



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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Agenda Item 18.1

SYNERGIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress in implementing Resolution 11.10 (Rev.COP14) *Synergies and Partnerships* and Decisions 14.8-14.10 *Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations and Other Groups in CMS Processes*.

The document proposes the adoption of new Decisions and deletion of Decisions 14.8–14.10.

The draft Decisions, if adopted, would contribute to all targets of the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032, especially Target 6.4.

SYNERGIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its 14th meeting (COP14, 2024), reaffirmed the importance of engagement in relevant processes and cooperation with partners through the adoption of [Resolution 11.10 \(Rev.COP14\) Synergies and Partnerships](#) which includes provisions directed to the Secretariat as well as Parties.
2. COP14 also adopted Decisions 14.8-14.10 *Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations and Other Groups in CMS Processes*:

14.8 Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and others

Parties, NGOs and other relevant organizations are invited to support the Secretariat in exploring options for a special accreditation for NGO partners to CMS for the consideration of COP15.

14.9 Directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested, subject to the availability of external resources, to:

- a) *assess the significance of multiple systems of knowledge and understanding, including traditional and Indigenous knowledge, for supporting effective migratory species conservation; and*
- b) *provide a report to COP15 with suggestions for ways in which CMS might facilitate inclusion of additional systems of knowledge and understanding for enhanced implementation of the Convention.*

14.10 Directed to the Secretariat

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

- a) *establish an Intersessional Working Group comprising Parties, the Secretariat, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant organizations to explore options for a special accreditation for NGO partners to CMS, including a process and a template for reporting to the Conference of the Parties;*
- b) *present a proposal for accreditation for NGO partners to CMS to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties for its consideration and adoption;*
- c) *continue exploring and proposing ways to increase the involvement of Indigenous Peoples, youth groups and local communities in CMS processes, building on the experiences from other multilateral environmental agreements, and present suggestions, including their cost implications, to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15); and*
- d) *in collaboration with interested Parties, UNESCO and other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, undertake a concise review of the values, policy principles and concrete opportunities that exist in relation to the tangible and intangible cultural values associated with migratory species and their conservation.*

Implementation of Resolution 11.10 (Rev.COP14) *Synergies and Partnerships*

Engagement within the UN System

3. The Secretariat engaged in numerous relevant processes and meetings of the UN, including those of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), and the UN Oceans Conference.

UNEP processes and initiatives, including UN Environment Assembly sessions

4. The Secretariat continued to cooperate with UNEP on various issues of interest, including promoting accession of countries to CMS, and participated in regular consultations that UNEP convenes with secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) – bringing together UNEP divisions and MEA focal points with a view to share priorities, and find areas for engagement or support .
5. The Secretariat took part in two capacity-building workshops convened by the UNEP Law Division to exchange information and strengthen implementation of global environmental commitments through coherent and synergistic implementation of Biodiversity, and Chemicals and Waste MEAs at the national level in Africa. A workshop took place in 2024 aimed at strengthening cooperation among the national focal points of CMS, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) and the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme in a selected number of countries in North and East Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco and Tunisia). A further workshop took place in November 2025 and involved representatives of CMS, CBD, BRS and the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal.
6. The Secretariat, through the Executive Secretary, actively participated in the 6th and 7th sessions of UNEA, leading or contributing to panels, side events and cross-thematic discussions. UNEA-6 took place from 21 February to 1 March 2024 and included an agenda item on enhancing collaboration and synergies between UNEP and MEAs to tackle the triple planetary crises (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) effectively and inclusively. An 'MEA Day' took place at UNEA-6 which included two MEA high-level dialogues on strengthening the science–policy interface and cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation. Similarly, at UNEA-7, two high-level dialogues on the 'MEA Day' focused on MEA implementation and advancing the sustainable development agenda. On both occasions, the Executive Secretary had the opportunity to share CMS perspectives on these matters.
7. The Secretariat has also actively maintained cooperative relations with UNEP regional offices:
 - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP): the Secretariat attended (remotely) two regional workshops. The first one in March 2024, organized by the GEF Early Action Support project team in the UNEP Ecosystems Division, with support from the ROAP, focused on ensuring synergies among MEAs in implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The second workshop in October 2025, was used to promote an integrated and synergistic approach in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).
 - Regional Office for Africa (ROA): while the Secretariat was unable to attend the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which was held in July 2025, it provided contributions to the priorities for AMCEN's 2025-2026 workplan and beyond.

- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC): the Secretariat participated in the meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held from 30 September to 2 October 2025 in Lima, Peru, to bring attention to CMS and COP15. In the margins of the meeting, ROLAC, the Caribbean sub-Regional Office and the CARICOM Secretariat supported the organization of a meeting of Caribbean countries not yet party to CMS to promote their accession. ROLAC and its sub-Regional Office located in Brazil are supporting the preparations for COP15.
8. Further details are contained in UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.11 *Report of the United Nations Environment Programme*.

Other UN processes

9. The Secretariat continued to engage in the UN Oceans process, a forum of UN entities working on ocean issues. In the past, this group often met in the margins of relevant UN conferences. The forum has moved online, which has proved to be more effective and inclusive. The Secretariat also participated in the third UN Oceans Conference in Nice (June 2025).

Strengthening existing collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements

Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG)

10. The Secretariat took part in the meetings and informal consultations of the BLG, which took place over the course of the intersessional period. The group met in person at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome ahead of the resumed CBD COP16 meetings (February 2025).
11. A central focus of the meeting, as well as of BLG cooperation in 2024-2025, was to ensure that the work of each convention is mutually supportive and contributes efficiently to broader global biodiversity goals, with particular emphasis on aligning actions with the KMGBF. This includes exploring harmonized reporting, joint outreach and communications strategies, and shared frameworks for monitoring and indicators where possible.
12. BLG discussions included engagement with scientific bodies and mechanisms, such as the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), to help ensure that scientific assessments and evidence inform policy actions across conventions and at national levels. The group discussed ways to better support countries – especially through coordinated capacity-building, resource mobilization and technical assistance – to implement biodiversity commitments effectively. Further information can be found here: <https://www.cbd.int/blg/>.

Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements

13. Bilateral cooperation with individual BLG members and other MEAs continued through the implementation of joint workplans and other areas of cooperation.
14. The collaboration with the CBD Secretariat including in the implementation and monitoring of the KMGBF is addressed in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.18.3](#) *CMS Contribution to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*.
15. Following the endorsement of the 2021-2025 Joint Work Programme, the Secretariats of CMS and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild

Fauna and Flora (CITES) worked closely to further the conservation of a number of common species, including the African wild dog, cheetah, leopard and lion under the framework of the African Carnivores Initiative, as well as the Jaguar. Further details are included in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.27.1 Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.27.4 Jaguar](#). The two bodies also cooperated on aquatic species of shared concern.

16. The Secretariat and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) have been collaborating closely on a number of areas, including addressing vessel strikes, plastic pollution, wild meat and climate change.
17. The Secretariat worked closely with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on matters of common interest, with a special focus on ecological connectivity, and launched the [Global Land Outlook Thematic Report on Ecological Connectivity and Land Restoration](#) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi on 11 October 2025.

Engaging in and pursuing strategic cooperation

18. Joint work is ongoing with various entities on matters related to the implementation of activities of common interest.

Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity (GPEC)

19. Recognizing that numerous connectivity-related initiatives and efforts are ongoing around the world, and that for migratory species in particular, cooperation and collaboration across multiple stakeholders, sectors and national boundaries is essential, the Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity (GPEC) was launched during CMS COP14. This Partnership, led by the CMS Secretariat as Chair of its Steering Committee, enables collaboration through a multi-stakeholder network of partners to collectively and coherently maintain, enhance and restore ecological connectivity across the globe. Further details are contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15 Doc. 28.2 Ecological Connectivity](#).

Global Initiative on Taking of Migratory Species (GTI)

20. In response to the growing impacts of illegal and unsustainable taking of migratory species, the Secretariat has advanced the development of a Global Initiative on Taking of Migratory Species aimed at strengthening coordinated, cross-cutting action across regions and taxa. The Initiative is designed to leverage and connect existing CMS instruments, species initiatives and agreements, while reinforcing collaboration with key partners, including CITES, FAO and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW). Its focus is on addressing policy, legal and enforcement gaps related to domestic take, improving data and knowledge systems, supporting community and stakeholder engagement, enhancing awareness and education, and strengthening institutional capacity. The Initiative has been presented and discussed in relevant intergovernmental and partnership fora, including the CPW, to explore synergies and collaborative implementation. A full description of the Initiative, its scope and proposed areas of work is provided in [UNEP/CMS/COP15 Doc.28.1 Illegal and unsustainable Taking of Species](#).

Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW)

21. The Secretariat remained actively engaged in the CPW as a key platform for advancing coherence and synergies on sustainable use and conservation of wildlife. Through its participation, the Secretariat has contributed migratory species conservation perspectives to joint discussions on policy, legal frameworks, capacity-building and guidance development, including collaboration with the CBD and CITES Secretariats on the preparation of global guidance for sustainable wildlife management. The Secretariat has also used the CPW to present and explore partnerships around the proposed GTI. This engagement has helped ensure that CMS priorities are reflected across the biodiversity-related conventions, while avoiding duplication and reinforcing complementary mandates. In addition, the Secretariat developed, in collaboration with the CITES Secretariat, a guidance document to support the integration of CMS and CITES obligations when developing actions for NBSAPs related to the three species-related targets of the KMGBF as a contribution to the CPW Work Plan 2023-2025.

Bycatch

22. The Secretariat continues its active engagement with the IWC, FAO, Regional Fisheries Bodies, and Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans regarding bycatch of CMS-listed aquatic species. Further details are contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.1.1 Bycatch and Other Fisheries-induced Mortality](#).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

23. The Secretariat has been working in close collaboration with UNDP in support of Jaguar conservation. Further details are contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.27.4 Jaguar](#). It also received logistical support from UNDP country offices in organizing numerous meetings.

World Bank

24. The Secretariat has been working closely with the World Bank, specifically in the context of the Steering Committee for the implementation of the GEF-8 Integrated Programme on Wildlife Conservation for Development (WCD IP). Further information is contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.14.3 Resource Mobilization](#).

Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

25. The CMS Secretariat continued to engage in IPBES processes and participate in its meetings. Further details are contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.18.2 Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#).

Climate High-Level Champions (HLCs)

26. The CMS Secretariat continued to engage with the UN Climate High-Level Champions (HLCs) through the 2030 Ocean Breakthroughs to promote the conservation and restoration of seagrass ecosystems, highlighting their importance for migratory species, blue carbon and climate-resilient coastal ecosystems.

World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

27. The Secretariat has been working closely with the WOAH, in particular through the context of the CMS Working Group on Migratory Animals and Health, and is currently developing a joint factsheet on the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for veterinary agencies and practitioners.

Strengthening existing collaboration with civil society

28. The Secretariat continued to benefit from the support of numerous NGOs in the implementation of memoranda of understanding and initiatives for specific species as well as from their contribution to various processes, working groups and task forces. Details of this work are contained in several other COP15 documents.

Cooperation on outreach activities

29. Since COP14, the Secretariat has continued to work closely with its partners: the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), Environment for the Americas (EFTA) and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) to organize World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), which is now being celebrated twice a year, on the second Saturdays in May and October. In 2024, the theme of WMBD was "[Protect Insects, Protect Birds](#)", highlighting the critical role insects play in the lifecycle of many migratory birds. In 2025, WMBD focused on highlighting the importance of designing and managing urban environments that support both birds and people under the slogan "[Shared Spaces: Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities](#)". On 10 May 2025, an event was celebrated in Bonn in cooperation with ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability and GWOPA/UN-Habitat to bring attention to the importance of making urban areas more welcoming for migratory birds. In 2026, WMBD will focus on the important role of community science in bird conservation with the slogan "Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!".

Implementation of Decision 14.10 a) and b) – NGO accreditation

30. Decision 14.10 requested the Secretariat to establish a working group to explore options for a special accreditation for NGOs, given the important role that numerous NGOs play in contributing to the work of the Convention. While, due to the short intersessional period and the absence of funding for this work, it was not possible to convene such a working group, the Secretariat collected information on NGO accreditation schemes under other organizations and MEAs, which is compiled in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.18.1 Overview of Accreditation Schemes of Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\)](#) to support any decision on this matter.
31. Based on the information gathered, NGOs can be accredited to support, inform, and scrutinize intergovernmental decision-making without holding voting power:
- Participate in governance processes including meetings of the governing bodies;
 - Provide scientific, technical, and policy expertise such as scientific data and assessments;
 - Enhance transparency and accountability by, for instance, monitoring compliance and implementation gaps;
 - Facilitate stakeholder engagement and awareness through the organization of side events and exhibitions, dissemination of meeting outcomes to the public and by building bridges between governments, science, civil society, and communities;

- Support implementation at national and local levels by carrying out projects on the ground.
- 32. While CMS does not have a formal NGO accreditation scheme, it provides an open, inclusive and transparent platform that enables NGOs to engage meaningfully and participate in CMS processes.
- 33. NGO participation in meetings of the Conference of the Parties is determined by the provisions of the Convention (Art. VII) and its established rules of procedure: the sole criterion is that their expertise aligns with the objectives of CMS. These provisions, which are applied across all meetings of the Convention and its instruments, have consistently allowed NGOs to attend meetings, engage constructively with Parties and the Secretariat, deliver statements and organize events.
- 34. NGOs are also engaged in working groups of the Scientific Council, are partners in numerous initiatives and support the implementation of activities on the ground for which they undergo due diligence vetting for receiving grants. NGOs can also submit cases to the Review Mechanism aimed at ensuring long-term compliance of Parties with the Convention by bringing to the attention of the Secretariat matters of non-implementation for the consideration of the Standing Committee.
- 35. Throughout the history of the Convention, these approaches have functioned effectively, and there has never been a significant barrier to NGO participation that would warrant an additional accreditation mechanism.
- 36. The existing framework ensures openness while maintaining procedural integrity, and it has facilitated productive collaboration between Parties, the Secretariat and civil society. Introducing an NGO accreditation scheme could create unnecessary administrative burdens and risks limiting the inclusive nature of the Convention, without addressing any demonstrated shortcomings. The current provisions of the Convention should suffice to support effective NGO engagement; no separate accreditation scheme appears necessary.

Implementation of Decisions 14.9 and 14.10 c) – *Involvement of Indigenous Peoples, youth groups and local communities in CMS processes*

- 37. Decision 14.9, as well as Decision 14.10 c) and paragraphs 3 and 8 of Resolution 11.10 (Rev.COP14) aim to promote ways of facilitating the participation and engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and youth groups. [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.14 *Multiple Systems of Knowledge*](#) addresses the topic of how to engage IPLCs and [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.4 *Communities and Livelihoods*](#) presents guiding principles and community-based approaches to advance the conservation of CMS-listed species through community engagement.
- 38. Outreach has taken place with youth organizations, including the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG) in the context of the World Migratory Bird Day campaign, and with a view to engaging them in the Conference of the Parties meetings.
- 39. CBD has established robust mechanisms for the effective engagement of IPLCs, as well as youth groups. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and promote coherence, the CMS Secretariat aims to build upon these existing mechanisms rather than developing parallel processes.

Implementation of Decision 14.10 d) – Review of the tangible and intangible cultural values associated with migratory species and their conservation

40. Due to lack of external resources, the Secretariat was unable to undertake this review thus the decision is included in the Annex of the document for consideration by COP15. However, it is to be noted that IPBES undertook a [Methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services](#) which was approved in 2022 and would already largely cover aspects of the review mandated by Decision 14.10 d).

Partnership policy and procedures

41. On 29 June 2024, the UNEP Executive Director issued a new Partnership Policy, effective from 29 September 2024. The new Partnership Policy applies to all partner categories and partnership modalities, from donors to partners implementing work on the ground, and at all stages of the partnership management process at UNEP. The Policy sets the principles and guides the processes, whereas the Procedures guide the practical steps to operationalize the Policy. The UNEP Procurement and Partnerships Unit in the Corporate Services Division provided preliminary training to Administrative Officers in UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats in September 2024 and continues to provide tailored training as needed.
42. While the new Partnership Policy was developed in consultation with UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats, some of its aspects impose resource-intensive requirements that are impractical for MEA Secretariats such as CMS, which operate on comparatively small budgets, and can significantly complicate and delay their work to implement their mandates. The new policy includes an exception for MEAs: “MEA Secretariats administered by UNEP are also subject to this Partnership Policy and its respective Procedures, However, given MEA Secretariats derive their mandates to enter Partnership from their governing bodies, this Partnership Policy is applicable insofar there is no specific decision from MEAs governing bodies mandating a separate process. As UNEP administered entities, such governing bodies decisions should be consistent with UN regulations and rules and, in case of any conflict, this Partnership Policy should apply.”
43. Implementation of the new Policy began with a one-year transition period, which is ongoing and has included surveys to seek feedback on its roll-out and optimization. As a result of this, in October 2025, UNEP launched initial simplified measures under the policy, and is in the process of gathering user feedback to inform the next phase of process improvements. This may provide an approach more suitable for MEA Secretariats, such as CMS, but alternatively, a policy for CMS may be warranted.

Discussion and analysis

44. The Secretariat has invested significant efforts in engaging with other organizations and partners, and is appreciative of the positive collaboration with other biodiversity-related conventions, other UN entities, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders to further the work of CMS. Subject to the availability of resources, the Secretariat will continue to work with these key organizations to advance the implementation of CMS.
45. The UNEP Partnership Policy applies to UNEP-administered MEA Secretariats unless alternative processes are mandated by their governing bodies. The Secretariat therefore proposes that the COP mandates the development of a partnership policy tailored to the Convention and its instruments, if required, depending on the outcome of the testing of

the simplified UNEP policy. Such policy would also consider and incorporate relevant aspects of NGO accreditation.

Recommended actions

46. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
- a) adopt the draft Decisions contained in the Annex of this document;
 - b) Delete Decisions 14.8–14.10.

ANNEX

DRAFT DECISIONS

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL VALUES

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.AA The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of external resources, in collaboration with interested Parties, UNESCO and other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, undertake a concise review of the values, policy principles and concrete opportunities that exist in relation to the tangible and intangible cultural values associated with migratory species and their conservation.

PARTNERSHIP POLICY

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.AA The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources, develop a partnership policy tailored to the Convention and its instruments, depending on the outcome of the testing of the simplified UNEP policy.