest in ecological networks was focused on the connectivity of site complexes and this included the flyways of migratory bird species. A comprehensive programme of work had been adopted in relation to climate change and the mitigation of its effects, and emphasis had been placed on maintaining the integrity of sites within networks.

26. Resolution 11.27² on renewable energy had been passed and the accompanying guidelines had been adopted; these would be forwarded to the AEWA Meeting of Parties (MOP) in November 2015 for endorsement. A multi-stakeholder Energy Task Force had been established which would initially focus on Africa. Funding was being sought so that a coordinator could be appointed.

27. Other resolutions with direct relevance to birds of prey included those on flyways (Res. 11.14³), poisoning (Res. 11.15⁴) and taxonomy (Res. 11.19⁵). Res. 11.14 dealt with flyway conservation at a global level and its ninth action related to African vultures. Res. 11.15 on poisoning had adopted guidelines on the use of insecticides, rodenticides, poison bait, veterinary drugs and lead in ammunition and fishing weight. Specialist groups would be established to consider each of

²² http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_27_Renewable_Energy_E.pdf

³ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_14_PoW_on_Migratory_Birds_Flyways_En.pdf

⁴ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_15_Preventing_Bird_Poisoning_of_Birds_E_0.pdf

⁵ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_19_Taxonomy_%26_Nomenclature_of_Birds_E.pdf

these areas. The resolution called for the ban on the use of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides and of poison bait to control predators. A strong call was made to have the anti-inflammatory drug, Diclofenac, prohibited and replaced by safer alternatives because of its devastating effects on vultures. Recent decisions to license the drug in Europe had led to an outcry (see Sections 6 and 12 below). A call had been made for lead ammunition to be phased out across all habitats, not just lead shot in wetlands. However, Norway was reviewing its ban and its strict rules were being relaxed.

28. Illegal killing, trapping and trade in migratory birds was a worldwide problem and all taxa including raptors were affected. A Task Force had been established with a clear role for the Raptors MOU, including extending the Task Force's reach as not all Parties to the Convention were signatories to the MOU and vice versa. Funding had been made available by the European Commission and the initial focus of work would be around the Mediterranean Sea.

29. Res. 11.19 on taxonomy had adopted a new reference for birds namely, del Hoyo, J. and Collar, N.J. (2014) *The Handbook of the Birds of the World/BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World, Volume 1: Non-passerines*. Lynx Edicions. chosen for non-passerines bringing CMS in line with AEWA, the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), the Raptors MOU and IUCN.

30. Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) asked for more details about the proposed ban on lead. Mr Kenward said that after a great deal of preparatory work, progress seemed to have stalled within the European Commission. He urged caution with regard to campaigning tactics, as too direct an approach might antagonize those on the other side of the argument. He advocated seeking compromises that would result in a win-win outcome. Charles Musyoki Mutua (Representative of Africa - Kenya) said it was necessary to convey the key political messages and to address the large number of interest groups involved.

31. Mr Shobrak sought clarification of the coverage of vultures under CMS. Mr Heredia confirmed most species of vultures are classified in the Accipitridae family, all of which are listed on Appendix II to the Convention, except the Egyptian Vulture which is listed in Appendix I.

5. Review of Actions from the First Meeting of TAG

32. The Chair initiated a discussion on progress so far and called on participants to be as challenging as possible when considering whether the TAG was addressing the right priorities.

33. Mr Williams recalled that at the first meeting of the TAG in Edinburgh a number of additional tasks had been generated beyond the Group's initial mandate. These tasks had been compiled in tabular form and the meeting would be invited to review and comment on the list and assess progress achieved to date. The table identified tasks that had been completed and those which were still being addressed. The advice of the TAG was being sought on how these partially addressed tasks should be dealt with in the run-up to the Meeting of Signatories (MOS). To allow time for consultation and translations, the Chair reminded the meeting that documents had to be ready 60 days before the MOS, meaning that the deadline for completion was 6 August 2015. Mr Williams offered to coordinate teleconferences for any of the TAG Working Groups, if requested.

34. Several current areas of activity were included on the meeting agenda and in many cases specific decisions were required such as identifying people or organizations to be mandated to take matters forward. Some activities might have to be put on hold. Mr Kenward said that if the proposal to take forward the ideas of developing a "Friends of the Raptors MOU" initiative should be pursued he urged a "light touch" and not making the mechanism too bureaucratic. Ms Crockford (Observer -

BirdLife International) thought that a volunteer could be found to take the lead in developing this network.

35. Action TAG1-7 related to additional guidance on Saker Falcon reintroductions in the light of the outcome of deliberations within the Saker Falcon Task Force. The Task Force had not issued any additional advice but comprehensive revised guidance had recently been produced by the IUCN. Mr Williams felt that the time had come to implement existing guidelines rather than devising more new ones. He referred to the ancient Bedouin practice of capturing falcons, training them and then releasing them after the hunting season. Mr Kenward said that the IUCN was dealing with this issue, although he pointed out that the practice described did not fall within the normal definition of reintroduction. Mr Shobrak stressed the importance of TAG members being involved in the process and he himself was a member of the IUCN group.

36. In relation to Action TAG1-11, it was noted that the CMS COP had adopted a resolution on renewable energy and had established a Working Group on energy in general. It was agreed that the Working Group was the best forum to pursue contacts with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) regarding the proposed industry-supported workshop on the impacts on migratory species.

37. The letter from the CMS Executive Secretary to USAID regarding power development in Africa mentioned under Action TAG1-12 had been issued. The Chair said that the TAG had fulfilled its obligation and this matter was being pursued by the parent Convention. Ms Crockford informed the meeting that there had been a change in staff at BirdLife International and a new officer was now covering this issue.

38. Action TAG1-13 was being implemented and cooperation with the “chemicals cluster” of Conventions was being effected in the context of the CMS COP Resolution on poisoning through the dedicated Working Group. Mr Kenward voiced concerns that this was a complex and highly political issue with many strands, which would be difficult to pull together comprehensively. Mr Williams said that the role of the TAG was to provide the raptor perspective and leave it to others to address the wider issues. Mr Heredia pointed out that the Secretariat was finding that its resources were stretched and establishing the various Task Forces and Working Groups required by COP Resolutions might take some time. Efforts were being made to find the funding to employ a coordinator.

39. Action TAG1-17 on data sharing protocols had been seen as a lower priority. Such protocols generally made good sense but adopting and implementing them comprehensively was an ambitious goal. It was agreed to take a pragmatic, opportunistic approach and respond to cases individually as they occurred.

40. Action TAG1-24 concerned a draft resolution on the perilous status of vultures for MOS2 on which David Stroud (Observer - AEWA & United Kingdom) had agreed to take the lead. Declining populations of Gyps vultures was primarily but not exclusively a problem in Africa. Mr Stroud said that Gyps vultures were flagship species facing some cross-cutting threats such as poisoning and deterioration of key sites. The existing MOU Action Plan provided a framework for measures that could benefit vultures. The Chair suggested undertaking a SWOT analysis (strengths/weaknesses – opportunities/threats) and a desk study to establish what other organizations were active in vulture conservation. Mr Botha said that work was being done in Africa but more was needed to change perceptions of the birds. Ms Crockford suggested that the MOU should prepare a wide-ranging programme for gyps vultures linked to the broader CMS strategy for birds; this would help emphasize the added value of the MOU. Mr Kenward agreed that cooperation was vital and Umeed Khalid (Representative of Asia - Pakistan) stressed the importance of involving veterinarians.

41. Mr Williams suggested that the TAG review what the MOU was already doing for vultures and consider how the MOU could engage and add value to the activities of other fora. The Egyptian Vulture might be used as a flagship species, with the conservation efforts on its behalf leading to a wider global action plan for vultures as a whole.

42. Mr Stroud said that consideration had been given to making a tranche of proposals to add more vulture species to the CMS Appendices at COP11. In the end, it had been agreed to play a longer game, and the proposed amendments would now probably be tabled at COP12. The Chair felt that discussion of the tactics would be more suited for the Working Group initially than the plenary. Mr Williams regretted that a number of key people who could have contributed to the discussion had been unable to attend the TAG.

43. Mr Batbayar (Regional Representative – Asia) asked about the role of national strategies as his country was in the process of developing one. He also asked if there was a pre-prepared outline strategy that Signatories could use or advice on involving other stakeholders and raptor conservation groups. The Chair recalled that at the first TAG in Edinburgh, there had been a presentation on the Norwegian National Plan and Mr Williams pointed out that the MOU requested Signatories to develop such a document within two years of joining. The Coordinating Unit had developed a set of guidelines on transposing the provisions of the MOU into national or regional raptor conservation strategies, but to date none had been submitted, although he was aware that the EU was working on a regional strategy covering its Member States. He was hoping that the strategy being developed for Europe might provide a model or at least offer useful insights for others to emulate. He welcomed the news that Mongolia was working on its strategy and stood ready to offer advice, but he stressed that it was for each country to take the lead. The guidance concerned linkage to NBSAPs, which had the advantage of associating the provisions of the legally non-binding MOU to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). He added that he had just returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was the latest Signatory to the MOU, and had been delighted to learn that so many conservation actions were already underway there and that the country was eager to become more involved in international work.

44. Mr Stroud asked Mr Williams to remind the meeting of the reporting requirements under the MOU. Mr Williams said that Signatories had agreed at MOS1 that reporting under the MOU should be linked to the Online Reporting System that had been developed for the parent Convention; this linkage would avoid duplication of work. The TAG had been requested to develop a model National Report Form.

45. Mr Kenward said that using “flagships” could be useful in raising awareness, but it was important to choose a non-controversial species. Once momentum had been gained with the flagship, the approach should be to embrace further species. Charismatic species such as raptors while threatened were sometimes less vulnerable than other species which might have more specialized needs. Mátyás Prommer (Representative of Europe - Hungary) said that recent changes to the EU LIFE programme would make it easier to work beyond the borders of the European Union.

46. Mr Botha voiced his concern that there was too much uncoordinated work using questionable methodology and techniques that did not meet modern standards. When being tracked, birds were often handled badly because the people doing the tagging had not been trained properly. The data obtained should also be more readily shared. Ms Jones wondered whether this point was specific to raptors or was valid for other taxa. Mr Stroud said that similar issues had been raised at AEWA, so some international guidance would be useful and there was no shortage of experts who could furnish good advice.

47. On tracking, the Chair raised the issue of recovering birds when they went missing, especially if shot or poisoned deliberately. It was also an activity which had captured the public's imagination but the impact on the birds seemed to be neglected.

48. Mr Williams said that bird tracking was mentioned in the horizon scanning paper. The Coordinating Unit was contacted by many people wishing to undertake projects, but often little thought was being given to the effects on the birds. Some of the tags being used were far too large for the birds, often a third the size of the wing when one tenth was more than adequate. Colleagues in Bulgaria also feared that conspicuous tags led to birds being targeted as it was thought by some that they were being used for spying or other surreptitious activities.

49. Mr Kenward advocated trying to engage the trappers as these were people with good local knowledge and could be persuaded to undertake conservation work. A bunker mentality was counter-productive and led to suspicions and lack of trust. When giving training on how to fit satellite tags properly, an unbureaucratic approach was best.

50. Mr Musyoki said that there was a great deal of interest in satellite tracking but what was lacking were a proper regulatory framework and a clear and agreed rationale for when these devices should be used.

51. Mr Prommer said that in Hungary there was guidance on how to conduct satellite tracking and Mr Botha said that there would be a workshop the following month in South Africa conducted with the help of BirdLife International.

52. Mr Heredia asked which issues were most likely to develop into agenda items or draft Resolutions to be put to the MOS. Mr Prommer suggested those species facing the worst declines, citing the Steppe Eagle in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, numbers of which had fallen from 2,000 breeding pairs to just 500. Mr Williams suggested drones and quadcopters had been shown to pose a threat to raptors. While normally the birds avoided such machines, they did respond when they felt their nests were being attacked and could be injured by the rotor blades and other moving parts if they approached too close. There had been one such incident involving an Osprey. Mr Kenward said that the TAG Working Group on monitoring should examine the issue. These new technologies were potentially very helpful, but limits should be set on the power of the motors. Mr Stroud confirmed that AEWA had faced similar issues.

Action TAG2-1: TAG could consider undertaking a review and assessment of modern technologies used for birds of prey with a view to developing guidance on selection, risks and benefits and including examples of good practice.

6. TAG Activity Reports from Working Groups Leads

Activities 1 and 2 – Improvements of Protection; and Threats – Protect and/or manage important sites and flyways

53. Ms Jones gave a presentation covering Activities 1 and 2. As proposed at the TAG1 meeting held in January 2014, BirdLife International had been commissioned by the Coordinating Unit to progress key aspects of this work.

54. A review of species in Annex 1 had been conducted and the implications of some taxonomic changes had been examined. Global population trends had been updated in the light of data from the European Red List of Birds and the IUCN Red List for species found elsewhere. A literature review had been conducted for non-European species. The migratory nature of African vulture species had been assessed and the evidence collected so far indicated that taxonomically vultures 'belong' under

the MoU. Evidence so far compiled suggested that a number of vulture species not currently listed on Annex 1 make significant movements, home ranges can be vast, and although movements tend to be 'nomadic' rather than 'migratory' in the strictest sense, there is evidence that national boundaries are regularly being crossed by many of these species. The magnitude of the declines in population of many vulture species meant that urgent conservation action was needed.

55. Any species being considered for addition to Annex 1 should first meet the criterion of being a migratory bird of prey in the African-Eurasian region and then be categorised appropriately in Table 1 according to its conservation status. Some species seemed to have stable world populations, and reviews by experts would be undertaken. Species listed in Category 2 comprise SPEC species and those species highlighted by regional experts as having unfavourable conservation status. The list of species currently included as Category 3 (all other migratory species) was re-examined in the light of new data on trends to see whether reassigning any to Category 2 (Species considered to have unfavourable conservation status at a regional level within the Range States and territories) would be justified.

56. The Site List had been updated by BirdLife. The Coordinating Unit would send it to Signatories for clearance in advance of the MOS2 meeting. It was mentioned that some proposals might prove to be controversial. Mr Williams raised the question of how to deal with the anticipated feedback and how long a deadline to set for responses; he thought that one month would be a minimum. Although Ms Jones said that the listing criteria were quite clear, it was not known what sort of reaction the list would provoke; it might be accepted with minimal comment or might result in heated debate. The Chair pointed out that the deadline would have to be before 5 August 2015 to keep in line with the MOS timetable.

57. Mr Stroud said that Signatories should be reminded that designation of these sites implied a commitment, but not a legal obligation, to maintain and manage them, while Mr Glowka said that with an average of 22 sites per country, the entire network would comprise over 2,000 areas. Mr Stroud said that he would recommend avoiding any suggestion of ranking of sites within the list (which could result from listing sites meeting global IBA criteria before those meeting regional IBA criteria for each country).

58. In answer to a question from Mr Batbayar, it was explained that the criterion used for selecting candidate sites was whether it was an Important Bird Area with migratory raptors present.

59. It was pointed out that CMS and BirdLife International used different definitions of the term "migratory" and some species might qualify as migratory under one but not the other. The text of the MoU refers to the CMS definition of migratory species. Some discussion took place about whether the MoU needed to adapt or supplement that in any way. Mr Heredia highlighted CMS Resolution 2.2 which the group had not hitherto been aware of and which offers an inclusive definition of 'cyclical' and 'predictable' that would tally with many of the movement patterns vulture species exhibit.

60. CMS, AEWA and CITES had agreed procedures for amending their species listings, and among the recommendations contained in the Task Tracking Document were a review of the species on Annex 1, consideration of further species to be added to Annex 1, changes between the three categories in Table 1 of the Action Plan depending on new information concerning conservation status of species, changes to Annex 2 (geographic coverage of the MOU) and changes to Table 3 (the provisional list of Important Bird Areas known to be important congregatory bird of prey sites, originally including globally threatened species and congregations of birds of prey, but proposed for expansion to include all IBAs and SPAs identified for MoU Annex 1 species). A form could be designed to assist Signatories update data on species' conservation status and accompanying guidance issued.

61. Taxonomy and nomenclature were important issues and Mr Kenward asked whether the Peregrine Group was represented on the Working Group dealing with them.

62. Mr Stroud pointed out that Activity 1 in Table 2 of the Action Plan was to seek to amend Appendix I of the parent Convention to ensure that it included all raptor species in Category 1 (Globally threatened and Near Threatened species as defined according to the latest IUCN Red List and listed as such in the BirdLife International World Bird and Biodiversity Database). Proposals would have to be prepared in advance of CMS COP12 scheduled to take place in 2017.

63. Activity 2 – Task 2.1 was to assess and review threats to Annex 1 species and to review information given at MOS1 on Category 1 species; this should be extended to Categories 2 and 3.

64. Lily-Arison René de Roland (Representative of Africa – Madagascar) raised a question about the species list as it applied to Madagascar. Ms Jones said that the list only contained sites identified as internationally important for migratory raptors listed on Annex 1 of the MoU; many raptor sites in Madagascar are identified for non-migratory raptors, but comments and corrections would be welcome.

65. Mr Stroud said that a check should be made of which of the Important Bird Sites had some level of protection. Establishing this could form part of the consultation with the Signatories.

66. The Chair wondered whether there was a clear idea of the role of each site in raptor migration, i.e. whether the sites were bottleneck congregation sites, or wintering or breeding grounds.

Activity 3 – Tasks 3.1 and 3.2: Threats: Power Grids and Renewable Energy

67. Ms Crockford referred to Mr Heredia's account of CMS COP11 where the report and guidelines on the deployment of renewable energy technologies had been adopted. The documents would both be presented for approval at the forthcoming AEWA MOP in Bonn in November 2015. A newly formed dedicated Task Force would start its work, funded by a voluntary contribution from the German Government, with the initial emphasis on Eurasia and Africa and the effects of wind turbines and solar energy installations. Discussions were being held with the German Government over the terms of a consultancy and a possible role for BirdLife International. At the moment there were no resources to fund meetings of the Task Force, and the CMS Secretariat was working to rectify that and would approach USAID.

68. In the run-up to the MOS, the TAG would have to decide on the content and focus of a draft Resolution for tabling. Mr Stroud said that AEWA was working to align its policies with those adopted by the CMS Parties, and a key element of any resolution put to the MOS should be identifying the unique role of the MOU. One open question was whether to address energy sources other than those identified in the CMS Resolution.

69. The Chair pointed out that Activity 3 covered further issues such as illegal killing and poisoning and these should also be addressed at the MOS. Ms Crockford said that given the wide range of subjects that the CMS Avian Team had to deal with especially after COP11 and the new Resolutions adopted there, the MOU should consider taking the lead on at least one of the issues. With regard to the Energy Task Force, she said that its composition had still not been decided but it was hoped to have members drawn from financial institutions that were funding energy projects, while Government nominees would need to "wear two hats" representing both conservation and development interests or nominate representatives from both the environment and energy

Ministries. BirdLife International's new desk officer [Stephen Mooney] was starting to work with the financial institutions. Mr Kenward said that these should include the Asian Investment Bank.

Activity 3 - Task 3.3: Threats: Illegal killing, taking and trade (Persecution)

70. Ms Crockford gave an overview highlighting the CMS resolution⁶ adopted at COP11 which had established a Task Force concentrating on the killing of birds around the Mediterranean. This Task Force seemed likely to benefit from funding from the European Commission. It would work in conjunction with a similar forum established under the Bern Convention which aimed to implement the Tunis Action Plan and which brought together representatives from Europe and North Africa.

71. BirdLife International would be releasing a review of illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean region in June 2015 and this report would provide a strong factual basis for further policy development. Funding was being sought for a similar exercise to be undertaken in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Other projects included one on crime funded by the European Commission Directorate General for Justice, which aimed to raise awareness among the judiciary of the seriousness of wildlife crime. The MOU also should liaise with the European Commission, the Bern Convention and Interpol to increase its influence and ensure that raptor issues were accorded the attention they deserved.

72. Mr Stroud noted a geographical bias towards the north in the activities being described and stressed that Central and Southern Africa should not be neglected. Mr Heredia pointed out that one of the benefits of the MOU was that it brought in Signatories that were not Party to CMS, an example being Lebanon.

73. Ms Crockford cited the case of the Amur Falcon harvest in India as an issue where the MOU had proved its worth as it was the forum that had drawn attention to the unsustainable nature of the practice and had secured measures to stop it. She was however concerned that the MOU had limited capacity and could not be expected to address too many issues at once, and urged that the MOU should not raise expectations by making promises without the means to deliver.

74. Mr Musyoki pointed out that illegal killing was dealt with in other fora, although there the focus tended to be on large terrestrial mammals; these fora however did present an opportunity for synergies and raptors could benefit from the efforts made to address similar problems faced by other species. Most of these initiatives were transboundary in character and were active in Africa.

Activity 3 - Threats: Poisoning

75. Mr Botha gave a presentation, apologizing on behalf of Munir Virani, the Chair of the TAG Poisoning Working Group, for the fact that less had been achieved than had originally been intended since the last meeting of the TAG. He listed a series of recent poisoning incidents and the number of birds killed in each (Botswana: 25; eastern Turkey: 8; Ithala, South Africa: 50-100; Assam, India: 70; and the Golan Heights: 6).

76. The tasks assigned to the Working Group by TAG1 were to respond directly to poisoning issues, to provide advice when requested and to alert the TAG to emergencies. CMS COP11 had highlighted the problem of poisoning with a Resolution drawing attention to the effects of diclofenac on vultures in Asia. A reply had been received from the European Commission concerning the licensing of this drug and there was concern that the decision was not to be referred, that no mitigation measures were being proposed and the Commission seemed to putting the onus back on the Member States. The Poisoning Working Group would have to consider how it should react and what the next steps should be. The Spanish authorities were apparently examining the carcasses of

⁶ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_16_Illegal_Killing_Migratory_Birds_En.pdf

Griffon Vultures to establish the presence of diclofenac, but this was a slow procedure (see also section 4 above and section 12 below).

77. CMS COP11 had adopted the guidelines to prevent the risk of poisoning of migratory birds (UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.23.1.2⁷). These in conjunction with robust legislation formed a solid basis. What was now needed was for the legislation to be enforced and the guidelines to be followed. Contact should be made with the pesticide manufacturers to promote safer alternatives and all “good news stories” should be publicized.

78. Mr Botha mentioned a series of workshops held in Andalucía (Spain) and southern Africa, where training had been given to managers so they could react better to incidents. Prevention was probably not achievable, so the authorities needed response procedures and should record all incidents. Time and resources permitting, effective and proven mitigation measures should be promoted and new techniques developed. Data should also be collected – there was already an African poisoning database where incidents were recorded along with the number of birds killed. The parent Convention might consider supporting the creation of a global database.

Activity 4 - Raise awareness of problems faced by birds of prey and measures needed to conserve them

79. Jari Valkama (Representative of Europe - Finland) said that progress had been limited given that he had been preoccupied with completing a two-volume book on flyways. Raptors featured strongly in the publication, copies of which he presented to CMS. Although mainly in Finnish, the books contained several passages in English.

80. Mr Valkama and Mr Stroud were asked to liaise and sketch out some concepts, drawing wherever possible on the AEWA experience concerning awareness raising.

81. Mr Heredia praised the way that David Stroud had led the discussions at COP in the working group on poisoning. He asked Mr Botha whether there were any statistics to show the extent of different types of poisoning. In response, Mr Botha said that information often came to light rather late and there was a reluctance to report the true level of the problem on the part of some authorities. Data were available but the difficulty was collating them. Another problem was establishing whether ingestion of the substance was the direct cause of death. Mr Musyoki said that one should differentiate between deliberate and accidental poisoning, with Mr Shobrak pointing out that predator species were often deliberately targeted, while vultures for instance were killed accidentally. In Saudi Arabia other rare species such as leopards were also being killed, so this was cross-cutting issue. He also said that mapping incidents helped to illustrate how serious and widespread the problem was.

82. Mr Batbayar asked what regulations were in place in different countries and suggested that users exchange information on best practice. Ms Jones said that at a workshop on illegal killing earlier this year, the potential connection between use of vultures in traditional medicine and the human health sector (through human consumption of vulture parts which might contain traces of poison) had been raised.

7. Working Group Break-out Session 1

83. Mr Stroud ran through the AEWA model report, explaining the functions of the various columns. The main part of the format was dedicated areas where decisions were required of the Parties and the advice of the TAG was sought. For the forthcoming MOS, the key areas were changes to the Action Plan, changes to the species listings, advice on causes of mortality (energy installations

⁷ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Doc_23_1_2_Bird_Poisoning_Review_%26_Guidelines_E_0.pdf

but these might be dealt with separately), species action plans (with separate treatment of vultures), monitoring, development of a reporting system, land use and liaison with the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Initiative.

84. The meeting divided into four Working Groups, and each was asked to fill in the gaps in the table. Everyone was reminded of the 5 August 2015 deadline for completion of documents and participants were also asked to be realistic about what could be achieved in the time available.

Reports of the Break-out Groups

85. Energy: Ms Crockford reported on engagement with wider CMS issues, primarily COP Resolution 11.27⁸ on renewable energy and the associated Energy Task Force. The COP had adopted the guidelines, which would also be presented to the AEWA MOP and the Raptors MOU MOS. Mr Stroud made one correction to the effect that to avoid a constant round of adopting different versions of the guidelines in different forums, AEWA Parties and Signatories to the MOU would be invited to endorse the version adopted at CMS COP. Ms Jones asked whether there were any outstanding actions for the Signatories to complete, such as nominate members to serve on the Task Force.

86. Mr Williams asked whether there was any indication of when the Energy Task Force would first meet. There was some question about when the funds from the German voluntary contribution would be available and when nominations of potential members had been received and processed. Mr Williams also asked the meeting's views on having a stand-alone draft decision on energy; the consensus was that there should be one.

87. Species: Ms Jones said that there had been remarkable consensus in the group concerning vultures. As well as African vultures, they had considered the migratory nature of a number of other species, and the evidence suggested that individuals of many vulture species were making movements crossing national boundaries. The technology used to ascertain the information was in its infancy and therefore more and better data were likely to emerge. A range of different types of behaviour had been identified – nomadic, cyclical and trans-boundary and many cross-cutting issues had become apparent. The precautionary principle therefore indicated that more species rather than fewer should be listed. The recommendation of the group was that all African-Eurasian vultures should be covered in Annex 1, with the possible exceptions of the Red-headed and Palm Nut Vultures. Ms Jones sought guidance of the sort of evidence that should be required in support of proposals to add new species.

88. Mr Williams urged that consideration be given to the definition of the term “migratory”. The Convention had a definition which had been subject to formal interpretation in COP Resolution 2.2⁹ of the terms “cyclically and predictably” when referring to migratory species. Goriup and Tucker applied a 100km-threshold to the distance travelled by the birds. The MOU did not have its own definition and had adopted the CMS approach. Mr Stroud said that the CMS definition was clear in terms of its wording, but there was room for interpretation. Taking a different raptor approach, consideration should be given to the migration strategies employed by the various raptor species currently or potentially covered by the MOU.

89. Ms Jones also sought guidance on whether the vultures should be considered en bloc or whether each species should be treated separately and how to proceed with non-vulture species. Mr Williams felt that a separate case should be made for each species, but did not rule out the possibility of a such a wide range of threats emerging that blanket coverage of all species would be recommended.

⁸ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_27_Renewable_Energy_E.pdf

⁹ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res2.2_E_0_0.pdf

90. **Illegal Killing and poisoning:** Mr Kenward presented a list of priorities and recommendations from the breakout group on illegal killing and poisoning. The first recommendation was that representatives should be nominated to serve on the Task Force and the second was to broaden the remit of the review of illegal killing. The main priorities were to undertake demographically important monitoring, focusing on the most significant threats and avoiding the mistake of being too site-orientated and missing the effects on populations and to establish a database to gather all the information that had been obtained in one place on subjects such as mortality. The quality of the data should be checked and biases removed. Mr Kenward said that for the tendency to report crime varied over time and by location, so the figures produced a skewed picture. He also advocated establishing a multilingual support network to disseminate best practice and here he saw a role for the MOU, where the Coordinating Unit should engage National Contact Points.

91. On poisoning, the MOU should contribute its expertise on raptors to the wider CMS Working Group. Mr Stroud said that the level of protection afforded by Signatories to raptors and its effectiveness should be reported. Mr Williams said that the National Reports could include a section on whether legislation was in place and “tick boxes” for species. Mr Stroud added that AEWA had found that some species on the Agreement’s appendices had not been added to the schedules of appropriate national legislation. Ms Jones commented that the BirdLife International project on illegal killing in the Mediterranean would examine protection measures at the national level.

8. Working Group Break-out Session 2

92. Ms Jones said that there had been some intense discussions over the definition of migratory and criteria for species to fall within this description. Some raptor migration had quite distinct features and for many species their natural range crossed national borders. In reply to a question from Mr Shobrak, she confirmed that owls qualified as raptors within the species definition of the MOU. The 100-km threshold had been taken from Tucker and Goriup; this threshold would reduce the list of qualifying species as those which travelled shorter distances for foraging would be excluded. Mr René de Roland (Madagascar) said that some species migrated within his country but the CMS definition meant that intra-national migration was not considered. Mr Williams said that for international instruments such as CMS and the MOU, the transboundary element of migration was important. Mr Prommer asked whether both the annual and full life cycles were taken into account.

93. Ms Crockford said that a draft Resolution being prepared for the forthcoming AEWA MOP6 was used by the Energy Working Group as the basis for a similar document for MOS2 of the Raptors MOU, with additions describing circumstances that affected raptors particularly, such as bottleneck sites on their migration routes and their vulnerability to specific types of renewable energy installations. Reference would be made to the report and guidance adopted at the CMS COP. There were still questions over the timing of a proposed meeting in Nairobi because funding from USAID and Power Africa had not been secured. Mr Khalid said that the donor community should be lobbied for support, as Ms Crockford confirmed that she was in contact with the financial sector and funding institutions, trying to ensure that proper EIAs and SEAs were conducted.

94. Mr Musyoki said that the TAG should be specific with regard to the improvements that were being sought in the planning and execution of developments and sweeping, well-meaning statements that were not backed up with practical suggestions should be avoided. In response Ms Crockford proposed adding wording regarding the dissemination of practical solutions.

95. Mr Stroud said that the Ramsar Convention had a set of principles on developments on wetlands which required the avoidance of damage, failing that the reduction of any impact, or failing that mitigation. The preamble of the draft Recommendation for the MOS should stress the urgency

for action, given that many countries were in the process of building electricity networks and the impacts on raptor populations could potentially be drastic.

96. Mr Batbayar (Mongolia) made a note that enforcement of guidelines for small and medium energy development projects was often more difficult than with larger ones.

97. Mr Kenward said that he had decided not to base the draft Recommendation on the AEWA equivalent because there were too many aspects where the issues differed. Recent innovations would be mentioned in the preamble, and this would include the approach adopted that secured the success of the SakerGAP and should be replicated in addressing illegal killing in the Mediterranean. Knowledge gaps and the methods being used to address them would be noted. It would be recommended that CMS establish a database with robust qualitative and demographic information. He highlighted the dangers of repeating work that had already been done and the need to learn from the experiences of others, citing the fact that the dangers of wind turbines and pylons had been exposed some time ago in the United States. The other precedent was DTT when the world community took too long to react to the evidence.

98. Mr Williams sought clarification on whether the geographic focus of the CMS Energy Task Force would be global or it would focus, at least initially, on the Mediterranean. Mr Heredia said that the CMS COP Resolution 11.27 had global application but the Task Force would focus on the Mediterranean. Ms Crockford described the Mediterranean as a “hotspot” and lessons learned there would be applied to other regions as other “hotspots” were identified – one likely candidate was the Caribbean. Mr Kenward supported this approach, saying that while the problems were severe in the Mediterranean, the general issues were relevant elsewhere.

99. Mr Heredia mentioned the practicalities of maintaining an international database which would have to be populated with entries and kept up to date. Mr Musyoki said that institutions existed with a long history of managing data including IUCN. Mr Kenward thought that maintaining the database would not be too onerous but it would need a dedicated person to do it.

100. Ms Crockford pointed to the publicity surrounding the London Declaration on wildlife crime. While this had focused primarily on mega-fauna, benefits could accrue to the conservation of raptors.

9. Working Group Break-out session 3

101. The Chair opened the final round of reporting back from the Working Groups, stressing that the deadline for the draft reports would be the end of May to allow completion of documentation in advance of the MOS. Mr Williams pointed out that BirdLife International was working under contract concerning Activities 1 and 2, with set milestones, so it would not be possible to adjust the terms of the agreement at this late stage.

102. Ms Jones asked what reference documentation would be required for proposals to add species to the Annexes. The recommendation to be put to the MOS would be for all African-Eurasian vultures to be added with the exception of the Palm Nut Vulture. Some other non-vulture species might also qualify but she did not propose to pursue that discussion at this juncture. The taxonomic changes had implications, including one split that had led to two species, one of which was sedentary and the other migratory. She also reported that interpretation of the definition of migratory had advanced by combining the references in CMS Resolution 2.2 with the original definition in the Convention text. She also proposed that a pro forma be prepared so that Signatories could nominate species to be added or to change the Category to which a species was assigned. Some form of paper trail was required but this should be as unbureaucratic as possible. Part of the evidence relating to the migratory nature of a species derived from tracking and tagging, which was a science in its

infancy and it was not certain how representative the tagged birds were of the population as a whole. The form should provide a clear steer to Signatories about the type of evidence that would be accepted to support a proposal and TAG could consider developing a framework to guide their decision making on whether or not to support proposals for changes to annexes or Table 1 categorisation. Signatories would also want to have some influence over the sites included on the list.

Action TAG2-2: TAG could develop a pro forma for Signatories to use to nominate species to be considered for inclusion in the Raptors MOU or to change the Category in which it was currently listed.

103. Mr Kenward suggested adding a reference to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and wording to the effect that any trade should be legal, sustainable and as beneficial as possible to conservation. With regard to developing a database, Mr Stroud advocated a step-by-step approach towards the ideal of a comprehensive system. The MOU could aspire to achieving a comprehensive database but this could only be attained after time, and the development milestones should be identified. The idea of working with organizations such as GBIF was therefore sensible.

104. Ms Crockford said that wording had been added describing the proliferation of overhead cables across the world, especially in Africa. Wherever possible, the text of the AEWA Resolution was used, as this reduced considerably the need to draft fresh text, and given the overlap between MOU Signatories and AEWA Parties, there were advantages in using terminology that was familiar and keeping the policy sets of the two instruments aligned.

105. Regarding vultures, Mr Williams said that the main thrust of the Recommendation was presenting the case for an urgent response to the worrying trends in the birds' populations in the region. Key features of vultures' life cycles and migration behaviour had been identified in a brainstorming exercise along with a list of 30 possible mitigating actions. It was proposed to hold an inter-sessional Working Group on vultures in conjunction with the IUCN Species Specialist Group. The ideas of a 'Year of the Vulture' initiative, would allow attention to be focused on these birds and it was proposed to organize some event or activity every month (or every other month). Guidance on monitoring methods – such as the use of drones and wing tagging – should be produced.

10. Preparations for the Second Meeting of Signatories

106. Agenda Item 10 (see Annex 2 of this document) was covered by means of developing a Reporting Form for TAG, adopted from AEWA (see Annex 4). Each TAG Working Group contributed text under 'Actions undertaken', and including the right-hand column 'Relevant MOS2 documents' in some cases also. Working Groups were also asked to include Actions to be taken between the meeting and submission of the TAG Report to MOS2 in early August 2015.

107. A timeline was also discussed by working back from MOS2, including submission of papers deadline and time for TAG members to agree on proposals for MOS2.

11. Horizon scanning

108. Mr Stroud presented the paper on emerging issues, explaining that the TAG had the mandate to advise the Signatories on potential issues and therefore had a duty to "scan the horizon". The Raptors MOU could learn from the experience of AEWA which had undertaken a similar exercise through its Advisory Committee. There were also a number of issues relevant to the MOU where other organizations were in the lead and the TAG should seek to have some influence.

109. Avian influenza, originally the H5N1 strain and later the H5N8 variant, and disease in general were issues that needed to be monitored. There was an animal disease Task Force and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust had produced a handbook for the Ramsar Convention. The MOU should continue to work with CMS and promote the handbook, adding any raptor-specific input. The Chair added that a PhD student was looking at the health of raptor chicks in the west of Scotland to ascertain why mortality rates were so high there.

110. Another issue was conservation on the ground and the role of different social groups. Women's groups in Niger had made a significant contribution to conservation with activities financed through micro-loans that provided alternative livelihoods reducing unsustainable harvesting of birds.

111. Urban birds presented an opportunity for education and awareness-raising for large numbers of people, and advice on conservation should be offered to urban local authorities.

112. Traditional knowledge had a potential to enrich understanding of the role of birds, while traditional medicine was in places a major driver for killing birds.

113. Thought should be given to partners with whom the Signatories and the MOU should work, especially international corporations which potentially had a large impact on the natural environment.

114. Airstrikes might be an emerging issue or an existing problem the impact of which was being underestimated. With the rapid growth of air traffic, this was a problem that was likely to grow. The Chair said that this was a complex issue. When birds thought to pose a threat to aircraft safety were shot, the carcasses attracted other birds. Mr Prommer said that poisoning of birds near airfields was a problem.

115. Mr Shobrak said that there were advantages and disadvantages of having birds present near airfields; the presence of raptors deterred other species. Fernando Feas (Expert - Spain) agreed saying that raptors could reduce by 75 per cent the presence of other birds, but unfortunately their prey included some endangered species. Mr Kenward said that falconers were good ambassadors, not just in Spain but in other countries too.

116. Renewable energy and the deployment of associated technologies were high on the parent Convention's agenda.

117. Recreational activities could possibly cause disturbance. Kite surfing was potentially detrimental to some waterbirds. Rock climbing and paragliding might have adverse effects on raptors.

118. Consideration should be given to issuing guidance on the use of remote cameras and drones, especially those that were made to resemble raptors. Guidelines might include advice on safety distances from nests.

119. There were unfortunately a number of armed conflicts in the world. TAG could highlight the need to address restoration of habitats and conservation after hostilities ceased and reconstruction began.

120. Ms Crockford said that while Europe was covered by EU environmental policies, Africa was not. The African-Eurasian Migratory Landbird initiative was addressing land use issues with a view to improving the conservation stats of the species it covered, and there was scope for cooperation between this instrument, AEWa and the Raptors MOU. In Northern Europe one problem was the homogenization of the landscape affecting habitats, vegetation and prey species. Mr Prommer said

that studies in his country (Hungary) showed a correlation between grassland and non-agricultural development around cities. Mr Stroud said that landscapes were also changing in South Africa with a wide-scale scrubbing up of the environment.

121. Mr Kenward suggested breaking down habitat issues into more distinct elements and devising a way to score them in order to establish priorities and to assess the potential for small dots on the horizon to become major problems. With regard to solutions, a range of options was available including best practice guidance, codes of conduct, new legislation and major publicity campaigns.

122. The Chair requested that a summary of emerging issues be prepared for the MOS.

Action TAG2-3: TAG to prepare a summary of emerging issues for presentation at MOS2.

123. TAG members enjoyed a field trip on the third day of the meeting. The group visited three sites: Al Wathba Nature Reserve, including a guided tour conducted by specialist staff from EAD; Jebel Hafeet near Al Ain where an appetizing buffet lunch was provided at the Mercure Hotel, with spectacular views across the desert into Oman, enhanced with close fly-bys of Egyptian Vultures; and, nearby Zakher Lake, a currently unprotected oasis literally teeming with birds.

12. Finalization of TAG Work Plan 2015

124. The Coordinating Unit had prepared a revised version of the Work Plan while the delegates had been away on the field trip. Thanks were expressed to Ms Jenny Renell for working on this so expeditiously. All the documents of the different Working Groups had been collated into a single composite paper. The Chair suggested running through the new document and making any necessary changes.

Activity 1, Task 1.1 - Review species list and sites list of the MOU

125. Ms Jones suggested that it would be worthwhile to review the list of species considered to be migratory, particularly as clarification of terms provided in CMS resolution 2.2 might increase the number of species that could be considered 'migratory' according to the CMS definition. Mr Stroud proposed some wording on the specific needs of raptors and an appropriate place in the text should be found for its insertion.

126. With regard to item 1g (developing a simple form and guidance that may be used by Signatories submitting information related to the possible change of species status in the context of the MOU and its Action Plan) it was concluded it might be preferable to have separate forms for new species categorization and for new sites.

127. More details on vultures would be provided by André Botha who was leading the temporary Working Group on those species that was established for the meeting.

128. Later, Ms Jones reported good progress on dealing with the taxonomic changes which had resulted in a split that had produced one sedentary and one migratory species - the Mountain and the Forest Buzzard. Some explanatory text describing the rationale for dealing with such cases should be included. The case of the Barbary Falcon merited further investigation as it had populations with different status and trends meaning it could qualify as either Category 2 or 3. Lessons could be learned from the AEWA model and its treatment of different populations.

129. On the site list, Ms Jones said that it seemed to be more advanced with regard to Europe. Regional and national IBAs could be retained but with the caveat that no prioritization was implied.

Some analytical work should be undertaken during the intersessional period between MOS2 and MOS3.

Activity 2 – Threats: protect and/or manage important sites and flyways

130. Ms Crockford asked about developing reintroduction guidelines, drawing the meeting's attention to a current debate raging in Switzerland concerning Ospreys (she could provide a weblink to details of the case). Ms Jones replied that the general guidance produced by the IUCN was sufficient. The Chair advised against the TAG intervening until such time as the Swiss authorities had made their judgement. Mr Williams agreed that the IUCN Guidelines were tried and tested and had been developed by experts, so there seemed little point in "reinventing the wheel". Mr Shobrak said that there were previous cases, citing one from Scotland, and lessons could be learned from these. Ms Crockford asked whether a portal could be provided where people could post their experiences to share with others; Mr Shobrak thought that this was a good idea and Mr Williams suggested that this item could be added to the standard national report form.

131. Mr Kenward said that he had reviewed for the expert working group that had devised the IUCN guidance and the IUCN had received many queries and was considering the best way to deal with them.

132. The Chair said that many countries were refining the IUCN guidelines and adapting them to suit their own particular circumstances, on example being Scotland where Golden Eagles and Natterjack Toads were being reintroduced.

Activity 3 – Task 3.1, 3.2 Threats: Power grids, renewable energy

133. Power grids had adverse effects through collisions, electrocution and disturbance during construction, and as the issue had been examined in depth by AEWPA Parties, Ms Crockford suggested drawing on the Resolutions adopted in that forum for the draft decision to be discussed at the Meeting of Signatories. The Chair, recalling the presentation given the previous evening by Nyambayar Batbayar on the level of electrocution occurring in Mongolia, said that it was a matter of urgency that the TAG brought power companies on board.

134. Mr Batbayar said that a national workshop on the threat posed by powergrids was being planned in Mongolia and it was hoped that international NGOs would participate; CMS might also be invited but the TAG would in any event be kept informed of the outcomes.

135. The Chair suggested adding developments being financed under the Power Africa initiative, saying that there were huge risks of harm to raptors if the opportunity to influence policy was missed. Ms Crockford said that the Convention's Fundraising Officer, Laura Cerasi, was dealing with this issue appropriately.

136. Further discussion of the text relating to wind and solar energy installations took place. Further examples were added taken from the CMS COP11 Resolution. Mr Shobrak raised the point that many such projects were being funded by development banks and he asked at what time and at what political level environmental concerns should be raised. Ms Jones said that her organization had a dedicated member of staff who was in frequent contact with IRENA, so channels of communication already existed.

137. Ms Crockford proposed to add some preambular text referring to the situation in Mongolia and the risk posed to Saker Falcons by new power lines and to the SakerGAP, and an operative paragraph calling on Signatories to undertake national assessments of the effects on raptors. Any

such monitoring should be done at a national level but following standardized methodologies to facilitate building a wider, regional picture.

138. The Coordinating Unit had a role in raising awareness of the problems caused by power lines and should liaise with the Saker Falcon Task Force and the newly established CMS Energy Task Force. There were calls for funding to be found for survey work in China, Kazakhstan and Mongolia to measure the extent of the impact of power lines on raptors and to assist experts from key countries to attend meetings. Mr Williams said that the Signatories may wish to establish a fund or agree to create a budget line for the Coordinating Unit to manage. A further suggestion was a certification scheme for power companies that used safe technologies and designs.

139. Some concerns were expressed that the Power Africa scheme could be “make or break”. If the many infrastructure project were developed insensitively, it could lead to huge numbers of additional bird deaths; done well, precedents could be set for the future of all major developments. It was suggested that the Coordinating Unit might approach all those agencies funding major development projects to ensure that they were aware of the conservation concerns. These agencies should not be given the excuse that they had not been consulted or warned.

Action TAG2-4: Coordinating Unit to consider approaching those agencies funding major development projects to alert them to conservation concern, particularly related to birds of prey.

140. Mr Stroud advised that one factor to be born in mind was the unique niche of the MOU and its added value, given that it was operating in a field alongside multiple other instruments and fora. The MOU was a combination of its Signatory Governments, its advisory bodies and the Coordinating Unit. This was a lesson that had been learned in AEWA.

141. Satellite tagging presented an opportunity to increase public awareness, underpin education work and recruit volunteers for conservation work and to put pressure on decision-makers to change public policies.

142. The Chair said that support groups such as the “Friends of the Raptors MOU”, celebrities and other prominent and well-connected people could also help exert pressure and attract attention to the cause of conservation.

143. Mr Williams said that the campaign in Nagaland to conserve the Amur Falcon had been successful because the conservationists used language and terms that the trappers and local communities could understand.

144. Mr Shobrak stressed the importance of communicating with other CMS initiatives, especially AEWA and the Africa-Eurasian Migratory Landbird initiative, which had similar geographic coverage to the MOU. The Chair pointed out that David Stroud provided one bridge between the MOU and AEWA.

Activity 3 – Task 3.3 Threats: Illegal Killing and Taking

145. Mr Kenward said that there was much preparatory work to do before a draft recommendation could be finalized; an initial outline had been added to the appropriate section of the list of activities. Further input was expected from BirdLife International in the days following the TAG, and placeholder text had been provided by Ms Crockford on vultures and diclofenac.

146. Mr Stroud doubted whether a “one size fits all” approach would work. A larger number of specific initiatives would be needed to ensure global coverage. The recommendation should present

basic information, setting out the percentage declines suffered by various species over recent years. This would bring home the urgency of the situation.

147. Mr Williams said that on his travels he had witnessed a great deal of good work being done in specific migration watch sites which often generated good publicity. He was less convinced that resulting data had demonstrated that monitoring had helped identify population trends. He cited the case of Hawk Mountain in the USA which had gathered many decades' worth of data, but one year the population of one species inexplicably increased manifold. Either the monitoring had failed to spot the factor or factors leading to the sudden population rise or the monitoring had not been providing an accurate view.

148. Mr Kenward agreed with Mr Williams that questions remained, but stressed that engaging people, raising awareness and public relations were still very important. Mr Shobrak said that the mid-winter waterbird counts involved more people. Ms Jones suggested that better synchronization of efforts along the flyway was needed.

149. The Chair commented that the question of conflict resolution still had to be addressed. Mr Kenward said that the Saker Falcon Task Force had shown the way on this, although the problem of electrocution in Mongolia indicated that more still had to be done. The Chair also said that the motivation behind illegal killing should be investigated. Mr Stroud said that case studies had been done and National reports should provide details of efforts undertaken in each country. Conflict was often the driver for persecution; this was seen in Europe with the persecution of carnivores. The experience was probably transferable.

150. Mr Heredia said that this issue was related to the social sciences and an area of expertise not covered by the membership of the TAG. The Chair agreed and said that consideration should be given to recruiting someone from an appropriate field.

Action TAG2-5: Consideration be given to inviting someone with expertise in the social sciences to contribute to the work of TAG.

151. Mr Shobrak reiterated the problem of bird strikes in the vicinity of airports and Mr Batbayar mentioned that vultures were deliberately targeted as their feathers were used to decorate traditional head dresses worn by shamans.

152. Mr Kenward said that many of the issues raised could be dealt with by adding paragraphs to the preamble of the draft Resolution. Conscious of the need to keep the draft to a manageable length, Mr Kenward promised that he would group the additional elements together at the end of the text.

Activity 5 - Tasks 5.1 and 5.2: Common standards for methods and data sharing mechanisms

153. The TAG had achieved as much progress as was likely for the immediate term. The Chair suggested that a small-scale consultancy might take things forward; it would be relatively simple to draw up the terms of reference for a short-term project. It was also suggested that in order to avoid possible duplication the TAG should wait to see what emerged from EURAPMON. The Chair proposed that the TAG report to MOS2 include a section noting that common standards for monitoring was a difficult issue given different regional and national approaches and copyright issues.

Diclofenac

154. The Chair returned to the issue of diclofenac and the outcome of the European Commission's referral of the issue to the Veterinary Committee which had not led to a full review but further consultation with the Member States over their safeguarding procedures. The TAG, the MOU and CMS had to express their dissatisfaction, and Ms Crockford, Ms Jones and Mr Botha were given the task of compiling points for inclusion in a letter.

155. Mr Williams said that the original idea was for the CMS Executive Secretary should write to the European Commission seeking a meeting. At the same time, it was understood that BirdLife International was also in contact with the Commission and a meeting had been arranged. It was therefore probably advisable for the Executive Secretary's letter to be held back until the outcome of BirdLife International's meeting with the Commission was known.

156. The Chair said that a key element was the CMS COP11 Resolution which included a paragraph on preventing the spread of dangerous pharmaceuticals to new regions, especially where safer alternatives were known to exist. Mr Shobrak suggested that health organizations be contacted.

157. The draft wording for a letter was projected on screen and included reference to the fact that a representative of the European Commission had been present at COP11 when the Resolution calling for the prohibition of diclofenac had been adopted. The draft expressed disappointment at the decision of the responsible agency not to refer the licensing of the drug and called for a meeting to discuss the issue further.

158. Mr Stroud thought that it was legitimate to point out that diclofenac was responsible for the catastrophic declines in some Asian vulture populations, but care should be taken not to overstate the case; it was not certain that all raptor species were susceptible to the drug. It could be pointed out that where Europe lead, other regions followed, and should African countries allow diclofenac, many more vulture populations would be at risk. Mr Shobrak said that the important ecological services provided by vultures as scavenger species should be emphasized.

159. Ms Crockford said that the note of the present meeting would provide the essential briefing material that Executive Coordinator, Lyle Glowka would need to convey to the CMS Executive Secretary when he wrote to the Commission. She added that she was concerned that CMS would lose credibility if the European Commission ignored the COP Resolution so soon after its adoption. The expert evidence provided for the review procedure should also be appended in annexes.

160. Ms Jones said that the outcomes of the approach made by BirdLife partners to the Commission were not yet known. She therefore suggested holding back to wait to see what more information emerged from that communication, particularly with regard to the decision to license the use of the drug without further referral. After some discussion, it was also agreed that rather than draft a letter it would be better to provide salient points to Lyle Glowka to convey to Bradnee Chambers; these should include the TAG's concern at the conservation status of vultures and highlight the COP Resolution. Mr Botha, Ms Jones and Ms Crockford were assigned to follow the issue up.

Action TAG2-6: TAG to compile a list of salient points relating to the licensing and use of diclofenac in Europe for transmission to the CMS Executive Secretary requesting that he write a letter to the European Commission.

161. The Chair added that another issue to be pursued was electrocution, especially in the light of the information provided the previous evening by Nyambayar Batbayar in his presentation, as it had become apparent that energy distribution companies were simply not aware of the problem being caused by their power lines.

Technologies

162. Mr Williams suggested that another short desk study would be helpful. The Chair asked Mr Prommer, Mr Kenward and Mr Javed to take matters forward within the meeting as they had experience of tagging programmes. Mr Kenward specified that capacity-building was needed rather than a set of restrictive rules.

Work Plan Final Run Through

163. Following the series of Working Groups and report back sessions, the TAG was satisfied that the content of their report to MOS2 was developing in an appropriate way. Deadlines were clear (documents had to be ready 60 days before the MOS, so drafting needed to be completed by the end of July) and it had been agreed who was responsible for each task. Remaining work before the MOS would have to be conducted by email or through the workspace. If necessary passwords for the workspace would be reissued and tutorials arranged for those unfamiliar with how it worked. Access could also be granted to people outside the TAG to specific parts of the workspace.

164. The Chair asked Ms Jones to report to the plenary of any exceptional cases being considered regarding species listing. General comments on potential candidates and their conservation status could be made through the workspace. BirdLife International could review its database and compare its information on migratory raptors occurring within the MOU Area with the existing species list. On taxonomic changes, the TAG should make specific recommendations regarding the review of Category 1 species in the light of the latest information. Mr Stroud said that the frequency of reviews could be every MOS or every other MOS, with the option of allowing Signatories to make proposals to add species at any meeting. At some time between MOS2 and CMS COP12, the species lists for the MOU and the Convention should be compared.

Action: TAG2-7: Consideration be given to comparing the species list of the MOU with that of the parent CMS Convention, probably during the period between MOS2 and MOS3.

165. In advance of MOS2, Signatories were to be given the opportunity to view the proposals setting out which sites were to be considered for inclusion on the list in the MOU text. Further thought would be given to whether species and site proposals would be submitted on the same forms.

Awareness-raising

166. Mr Prommer ran through the additions made to the previous version of the document. Some initiatives used tried and trusted methods, others were more innovative. Care should be exercised to ensure that activities conformed to best practice and were legal.

167. Ms Jones supported the idea of a 'Year of the Vulture' campaign and greater involvement with WMBD. WMBD had a website but no specific listing of events relating to vultures. Mr Batbayar reminded the meeting of International Vulture Awareness Day. He also suggested that the CMS Family should produce a range of posters that could be distributed at conferences and meetings. Mr Shobrak said that efforts should be made to publicize raptor census activities when they occurred.

Action: TAG2-8: Consideration should be given to further developing the idea of a 'Year of the Vulture' initiative, alongside other partners such as the IUCN Vulture Specialist Group, The Peregrine Fund, Endangered Wildlife Trust (South Africa), etc.

168. The Chair agreed to take the lead on the issue of using new technologies for conservation saying that there was scope for cooperation across the CMS Family as AEWA had also been dealing with monitoring. Common standards could be developed applicable to all CMS instruments. Mr Prommer said that websites lent themselves to such activities and Mr Musyoki said that more media work should be done, noting that a Press Release and news article had been issued after TAG1 in Edinburgh which he was able to use back home in Kenya. Mr Williams confirmed that the Coordinating Unit would be preparing an article for the website and TAG members were welcome to adapt it and use it for their own publicity.

Action TAG2-9: Coordinating Unit to prepare an illustrated news article about TAG2 for publication on the Raptors MOU website. [Completed]

Vultures

169. Mr Botha had identified a number of activities; these included liaison with outside bodies such as the IUCN Species Specialist Group and the CMS Poisoning Working Group and becoming involved in awareness-raising campaigns such as the ‘Year of the Vulture’ and International Vulture Awareness Day. The MOS could be used as a launch pad for conceptualizing the campaigns and could also have an advocacy role regarding legislation to control or prohibit harmful chemicals. It was important to share and disseminate scientific data, to agree protocols for satellite tagging and other new technologies such as drones, and address the “spy-in-the-sky” fears. The diclofenac issue and the letter to the European Commission were being dealt with separately (see immediately below). Reintroductions should be considered a last resort and the IUCN guidance should be followed. The potential for using vultures as flagship species was large.

170. Mr Williams suggested that a task that could be suitable for an intern would be to draw up a list of organizations dealing with raptors and identifying the type of data that they were collating.

Action TAG2-10: Coordinating Unit to consider developing an online data source of raptor-related organisations which could promote international communication, cooperation and collaboration.

Tracking and Tagging

171. A second new task – reviewing issues relating to the use of technologies in the study and monitoring of birds of prey – was agreed, which included a possible small-scale consultancy to develop a guide to current methods, describing their purposes and risks and benefits. See Action TAG2-1 (above).

13. Any other business

172. Mr Valkama gave a presentation on the monitoring of birds of prey in Finland. He led a team based at the Finnish Museum of Natural History which was responsible for all bird ringing undertaken in the country. The operation depended on the help of volunteers and questionnaires showed that 45,000 different locations were checked annually. Ten 10km x 10km grids were studied each year and the long-term aim of the project was to establish a thorough dataset over time. Nests and birds’ territories were marked on a map and so far there had been little mapping done in the far north of the country compared with elsewhere. Declines had been detected in Common Buzzard numbers; the Eagle Owl had experienced a short upward blip but was also declining. An atlas was published periodically as well as a Red List assessment. As a result of the surveys, the status of several species including three raptors had been changed.

173. Mr Valkama concluded his presentation with some details of his personal involvement in bird conservation which had involved participation in wader studies before he moved on to raptors. He

had worked on Pygmy Owls many of which bred in nest boxes, Boreal (Tengmalm's) Owls, Goshawks and Eagle Owls. One unusual nesting site had been discovered in the centre of Helsinki. He also showed a video of an encounter with a Ural Owl chick and its protective parent.

174. The Chair conducted a final tour de table allowing participants to raise any final issues. In response to a query from Mr Shobrak, Mr Williams explained the history of the TAG to which there was no reference in the MOU itself, it being established at the first Meeting of Signatories, which had drawn up its Terms of Reference. He further explained that members of the TAG were allowed to serve no more than two terms, and as a degree of staggering membership was desirable. All existing members would be stepping down from this Interim TAG at the forthcoming MOS but could be re-nominated to continue to serve on the TAG which is scheduled to be established at MOS2.

175. The Chair congratulated Professor Shobrak on his promotion to Vice-President of the University of Taif and the meeting congratulated Professor Thompson on his election to the Royal Society in Edinburgh.

14. Closure of the Meeting

176. After the customary expression of thanks to all those who had contributed to the success of the meeting, particularly the host government and those who had organized the field trip, the Chair declared proceedings closed.

Annex 1: TAG2 Actions

Action TAG2-1: TAG could consider undertaking a review and assessment of modern technologies used for birds of prey with a view to developing guidance on selection, risks and benefits and including examples of good practice.

Action TAG2-2: TAG could develop a pro forma for Signatories to use to nominate species to be considered for inclusion in the Raptors MOU or to change the Category in which it was currently listed.

Action TAG2-3: TAG to prepare a summary of emerging issues for presentation at MOS2.

Action TAG2-4: Coordinating Unit to consider approaching those agencies funding major development projects to alert them to conservation concern, particularly related to birds of prey.

Action TAG2-5: Consideration be given to inviting someone with expertise in the social sciences to contribute to the work of TAG.

Action TAG2-6: TAG to compile a list of salient points relating to the licensing and use of diclofenac in Europe for transmission to the CMS Executive Secretary requesting that he write a letter to the European Commission.

Action: TAG2-7: Consideration be given to comparing the species list of the MOU with that of the parent CMS Convention, probably during the period between MOS2 and MOS3.

Action: TAG2-8: Consideration should be given to further developing the idea of a 'Year of the Vulture' initiative, alongside other partners such as the IUCN Vulture Specialist Group, The Peregrine Fund, Endangered Wildlife Trust (South Africa), etc.

Action TAG2-9: Coordinating Unit to prepare an illustrated news article about TAG2 for publication on the Raptors MOU website. *[Completed]*

Action TAG2-10: Coordinating Unit to consider developing an online data source of raptor-related organisations which could promote international communication, cooperation and collaboration.

Annex 2: Agenda of the Second Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group to the Raptors MOU

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Update since the First Meeting of TAG
4. Report of CMS 11th Conference of Parties
5. Review of Actions from the First Meeting of TAG
6. TAG Activity Reports from Working Group Leads
7. Working Group Break-out session 1
8. Working Group Break-out session 2
9. Working Group Break-out session 3
10. Preparations for the Second Meeting of Signatories
11. Horizon scanning
12. Finalization of TAG Work Plan 2015
13. Any other business
14. Closure of the Meeting

Annex 3: List of Participants

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Annex 4: Reporting Form for TAG (adopted from AEWA)

Issue/Working Group Task [...]	Actions undertaken	Relevant Raptors MOS2 documents