



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN POPULATION OF THE GREAT BUSTARD (*Otis tarda*)

*Feodosia, Crimea, Ukraine
11-12 November 2008*

UNEP/CMS/GB/2/Doc.5
Agenda Item 8.2

ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL REVIEW AND ADVISORY PANEL FOR REINTRODUCTION AND REESTABLISHMENT

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

1. Under the Memorandum of Understanding Signatories endeavour to work closely together to improve the conservation status of the Great Bustard in the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation and in accordance with the precautionary principle (paragraph 4 of the MoU).
2. To this end they have undertaken to identify and monitor processes that are endangering or likely further to endanger the Great Bustard and take appropriate actions to regulate and manage these processes with a view to improving the status of the species (paragraph 4.c of the MoU). In this context, the potential range shift of the Middle European population predicted on the basis of climate change modelling is a particular cause of concern for the Middle European population of Great Bustard and urges international collaboration between current and future range states. Considering the poor dispersion ability of the species, benign introduction to climatically suitable areas might play a role in the future conservation of the species.
3. In this context it is important to recall that Signatories shall endeavour to identify and conserve potential unoccupied breeding habitats, including display sites and nesting areas, where breeding populations of the Great Bustard could be re-established in the future (paragraph 4.e of the MoU). Paragraph 8.1. of the Action Plan also notes that the Great Bustard should be used as a flagship for the protection and sustainable use of the entire biodiversity of steppes, dry grasslands and suitable agricultural landscapes across Europe.
4. At the First Meeting of Signatories, several Range States have expressed their intention to reintroduce or reinforce the remaining populations of the species. Although the Action Plan of the MoU clearly states that reintroduction should be undertaken only at those sites where feasibility studies (following the IUCN criteria for re-introductions) have been carried out with success (paragraph 4.2), there are issues related to genetics, impacts on source populations and strategic placement of reintroduction sites to maximise the impact on the viability of extant populations which require international coordination under this MoU.
5. The 1st International Medium-term Work Programme includes an action point on setting up a Technical Advisory Panel of international experts with the involvement of IUCN, however, it does not provide further instructions or guidance on how this should be done.

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6. In the light of recent experience with other reintroduction schemes it is proposed to set up a Technical Review Panel comprising internationally acknowledged expertise on the following fields: habitat suitability, population ecology, conservation genetics and captive breeding.

7. It is envisaged that the Technical Review Panel would provide independent scientific assessment of studies related to reintroductions and would make available its assessments to the Range States concerned and to the Secretariat. Draft Terms of Reference for the Panel are provided in the annex to this note as a basis for discussion.

Action requested:

The Signatory States are invited to:

- a. Consider how they wish to coordinate their actions on reintroductions and reestablishments in order to maximise their conservation benefits;
- b. Review and finalise as appropriate the draft *Terms of Reference* for a Technical Review Panel on Reintroductions and Reinforcement; and
- c. Request the Secretariat to proceed with the establishment of the Panel according to the agreed procedure.

Draft Terms of Reference for the Technical Review and Advisory Panel for Reintroduction and Reestablishment

Objectives

1. The objectives of the establishment of the Technical Review and Advisory Panel for Reintroduction and Reestablishment (hereafter the Panel) are
 - (i) to maximise the contribution of reintroductions and reestablishments towards the conservation of the Middle European population of Great Bustard, and
 - (ii) to minimise any potential negative impacts on donor populations.

Mandate

2. The role of the Panel is to provide independent review of plans or projects for reintroduction or reestablishment of great bustards in the MoU area that Signatory States may develop or have to consider for permission within their territory, or to which they should contribute by providing individuals for reintroductions.

Operational rules

3. Signatory States undertake to submit their plans or projects with all supporting documents to the Secretariat before giving their permission to the implementation of projects on reintroductions or reestablishments.
4. On request of the Secretariat, the Panel will review the plans or projects and supporting scientific work and would submit its review and recommendations to the Secretariat.
5. The Panel will investigate and provide advice on the following main topics:
 - (i) whether the plan complies with the relevant IUCN guidelines;
 - (ii) the extent to which the project would contribute to the overall viability of the Middle European population of Great Bustard;
 - (iii) the potential cumulative impacts of different reintroduction schemes on the source population(s).
6. The Panel shall communicate its finding in a joint statement within 60 days to the Secretariat which will (a) make the review and recommendations immediately available to the Signatory State(s) concerned and (b) present a summary of reviews available for all Signatory States as part of the Overview Report.

Composition and appointment of the Panel

7. The Panel will be composed of 4 members. Members will participate in the panel in an independent expert capacity. Members will elect among themselves a coordinator, with the task of coordinating the work of the Panel and be the main contact point with the Secretariat.
8. The Secretariat will liaise with the Chairmen of the IUCN Reintroduction and Captive Breeding Specialist Groups with a view to identifying suitable experts in the following fields (a) habitat suitability, (b) population ecology, (c) conservation genetics and (d) captive breeding.
9. The Secretariat will submit the candidates for appointment to the MoU Signatories either at a Meeting of the Signatory States or, if a meeting is not foreseen within 6 months, in writing. Decision on the appointment of the members of the panel will be taken by consensus.
10. Membership of the panel will be reviewed at any Meeting of the Signatory States. Members can be re-elected. In the event that a member of the panel should have to step down in the period between two meetings, it will be replaced using the same procedure outlined in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.