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Agenda Item 26.6

CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN VULTURES

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14) *Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures* and Decisions 14.148–14.155. It recommends the deletion of these Decisions and the adoption of new draft Decisions.

The attached draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.3, 5.5 and 6.1 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (2024–2032).

CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN VULTURES

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its 14th meeting (COP14), adopted Resolution 12.10 (Rev. COP14) *Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures*, urging Parties and encouraging non-Party Range States, partners and stakeholders to implement [the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures \(Vulture MsAP\)](#) as a matter of priority, taking into consideration the Mid-term Implementation Review of the Action Plan.
2. COP14 also adopted the following Decisions on the issue:

14.148 Decision directed to Parties, non-Party Range States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

Parties, non-Party Range States and stakeholders are encouraged to:

- a) *develop partnerships with anti-poaching initiatives and conservation groups concerned with poisoning of other taxonomic groups, including developing training courses, translating and disseminating examples of best practice, sharing protocols and regulations, transferring technology, and promoting the use of online tools to address specific issues that are relevant to the Vulture Multispecies Action Plan;*
- b) *actively engage with the Energy Task force, the CMS regional task forces on illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds and the Intergovernmental Task Force on Phasing Out the Use of Lead Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights;*
- c) *participate in the ongoing development of the Mid-term Review of the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan and take the findings into consideration while implementing the Action Plan;*
- d) *support the upcoming Mid-term Review of the Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan; and*
- e) *ensure the national implementation of the Vulture MsAP integrates the findings of the Mid-term Reviews into their (revised) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).*

14.149 Decision directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide the Secretariat with information on the activities carried out towards the implementation of the Vulture MsAP in time for the Secretariat to report at the 15th Conference of the Parties.

14.150 Decision directed to West African Parties and Range States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo)

*The West African Range States for White-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*), Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), Rüppell's vulture (*Gyps rueppelli*), Hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*), Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), Lappet-faced vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*), and White-headed vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) are urged to:*

- a) *ensure that national laws to protect vultures – in particular, all vulture species listed in Appendix I – are effectively enforced by sufficiently trained and equipped police forces, and ensure that penalties for noncompliance are effectively administered and sufficient to deter illegal activities;*

- b) *work with relevant experts and organizations and stakeholders for identifying and implementing demand reduction strategies for vultures and their parts and derivatives including for belief-based use and consumption and, where appropriate, expand the implementation of strategies that have been successful;*
- c) *work with relevant organizations to initiate wide-scale public awareness campaigns at regional, national and local levels about the impacts of belief-based use of body parts of vultures, including the importance of these species to ecology and human health, and existing national and international legislation that protects vultures; and*
- d) *provide information to the CMS Secretariat on the implementation of this Decision to assist it in reporting to the 15th meeting of the COP.*

14.151 Decision directed to West African Range States and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

The West African Range States and relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations are encouraged to:

- a) *support the finalization and implementation of the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan 2023-2043 and collaborate in the conservation and restoration of West African vultures;*
- b) *gather and exchange scientific knowledge and expertise on West African vultures, with a particular focus on: i) documenting the scale of vulture internal trade by surveying markets and identifying national trade routes; ii) characterizing links between poisoning and trade in vultures, and contributing to the African Wildlife Poison Database; and iii) updating the conservation and population status information of West African vultures, and White-backed Vultures (*Gyps africanus*), Rüppell's Vultures (*Gyps rueppelli*) and Lappet-faced Vultures (*Torgos tracheliotus*) in particular.*

14.152 Decision directed to the Standing Committee

Following consultation with the Scientific Council, the Standing Committee shall consider and adopt the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan upon its finalization, in the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15.

14.153 Decision directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested to consider the West African Vultures Action Plan, if provided to the Scientific Council at the 7th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council and recommend it to the Standing Committee for adoption.

14.154 Decision directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall convey these Decisions to the secretariats of other multilateral environmental fora, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), seeking their support, contributions, cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the Vulture Multispecies Action Plan, subject to the availability of resources.

14.155 Decision directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *operationalize the mandated Vulture Working Group and associated structures and facilitate continuation of the Vulture Coordination Team in the interim;*
- b) *liaise with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) to assist in the implementation of the trade-related aspects of the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) 2017-2029, building on ongoing initiatives such as the West Africa Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) and subject to external funding;*
- c) *subject to external funding, support the implementation of capacity building activities aimed at providing support to the West African Range States in implementing the Vulture MsAP;*
- d) *in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat, consider available conservation status information from the whole geographic range of the vulture species concerned for inclusion in the CITES Secretariat reporting to the Animals and Standing Committees; and*
- e) *subject to external funding, support the implementation of capacity building activities aimed at providing support to the range States in implementing the Vulture MsAP.*

14.156 Decision directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of these Decisions to the next Meeting of Signatories of the CMS Raptors Memorandum of Understanding and CMS COP15.

3. This document provides a summary of the implementation of the Decisions on the conservation of African-Eurasian vultures as mandated by Decision 14.155 and, more generally, on the implementation of the Vulture MsAP.

Implementation of Decisions 14.148–14.151

4. A questionnaire was circulated through [Notification 2025/018](#) to all CMS Parties and Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU). To support recipients in filling out the questionnaire, a webinar was held on 15 July 2025, which was attended by 21 representatives of CMS Parties, Raptors MOU Signatories and Cooperating Partners. Completed questionnaires were received from Belgium, Croatia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Pakistan, Spain and Togo.
5. The CMS Secretariat/Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit produced a report outlining the answers received ([CMS/COP15/Inf.26.6a](#)), which is summarized here with integrations gathered through the Vulture Coordination Team:
 - a) Several countries, particularly in Europe, are actively engaged in implementing the Vulture MsAP.
 - b) **Partnerships:** Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece Italy, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Spain have developed partnerships with conservation groups, particularly anti-poaching initiatives. These collaborations, often supported by initiatives like the EU LIFE Programme, help combat poisoning and illegal killing of vultures and other species.
 - c) **Training:** Training courses have been developed in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Spain. These programmes, most of them delivered

through the Wildlife Crime Academy, focus on topics such as handling poisoning incidents, forensic analysis and judicial investigations related to wildlife crime, and have trained dozens of staff members of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations.

- d) **Best practices:** Countries are translating and disseminating best practices. Croatia is sharing knowledge gained from projects and study visits funded through the EU LIFE Programme. France has a National Action Plan to improve food availability for vultures, and Spain is promoting new laws on lead shot use and is sharing guidelines. Morocco is sharing success stories from its raptor rehabilitation centres through visits and publications.
- e) **Protocols and regulations:** National protocols are in place in Croatia, France and Spain for procedures such as managing rescue centres, responding to poisoning incidents and regulating feeding stations. Building on the Spanish experience, best practice, national road maps and investigation protocols for wildlife poisoning have been prepared for all Balkan countries. Spain has a new strategy to address the illegal use of poison baits and to conserve the bearded vulture.
- f) **Technology:** The use of GPS tracking to monitor vultures has become standard practice, helping to understand population dynamics and identify threats.
- g) **Online tools:** Croatia promotes online databases for reporting wildlife mortality and uses websites for public education and consultation. France and Spain also utilize online tools for vulture conservation.
- h) **National strategies:** Several countries have either finalized or are developing national strategies or action plans for vulture conservation. Progress has been made in the Balkans, Tanzania and Southern Africa. Spain has 16 regional conservation plans for vultures in addition to national-level plans.
- i) **Challenges:** Reported common challenges include limited financial resources, insufficient staff and data gaps. Morocco notes the difficulty of securing species-specific funding as donors prefer projects with broader themes. Spain's main challenge is the need to improve national and EU regulations to ban lead ammunition and reduce anticoagulant rodenticides.

Implementation of Decisions 14.152 and 14.153

6. [The West Africa Vulture Action Plan \(WAVCAP\)](#) was finalized by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU (CU) and submitted to the 7th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC7, 17-20 September 2024), which recommended that the Standing Committee adopt the Action Plan without change. The 56th meeting of the Standing Committee (StC56, 25-27 March 2025) subsequently adopted the WAVCAP. Summaries of the WAVCAP in English, French and Spanish have also been produced ([CMS/COP15/Inf.26.6b](#))
7. WAVCAP, which represents a plan for implementing the Vulture MsAP in West Africa, addresses vulture take driven by belief-based use, the most serious threat to vultures in the region. The CU is actively seeking resources for its implementation.

Implementation of Decisions 14.154 and 14.155

8. The CU, with the support of the Vulture Coordination Team (VCT), organized a side event on vultures during COP14 to launch the [Mid-Term Implementation Review of the MsAP](#) and the West Africa Vulture Conservation Action Plan.
9. Since COP14, the VCT, facilitated by the CU, has met regularly to share information, review funding opportunities and devise plans for promoting the Vulture MsAP at meetings and forums. These activities ensure that the Vulture MsAP maintains its relevance and influence among the conservation community. The team's activities contribute to Objective 12, which aims to advance vulture conservation through effective promotion and implementation of the Vulture MsAP.
10. [Notification 2024/027: Call for Funding and Nominations for Vulture Working Group](#) was circulated among CMS Parties in November 2024. No financial support was offered and only a few countries nominated members to the Working Group.
11. The VCT agreed on how to identify coordinators – both for the Working Group as a whole and for regional coordination – and a number of meetings were held with potential regional coordinators. However, the lack of resources was a major challenge.
12. The Secretariat contributed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan by supporting the development of a situation analysis of vultures in Southern Africa. The Plan was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 26-27 August 2025.
13. The Secretariat held discussions with the SADC Secretariat and CMS Parties in the region on how to align the coordination of the SADC and CMS Action Plans. The Secretariat is exploring similar engagement with other Regional Economic Communities.
14. Coordination with CITES continues, in particular regarding West Africa, which is one of the areas of major concern regarding vulture conservation. The proposal to uplist White-backed and Rüppell's vultures (*Gyps africanus* and *G. rueppelli*) to CITES Appendix I submitted by several West and Central African countries is encouraging. VCT members provided additional information to the submitters and recommended the possible inclusion in the proposal of Hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*).

Implementation of the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan

15. The Vulture MsAP covers the geographic ranges of all 15 species of migratory African-Eurasian vultures. It sets out 12 objectives, with a framework of actions encompassing 124 activities, to promote actions to save these species. The plan also contains information on or links to existing plans: the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Balkan and Central Asian Populations of the Egyptian Vulture (Annex 4 to the Vulture MsAP), and the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Cinereous Vulture (Annex 5 to the Vulture MsAP). A Blueprint for the Recovery of South Asia's critically endangered Gyps Vultures is also included as Annex 6 to the Vulture MsAP.
16. The VCT, with support from the CU, attended the African consultation and preparation workshop for the upcoming meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention on Biological Biodiversity (the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice), held on 10 and 11 April 2024 in Cape Town, South Africa. Both the Vulture MsAP and the WAVCAP were presented at the workshop, helping to catalyse the development of the SADC Vulture Strategy.

17. The Vulture MsAP is used in the assessment of vulture-related proposals submitted for funding under the LIFE Programme, the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. This has helped to fund priority actions highlighted in the plan, contributing to its implementation and the conservation of vultures globally. The EU LIFE funding instrument continues to provide co-funding for effective vulture conservation, with activities implemented well beyond the EU's borders.
18. The value of the Vulture MsAP has been recognized across taxa and geography. The members of the VCT have advised on the development of the Bustard Multi-species Action Plan (Doc 26.4.2) and the development of the upcoming Multi-species Action Plan for the New World Vultures.
19. Objective 1 of the plan aims to significantly reduce the mortality of vultures caused unintentionally by toxic substances used (often illegally) in the control and hunting of vertebrates. To this end, the work carried out thus far in Europe and Africa continues to engage with government agencies and local communities, building capacity through initiatives such as the Wildlife Crime Academy and maintaining national (e.g. Italy, Hungary) or regional (e.g., Balkan, African) databases on wildlife poisoning accidents.
20. Objective 2 of the plan aims to recognize and minimize the mortality of vultures by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which caused the collapse of South Asian vulture populations. Significant results have been achieved in South and South-West Asia, mostly under the coordination of the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) consortium. India, for example, has added aceclofenac, ketoprofen and, most recently, nimesulide to the list of banned veterinary NSAIDs; bans are currently being discussed in a few more Range States. India has also initiated testing for flunixin and paracetamol to ascertain their toxicity for vultures. The CU and VTC met with representatives of the World Organizations on Animal Health (WOAH) and it was agreed that more awareness-raising is required among the veterinarian authorities of the Range States of the Vulture MsAP. Plans are also being developed for vulture experts to participate in capacity-building activities organized by WOAH.
21. The VCT is urging governments and the pharmaceutical industry to enforce Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP14), with a particular focus on testing the safety of existing veterinary NSAIDs and the removal of any that are found to be toxic to vultures. Additionally, it requires that pharmaceutical companies test any new veterinary NSAIDs to ensure they are safe for vultures as part of the licensing process. The Secretariat is currently finalizing a report on NSAIDs, with a scheduled launch by the end of 2025.
22. Objective 3 of the plan aims to fully implement the phasing out of lead ammunition by hunters, as set out in Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP14). To this end, the CU has supported and welcomes the decision by the United Kingdom to ban lead from most of the shots used for hunting, following a discussion in the EU on the ban on lead shots. Furthermore, workshops were organized by BirdLife International in Africa to raise the issue of the impact of lead ammunition on raptors and vultures in particular, and advocate for national bans.
23. Objective 4 of the plan aims to reduce and, eventually, halt the trade in vulture parts for belief-based use. Progress has been made in delivering on this objective. The WAVCAP provides the required guidance to West African Parties and Raptors MOU Signatories and Range States to address this growing threat, but regional leadership and resources for implementing the plan are still to be identified.

24. Poisoning for belief-based use is a major and growing threat to vultures across Africa. Incidents are increasing in West and Southern Africa and becoming more frequent in East Africa, driven by rising local and international demand for vulture body parts used in traditional practices. The impact of these poisoning events on vulture populations extends far beyond the actual market demand, as body parts are often taken from only a small fraction of the poisoned animals. Recent large-scale poisoning events in The Gambia and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area illustrate the widespread nature of this threat and highlight the urgent need for rapid response and thorough investigation by enforcement agencies.
25. Effectively addressing this issue requires targeted actions to disrupt the complex supply chains and reduce demand for vulture body parts. The threat is deeply rooted in cultural and traditional practices across many African communities, and must be carefully studied and understood. Collaborative efforts with key stakeholders are essential to develop appropriate strategies and ensure the long-term survival of Africa's vultures.
26. Several NGO-led initiatives are tackling this issue at the national level in countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, engaging key stakeholders. A notable milestone was the first South African regional workshop held in Johannesburg on 28 August 2025, which brought together representatives from 12 governments, NGOs and traditional healer associations to address belief-based use and vulture conservation.

Discussion and analysis

27. Significant progress has been made in regions that received funding from government and intergovernmental sources, like the EU LIFE financial instrument. However, in other regions, the successful execution of the Vulture MsAP relies on enhancing coordination capacity, for which no resources have been allocated. Therefore, it is essential to secure sufficient financial resources to: a) support coordination and fundraising efforts, and b) facilitate the implementation of the Vulture MsAP. Moreover, it is crucial to raise awareness and garner support for the plan throughout all areas covered by the Vulture MsAP.
28. The Secretariat is exploring ways of engaging Regional Economic Communities in the coordination of regional committees of the Vulture MsAP Working Group.
29. New Decisions are proposed to guide the Parties and other stakeholders in implementing the Vulture MsAP and in addressing, in cooperation with CITES, the threat to vultures in West Africa posed by the belief-based use of vulture body parts.

Recommended actions

30. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the draft Decisions contained in the Annex of this document; and
 - b) delete Decisions 14.148–14.155.

ANNEX

DRAFT DECISIONS

CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN VULTURES***Directed to Parties, non-Party Range States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations***

15.AA Parties, non-Party Range States and stakeholders are encouraged to:

- a) develop partnerships with anti-poaching initiatives and conservation groups concerned with the poisoning of other taxonomic groups, including developing training courses, translating and disseminating examples of best practice, sharing protocols and regulations, transferring technology, and promoting the use of online tools to address specific issues that are relevant to the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP);
- b) actively engage with and support the Vulture MsAP Working Group;
- c) support the upcoming Mid-term Review of the Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan;
- d) ensure the national implementation of the Vulture MsAP integrates the findings of the Mid-term Reviews into their (revised) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs); and
- e) provide the Secretariat with information on the activities carried out towards the implementation of the Vulture MsAP in time for the Secretariat to report at the 16th Conference of the Parties.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.BB The Secretariat shall:

- a) subject to external funding, support the implementation of capacity-building activities to support the West African Range States in implementing the Vulture MsAP;
- b) subject to external funding, develop a study on belief-based use and its impact on vultures in Africa to guide decisions on which countries to concentrate efforts and how; and
- c) subject to external funding, support the upcoming Mid-term Review of the Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan.

15.CC The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of these Decisions to the next Meeting of Signatories of the CMS Raptors Memorandum of Understanding and CMS COP16.