

FOURTH MEETING OF SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF PREY IN AFRICA AND EURASIA

(Victoria Falls, 30 November- 2 December 2026)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Doc.13.1

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

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit and the Chair of the STF)

Summary:

This document reports on progress in implementing the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) and on the outcomes of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP15), which adopted Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP15) and Decisions 15.173 and 15.174. The Meeting of Signatories is invited to note the progress achieved, support the continued work of the Saker Falcon Task Force, and encourage Range States to contribute to the review of the SakerGAP and to develop and implement monitoring programmes.

Background

1. CMS Resolution 10.28 (2011) established the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF), under the auspices of the Coordinating Unit (CU) of the 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 Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP), including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the species.
2. The SakerGAP was adopted by the CMS Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (COP11) in 2014 through Resolution 11.18 and was endorsed by the Signatories to the Raptors MOU at their Second Meeting (MOS2, October 2015). The overall goal of the SakerGAP is to re-establish a healthy and self-sustaining wild Saker Falcon population throughout its range and to ensure that any use is sustainable.
3. The Signatories last considered progress in implementing the SakerGAP at their Third Meeting (MOS3, Dubai, 3–6 July 2023), on the basis of document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.13.1](#). At that Meeting, the Signatories noted the key conservation and management issues involved, supported the draft Resolution to be presented to the CMS Conference of the Parties, and requested that the STF continue to develop the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework for the species and update the Global Action Plan, particularly in light of the growing threat from electrocution.
4. At its 14th meeting (COP14), the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) and Decisions 14.157 - 14.160; and decided to continue the Saker Falcon Task Force. A well-attended side event on Falcon Conservation was held during COP14 to illustrate the proposed amendments to Resolution 11.18.
5. At its 15th meeting (COP15, Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 - 29 March 2026), the Conference of the Parties reviewed progress in implementing Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) on the basis of document [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.26.7](#). The Conference adopted amendments to the Resolution, now [Resolution 11.18 \(Rev.COP15\)](#), and adopted Decisions 15.173 and 15.174 which are included as Annex I of this document, deleting Decisions 14.157–14.160.
6. A side event¹ took place during CMS COP15 on 23 March 2026. The side event drew strong participation and featured a presentation by the Chair of the STF. The programme also included an overview of the United Arab Emirates' Falcons and Falconers Registration System and a review of successful conservation efforts for the species in Hungary.
7. The saker falcon 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 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 regulated international trade under certain conditions; a “zero export quota” is in effect for populations in Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan. For the

¹ Presentations and recording of the interventions are available at: <https://raptors.cms.int/workinggroup/saker-falcon-task-force>

period 2011-2017, zero export quotas also applied to Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. Trade suspensions are in place in Libya, Bangladesh, India, Djibouti and Afghanistan.

Progress in implementing the SakerGAP

Population monitoring

8. Information on the overall population size of the species remains limited. Recent compilation for Central and Eastern Europe estimates² the presence of 535–700 breeding pairs, organized into three subpopulations, two of which are slowly increasing. The third subpopulation, distributed along the Black Sea, is not well monitored and its current trend remains uncertain. However, reduced food availability and trapping pressures suggest that the population may be vulnerable to decline. In the Caucasus ecoregion³, a small, stable population of fewer than 30 pairs has been confirmed.
9. Of particular concern is the limited data available for Central Asia, where no coordinated monitoring scheme is in place. In Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, monitoring in different parts of the two countries indicates that populations are still declining⁴. No recent surveys have been published for the other Central Asian countries, and there is no indication that the negative trend previously reported from Uzbekistan has stopped or reversed. A project in Kyrgyzstan implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is conducting surveys to assess the national saker falcon population and evaluate the scale of illegal or unregistered trade.
10. No regular large-scale monitoring is reported from Mongolia and China, although the populations in these two countries still appear to be relatively large and apparently stable.

Threats assessment

11. The decline of the Saker Falcon in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation is likely driven by the reduction in rodent populations, trapping and electrocution, although the relative significance of each threat varies locally. Given the sensitivity of the species to electrocution, the ongoing development of large energy infrastructure within its breeding range remains a significant threat, as does the illegal trapping of falcons that continues to be reported in the region.
12. Illegal or unsustainable trapping in the Middle East and North Africa continues to represent a major threat. Satellite tracking data from tagged birds indicate that a significant proportion of large falcons, including the lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*), fall victim to trappers, with adverse impacts on their wild populations. Trappers also regularly use smaller falcons as decoys to attract target species, extending the unsustainability of this practice to non-target species.
13. In 2024, TRAFFIC assessed the scale of legal and illegal wildlife trade in Kazakhstan,

² Prommer et al. (2025) [DOI: 10.2478/orhu-2025-0002](https://doi.org/10.2478/orhu-2025-0002)

³ Farajli et al. (2025) doi.org/10.3897/caucasiana.4.e150297

⁴ Karyakin et al. (2023) [DOI: 10.19074/1814-8654-2023-2-450-458](https://doi.org/10.19074/1814-8654-2023-2-450-458)

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during the period 2012-2021⁵. The saker falcon also features prominently in seizure records from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, indicating the occurrence of illegal trade in the species in the region. The report also highlighted the role of Kyrgyzstan as a trade hub for the species destined for the Gulf countries.

14. TRAFFIC also reviewed the legislation in the same countries, indicating that the current legal frameworks in Central Asia need to be strengthened in order to effectively address the challenges posed by illegal trade⁶ in wild species.

Conservation and research

15. With the support of the Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund (MBZRCF), ecological research is ongoing in Mongolia to assess the relationship between saker falcons and other raptors and local rodent populations. New plastic nest boxes are being installed to replace the numerous ageing metallic artificial nests. The MBZRCF is also expanding its work in China, western Mongolia and eastern Kazakhstan, with a focus on the “Altai” saker falcon, with a view to developing further conservation work in those areas.
16. In cooperation with the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, two questionnaires have been launched. The first, targeted at falconers and trappers, aimed to identify changes in their practices and attitudes compared with those reported in a similar survey carried out in 2015. The report⁷ was launched at a side event during CMS COP15. The second, developed in cooperation with the CMS Energy Task Force, aimed to gather information on awareness of electrocution as a threat to the Saker Falcon and to birds of prey more generally. The data have been gathered, and the report is being finalised.
17. In May 2026, the Raptors MOU CU took part in a workshop co-organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic⁸, which marked the start of work towards developing a National Raptor Conservation Strategy. The workshop identified key priorities for raptor conservation in Kyrgyzstan, and the saker falcon was identified as one of the priority species to be considered. The strategy is intended to guide national raptor conservation actions in the coming years.
18. In September 2026, the Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) has organized a workshop on National Action Plans to address Illegal Killing of Birds (IKB) for North Africa, where the issue of trapping of falcons was featured.
19. To contribute to minimizing electrocution, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) produced a Tipsheet⁹ that was launched at a Webinar¹⁰ which included interventions by the CMS

⁵ Tokubek uulu et al. (2024a) <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/an-assessment-of-wildlife-trade-in-central-asia/>

⁶ Tokubek uulu et al. (2024b) https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/23053/en_legal_analysis-central_asia.pdf

⁷ <https://raptors.cms.int/publication/changes-falconers-practices-and-impact-electrocution>

⁸ [Landmark Seminar in Bishkek to Protect Central Asia's Birds of Prey | Raptors](#)

⁹ <https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2026/preventing-electrocution-risks-for-birds-on-distribution-lines>

¹⁰ Recording of the webinar is available at: <https://www.ifc.org/en/events/2026/preventing-bird-electrocution-on-distribution-lines>

Secretariat, IAF and the Raptors MOU CU.

Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework

20. The STF, supported by the Raptors MOU CU, has concentrated its efforts, as mandated by CMS Parties, on the development of an Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework (AMF). Developing such a framework for the Saker Falcon is set within the current legislative framework for species management and does not contravene any provision of the Convention. However, any implementation that included harvesting or taking of the species beyond populations excluded from Appendix I (at present the Mongolian population) would contravene Article III(5) as clarified in the legal assessment produced by the CMS Secretariat (see document [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.26.7a](#)).
21. Since COP14, the Secretariat has convened three online meetings of the STF (the 13th, 14th and 15th meetings, held in May 2024, May 2025 and September 2025, respectively) and consulted the CITES and AEWA Secretariats on the proposed decision-making system before its approval by the STF. The system provides a structured, science-based approach for international decision-making regarding any sustainable take from wild populations not included in CMS Appendix I, ensuring that 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.
22. The STF proposed to COP15 a decision-making structure for the AMF. Under the proposed governance arrangements, the STF would meet annually to review implementation of the SakerGAP and its Work Plan, with a key meeting held one year ahead of each CMS COP to review data from national monitoring and reports on take, together with the outputs of the latest population and scenario modelling. On that basis, the STF would recommend a preliminary maximum level of take, which would be shared with the CMS Scientific Council and the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU before being presented to the Conference of the Parties. The framework mandates the application of the precautionary principle wherever significant data or information gaps are identified.

Outcome of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

23. Through [Resolution 11.18 \(Rev.COP15\)](#), the Conference of the Parties acknowledged that the decision-making structure proposed by the STF is under refinement and recognised it as an important step towards the implementation, where legally possible, of the AMF as a voluntary process for the conservation of the Saker Falcon.
24. The Resolution continues the implementation of the SakerGAP and the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force, and instructs the Task Force, subject to the availability of resources, to promote implementation of the SakerGAP, to further develop, refine and implement the AMF where legally possible, to promote monitoring and research across the range of the species, and to work collaboratively with the CMS Energy Task Force to reduce the impact of electrocution from power lines and related energy infrastructure.
25. By Decision 15.173, Party Range States are requested, and Non-Party Range States are encouraged, to contribute to the review of the SakerGAP during the coming triennium and to develop and implement monitoring programmes in order to close the existing data and information gaps. By Decision 15.174, the Secretariat is directed, inter

alia, to convey Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP15) to the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements, and, subject to the availability of resources, to organize regional workshops of the STF within the breeding range, to review and update the SakerGAP, and to invite Range States to renew their STF membership.

Discussion and analysis

26. The continued operation of the STF, supported the Raptors MOU CU, has provided an effective platform for cooperation among Range States, intergovernmental organizations, scientific experts and falconry stakeholders. Through regular meetings, targeted research and outreach activities, the STF, supported by the Raptors MOU CU, has maintained momentum in the implementation of the SakerGAP and contributed to strengthening international cooperation for the conservation of the species.
27. The Saker Falcon Task Force is entering a new phase of its mandate, which includes:
 - a) promoting the implementation of the SakerGAP;
 - b) further developing the decision-making process underpinning the AMF, where legally possible;
 - c) promoting monitoring and research across the range of the saker falcon to address information gaps regarding population size and trend; and
 - d) reviewing and updating the SakerGAP.
28. The implementation of Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP15) and of Decisions 15.173 and 15.174 will depend substantially on i) the active engagement of CMS Parties that are Range States to the Raptor MOU and Signatories to the Raptors MOU, in particular through their contribution to the review of the SakerGAP, ii) the development and implementation of national monitoring programmes to close data and information gaps, and iii) the renewal of their membership of the Saker Falcon Task Force. The mobilization of adequate resources remains essential to facilitate the full implementation of the SakerGAP throughout the species' range.

Actions requested

29. The Meeting of Signatories is recommended to:
 - a) take note of this document;
 - b) note the outcomes of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties concerning the Saker Falcon, in particular Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP15) and Decisions 15.173 and 15.174, reproduced in Annex I to this document, as well as the Saker Falcon-related activities contained in Annex 6 of Resolution 15.1 Financial and Administrative Matters¹¹ and summarised in Annex II to the present document;
 - c) encourage Signatories to contribute to the review of the SakerGAP during the coming triennium, and to develop and implement monitoring programmes in order to close the existing data and information gaps;
 - d) request that the Saker Falcon Task Force, supported by the Coordinating Unit, and subject to the availability of resources, continue to develop, refine and implement the Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework, where legally possible, and review and update the SakerGAP.

¹¹ <https://www.cms.int/document/financial-and-administrative-matters-19>

ANNEX 1

DECISIONS 15.173 AND 15.174

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

Directed to Parties

15.173 Party Range States are requested and Non-Party Range States are encouraged to:

- a) contribute to the review of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) during the coming triennium;
- b) develop and implement monitoring programmes, in order to close the existing data and information gaps.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.174 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 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 assist them to develop and implement monitoring programmes;
- c) subject to the availability of resources, review and update the SakerGAP;
- d) invite Range States to renew their Saker Falcon Task Force membership.

ANNEX 2

SAKER FALCON RELATED ACTIONS INCLUDED IN THE CMS PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD BETWEEN COP15 AND COP16 (ANNEX 6 TO RESOLUTIONS 15.1)

Activity 1.1.23 - Saker Falcon Action Plan Coordinate, convene Task Force meeting and implement priority actions

Activity 1.1.24 - Convene regional workshops

Mandate: Action Plan, Resolution11.18 (Rev.COP15), Decision.15.174

Object of expenditure	Years				Total
	2026	2027	2028	2029	
Part-time Coordinator	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
Consultant for updating the SakerGAP	40,000				40,000
Travel		10,000		10,000	20,000
Grants / consultancies	30,000		30,000		60,000
Regional Workshops	30,000		30,000		60,000
Total funds required	125,000	35,000	85,000	35,000	280,000