



**CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
CONCERNING CONSERVATION,  
RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE  
OF THE SAIGA ANTELOPE**

Distr: General

UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Report

7 December 2015

Original: English

THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING  
CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE  
USE OF THE SAIGA ANTELOPE

Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 26-29 October 2015

**REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES**

**Agenda Item 1: Welcoming remarks**

1. Welcoming participants to Tashkent, Alexandr Grigoryants (Uzbekistan) said that it was an honour for his country to host the meeting which was dedicated to the conservation of a unique animal of the steppes, which had already roamed the plains during the last ice age together with mammoths. The saiga antelope was endangered and those wishing to conserve it faced many challenges.
2. Stefan Priesner (UNDP) added his words of welcome as the representatives of one of the organizations sponsoring the meeting. UNEP was a key player in implementing biodiversity policies. The meeting had a busy and challenging agenda with important decisions to be made. It was important that conservation policies were not overshadowed by other agendas. An impressive coalition had formed in support of saiga conservation to address a variety of threats from habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, overexploitation of the animal for meat, hide and horns, invasive species, climate change and disease.
3. Mr. Priesner said that when he had visited the Ustiurt Plateau [western Uzbekistan] he had not seen any saiga but knew that these antelopes were a key element of this arid environment. Conservation in the region was made even more complex as a result of the Aral Sea disaster.
4. The countries of the world had just agreed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), two of which related to biodiversity – one for the terrestrial environment and another for the marine. In Uzbekistan the SDGs were reflected in a 5-year framework agreed with the Government and formed the basis for the work of UNDP in the country. One UNDP project concerned reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with oil and gas operations. Twelve amendments to legislation had been proposed to help offset the effects of the oil industry, to enlarge a nature reserve and fund more conservation personnel. It was hoped that the Government would agree to these changes and accept the principle underlying offsetting, for example that an equivalent area to that which was degraded should be restored.
5. UNDP had played an active role in Uzbekistan, being involved in the designation of the first reserve set up since the country's independence and in developing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Strong partnerships had been established which could be of benefit to saiga conservation.
6. Marco Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) also welcomed the participants but noted that the meeting started on a sad note because of the negative developments with the catastrophic losses in the die-off of saigas in what had been the largest population, which had seen until that point some encouraging growth. This

population in central Kazakhstan was now also endangered. In addition, most of the stock at a captive breeding centre in the Russian Federation had also been lost.

7. Mr. Barbieri warmly thanked the hosts and co-organizers of the meeting, the State Committee for Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the sponsors without whom this large international saiga meeting would not have been possible: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of Germany, Frankfurt Zoological Society, NABU, UNEP Regional Office for Europe, UNDP Uzbekistan and US Forestry Service.

8. CMS was one of the oldest biodiversity treaties having come into force in 1983. The saiga antelope was one of the species to which the Convention dedicated considerable attention, and was assisted by a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which made their expertise available. More had been discovered about the causes of the die-off, although what triggered the event was still unclear. The Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would also have to address other animal health issues as well as the effects of burgeoning infrastructure.

9. Thomas de Meulenaer (CITES Secretariat) added his welcome to the participants and said that CITES had an interest in both sustainable use and conservation. The Saiga MOU provided a forum where CMS and CITES could cooperate and both Conventions were committed to assisting their Parties with implementing policies agreed at the international level. Within CITES 180 Parties had adopted policies consistent with the aims of the MOU and the CITES COP in 2016 would doubtless adopt more. Mr. de Meulenaer looked forward to the adoption by the meeting of a coherent and pragmatic five-year Work Programme and hoped that the necessary political support would be forthcoming to ensure its implementation. He too thanked the donors and UNDP for their support.

## **Agenda Item 2: Election of officers**

10. Mr. Barbieri said that it was customary at meetings of instruments of the CMS Family to offer the chair to the Host Government. This had been discussed and agreed at a meeting of the Heads of Delegation and Mr. Grigoryants had agreed to serve. The Heads of Delegation had also agreed that Kazakhstan should serve as Vice-Chair.

11. These proposals were accepted by the meeting and Mr. Grigoryants assumed the chair.

## **Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule**

12. The agenda and schedule had been circulated in advance. There were no suggestions for any amendments so both were adopted as presented in Documents UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Doc.1/Rev.2 and Doc.2/Rev.2.

## **Agenda Item 4: Opening statements**

13. The representative of Kazakhstan expressed his thanks to the meeting for electing him Vice-Chair. Especially after the die-off in central Kazakhstan in spring 2015, the meeting was topical and saiga conservation was attracting a lot of attention.

14. Mongolia wanted to see the conservation status of the saiga improve and was taking action to achieve this. There were now 14,000 saigas in the Mongolian population and anti-poaching units had been established.

15. The Russian Federation said saiga conservation needed more attention. Saigas were unique animals and their numbers had been reduced by several human factors. The agenda of the meeting included items requiring different conservation approaches. The Russian Federation was already active and the saiga was listed in the red book of the Republic of Kalmykia and is intended to be listed in the national red book of the Russian Federation. It was recognized that organized criminal groups were now poaching saigas, and as well as combating this threat, efforts were being made to restore a larger proportion of the animals' habitat. Saiga conservation needed to be conducted at the international level and the involvement of NGOs and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) was welcome.
16. China was pleased to be participating in the meeting and thanked the organizers. A great deal was being done in China to protect saigas, complementing the efforts of the Range States. Laws regarding trade were being rigorously enforced and China would support the Range States and monitor domestic trade.
17. The Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), speaking also on behalf of the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), said that the meeting was particularly important in the light of the 2015 mass die-off and the Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) would serve as a vital guide to the actions of the Range States and cooperating organizations.
18. The representative of Flora and Fauna International (FFI) stressed his organization's determination to do all in its power to assist.
19. The Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) also thanked the organizers, commenting that the technical workshop held on the previous two days had been productive. The challenges ahead were daunting but the Range States, China and the partner organizations had the energy and commitment to succeed.
20. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) thanked the organizers for their invitation and expressed its willingness to contribute to the work of the meeting and the implementation of its decisions.
21. WWF Russia also expressed its thanks to the organizers. WWF worked closely with the FZS and was working with local communities and particularly children to encourage more conservation activities and discourage unsustainable hunting. Some new information was emerging suggesting that in some areas saiga numbers had increased in comparison with the previous year. The die-off had however been a major set-back and it was vital to start the recuperation work.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Summary of the Technical Meeting (26-27 October)**

22. E.J. Milner-Gulland (SCA) said that the technical workshop had seen excellent discussions. Summaries of the specialist sessions had been compiled would soon be available in both English and Russian (see Annex 7). Participants were invited to comment on the summaries as soon as possible, with a view to their finalization.
23. The workshop had also reviewed the draft Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) for 2016-2020, and made a number of suggestions for its revision. Those proposed amendments will be presented to the meeting under Agenda Item 10. The MTIWP provided a 5-year plan of action and served as a guide to Governments, NGOs and IGOs setting out the priorities upon which to concentrate.
24. The new National Report Forms were targeted at the Range States and as they were the ones that had to complete the form, their comments were invited, in particular regarding the length of the form, its complexity and its relevance. The proposed amendments will be presented to the meeting under Agenda Item 9.

25. The Secretariat mentioned that it was collecting all the PPT presentations provided by the speakers with a view to making them available to the meeting participants. The presentations can be downloaded from the CMS website at <http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/third-meeting-signatories-saiga-mou-mos3>.

## **Agenda Item 6: Report of the Secretariat**

26. The Vice-Chair presiding over the meeting at this point invited the Secretariat to make its report. Mr. Barbieri explained that the report covered a number of sub-items and invited Natalya Yakusheva (CMS Secretariat) to make the presentation. She referred to a series of documents: UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Doc.4 *the Report of the Secretariat*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Doc.6 *Overview report on conservation status*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.2 *Status of Signatures to the MOU*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.6 *Designated National Contact Point Form*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.7 *List of Designated National Contact Points*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.19 *Resolution 11.24 The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and Programme of Work (2014-2020)* and UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.20 *Guidelines on Mitigating the Impact of Linear Infrastructure and Related Disturbance on Mammals in Central Asia*.

27. Ms. Yakusheva said that a workshop on Traditional Chinese Medicine had been held in China in 2010 in collaboration with CITES. Two further workshops had been held in Kazakhstan; one in 2011 on the implementation and coordination of the Saiga Antelope MOU and other CMS instruments for migratory ungulates in Kazakhstan and another in 2013 just dealing with the Saiga MOU.

28. In May 2015 the CMS Secretariat had helped coordinate the emergency mission sent to Kazakhstan in response to the die-off in Betpak-dala upon request of the Ministry of Agriculture.

29. An updated Joint Work Programme (JWP) for 2015-2020 between CMS and CITES had been agreed. The CMS Standing Committee had endorsed the JWP at its 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting in 2014 (UNEP/CMS/StC42/Doc.6.1). A joint post had also been established to help coordinate the work of the two Conventions; the officer had been recruited and was based at the CMS offices in Bonn since July 2015.

### **Agenda Item 6.1: Status of signatures**

30. All five Range States were Signatories to the MOU. There were also a total of eight cooperating organizations that had signed the MOU and the German NGO NABU (Naturschutzbund Deutschland - Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union) had applied to become a formal cooperating organization too, which would bring the total number to nine (see agenda item 11).

### **Agenda Item 6.2: List of designated national contact points**

31. All five Range States had designated a National Contact Point; the list with contact details could be found on the CMS website.

### **Agenda Item 6.3: Presentation and discussion of Resolution 11.24 the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and its Programme of Work (POW 2014-2020)**

32. CMS COP11 had adopted Resolution 11.24 on the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and its accompanying Programme of Work (POW). CMS Parties had at COP11 created a staff position to coordinate the CAMI, to be based at the Bonn duty station. CAMI covered 14 Range States and 15 species (13 ungulates and 2 cats) and was intended to provide a framework for coherent coordination for MOUs and Action Plans in the region, given that barriers to migration, wildlife crime, habitat degradation and climate change were threats common to all the species. The separate MOUs and Action Plans would continue to exist as self-

standing instruments but would benefit from greater synergies. Like the MOU, CAMI was not restricted to Range States but was also open to other stakeholders.

#### **Agenda Item 6.4: Presentation of the Guidelines on Mitigating the Impact of Linear Infrastructure and Related Disturbance on Mammals in Central Asia**

33. CMS COP11 had endorsed the document *Guidelines on Mitigating the Impact of Linear Infrastructure and Related Disturbance on Mammals in Central Asia* concerning the effects of linear infrastructure such as roads, railways, pipelines and electricity cables on animal migration, an issue that had been of concern to Parties since the Convention's inception and had been discussed at both the COP and the Scientific Council.

34. Mongolia had been the subject of a case study submitted to the Scientific Council in 2011 and had taken the lead in implementing the guidelines as the first country to transpose them into national legislation. The guidelines required a series of actions from mitigating the effects of infrastructure, improving the planning and design of projects, carrying out assessments, monitoring and evaluation and adjusting existing installations.

35. In addition to new roads and railways Kazakhstan had a border fence along the frontier with Uzbekistan which was impeding migration of saigas.

#### **Agenda Item 6.5: Any other matters**

36. A preview of a video to be used for outreach and fundraising was shown.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Reports on MOU implementation**

##### **Agenda Item 7.1: National reporting**

37. **Kazakhstan** was a Signatory to the MOU and Party to a 2007 bilateral agreement with Turkmenistan and another dating from 2010 with Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan had also been formally cooperating with the Russian Federation's Ministry of Natural Resources since 2012.

38. In the 1950s there had been 1.5 million saigas but harsh winters, disease and large-scale poaching had brought saigas to the brink of extinction with possibly as few as 22,000 animals left at one point. The National Saiga Conservation Service worked in collaboration with local authorities operating from 15 sub-regional centres, with anti-poaching action as one of their priorities. The inspectorate was active 24 hours a day and were using modern technology such as satellite tracking and camera traps. There were 80 inspectors responsible for red book species covering an area of 7 million hectares.

39. Poachers also had specialized vehicles and had no compunction in defying the law. Saigas were still being targeted by organized and well-equipped gangs with all-terrain vehicles, an arsenal of modern weapons and hi-tech communications and poachers also tried to impede the work of the inspectors and were beginning to turn their attention to the Ural population in western Kazakhstan. There had been 33 poaching cases in 2012, 46 in 2013, 71 in 2014 and 63 up to October in 2015. There had been 814 cases filed for breaches of environmental regulations.

40. The authorities had to rethink their conservation policies in view of poaching and the die-off. Across the 22 Protected Areas, patrols had to continue and more proactive action taken when intelligence was received. Different teams were working together on some raids and GPS tracking helped communication.

41. Cross-agency liaison among ministries, customs and local authorities improved efficiency, but unfortunately the poachers not only were better organized themselves but also were prepared to use weapons. Organized crime had become involved and officials were being bribed. One of the people detained when two trucks were stopped by a patrol was a police major; one of the others was on probation after being convicted of wildlife crime. The trucks had false number plates, and rifles, ammunition and saiga horns had been confiscated.
42. The judiciary often seemed to see poaching as a misdemeanour rather than a crime. The court system was slow to respond, did not confiscate equipment and was content to prosecute one member of the gang and not pursue the rest of the team.
43. Kazakhstan took conservation seriously, recognizing its key role with regard to saigas and aware that the country's international image was at stake.
44. The representative of **Mongolia** outlined some of the key activities undertaken in his country in the period 2011-2015. These included monitoring the population and ecological research and a field study conducted from 2008 to 2012. Survival rates for calves were estimated at 50 per cent, with 95 per cent of deaths occurring in the first two months of life, with the primary cause being predators (including foxes and raptors). Females' choice of calving sites seemed to be driven by the proximity to water and the incline of the terrain. Horn and hair samples had been analysed at the University of Tübingen and the isotopes meant that it was possible to identify the origin of the saiga which would be a useful tool against those illegally trading saiga horn.
45. A study of population abundance and distribution conducted in the summer and winter of 2014 had counted 243 groups with 1738 animals and 148 groups with 1934 animals respectively. Extrapolated this produced an overall population estimate of 14,869, this being the average of the summer and winter figures. Eight saigas had been captured and fitted with satellite collars. The collar batteries had an expected life of one and a half years. The animals' movements had been tracked and plotted on a map with the route of a tarmacked road that was under construction superimposed, illustrating the potential impact. A genetic study by the University of Copenhagen would inform the continuing debate over saiga taxonomy.
46. **The Russian Federation** was using drones, satellites and groundwork to conduct surveys of the Pre-Caspian population. The information derived from this work was not comprehensive but the population was in a critical state and was declining. It had been inscribed in the red book of the Republic of Kalmykia. Protected Areas covered 40 per cent of the range but this was not enough to halt the decline and corridors needed to be established.
47. In 2012 a bilateral agreement had been signed with Kazakhstan (UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.21.1), *inter alia* setting up a working group for which a workshop had been organized.
48. Within the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Natural Resources was working with partners such as the All-Russian Research Institute, the Russian Academy of Science's Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution (IEE RAS) and the Stepnoi Sanctuary and at the regional level.
49. The saiga enjoyed total protection and hunting it was illegal. There was some illegal trade so it was necessary to work through CITES with other Range States and consumer countries. The first arrest under the new regulations had been made in September 2015 after 50 horns had been seized and the case was going to court.
50. There were three centres for captive breeding and awareness-raising programmes were being implemented to educate local communities.

51. The challenges were poaching and agreeing standards for monitoring methodologies and the priorities for the next five years were to employ rangers to protect the herds and developing monitoring techniques.
52. As there was no representative of **Turkmenistan** present, the Secretariat referred participants to the written report that had been submitted (UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.10.4).
53. **Uzbekistan** reported that saiga was a transboundary migrant and was protected by a presidential decree. Bilateral arrangements had been negotiated with Kazakhstan and an agreement was in place between the relevant authorities of the two countries (UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.21.2). In Uzbekistan the specialist agency was the State Committee for Nature Protection whose inspectors were equipped with all-terrain vehicles for anti-poaching patrols. There was a strong regulatory framework and fines for poaching could reach US\$2,500 for local people and double that for foreigners.
54. In the fight against illegal trade, various agencies were working together and had seized unregistered vehicles and weapons.
55. There were plans to extend the Saigachy reserve near the Aral Sea so that it would reach the border with Kazakhstan and cover over 1 million hectares.
56. The SCA was also active in the country and was cooperating closely with the Government on awareness-raising campaigns for local communities living near saiga habitat.

## **Agenda Item 7.2: Non-Signatory States reporting**

57. In **China** the CITES management authority had organized a workshop with the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry in conjunction with both CMS and CITES Secretariats in 2010. The State Forestry Administration had established a fund for captive breeding and had obtained animals from zoos in Germany and the USA and there was now a stock of nearly 200 saigas at a captive breeding centre at Wuwei, Xinjiang.
58. The authorities were using a range of technologies to combat illegal trade, such as scanners and x-ray machines and were targeting suspect shipments. The State Forestry Administration had conducted several operations - Alarm Bell, Skynet, Swords and Cobra III – in cooperation with international partners.
59. Figures indicated that the domestic market for saiga products was declining but saiga horns were still being smuggled and there had been several confiscations of shipments originating from the Russian Federation and Singapore. The leading Chinese internet companies (the equivalents of Google and of Facebook) had signed a “zero tolerance” agreement to stop illegal trade on the internet and the State postal and parcel delivery services were cooperating, too.
60. A licensing system for the industry to allow thorough supervision and regulation and to manage the use of raw materials and set quotas for wildlife products entering the market was in place. Approved products received a special mark. A database had been set up for materials derived from endangered wildlife.
61. Law enforcement was being improved through the use of modern technology and effectiveness could be enhanced through cooperation with the Range States. It would be helpful if all those involved in conservation efforts could have the opportunity of swapping notes and exchanging ideas.
62. In China, questions were being asked about the fate of the horns of dead animals from the captive breeding centre and whether these might be made available. The Chinese Traditional Medicine industry was

willing to fund captive breeding but needed to have partners to contact to develop their proposals. The restrictions on the export of animal could be relaxed to allow new blood in the captive stock.

### **Agenda Item 7.3: Report of the CITES Secretariat**

63. Thomas de Meulenaer (CITES Secretariat) said that two saiga species were recognized by CITES (as was also the case under CMS) and both were listed on Appendix II, meaning that international trade was allowed if it was legal, sustainable and traceable through CITES certification. Poaching had to be dealt with nationally.

64. The Range States had banned all export of saiga products (live animals, hides, horns, meat and blood samples), so now trade was restricted to consumer countries presumably using stockpiles. Only Turkmenistan among the Range States was not a Party to CITES and the Secretariat did not have contact details of the authority that would deal with the Convention.

65. CITES COP13 in 2004 agreed special measures for saiga and these measures complemented and supported the CMS MOU. COP14 in 2007 renewed the mandate as did the most recent COP in 2013 in Bangkok. Range States in implementing the MTIWP were meeting their obligations under both CMS and CITES and they were asked to communicate their needs to CITES as some funds were available. No requests had been received from saiga Range States. The CITES Secretariat had a mandate to assist.

66. China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Viet Nam as consumer states were also under an obligation to implement parts of the MTIWP and were required to report on the actions that they were taking. They had also been requested to contribute to *in situ* conservation, to reduce consumption and research into alternatives for saiga horn.

67. A workshop had been held in Urumqi, China, in September 2010 and funds had been provided for anti-poaching actions and work with local communities.

68. With regard to the question of what should be done with horns from animals that had died of natural causes, that decision rested with the Range States and the CITES Parties.

69. Mr. de Meulenaer noted that China monitored its stocks with a sophisticated system. Singapore had reported that it had 20 tonnes of horns in its stockpile and might be able to learn from China's experience.

70. UNEP/WCMC had been commissioned to do an analysis of published trade data and would report to the CITES Standing Committee and the COP in Johannesburg in 2016. The deadline for submission of documents to the COP was 27 April 2016.

71. Legal trade of saiga products had been declining according to the reports submitted to CITES. In the period 2000-2013 horns the equivalent of 118,000 animals had been recorded. The main importers were now China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, while the main exporters were Japan and the Hong Kong SAR. The majority of the trade was in whole horns, horn cuttings and medicines containing horns.

72. Mr. de Meulenaer requested details of the illegal trade mentioned in some of the oral reports as he had been unaware of some of them. Various seizures had taken place in Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Uzbekistan. In China seizures included one incident involving 296kg of saiga horn from Kazakhstan in 2014. In Japan five seizures included one of 11 horns from China in 2013.

73. With the revised MTIWP 2015-2020 Range States needed to demonstrate their commitment, and cooperation among the Range States and consumer countries was essential. The joint work being done by

China and Mongolia was a model that others might wish to follow. Trade had to be controlled, the stockpiles appropriately managed, and the methods of identification, sourcing and ageing of horn improved. One problem was that in medicine the horn was not readily identifiable, so it would probably be more fruitful to concentrate on raw horn. Another was that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) had not found a suitable alternative to saiga horn from other wild or domestic animals and practitioners were reducing the dosage to the bare minimum to help conserve stocks. Patients were moving towards western-style medicines but even with a 10 per cent market share, TCM would have over 100 million customers.

#### **Agenda Item 7.4: Reports of Co-operating Organizations**

74. Paul Hotham (Flora and Fauna International) said that his organization was working on the Ustiurt Plateau on saigas in partnership with others. FFI had four main objectives: to improve ecological and social understanding; to reinforce the capacity of state agencies; to engage with and support local communities and improve their lives; and to engage with the private sector to mitigate the impact of its activities. To improve capacity a transboundary event had been held for rangers and an inter-school football tournament had been organized. A mobile environment resource centre (MERC) had toured the region and four sniffer dogs originally deployed against narcotics had been retrained to work on saiga horn, making their first detections after only two months. Progress had been made on transboundary work and a better understanding of saiga movements had been gained.

75. Five years – the period of the MTIWP – was not enough to cover the Ustiurt area given its vast size. The main issues to be tackled were the border fence and illegal trade, and there was no adequate policy framework for dealing with landscape-scale actions. More support from local communities was needed to address poaching which was causing the population to decline; it had fallen to 1,200 but this was still enough to make recovery possible.

76. FFI would continue to work with the Kazakh Government and the ACBK, maintain existing partnerships and develop new ones and provide trained sniffer dogs. It would also contact the business community to open their eyes to the damage they were doing.

77. Steffen Zuther (FZS) said that the organization had been active in Kazakhstan since 2002 and involved in the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (ADCI) since 2006, working with its local partner the ACBK. The ADCI was a long-term programme dealing with flora, fauna and people, and one of its concerns was to establish migration corridors, a new category recognized in national law, in the areas between the existing and planned Protected Areas in central Kazakhstan.

78. Training and equipment were being provided to the authorities, but unfortunately the poachers were keeping pace. FZS was also working on new options for wildlife-friendly railway crossings for saigas, improving aerial census techniques and deploying satellite telemetry. Work with local communities included visiting schools.

79. Looking to the future, FZS would continue its involvement with the ADCI, working with local people, encouraging better law enforcement, the sustainable use of wildlife and the deployment of telemetry.

80. Ms. Milner-Gulland (SCA) said that the Alliance, which was registered as a charity in the UK, had been a signatory of the MOU since 2010. It was one of the NGOs charged with technical coordination of the MOU (see agenda item 7.5).

81. The SCA had been running a small grants programme since 2008 and applicants had to follow a relatively straightforward process with short forms in both English and Russian. The eligibility criteria required projects to involve saigas in the wild and be related to the MTIWP. Grants were given in the range of US\$2,000 to US\$20,000, but this could not be put towards salaries and the grants could not be used as

matching or part funding. In total US\$100,000 had been dispersed to 29 projects in 5 countries, covering research, education and animal protection.

82. Anti-poaching excellence awards were also given to recognize those in the frontline who would not often be seen at conferences or symposia. Another award was given to young conservation leaders as an encouragement to the next generation of activists. The winners of the awards were chosen by a jury made up of trustees of the Alliance and selected experts and the candidates had to be nominated. Choosing the winners was often difficult and the jurors took into account whether the nominee had overcome a particular challenge or had done something innovative.

83. SCA was working with children and local people with a focus on Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan and it was planned to build a network of teachers and conservationists to work across borders. Material aimed at children included cartoons, stickers, posters and quizzes were distributed and at one school a mural had been painted.

84. Priority actions were devised for each country tailor-made for local needs. In Uzbekistan, the main activities were education, support for the government, conservation and research, an embroidery initiative providing alternative livelihoods for women and establishing local monitoring networks. In the Russian Federation the focus was on the Stepnoi/Tinguta Sanctuary, in Kazakhstan on working with the ACBK, in Mongolia helping young scientists and customs officers and in China on conducting market surveys and training.

85. The SCA and Imperial College London had been doing opinion and attitude surveys on and off since 2006. People were positive about saigas and did not want to lose them. It was generally agreed that poaching for horn was wrong but many people said that they would still eat saiga meat. The representative of Mongolia said that surveys conducted in that country had produced similar results, but children were pressurizing their parents not to kill saigas.

#### **Agenda Item 7.5: MOU coordination**

86. Carlyn Samuel (SCA) explained how the alliance and the ACBK were working on the Saiga Resource Centre (SRC) which was being funded by CMS and had been launched a few years previously. It was an online resource aimed specifically at conservation practitioners which appeared in four languages with comprehensive coverage in English and Russian (the Chinese and Kazakh pages were being built up). The SRC was a searchable repository and included an archive of Saiga News in six languages. The website was being constantly improving with bugs fixed, a better lay-out and Google analytics.

87. Alena Chukhatina (ACBK) described the specialist resource section of the SRC which was a platform for those working on saiga. She urged people to use it, to add further material and spread the word that the facility existed. Registration only took three minutes and login passwords would be generated. So far 300 documents had been loaded and more would follow. The education section was being built up, pages in Mongolian were being developed and the search function was being improved. The site would further improve with more people using and populating it. There were also plans to add an *Ask the Expert* section.

88. Elena Bykova (SCA) said that Saiga News was an e-publication which had started in 2005 and had gone from strength to strength and now had more pictures and a wealth of information. It was produced in six languages. The editorial board came from across the species' range and the UK. In some countries editions were printed for distribution and copies were taken to suitable conferences as a convenient means of highlighting the plight of saigas.

89. There was an area for comments and forums where arguments could be exchanged over issues of controversy or importance (such as the taxonomic split and the May 2015 die-off). Saiga News was also a

means for people to keep abreast of developments and stay in touch, given that the Meetings of the Signatories occurred only every five years.

90. A new rubric had been started – saiga heroes – with biographies of people playing a crucial role in saiga conservation or worked in schools or for the customs service. It also gave such people the opportunity of sharing their ideas and experiences. It also published the results of young scientists' research. Saiga News aimed to be a good quality publication, with high editorial standards and it was well received by its audience.

### **Agenda Item 8: Update and review of the conservation status of saiga within the agreement area**

91. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) called on Ms. Milner-Gulland to present the review, explaining that paragraph 6 of the MOU required the production and presentation of such a report. On this occasion, the Secretariat had received a voluntary contribution from Germany which had allowed the work to be contracted to the IUCN Species Survival Commission and SCA. The Secretariat's aim was to have the review, elements of which had been discussed in depth at the technical workshop, adopted by the Meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 8.1: Saiga antelope conservation status within the agreement area**

92. Ms. Milner-Gulland introduced that portion of the Overview Report addressing the conservation status of the saiga antelope. The relevant documents for this agenda item were: UNEP/CMS/Saiga/ MOS3/Doc.6 *Overview report on conservation status*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.14.1/Rev.2 *Compilation of Project Reports (English)*, UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.14.2/Rev.1 *Compilation of Project Reports (Russian)* and UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS3/Inf.15 *Programme of the Saiga Antelope Technical Workshop*.

93. It was explained that although CMS and CITES used a taxonomic nomenclature recognizing *Saiga borealis* as a separate species [Wilson, D.E. & Reeder, D.M. (2005) *Mammal species of the World. A taxonomic and geographic reference*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Johns Hopkins University Press], the authors had preferred to follow the taxonomy recognized by IUCN in the report.

94. Given the uncertainties about the estimates of the number of saiga that had died during the mass mortality event in May 2015 in the Betpak-dala population in central Kazakhstan, it was agreed to cite the lowest definite number known calculated from the carcasses buried. The figure included in paragraph 11 of the Overview Report would therefore be >150,044.

95. Table 1 which showed populations of saiga based on information collected for the 2015 CMS MOU meeting, compared with the same information for the previous two meetings was the most frequently cited element of the report. The footnote made clear that the years in the heading referred to the date of the Meeting of the Signatories and the figures in the columns were the most recent population estimates (hence Mongolia's 2014 census figures appeared under 2015).

96. Under the Ural population, a minor change was made to paragraph 16 adding a reference to the Orenburg Reserve and paragraph 17 had been totally revised with details of the May 2010 die-off which claimed 11,920 animals and the smaller die-off the following year in the same location in which about 400 saiga died but 4,000 had been unaffected. The population had recovered by 2014 and had seen a further increase in 2015. In paragraph 18, figures for the number of animals kept at the small captive breeding facility linked to Zhangirzhan Agrarian-Technical University.

97. No changes had been proposed to the section concerning the Ustiurt population (paragraphs 19 to 23).

98. Regarding the Betpak-dala population, a reference was added to national NGOs (in addition to international ones), a new paragraph 26 was added concerning monitoring during the calving season. More text was added to former paragraph 26 regarding the near 100% mortality in the Turgai and Tengiz populations (and presumably also in the 11 other sites) with live animals seen presumed to belong to other unaffected groups.

99. Paragraph 28 had additional opening text stressing how unusual it was for there to be 100% mortality in such disease outbreaks suggesting a complex interplay of various factors, which might include anthropogenic influence or extraordinary environmental stressors.

100. For the Mongolia population/subspecies, mention was made of the annual population assessments that had been carried out since 2012 and the results of the isotope study confirming the distinctiveness of the population.

101. A reference was also made to the mobile anti-poaching unit that had been supported by NGOs but which had been forced to cease operations due to lack of resources.

### **Agenda Item 8.2: Status of implementation**

102. In Section 3 on the implementation of the MTIWP, a correction was made to a passage suggesting that the Mongolian population had been excluded from a series of CITES-led meetings because of the taxonomic reference used by that Convention and CMS.

103. An additional paragraph was inserted referring to the first transboundary meeting of rangers from Range States with representatives from Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Russian Federation which was held in 2014.

104. Minor changes were made correcting the reference to the number of sniffer dogs deployed and adding wording suggested by the Russian Federation concerning non-invasive counting method using high resolution satellite images.

105. In paragraph 52 (formerly 49) a reference was added to the 2014 seizure in China of 296 kg horn from Kazakhstan.

106. No or only minimal changes were made to the sections on captive breeding, threats, education and awareness, ecological studies and priority actions.

107. Overall, it appeared that there was generally a good understanding of the status of saigas and their conservation needs, a great deal of work was being done (some at the international level), poachers were being pursued and taken to court and more protected areas were being declared with ecological corridors being identified in Kazakhstan and the Saigachy Reserve in Uzbekistan.

108. On the negative side, poaching still occurred throughout the range, monitoring methods were inconsistent and their application sometimes of dubious quality, the Ustiurt and Pre-Caspian populations were still declining, infrastructure was preventing migration and disease could have devastating effects. Concerning captive breeding, time needed to be invested in developing best practice and stud books, and currently none of the centres had enough numbers to be viable. The transboundary populations also faced specific problems such as border fences.

109. Mr. Hotham (FFI) pointed out that before May 2015 the largest population (Betpak-dala, Kazakhstan) had been growing but the 2015 die-off had thrown conservation efforts back to square one. The strategy had been too dependent on one key population and it seemed that a broader approach should be adopted to spread

the risk. It was clear though that the conservation efforts at Betpak-dala were bearing fruit and other populations might benefit from similar attention.

110. Richard Kock (Royal Veterinary College) said that looking at the possible impacts of disease, each population was so small that a single outbreak could wipe out all the animals. The May 2015 die-off showed that one large population in a broad landscape could be lost.

111. The revised version of the Overview Report is attached to this report as Annex 4.

### **Agenda Item 9: Review of the updated National Report Format**

112. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) said that Ms. Milner-Gulland (SCA) and the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group had undertaken the revision of the National Report format. The format had been discussed at the second Meeting of the Signatories.

113. All Range States had completed the form for MOS3, so had experience of how easy it was to fill in. Comments regarding its coverage and appropriateness were invited. Ms Milner-Gulland pointed out the few changes that had been made. Suggestions that infrastructure should be a separate sub-item and not included under *others*, and adding a requirement to attach a CITES non-detriment finding if applicable and surveillance of diseases under monitoring were all agreed.

114. The revised version of the National Report Format is attached to this report as Annex 6.

### **Agenda Item 10: Review and adoption of 2016-2020 MTIWP**

115. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) said that the MTIWP had been reviewed in sections over the past two days in the technical workshop. The MTIWP had existed in conjunction with the MOU from the outset. He proposed that the meeting review the changes proposed and invited Ms Milner-Gulland to lead the process. Ms. Milner-Gulland requested that participants consider not just the content of the MTIWP but also reflect on the priority attached to each action, reminding the meeting that the timescale was categorized A for immediate and B for medium term and urgency was rated on a scale of 1: urgent, 2: important and 3: useful. It was also suggested that in the final version the actions would appear in order of importance.

116. Under implementation a change was made to action 1.4 adding reference to the organizations charged with coordinating the MOU, without specifying that this meant SCA and ACBK under current arrangements.

117. Under action 1.8 it was agreed to add a reference to protocols for routine monitoring for disease in addition to protocols for emergency actions in the event of an outbreak.

118. Two further actions were added, one relating to encouraging Range States to coordinate their research and monitoring to maximize synergies and another to ensure that all saiga populations had appropriate investment to ensure that overall goal of the MOU was achieved.

119. With regard to combating poaching, it was agreed that strategies should focus on the population level (including transboundary populations). As well as establishing new anti-poaching units, existing ones needed to be strengthened. It was also recognized that local inspectors might face pressures not to pursue cases and that their prestige and capacity to carry out their duties should be enhanced.

120. Under sustainable use, a reference was added to financial support in the final action regarding *in situ* conservation and the Asian medicine industry.

121. The title of the fourth section of the MTIWP was amended to *Work with Local People* (changed from *Human Factors*).

122. In action 4.1 a change was made adding that livelihood improvement projects should be linked to conservation and in action 4.3 a direct reference to industry was added to the stakeholders whose involvement should be strengthened. Livestock was added to the action point on sustainable rangeland use and cohabitation.

123. There was a discussion about whether to retain a proposed amendment from Stefan Michel (NABU) about examining the possibility for sustainably using some populations. It was pointed out that this was the long-term vision of the MTIWP (see Annex 5) and therefore it did not need to be reiterated under a specific point. Other opinions were that in the medium-term it was inconceivable that populations would have recovered sufficiently to consider any use to be sustainable. After a *tour de table* of the Range States it was apparent that none supported adding wording even about exploring the possibility of sustainable use.

124. Section 6 on Habitat was retitled *Habitat and environmental factors* which was done to encompass climate change, references to which was added in actions 6.1 and 6.2. Action 6.2 was also amended with the addition of remote sensing as an example of appropriate technology for monitoring movements. Under action 6.3 it was agreed to explore the possibility of using the SRC to facilitate archiving and exchange of information recorded on GIS. The potential for expanding Protected Areas was added to action 6.4. Reference was made to the internationally recognized standards IFC1 and IFC6 in supporting authorities to ensure that all infrastructure projects were subject to full impact assessment (Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments). Action point 6.7 was amended to reflect the fact that it was unlikely that border fences would be removed but might be altered to allow wildlife to pass through more easily.

125. Under *Protected Areas* (Section 7) action 7.2 was amended slightly with the addition of a reference to saiga migration and a new action was added relating to the establishment of ecological corridors.

126. Under Section 8 (*Monitoring*) action 8.1 on carrying out annual population counts subsumed action point 8.4 on ensuring a time series and reference was made to modern non-invasive techniques. The need to harmonize methodologies had been covered in action 1.12. Action 8.2 was modified with the addition of mortality and movement patterns, age structure, predators and competitors. Amendments were also made to the final three actions in this section, all relatively minor.

127. The only changes to Section 9 (*Captive breeding*) were the addition of Uzbekistan to action point 9.2 and the additional wording relating to study tours in action 9.4 on the exchange of information.

128. Sections 10 to 14 dealt with population specific measures and concerned respectively the Pre-Caspian, the Ustiurt, the Ural, the Betpak-dala and Mongolian populations. A general point for consideration with regard to each population was whether there was a general applicability for any of the actions identified, bearing in mind that the level of priority might be different from one region to another. It was agreed that a more general action point be added to the implementation section at the beginning of the MTIWP.

### Pre-Caspian

129. New actions were added regarding the setting up of a working group under the Ministry of Natural Resources and non-invasive monitoring and Russian Federation suggested downgrading the timescale from A to B. Text relating to the comparability of methodology was deleted from the action related to conducting regular, scientifically robust assessments of abundance and distribution.

130. Protected Areas were removed from action 10.3 as these were covered elsewhere, meaning that this action only referred to breeding centres and other institutions. The creation of new centres was foreseen and methods should be developed for reintroducing and acclimatizing saigas to the wild.

131. The action point regarding improving the effectiveness of law enforcement was amended with the addition of the use of modern methods, and two new actions were added, one on research into the distribution, migration, population structure, genetic variation, habitat and monitoring of saigas and another on optimizing the network of federal and regional Protected Areas taking into account future saiga population expansion and changes to the range.

#### Ustiurt

132. Under action 12.1 inspectors and customs officers were added to the list of those who should be involved in transboundary cooperation. In recognition that research into the seasonal distribution of saigas had been carried out, the action point was amended to urge that this work should continue. Turkmenistan was added to the countries affected.

133. The proposed amendment to action 12.3 to add exploring the possibility of sustainable use of saiga by local communities to provide additional incentives for conservation was deleted in the light of the earlier discussion (see *Work with Local People* above) with participants pointing out that the population level was too low. Poachers could still drive populations to extinction despite the best conservation efforts, and it was necessary to persuade local communities to come on board. This approach worked with other species in other parts of the world and the concept was also covered in section 4 of the MTIWP (see action 4.1).

134. In action 12.4 ecological connectivity was added with the southern Ustiurt mentioned as an example, in action 12.5 existing multilateral cooperation agreements should be strengthened, in action 12.6 the public should be granted access to information on planning and implement measures for mitigation and compensation and developers should be required to carry out mitigation measures under action 12.7.

#### Ural

135. A new action point was added regarding carrying out research into factors predisposing the population to mass mortality from disease.

#### Betpak-dala

136. In action 13.1 agricultural development was added to the list of factors with a bearing on the future needs of saigas. Incentives for rangers and higher fines for poaching were added to action 13.2.. Action 13.5 was amended and now referred to the development and implementation of a long-term research programme on saiga diseases and an action point on continuing and extending the monitoring of the health of the population (especially at calving time) was added.

#### Mongolia

137. The wording of action 14.5 was amended with the addition of a reference to the updated range, genetics and saiga health and the priority category increased from 2B to 1A.

138. It was agreed to reorder the numbering of all measures within the MTIWP 2016-2020, sorted by timescale and then urgency. The final version of the MTIWP 2016-2020 is attached to this report as Annex 5.

### **Agenda Item 11: Signing ceremony**

139. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) invited Christiane Röttger (NABU) to the podium. He explained that the MOU was not confined to Range States but had a provision that allowed NGOs to sign as cooperating organizations. These organizations commit themselves to actively supporting the implementation of the saiga MOU in the long-term. The German NGO, NABU, had expressed an interest in signing and the Range States had been informed, as their consent was required as a new cooperating organization signing the MOU constituted a material change to the instrument that required the consensus of all Signatory States. None of the Range States had objected so NABU was welcomed to sign.

140. Ms. Röttger (NABU) after thanking the hosts and the other organizers of the meeting, explained that NABU was doing a great deal of education work in the region in cooperation with Governments. Magazines with cartoons were being produced for children living near saiga habitat and work was also being done to combat the poaching of snow leopards, to encourage transboundary cooperation and to foster sustainable landscape management. NABU wished to step up its work on saigas, hence its desire to sign the MOU. Ms Röttger promised that NABU would be active in meetings and in the field, using its network of partners and donors.

### **Agenda Item 12: Date and venue of the next Meeting of the Signatories**

141. The Chair said that three of the five Range States, namely Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan, had already hosted a Meeting of the Signatories and as Turkmenistan was not present, he invited the Russian Federation to take the floor.

142. Dmitri Belanovich, the head of the Russian delegation, suggested that the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories be held in Astrakhan in 2020 to coincide with the Day of the Caspian Sea and the Russian-Kazakhstan bilateral meeting.

143. This invitation was greeted with enthusiasm by the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 13: Any other business**

144. The Chair invited comments on the format of the meeting and in particular the practice of holding the Meeting of the Signatories in conjunction with a technical workshop.

145. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) explained that this had been the format adopted since the MOU started, but if any changes were thought desirable, the Secretariat suggested that agreeing revisions should be done in advance of planning the next meeting. The Technical Workshop served the role normally played by an advisory committee, as no such body had been established under the MOU. The timing of the Technical Workshop corresponded to the former practice of the parent Convention, the Scientific Council of which used to meet immediately before the Conference of the Parties. There seemed to be some confusion regarding the roles of the Technical Workshop and the Meeting of the Signatories, also triggered by the fact that participants in the two meetings were mostly the same in Tashkent. While this resulted in a degree of duplication, however essentially the arrangements seemed to work.

146. Til Dieterich (Baku State University) said that given the need for an interdisciplinary approach to saiga conservation he would have preferred more scientific content in the technical workshop, especially in the light of the die-off. It was suggested from the Russian delegation that there should be a dedicated scientific session before the technical workshop.

147. Mr. Kock (Royal Veterinary College) agreed and said that the technical workshop could provide a forum for comparing notes and agreeing standardized protocols.

148. Anna Lushchekina (Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences) suggested that the CMS Secretariat should circulate a questionnaire through National Contact Points to seek proposals on how to improve meetings and conservation work with feedback from Range States and consumer countries.

149. Yingjie Qiu (China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine) suggested that other consumer countries such as Japan, Singapore and Vietnam should be invited to future meetings. The Secretariat pointed out that these and other consumer countries had been invited, but only China had accepted. The other countries would continue to be invited and they might also be approached through other channels such as the CITES Secretariat. The Chair suggested that Signatories use their own diplomatic representation to try to persuade other consumer countries to participate.

150. Ms. Milner-Gulland (SCA) considered the technical workshop to be very useful and a fundamental component contributing to the success of the MOU.

151. Uzbekistan said that the theories needed to be backed up with practical work which lay at the heart of conservation efforts.

152. The Secretariat noted the comments, in particular the idea of having a scientific session, although the resource implications of extending the meeting would have to be considered, and of circulating a questionnaire. It was however clear that participants thought that the technical workshop was useful, although some adjustments might be necessary to reduce duplication.

153. An animated film was shown emphasizing the need to balance development with conservation. The film had soundtracks in English, Russian, Uzbek and Karakalpak and could be viewed on the SCA Youtube account.

#### **Agenda Item 14: Closure of the Meeting**

154. Mr. Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) noted that the three main objectives of the meeting, namely the adoption of the overview report, agreement on the revised format of the National reports and approval of the revised MTIWP, had been accomplished. The next task was to implement as much of the Plan as possible in the intervening five years before the 4th Meeting of the Signatories in 2020 in Astrakhan.

155. He expressed his sincere thanks to Ms. Milner-Gulland, who had made a major contribution to the technical documents tabled at the meeting and who had taken charge of revising the drafts, to the hosts, to the sponsors, to other organizations that had assisted, to the interpreters and to the local support staff.

156. Ms. Yakusheva (CMS Secretariat) said that the final versions of all the main documents would be posted on the Saiga MOU pages of the CMS website in English and Russian as soon as possible.

157. The Chair said that the past four days had been fruitful and produced good outcomes. After adding his thanks, he declared the meeting closed.