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Agenda Item 26.7

**SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) GLOBAL ACTION PLAN (SAKERGAP)**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) *Saker Falcon (Falco cherrug) Global Action Plan*. It contains draft amendments to this Resolution as well as new draft Decisions.

The attached draft amended Resolution and draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2., 4.1 and 5.5 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032

## SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) GLOBAL ACTION PLAN (SAKERGAP)

### Background

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting (COP14), adopted Resolution 11.18 (Rev. COP14) *Saker Falcon (Falco cherrug) Global Action Plan (SakerGAP)*, and decided to continue the Saker Falcon Task Force. It instructed the Task Force, subject to the availability of resources, to actively promote the implementation of the SakerGAP; further develop, refine, and implement, where legally possible (see para. 11 below), an adaptive management and monitoring framework to improve the current conservation status of the saker falcon; and work collaboratively with the CMS Energy Task Force to raise awareness of the threat from electrocution.

2. COP14 also adopted the following Decisions on the issue:

#### **14.157 Decision directed to Parties**

*Parties are requested to participate in the review of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan during the coming triennium.*

#### **14.158 Decision directed to the Scientific Council**

*The Scientific Council shall keep under review the work to implement the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan and to advise on the scientific principles and precedents involved, notably in relation to the adaptive management of the species and on the significance of data and information gaps in assessing the impact of electrocution on the viability of populations across the global range of the species.*

#### **14.159 Directed to the Secretariat**

*The Secretariat shall convey Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) to the secretariats of the other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in particular CITES, seeking their support and contributions to the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan.*

#### **14.160 Directed to the Secretariat**

*The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external resources:*

- a) ensure coordination across CMS working groups and task forces and those of AEWA, especially in relation to the adaptive management of species and in relation to the assessment of the impact of electrocution on species populations;*
- b) organize regional workshops of the Saker Falcon Task Force within the triennium 2024-2026 in the breeding range, to promote the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP); and*
- c) review and update the SakerGAP.*

3. The species is listed on CMS Appendix I, with the exception of the Mongolian population, which is listed on CMS Appendix II. Pursuant to Article III.4 of the CMS Convention, no taking of saker falcons from the wild is permitted from populations listed in Appendix I. The species is also listed in CITES Appendix II, which allows for regulated international trade under certain conditions. However, a 'zero export quota' is in effect for populations in Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Mongolia maintains an yearly export quota of 300 live specimens.

## Progress in implementing SakerGAP

### *Population monitoring*

4. Information on the overall population size of the species remains limited. Recent compilations of Central and Eastern European populations estimate the presence of 535-700 breeding pairs, organized into three subpopulations. Two populations are slowly increasing. The third subpopulation, distributed along the Black Sea, is not well monitored and is likely in decline, possibly due to reduced food availability and trapping. In the Caucasus ecoregion, a small, stable population of fewer than 30 pairs has been confirmed.
5. Of concern is the limited data available for the saker falcon population in Central Asia. No coordinated monitoring scheme is in place in this region. In Kazakhstan and Russia, estimates from monitoring in different parts of the countries indicate that the populations are still declining. No recent surveys in other Central Asian Republics were published. There is no indication that the negative population trend reported from Uzbekistan in the SakerGAP has stopped or reversed, and information is still not available for the other neighbouring republics, although some monitoring efforts are ongoing.
6. No regular monitoring is reported from Mongolia and China, although the population in these two countries still seems to be rather large and apparently stable.

### *Threats*

7. The causes of the decline of saker falcon in Kazakhstan and Russia are likely to be the reduction in rodent populations, trapping and electrocution, although the respective significance of each threat varies locally. Given the sensitivity of saker falcon to electrocution, the ongoing development of large energy infrastructure in their breeding range remains a significant threat to the species, as is the illegal trapping of falcons that is also still reported in the breeding range.
8. Illegal or unsustainable trapping in the Middle East and North Africa still represents a major threat for falcons. According to satellite data from tagged birds, a significant proportion of large falcons (including lanner falcon (*F. biamircus*)) fall victim to trappers, with adverse impacts on their wild populations. Furthermore, trappers regularly use smaller falcons as decoys to attract the target species, thereby expanding the unsustainability of this practice to non-target species.

### *Conservation and research*

9. Supported by the Mohammed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund (MBZRCF), ecological research work is ongoing in Mongolia to assess the impact of saker falcons and other raptors on the local rodent populations, and new nest boxes are being installed to replace the numerous old artificial nests that were installed over 15 years ago. MBSRCF is also expanding its research work in China, western Mongolia and eastern Kazakhstan with a focus on the 'Altai' saker falcon, with a view to developing further conservation work there.
10. The Secretariat has launched, in cooperation with the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, two questionnaires. The first is targeted at falconers and trappers and aims to identify changes in their habits and attitudes by comparing the results with a similar enquiry carried out in 2013. The second questionnaire was developed and circulated in cooperation with the CMS Energy Task Force, and aims to gather information on knowledge about electrocution as a threat to

sakers falcon and birds of prey in general. The results of the questionnaires will be available in 2026.

#### Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework for the sustainable use of the saker falcon

11. The Secretariat reached out to national governments and other stakeholders to raise the required resources to support the coordination and hosting of meetings of the Saker Task Force (STF), but no resources were made available during the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15. The Secretariat, through the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU, has continued to support the STF, which has concentrated its efforts, as mandated by CMS Parties, on the development of an Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework (AMF).
12. Developing an adaptive management and monitoring framework, or elements of an AMF, for Appendix I species per se is not in itself problematic from a legal standpoint, even if it includes harvesting. The development of an adaptive management and monitoring framework for the saker falcon does not, by itself, contravene any provision of the Convention. However, any implementation of an AMF that includes harvesting or taking of the saker falcon beyond populations excluded from Appendix I (i.e. at present the Mongolian population) would contravene Article III.5. A legal analysis of the consistency of the development and implementation of an adaptive management framework for the Saker Falcon with the provisions of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is available as Information document ([UNEP/CMSCOP15/Inf.26.7a](#)).
13. Since COP14, the Secretariat has organised three online meetings – on 29 May 2024 (13<sup>th</sup> meeting), 26 May 2025 (14<sup>th</sup> meeting) and 8 September 2025 (15<sup>th</sup> meeting) – and consulted with the CITES and AEWA Secretariats to discuss aspects of the decision-making system (see Annex 3 of this document) before its final approval by the STF at its last meeting before COP15. It is a crucial step towards implementing the SakerGAP. It provides a structured, science-based approach for international decision-making regarding any sustainable take from wild populations not included in CMS Appendix I, ensuring any proposed quota aligns with the objectives of the SakerGAP and is not to the detriment of existing wild populations as required by Article II.3 of the Convention.
14. The proposed governance and decision-making structure would establish a clear annual cycle for the STF to review progress and make informed decisions. The STF will meet annually to review the implementation of the SakerGAP and its Work Plan. A key meeting will be held one year ahead of each CMS COP to formally review data from national monitoring and reports on take, along with the outputs of the latest population and scenario modelling. Based on this review, the STF will make recommendations for a preliminary maximum level of take. This recommendation will then be shared with the CMS Scientific Council and the Raptors MOU Technical Advisory Group for their expert advice before being presented at the COP.
15. The AMF requires the STF to establish a robust, independent, scientific process to assess the numbers and trends of saker falcon populations across their entire life cycle, encompassing breeding, migration and wintering ranges. The data from this assessment will feed directly into the population and scenario modelling, which will serve as the scientific basis for informing decisions on any quota. The framework also explicitly mandates the application of the precautionary principle when significant data or information gaps are identified.

16. The framework delineates clear roles and responsibilities between the international and national levels. The STF is responsible for providing the global framework and recommending the maximum international level of take. However, national governments are ultimately responsible for translating these international frameworks into their own national laws, policies and regulations. In other words, national governments, through their designated authorities, are responsible for proposing and implementing specific national quotas.
17. Finally, the AMF is designed with essential legal, ecological and social safeguards to ensure sustainability and protect wild populations. These safeguards ensure that any take is legally permissible – as defined by the legal context (UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf26.7a) – does not harm wild populations, and has the support of relevant stakeholders. The STF is tasked with continuing to report to subsequent CMS COPs on the effectiveness of this approach. To fully integrate this new operational role, the STF's Terms of Reference were revised and are provided for information in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf 26.7.b](#).

#### Discussion and analysis

18. The Saker Falcon Task Force is entering a new phase in its mandate, moving from the development of the decision making process towards the testing and practical application of the AMF model, where legally possible. This evolution is consistent with the long-term objective of ensuring that the framework can deliver tangible benefits for the conservation and sustainable use of the saker falcon. To facilitate this transition, the STF would need a clear mandate to operationalize the model under carefully defined parameters.
19. This next stage requires a limited amendment to Resolution 11.18 (Rev.14) to enable testing of the model in practice. The amendment would not alter the fundamental direction of the STF, but rather provide the necessary tools for the effective implementation of its work. The proposed changes therefore represent a natural and necessary step to move from planning into action, ensuring the conservation of the saker falcon continues to be underpinned by an evidence-based and internationally agreed process.

#### Recommended actions

20. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
  - a) review and adopt the proposed CMS decision-making structure for the conservation and adaptive management of the saker falcon contained in Annex 3;
  - b) adopt the draft amended Resolution contained in Annex 1;
  - c) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 2; and
  - d) delete Decisions 14.157–14.160.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 11.18 (Rev.COP14)

**SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) GLOBAL ACTION PLAN (SAKERGAP)**

*NB: Proposed new text is underlined. Text to be deleted is ~~crossed-out~~.*

*Noting* that at its Tenth Meeting, the CMS Conference of the Parties (COP10) in Resolution 10.28 decided on an immediate Concerted Action supported by all Parties, including the establishment of a Task Force under the auspices of the Coordinating Unit of the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU) to bring together Range States, Partners and interested parties, to develop a coordinated Global Action Plan, including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the Saker Falcon,

*Noting* that CMS COP10 decided that improvements in the conservation status of the Saker Falcon in any Range State may allow sustainable taking from the wild in that Range State under a management system, and that in such cases a Party or Parties may request an exclusion from the Appendix I listing to apply in that Range State, and that the Task Force would endeavour to facilitate this process through the Scientific Council inter-sessionally and through the Conference of the Parties,

*Further noting* that CMS COP 11 adopted the ten-year SakerGAP (UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.23.1.5.2) as the basis for action on the conservation and management of the Saker Falcon, and decided to continue the Saker Falcon Task Force, under the auspices of the Coordinating Unit of the CMS Raptors MOU to bring together Range States, Partners and interested Parties,

*Recalling* that the Saker Falcon Task Force, established by CMS COP11, was mandated by COP12 to report to the Signatories of the CMS Raptors MOU, the CMS Scientific Council and to the CMS Conference of the Parties,

*Aware of* the urgent need for conservation action to ensure the survival of the Saker Falcon throughout its range, including the need to reduce the impact of electrocution from powerlines and related infrastructure,

*Recognizing* that the listing of the Saker Falcon in CMS Appendix I excludes the population in Mongolia, and that any legal taking of the Saker Falcon is allowed only within the legal frameworks of CITES and CMS in particular,

*Further recognizing* that the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force has been a unique and productive partnership involving a wide range of parties, and appreciative in particular of the financial contributions made by the Parties, the European Union, the Saudi Wildlife Authority on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and by the CITES Secretariat, as well as of the wider support in the form of working time contributed by all the members of the Saker Falcon Task Force, and

*Stressing* the need for immediate action by Range States and stakeholders to address the principal threats to the Saker Falcon at all stages of its life cycle and across its full range, and

*Noting* that significant data and information gaps exist in relation to understanding the ecology of the Saker Falcon across its range including in particular the origin of birds seen and trapped on migration, and that there is an urgent need to develop a coordinated monitoring programme for the species,

*Welcoming* the decision-making structure proposed by the Saker Task Force as an important step towards the implementation, where legally possible, of the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework as a voluntary process for the conservation of the saker falcon,

*The Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Congratulates* the Saker Falcon Task Force on its work, including especially the transparent consensus-building approach that has been employed, and recognizes the importance of the development of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) for the conservation and management of the species;
2. *Decides* to continue the implementation of the SakerGAP with the overall goal to re-establish a healthy and self-sustaining wild Saker Falcon population throughout its range, and to ensure that any use is sustainable;
3. *Encourages* the continuation of the CITES endorsed programme in Mongolia of using artificial nests and setting sustainable harvest quotas, taking into consideration the ecological balance of the ecosystem and encourages additional conservation activities on the natural breeding population of the Saker Falcon in Mongolia;
4. *Further decides* to continue the Saker Falcon Task Force, and instructs the Task Force, subject to the availability of resources, to:
  - a) Actively promote the implementation of the SakerGAP including by continuing to facilitate engagement, communication, cooperation and collaboration between the stakeholders; and coordinate its review;
  - b) Further develop, refine, and implement, where legally possible, and following best practice, an adaptive management and monitoring framework to improve the present conservation status of the Saker Falcon through, inter alia, regulated, and sustainable use;
  - c) Promote monitoring and research across the range of Saker Falcon, inter alia to fill information gaps on population size and trend, improve knowledge of the genetic structure of Saker Falcon populations, fill knowledge gaps regarding other key parameters needed for population modelling and contribute new information to any future IUCN global Red List reassessment for the species;
  - d) Work collaboratively with the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF) to ensure synergies and identify priority areas within the range of the Saker Falcon and promote mitigation measures that could reduce the impact of electrocution from power lines and related energy infrastructure on populations of the Saker Falcon;
  - e) In collaboration with the CMS ETF and other expert groups, continue to raise awareness of the serious issue of electrocution of Saker Falcon with energy companies and national governments; and
  - f) Ensure synergies with any relevant work proposed under the CMS Central Asian Flyway Initiative to minimise impacts of energy infrastructure on birds;

5. *Agrees* on the following reporting framework for the Saker Falcon Task Force:
  - Report to each meeting of the CMS Raptors MOU;
  - Report to the next meeting of the CMS Scientific Council; and
  - Review progress on implementing the SakerGAP and report to the 15th each Meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties;
6. *Urges* Parties, Range States and stakeholders to actively support the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force;
7. *Further urges* Parties, Range States and stakeholders to work collaboratively to immediately begin to mobilize the considerable resources required to fully implement the SakerGAP throughout the species' range; and
8. *Invites* Parties and Range States to integrate implementation of the SakerGAP into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and/or National or Regional Species Action Plans developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD

**ANNEX 2**

DRAFT DECISIONS

**SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) GLOBAL ACTION PLAN (SAKERGAP)**

***Directed to Parties***

15. AA Parties are requested to:

- a) participate in the review of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) during the coming triennium; and
- b) participate in the renewal of the Saker Falcon Task Force membership.

***Directed to the Secretariat***

15.BB The Secretariat shall:

- a) convey Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP15) to the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements, in particular CITES, seeking their support and contributions to the implementation of the SakerGAP;
- b) subject to the availability of external resources, organize regional workshops of the Saker Falcon Task Force in the coming triennium in countries within the breeding range, to promote the implementation of the SakerGAP and its Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework (AMF); and
- c) subject to the availability of external resources, review and update the SakerGAP.

## A PROPOSED CMS DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE SAKER FALCON

### Background

CMS Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) urges Parties, Range States and other stakeholders to actively support the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF). The Resolution instructs the STF to actively promote the implementation of the Saker Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) and coordinate its review. It also instructs the STF to further develop, refine and implement, where legally possible, and following best practice, an adaptive management and monitoring framework to improve the current conservation status of the saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and to promote monitoring and research while minimizing the impacts of illegal taking and use, energy infrastructure and other key threats to birds. See for details the legal opinion providing context for the work of the STF (UNEP/CMSCOP15/Inf.26.7). The STF is now nearing the completion of the development of an innovative Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework (AMF) concept. T.

This document outlines the governance structure and modus operandi required to implement a system of adaptive management for the saker falcon. It proposes a decision-making framework at the global level to provide an overview and direction for the conservation and management actions required. This approach is designed to be inclusive and to use and develop the best available science, which will feed into best practice population and scenario modelling to help inform decisions.

Note that at the national level, quotas would be proposed by government management and scientific authorities – or, in some cases, national wildlife conservation authorities. National governments are responsible for translating international frameworks into national laws, policies and regulations, and would therefore be responsible for the national implementation of the Saker Falcon AMF. Appropriate levels of take that the population can support would be determined by the STF through international population and scenario modelling based on the best available data on key parameters for each affected population.

### Existing key structures at the international level

- The **CMS Conference of the Parties (CMS COP)** provides the overall strategic direction for the work of CMS, including the SFT, through the adoption of Resolutions and Decisions. The Decision on listing the saker falcon on Appendix I or II is made by the CMS COP. The CMS COP also approves the overall guidelines for sustainable use and international population management strategies.
- The **CMS Scientific Council** advises the COP on such issues as research on migratory species, specific conservation and management measures in relation to threats to migratory species, and the inclusion of migratory species on the Appendices.

- The **Saker Falcon Task Force (STF)** derives authority directly from the CMS COP through Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14). The STF takes forward the implementation of the Resolution, reporting on progress to the forthcoming CMS COP15, scheduled for early 2026. It reports also to meetings of the Signatories to the Raptors MoU and to the CMS Scientific Council; these two bodies provide valuable sounding boards on some of the key issues involved.
- Meetings of the **Signatories to the Raptors MOU** and the related **Technical Advisory Group** provide important guidance for the work of the STF. The **Coordinating Unit** facilitates the work of the STF, ensuring the delivery and cost- effectiveness of the work.

### Proposed governance and modus operandi

It is proposed that the STF, acting under a renewed mandate to be considered at CMS COP15, continues to implement Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) and uses the approach outlined below to decide on the level of any take of saker falcons from the wild. This will be implemented only where legally possible. Any take should be in line with the objective of the SakerGAP – the recovery of the saker falcon – and the legal, ecological, conservation and social safeguards that must be in place to ensure that any quota is sustainable and is not to the detriment of existing wild populations across the full range of the species. The STF will continue to report to subsequent CMS COPs on the effectiveness of this approach.

The membership of the STF shall comprise:

A Chair and Vice Chair – elected at the 1st meeting

STF Secretariat – to be provided by Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU

2 CMS Scientific Councillors, including the Chair of the Scientific Council

3-4 representatives from Central and East Asia (core breeding areas)

2 representatives from Europe and Eastern Europe (breeding areas)

2-3 representatives from the Middle East (migration/wintering and falconry areas)

1-2 representatives from North and East Africa (wintering areas)

2-3 representatives from NGO partners

1 independent Specialist Technical Advisor (ornithologist)

1 representative from the CMS Secretariat

1 representative from the CITES Secretariat

The STF will meet every year to review progress in the implementation of the SakerGAP and its Annual Work Plan. Meetings of the STF should be held in person, if resources allow, otherwise they should be held online.

The STF will meet one year ahead of CMS COP to review the results of national population monitoring, national reports on taking of saker falcons, and any available information on illegal taking, alongside the outputs of the latest population/scenario modelling made by an independent research group or researchers. Based on the annual review, the STF will make recommendations for the next triennium on the preliminary maximum level of take supported by the latest available data.

The recommended maximum level of take and all opinions expressed in the discussions shall be shared with the CMS Scientific Council and the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU and then presented to the COP as part of STF reporting.

Thereafter, following best practice, the STF will meet annually to review any new population and taking data, re-assess the modelling and review the recommended maximum level of take. The Raptors MOU should be informed of the outcome of the deliberations of the STF.

Any decisions on the recommended level of any quota at the international level should, where possible, be reached by consensus. If voting is required to arrive at the STF recommendation, then each member of the STF would have one vote; the Chair would have an additional casting vote in the event of a tie. Decisions on national quotas should be made through a three-level (international, national and local) engagement of stakeholders.

The STF should establish an independent scientific process to undertake a prioritized assessment of the numbers and trend of saker falcon populations in each region of the world so that the full life cycle (breeding, migration and wintering) of the species is periodically reviewed. Population monitoring should be undertaken particularly in priority countries<sup>1</sup> of the range including any participating in quota setting. Such an independent assessment should feed into population modelling that is used to inform decisions on quotas. Where there any significant data or information gaps, these should be assessed by the STF and, when making a decision, the precautionary principle should be applied.

A revision of the Terms of Reference for the STF is now required. This should include the new role in taking forward the operation of the adaptive management approach outlined here, along with the need to meet agreed sustainability safeguards<sup>2</sup>, implement conservation action and mitigate the impact of illegal activities on saker falcon populations.

#### **Decision 14.160 Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan**

The Decision calls on the Secretariat, subject to the availability of external resources to: organize regional workshops of the Saker Falcon Task Force in the coming triennium in countries within the breeding range; promote the implementation of the SakerGAP; and review and update the SakerGAP in due course.

The following related documents are provided for information:

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.26.7.a - Legal context for the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force.

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.26.7.b Revised Terms of Reference for the STF.

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.26.7.c Saker Falcon Adaptive Management Framework Indicative Budget for the period 2026-2029.

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<sup>1</sup> As identified by the STF - in Asia: China, Russian Federation (Asian part), Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe: Hungary, Russian Federation (European part), Ukraine; in Middle East: Iran.

<sup>2</sup> [Saker Falcon \(\*Falco cherrug\*\) Global Action Plan \(SakerGAP\)](#), Table 5 on page 64