



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.26.8

8 September 2025

Original: English

15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 to 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 26.8

INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT RAPTOR AREAS (IIRAs)

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

To further the implementation of core mandates on the conservation of birds of prey listed on CMS Appendices, in particular CMS Article III (4), this document proposes the establishment of Internationally Important Raptor Areas (IIRAs) through a draft Resolution and draft Decisions.

The attached draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032.

INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT RAPTOR AREAS (IIRAs)

Background

1. The first Conservation Status Assessment Report for migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia (2023)¹ highlighted that the Red List Index (RLI)² for all migratory raptors in Africa and Eurasia is declining at an alarming rate, particularly when compared to the RLI for all birds. The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN Red List) estimates that approximately 34 per cent of these species are at risk of extinction (classified as either 'Critically Endangered', 'Endangered', 'Vulnerable' or 'Near Threatened'), and that more than 50 per cent of all migratory raptor populations in these regions are declining. Population declines are driven by habitat degradation, habitat loss due to agriculture and logging, hunting and trapping (which includes intentional and unintentional poisoning, illegal shooting, and taking for belief-based use) and electrocution/collision with powerlines and wind turbines.
2. The conservation of important habitats that support populations of CMS-listed species is therefore critical for achieving the main objectives of the Convention.
3. Twenty-one species of migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia are listed in CMS Appendix I and 82 are listed in CMS Appendix II under Accipitridae, Pandionidae and Falconidae.

Implementation

4. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) includes strong mandates calling on Signatories to "identify important areas, significant routes, breeding and congregatory sites for birds of prey and promote their protection and/or appropriate management, rehabilitation and/or restoration". A 'Provisional list of Important Bird Areas that are currently known to be important congregatory bird of prey sites in Africa and Eurasia' was included in Table 3 ('List of Sites') of Annex 3 of the MOU when it entered into force.³ The Annex also stressed that "the indicative list should be treated as a minimum list of internationally important areas".
5. The Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU (TAG), with a mandate from Signatories, undertook the task of expanding Table 3 of Annex 3. This process was carried out between the first and third Meeting of Signatories (MOS1, MOS3) through a series of consultations with experts and Signatories, ensuring that the revised list is scientifically rigorous and reflects the updated list of species covered by the Raptors MOU and broad regional input. The list was approved by the Signatories at MOS3 (Dubai, UAE, 2023) and is contained in [Table 3 of Annex 3](#) to the Raptors MOU. The list is composed of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and Special Protection Areas (designated by the European Commission's Bird Directive) that host one or more raptor species listed in Annex 1 of the Raptors MOU, as well as sites proposed by Signatories that meet the IBA criteria.

1 <https://www.cms.int/raptors/en/document/conservation-status-assessment-report>

2 The Red List Index indicates the rate at which species are slipping towards (or moving away from) extinction.

3 The terms 'site' and 'area' in the Raptors MOU are considered synonymous. To align with the approach on area-based conservation of migratory species in Resolution 12.13 *Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)* and 14.7 *Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs)*, the term 'area' is also used for raptors.

6. Furthermore, the TAG conducted a [pilot site network analysis](#) on a representative subset of 12 Annex 1-listed species, with the aim of identifying gaps in the network of internationally important areas and making recommendations to improve it. The analysis highlighted that, for some species, there are notable gaps in the network. It also noted that the ranges of several species have contracted, underscoring the importance of monitoring and the potential value of recognizing these areas as candidates for conservation and habitat restoration.
7. Signatories at MOS3 welcomed the findings and underlined the value of the pilot analysis in strengthening the comprehensiveness of the network of internationally important areas. They agreed that the analysis should be expanded to cover – at the very least – all other Annex 1 species, thereby providing a stronger scientific foundation for coordinated conservation efforts across the flyways.

Internationally Important Raptor Areas

8. Pursuant to Article II (1) and III (4) of CMS, which refer to the importance of habitat conservation and restoration for migratory species, and the '30 by 30' goal contained in Target 3⁴ of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, this document proposes establishing Internationally Important Raptor Areas (IIRAs) under CMS.
9. The approach for identifying IIRAs would be based on the successful experiences of establishing Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) ([CMS Resolution 12.13](#)) and Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) ([CMS Resolution 14.7](#)) – although it should be noted that those processes are managed by IUCN.
10. It is envisaged that extending the existing area identification process under the Raptors MOU to CMS (as the 'mother' Convention) and establishing the IIRA process would help to strengthen and broaden the reach of the network.

Criteria and process proposed for identifying IIRAs

11. As is the case with ISRAs and IMMAs, the proposed identification of IIRAs is based on guidance from other mechanisms. For IIRAs this includes identifying Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). In fact, the criteria that are used by the Raptors MOU TAG and that are proposed for identifying IIRAs are based on the globally standardized scientific criteria developed for identifying IBAs. Detailed information on these criteria and their application is available at: <https://datazone.birdlife.org/site/ibacriteria>.
12. Areas to be included in the Table 3 of Annex 3 of the Raptors MOU can be proposed by Signatories to the Raptors MOU using the appropriate form (<https://www.cms.int/raptors/en/document/site-proposal-and-amendment-form>) or by the Raptors MOU TAG. The TAG is tasked with verifying that each site proposed for inclusion in Table 3 meets the identification criteria. Any amendment to the list is to be approved by the Meeting of Signatories. The TAG membership includes a representative of BirdLife International, thereby ensuring fully adherence to the IBA criteria.

⁴ "Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories."

Discussion and analysis

13. The identification of IIRAs contributes significantly to the implementation of several obligations under CMS, as stated above. It aims to increase recognition of the habitat needs of migratory birds of prey, guide the development of area-based conservation initiatives, and promote consideration of raptors in spatial planning, ultimately helping to reduce mortality and restore populations.
14. The list of identified IIRAs (i.e. [Table 3 of Annex 3](#) of the Raptors MOU) will be instrumental in supporting Parties with identifying and prioritizing areas for conservation that are most critical for the survival of CMS-listed raptors – particularly in light of the ‘30 by 30’ target.

Recommended actions

15. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the draft Resolution contained in Annex 1 of this document;
 - b) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 2 of this document.

ANNEX 1

DRAFT RESOLUTION

INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT RAPTOR AREAS (IIRAs)

Alarmed that migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia are facing a biodiversity crisis, with an estimated 34 per cent of species threatened with extinction and 50 per cent in decline,

Conscious that area-based conservation is essential to safeguard declining biodiversity, and concerned that migratory birds of prey are overlooked by many national and international efforts to develop and apply area-based conservation and management measures such as the creation of protected areas with management plans, or as areas subject to other effective area-based conservation/restoration measures,

Welcoming Targets 1 and 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,

Recalling the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU), which calls on Range States in Art. 8(d) to “identify important areas, significant routes, breeding and congregatory sites for birds of prey and promote their protection and/or appropriate management, rehabilitation and/or restoration”,

Recalling CMS Resolution 12.13 *Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)* and CMS Resolution 14.7 *Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs)* which, among other things, acknowledge the IUCN criteria and identification processes for CMS-listed marine mammals, sharks, rays and chimaeras, and request Parties and invite Range States, intergovernmental organizations and partners to identify specific areas where the delineation of IMMAs and ISRAs could be particularly beneficial,

Welcoming the development of robust selection and review criteria for the identification of IIRAs by the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU and progress made in identifying IIRAs that will contribute to determining Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs),

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

1. *Decides* to establish IIRAs as areas internationally important for migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia for those sites meeting criteria used to identify Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas as recognized by the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU, including the sites already listed in Table 3 of Annex 3 of the Raptors MOU;
2. *Requests* Parties and invites all Range States, intergovernmental organizations and partners to support the identification and delineation of IIRAs, in particular for species listed in category 1 in Table 1 of the Raptors MOU Action Plan, including Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), lappet-faced vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*), Rüppell's vulture (*Gyps rueppelli*) and steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*);

3. *Acknowledges* that the criteria used by the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU to identify IIRAs are based on the globally standardized scientific criteria developed for identifying Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) as described by BirdLife International, and that the IIRAs include IBAs and Special Protection Areas (as designated by the European Commission's Bird Directive) that host one or more raptor species listed in Annex 1 of the Raptors MOU, as well as sites proposed by Signatories to the MOU that meet the IBA criteria;
4. *Recommends* that, in the spirit of transparency, such support to identify IIRAs engages the authorities of Parties and relevant regional and international organizations at an early stage;
5. *Invites* Parties, Range States, intergovernmental organizations and partners to request the support of the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU to advance the identification and assessment of IIRAs;
6. Also *invites* the Convention on Biological Diversity, other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international financial institutions to consider IIRAs as useful contributions to the determination of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and other areas subject to other effective area-based conservation/restoration measures;
7. *Encourages* Parties to make use of the areas already listed in Table 3 of Annex 3 of the Raptors MOU when designating protected areas or areas subject to other effective area-based conservation/restoration measures, or more generally for spatial planning processes, to support the conservation of CMS-listed birds of prey and to implement Targets 1 and 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, including through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and;
8. *Requests* the Secretariat to continue to promote the value of IIRAs for the conservation of CMS-listed birds of prey.

ANNEX 2**DRAFT DECISIONS****INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT RAPTOR AREAS (IIRAs)*****Directed to Parties***

- 15.AA Parties are requested to support the identification of new IIRAs by proposing new areas to the Technical Advisory Group of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU).

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

- 15.BB Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to:
- a) actively contribute to the identification of proposed IIRAs in Africa and Eurasia and submit proposals to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of the Raptors MOU;
 - b) actively engage with and provide support to the TAG for the process of identifying IIRAs.

Directed to the Scientific Council

- 15.CC The Scientific Council is requested to support the TAG in identifying IIRAs for CMS-listed raptor species in Africa and Eurasia, through sharing information and data.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.DD The Secretariat shall:
- a) inform the Parties of newly identified IIRAs;
 - b) promote consultation and coordination between the TAG, Parties, Range States, and relevant international and regional organizations with a view to establishing a mutually supported, science- and ecosystem-based approach to conservation and sustainability;
 - c) report to the Conference of the Parties at its 16th meeting on the implementation of this Decision.