



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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15<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 to 29 March 2026  
Agenda Item 28.3

**TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decisions 14.197–14.199 *Transfrontier Conservation Areas for Migratory Species*. It proposes the adoption of new Decisions and the deletion of Decisions 14.197–14.199. It also proposes consultations, including a cost benefit analysis, on the tool for *Identifying opportunities for transboundary conservation*.

The attached draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2 and 5.3 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032.

## TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES

### Background

1. The concept of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) was included in [Resolution 14.16 Ecological Connectivity](#), and described (in paragraph 18) as “an area or component of a large ecological region that straddles the boundaries of two or more countries and is within their national jurisdiction, which may encompass one or more protected areas, as well as multiple resource use areas”. The concept of TFCAs was initially defined by the members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in their [Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement](#) of 1999. The establishment of TFCAs has since become the focus of conservation in Southern Africa and provides an example for other regions on the continent. At its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Conference of the Parties (COP14) adopted Decisions 14.197–14.199 *Transfrontier Conservation Areas* to support Parties in implementing this approach:

#### **14.197 Directed to Parties**

*Parties that are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC) are invited to:*

- a) *consider testing, as appropriate, the UNEP-WCMC pilot Transboundary tool (the ‘Tool’) to identify potential opportunities for transboundary conservation using data from the World Database on Protected Areas and the World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas; and*
- b) *consider reporting through the Secretariat to the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council at its 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> meeting on the potential opportunities for identifying transboundary conservation areas, as well as the functionality and usefulness of the Tool in supporting Parties to identify these.*

#### **14.198 Directed to the Scientific Council**

*The Scientific Council is requested, subject to the availability of resources, to review the usefulness of the Tool based on the reports submitted by Parties through the Secretariat, in line with Decisions 14.197 (b) and 14.199 (b), and make appropriate recommendations to the Secretariat and Parties on its further use and to help identify improvements that should be incorporated into the Tool and to inform the future expansion of the Tool.*

#### **14.199 Directed to the Secretariat**

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

- a) *in collaboration with UNEP-WCMC and other partners, raise awareness of the Tool among Parties mentioned in Decision 14.197;*
- b) *request Parties referred to in Decision 14.197 to consider sharing feedback on the functionality and usefulness of the Tool in identifying potential opportunities for transboundary conservation, and submit a report on the feedback received to the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council at its 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> meeting; and*
- c) *report to the Conference of the Parties at its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting on the progress in implementing these Decisions.*

## Cross Regional Wildlife Conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean

2. The project, 'Cross Regional Wildlife Conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean', enabled the CMS Secretariat, together with a number of partners, to support Range States with the implementation of the Resolution and Decisions relating to TFCAs. The project was funded by the European Union and was implemented in partnership with the Secretariat for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The project ended in October 2024.
3. The CMS Secretariat's component of the project focused on '*Specific Objective 3: The establishment and sustainable management of Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) promoted and strengthened*'. The five result areas for this objective are set out below, along with the activities and outputs delivered between COP14 and October 2024. Details on the implementation of the project prior to COP14 can be found in [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.2.2/Rev.2](#).

### *Result 3.1: High-level political instruments (protocols) mandating the formation of TFCAs formulated/updated:*

4. Preparatory work to develop a protocol on TFCAs for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) had been ongoing between 2021 and 2023, in partnership with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) and Legal Atlas (LA), and in close consultation with the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HAWEN) Executive Committee (an entity under the aegis of IGAD). In June 2024, during the 6<sup>th</sup> HAWEN Executive Committee meeting, IGAD member states decided that they did not need the Protocol. Instead, national consultations in the IGAD member states were conducted in September 2024, supported by partners CCF and LA, to ascertain countries' needs and desires regarding the establishment of TFCAs.

### *Result 3.2: Bilateral and multilateral treaties/agreements/MOUs for the co-management of specific TFCAs formulated and signed:*

5. At the request of the Governments of Kenya and Tanzania, the CMS Secretariat, together with the Secretariat of the Lusaka Agreement Task Force, supported preparations for establishing a TFCA for the Mara-Serengeti and Tsavo-Mkomazi ecosystems in Kenya and Tanzania. This involved:
  - a gap analysis of TFCAs, highlighting the strengths and gaps in existing conservation frameworks;
  - a benchmarking mission to the Kavango–Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA (August 2024, Kasane, Botswana), providing insights into the success of this model and the modalities for establishing an effective TFCA, including governance structures and measures to mitigate conservation challenges;
  - consultative meetings between Kenya and Tanzania at the technical level (September 2024, Arusha, Tanzania) to review the outcomes of the gap analysis and benchmarking mission and provide recommendations for the two governments' consideration.
6. At the request of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, the CMS Secretariat commissioned a feasibility study for establishing a TFCA in the Mutshatsha–Kasanga ecosystem. The proposed delineation of this TFCA is based on the habitat of migratory bats.

7. In July 2024, the CMS Secretariat, in cooperation with IUCN, organized a high-level visit of representatives of the member states of the East African Community to the SADC Secretariat and the KAZA TFCA in Botswana.

*Result 3.3: Harmonization of legislation pertaining to wildlife conservation, management and crime promoted and supported:*

8. All activities were finalized in 2021, as set out in [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.2.2/Rev.2](#).

*Result 3.4: Ecosystem/landscape management plans and/or protected area co-management plans prepared for TFCAs and formally approved by the responsible management authorities; and Result 3.5: Approved management actions implemented in the TFCAs according to jointly-agreed priorities:*

9. Upon the request of the relevant Range States, the CMS Secretariat commissioned the preparation of the following management plans and strategies:
  - a) Joint Strategic Management Plan for the Great Limpopo TFCA (Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe)
  - b) Land Use Plan for the Lower Zambesi Mana Pools (LOZAMAP) TFCA (Zambia and Zimbabwe)
  - c) Situational Analysis as basis for the Integrated Elephant Management Plan for Tembe and Maputo Parks in the Lubombo TFCA (Eswatini, Mozambique and South Africa)
  - d) National Giraffe Conservation Strategy and Management Plan for Zimbabwe
  - e) Approach for a Joint Operations Strategy for the Kosi Bay/Ponta do Ouro TFCA (Mozambique and South Africa)
  - f) Situational Analysis for SADC Vulture Conservation Strategy
  - g) Roadmap for the Conservation of the Leopard in Africa (to be consulted on by Range States)
  - h) Human Wildlife Conflict Insurance Solutions in Zambia
  - i) Finance Solution Inventory

#### Implementation of Decisions 14.197–14.199

10. In 2021, the CMS Secretariat commissioned the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP–WCMC) to develop a methodology and a new, publicly available, web-based tool to identify existing protected areas in Africa that are spatially adjacent across country boundaries, and that have the potential for harmonized management. The tool ([Identifying opportunities for transboundary conservation](#)) is online, providing Governments and other actors with a scientific basis for establishing bilateral and multilateral TFCA agreements across Africa. The tool was launched at the African Protected Areas Congress in Rwanda in 2022. A [scientific paper](#) based on an analysis conducted using the tool and a further evaluation of the functional connectivity between pairs of Protected Areas, was published in the journal, 'Frontiers in Conservation Science', in August 2023.
11. In line with COP14 Decisions 14.197 – 14.199, the Secretariat organized a series of webinars on the usefulness and functionality of the tool. The tool was presented to members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on 6 June 2024; members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on 7 June 2024, and members of the East African Community (EAC) on 26 June 2024 during existing

events. A standalone event was organized by the CMS Secretariat on 19 June 2024 for all Parties to CMS of the IGAD, EAC and SADC regions.

12. To facilitate implementation of Decision 14.197, a survey was sent to all CMS Parties as well as participants of the above-mentioned events, a total of 145 people (<https://forms.office.com/e/wgwVTNU94p>). Feedback on the tool during the webinars and responses to the survey were compiled by UNEP–WCMC in the report annexed to this document. Two responses to the survey were received by UNEP-WCMC. Further unstructured feedback was gathered through discussions at the workshops.
13. The Secretariat submitted the synthesized report of Parties' responses to the Scientific Council at the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of its Sessional Committee ([UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC7/Doc.6.1.3](#)), listing the following recommendations:
  - a) Circulate the survey further.
  - b) Consider housing the transboundary tool contents in a new location.
  - c) Consider sharing data layers with UN Biodiversity Lab (UNBL) and/or other online platforms. Alternatively, consider adding some of the data layers listed under 'Content improvements', or providing links to the UNBL within the transboundary tool.
  - d) Consider implementing the ideas listed under 'Usability improvements'.
  - e) Improve content and visibility of information provided about the data layer methodology.
14. The Scientific Council endorsed the recommendations, emphasizing the need to add more data layers to strengthen baselines, and to show the ranges of wildlife. It was noted that the tool should integrate data from all land uses and stakeholders to guide decisions, ensuring that it serves not only as a conservation tool but functions as an independent and practical decision-making instrument ([UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC7/Report](#)).

#### Discussion and analysis

15. In light of the low number of responses received and the comments provided at the presentations of the tool, the benefits of any further developments should be carefully scrutinized. This should include a review of other existing tools to avoid duplication. At the same time, the target users of the tool and their needs should be identified, in close consultation with Parties, building on the experience of SADC member states in establishing TFCAs. Once the target users and their needs have been determined, the recommendations endorsed by the Scientific Council should be given due consideration.

#### Recommended actions

16. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
  - a) adopt the draft Decisions contained in the Annex of this document;
  - b) delete Decisions 14.197–14.199.

**DRAFT DECISIONS**

**TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS FOR MIGRATORY SPECIES**

**Directed to the Scientific Council**

- 15.AA Taking into account the recommendations emanating from the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Sessional Committee, the Scientific Council is requested to establish a Working Group, which includes representatives from the Southern African Development Community region (the lead region for establishing Transfrontier Conservation Areas), to:
- a) determine the target users of the tool for identifying opportunities for transboundary conservation, in close consultation with Parties and other stakeholders;
  - b) taking into account the recommendations emanating from the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Sessional Committee, conduct consultations with target users to identify their needs, the applicability of the tool and any technical adjustments required to improve it; and
  - c) based on the outcomes of a) and b), identify, in close consultation with target users, further parameters and functions to be added to the tool.

**Directed to the Secretariat**

- 15.BB The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external resources and in cooperation with UNEP–WCMC, support the Working Group established under Decision 15.AA and assess the costs and benefits of further developing and maintaining the tool.