



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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Agenda Item 24

REVIEW OF THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

(Prepared by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Scientific Council)

Summary:

The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Manila, 2017) endorsed the preparation of a report on the conservation status of migratory species as an activity to pursue within the CMS Programme of Work for 2018-2020.

This document includes a preliminary compilation and analysis of information concerning the conservation status, population trends and threats concerning migratory species covered by CMS Appendices, based on information obtained from the IUCN Red Data List database. It also includes the analysis of a few indicators: (i) Trends in protected area coverage of KBAs identified for migratory species; (ii) Red List Index of CMS-listed and migratory species; and (iii) Living Planet Index for species listed on the CMS Appendices.

An earlier version of this report was submitted to the 4th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council. This version is based on the comments from the meeting and the advice of a working group established within the Sessional Committee to assist the Secretariat in the further development of this initiative.

Additional analysis of the data was undertaken by the Secretariat following the initial publication of this document on 19 December 2019. This revised version expands the section 'Discussion and analysis', with the aim of providing additional rationale for the proposals for action included in the draft Decisions and proposes a limited revision of the same draft Decisions.

REVIEW OF THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

Background

1. The 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11, Quito, 2014) identified the preparation of a report on the conservation status of species listed on CMS Appendices as an activity to pursue within the CMS Programme of Work for 2015-2017 ([Resolution 11.1 Financial and Administrative Matters](#), Annex V). The production of the report was expected to be realized entirely through voluntary contributions.
2. Despite the Secretariat's efforts, financial resources sufficient to produce the report in the course of that triennium could not be secured. The Secretariat therefore concentrated on the definition of the scope of the report, and identification of potential partners to contribute to the implementation of this activity.
3. Thanks to a voluntary contribution from the Government of Switzerland, an expert workshop was convened by the CMS Secretariat in Cambridge, UK on 21 November 2016, working in collaboration with the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), which acted as local organizer and facilitator. In addition to the Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC, participants included the chair of the CMS Scientific Council, the scientific councillor for the UK, experts from BirdLife International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wetlands International, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Zoological Society of London.
4. The main outcome of the workshop was a scoping paper regarding the establishment of a flagship report for CMS on the "State of the World's Migratory Species". The scoping paper, which provides for costed alternative options for the report, was endorsed by the 2nd meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council and was made available to COP12 as document [UNEP/CMS/COP12/Inf.29](#).
5. The 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12, Manila, 2017) reaffirmed the preparation of a report on the conservation status of migratory species as an activity to pursue within the CMS Programme of Work for 2018-2020 ([Resolution 12.2 Financial and Administrative Matters](#), Annex 5). The production of the report was again expected to be realized entirely through voluntary contributions.

Activities

6. Since COP12, the Secretariat has been actively fundraising for the production of the report. Unfortunately, fundraising efforts have not produced sufficient resources to contract out the production of the report as was intended when including the activity in the Programme of Work.
7. While fundraising efforts are being continued, the Secretariat has decided to undertake a compilation of information on the conservation status of migratory species covered by the CMS Appendices, using its own internal capacity, with a view to submitting at least a preliminary review to COP13.
8. An initial version of this report was submitted to the 4th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC4, Bonn, 12-15 November 2019) as document UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC4/Doc.8 with a view to receiving comments and advice on the possible further development of the compilation and analysis, possible conclusions to be drawn, and any additional guidance, which the Secretariat could use to update the document and submit it as a preliminary report to COP13.

9. ScC-SC4 welcomed the report, while recommending caution over the interpretation of the findings. The meeting made a number of suggestions for the further development of the report, in the short and longer term. The main suggestions included (i) to focus the analysis on Appendix I species, starting with those species classified in the categories of lowest threat of extinction in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, with a view to determining whether Appendix I listing remains justified; (ii) where data are available, to consider assessments at the population or genetic stock level, to identify possible geographic variations in the conservation status of listed taxa; and (iii) to undertake analyses of the information compiled at different geographic and taxonomic scales. More details on the consideration of the report by the Sessional Committee can be found in the ScC-SC4 report.
10. A working group was established within the Sessional Committee with a view to continue providing advice to the Secretariat in the further development of the report. The working group met with the Secretariat in the margins of ScC-SC4, supporting the submission of the report to COP13 with a few limited developments that could be undertaken in the short term.

Discussion and analysis

11. Annex 2 to this document summarizes information concerning the Red List status, population trends and threat analysis, as available from the IUCN Red List database, for all taxa currently listed at the species and subspecies levels in CMS Appendices, as well as species considered covered by higher taxa listing in Appendix II (see annexes for details).
12. Annex 3 includes the results of preliminary analyses conducted on the information compiled in Annex 2. Given the preliminary nature of these analyses, and as also advised by the Scientific Council, the document does not attempt to draw conclusions at this stage. Discussions during ScC-SC4 and additional analyses of the findings by the Secretariat helped to identify aspects of the report that merit further development in terms of scope and depth of analysis.
13. Bearing in mind the limitations of the work undertaken thus far, several interesting observations can be made. First, the analysis of the IUCN Red List Category for CMS-listed species shows that a significant number of species are assessed as belonging to a category that, based on the current guidelines on the assessment of listing proposals as contained in Resolution 11.33 (Rev.COP12), would in principle not qualify them for listing. A number of factors are likely to have contributed to this, including changes in the criteria for the listing over time, improved information on the conservation status of individual species, and genuine improvement of the conservation status of individual species. An additional element to be considered is the fact that the scope of the IUCN assessment does not always fully correspond to the CMS listing, notably when only regional populations are listed. The main point that emerged from the discussion of this issue at ScC-SC4 is that the factors and possible conclusions should not be oversimplified, and that further work would be desirable, e.g., to develop the analyses at the level of individual species. The main recommendations of the meeting are summarized in paragraph 9 above.
14. Second, the analyses of threats are another component that has been made the object of significant consideration. While they represent the first attempt in the history of CMS of a systematic consideration of the threats to migratory species listed on the Appendices, the analyses have at this stage significant limitations that, if not taken into account, could lead to simplistic conclusions. A main limitation is that, due to resource and time constraints, the compilation of information had to be limited to the association of threats to individual species, without being able to consider other aspects that could allow a quantification of the importance of such threats both in absolute and relative terms. Due to these limitations in the compilation of information, the analyses of threats had to be limited to the calculation of the number and percentage of species affected by individual threats, without evaluating their severity and relative importance. Another consideration is that the IUCN classification of threats on which the compilation and analyses are based differs in some respects from other categorizations of threats commonly in use. For instance, habitat loss or degradation, generally regarded as a

major threat to biodiversity, is not categorized as such in the IUCN classification, while a number of categorized threats in the classification would contribute to it.

15. With the above limitations in mind, a consideration that emerges from the analyses of threats is the fact that biological resource use¹ is the category of threat affecting the highest number of CMS-listed species by a considerable margin, in general and for all disaggregations by taxa. This is particularly significant for species listed on Appendix I, for which direct use is banned with limited exceptions under the terms of the Convention. In interpreting this finding, consideration needs to be given to the fact that biological resource use is a broad category that, in addition to direct use of the target species, covers also unintentional taking and indirect effects related to the use of other species. An additional analysis undertaken on Appendix I species impacted by biological resource use and aiming at distilling those species subject to forms of direct use indicate that 3 out of 4 species are impacted by intentional use while about 20 per cent are subject to forms of persecution and control. While any conclusions from these preliminary findings would be premature, a further development of the analysis of threats, possibly starting from a more in-depth assessment of the impact of direct use, appears of potential significant interest for the Convention.
16. In addition to the compilation and analyses referred to above, through synergies with the process of assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species, an analysis of the disaggregation for migratory species of priority indicators had been contracted to the UNEP-WCMC thanks to voluntary contributions from the Governments of Germany and Switzerland. These indicators include: (i) trends in protected area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas identified for migratory species; (ii) the Red List Index of CMS-listed and migratory species (Annex 4); and (iii) the Living Planet Index for species listed on CMS Appendices (Annex 5).

Recommended Actions

17. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) consider the compilation and analyses of information on the conservation status of migratory species included in the annexes to this document;
 - b) review and adopt the draft Decision contained in Annex 1 of this document.

¹ Defined in the IUCN – CMP Unified Classification of Direct Threats as “*Threats from consumptive use of “wild” biological resources including both deliberate and unintentional harvesting effects; also persecution or control of specific species*”.

DRAFT DECISIONS

CONSERVATION STATUS OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

Directed to the Secretariat

13.AA The Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, is requested to:

- a) further develop a review of the conservation status of migratory species and the relative impacts of various threats, building on the preliminary review submitted to COP13 in document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.24, in close consultation with the Scientific Council and in collaboration with competent organizations, as appropriate and feasible;
- b) initiate, in consultation with the Scientific Council and in collaboration with competent organizations, an in-depth review of the conservation status of individual Appendix I-listed species, starting with those species classified in the categories of lowest threat of extinction in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, with a view to determining inter alia:
 - (i) differences in the conservation status of individual populations or management units;
 - (ii) the importance of the protection provided by the listing on Appendix I for the conservation of the species and its individual populations;
- c) undertake, in consultation with the Scientific Council and in collaboration with competent organizations, and in synergy with other relevant initiatives under the Convention, an assessment of the impact of direct use on the conservation status of species listed on Appendix I;
- d) report to the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council at its intersessional meetings between COP13 and COP14 and to the Conference of Parties at its 14th meeting on the progress in implementing this decision.

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

13.BB Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical support to the Secretariat in undertaking the activities foreseen in Decision 13.AA a-c.

Directed to the Scientific Council

13.CC The Scientific Council is requested to:

- a) provide support and guidance to the Secretariat in undertaking the activities foreseen in Decision 13.AA a-c;
- b) consider the reports submitted by the Secretariat pursuant to this Decision and formulate recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on conservation actions underpinned by the reports as appropriate.