



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE BUKHARA DEER

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Workshop “Securing Bukhara Deer Habitat Connectivity
in the Lower Amu Darya”
Urgench, Uzbekistan, 23-25 September 2026

DRAFT RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOWER AMU DARYA CONNECTIVITY ACTION PLAN FOR THE BUKHARA DEER

Background

1. The Bukhara deer is listed on Appendices I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). CMS Parties that are Range States of the Appendix I-listed species are obliged to prohibit their taking, to conserve and, where feasible and appropriate, restore those habitats of the species which are of importance in removing the species from danger of extinction and to prevent, remove, compensate for or minimize, as appropriate, the adverse effects of activities or obstacles that seriously impede or prevent the migration of the species.
2. The *Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation and Restoration of the Bukhara Deer* (hereinafter – Bukhara deer MOU), developed under CMS, together with its programme of work for the Bukhara deer provides the principal international framework for cooperation among the Range States. In addition, Resolution 11.24 (Rev.COP15) *Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)* and its associated Work Programme 2026 – 2032, govern regional cooperation to address threats common to many mammal species of the region, such as the disruption of ecological connectivity, human-wildlife conflict, poaching etc, and to secure necessary funding for implementation of these commitments (CAMI WP Activities 2.1-2.5).
3. Today, the largest population of Bukhara deer occurs in the Badai-Tugai riparian forest of the Lower Amu Darya Biosphere Reserve (LABR) in Uzbekistan. While conservation efforts have led to significant population growth and stabilization in the LABR in recent decades, important challenges remain. These include habitat loss and fragmentation, barriers to migration, poaching, human–wildlife conflict, and locally high population density, which causes habitat degradation and increases the risk of disease outbreaks. Parts of the LABR (Nazarkhan cluster) are located close to the border with Turkmenistan, where suitable habitats also exist in the lower Amu Darya region and could be potentially recolonized by dispersing Bukhara deer provided that habitat conditions are and remain suitable.

Purpose of the workshop

4. The workshop "Securing Bukhara Deer Habitat Connectivity in the Lower Amu Darya" aims to: 1) develop and endorse a concise Lower Amu Darya Connectivity Action Plan for the Bukhara Deer (LACAP) including identified measures to restore connectivity, adjustments in management, potential establishment of an ecological corridor and

translocation of animals where appropriate; 2) identify associated financial resources required to implement the Action Plan; and 3) agree on the next steps for mobilizing necessary funding.

Resource mobilization

5. Successful implementation of the Action Plan will depend on coordinated resource mobilization by governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and other stakeholders. To facilitate this process, the workshop is invited to consider the proposed approach to identifying funding opportunities and coordinating resource mobilization efforts.
6. To support these discussions, Annex I provides an overview of potential funding opportunities that could support the implementation of the LACAP, while Annex II presents a draft Resource Mobilization Framework, identifying priority actions, lead organizations and indicative timelines, which are also referenced in the respective section of the LACAP.

Coordination mechanism for resource mobilization

7. Furthermore, participants are invited to consider establishing a resource mobilization coordination group, comprising representatives of the relevant government authorities, NGOs and international organizations to coordinate resource mobilization efforts and advance the implementation of LACAP.
8. It is proposed that the coordination group be led by an organization with an established presence in Uzbekistan, and experience in mobilizing and managing large-scale conservation funding, including from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The CMS Secretariat would provide technical support as a member of the group and contribute to fundraising efforts within its mandates.

Recommended actions

9. The participants are recommended to:
 - a) Take note of the overview of potential funding opportunities contained in Annex I and use it as a starting point to support future resource mobilization efforts, updating it periodically as new funding opportunities emerge and priorities evolve.
 - b) Review and agree on the indicative Resource Mobilization Plan contained in Annex II, including its priority actions, lead organizations and indicative timelines.
 - c) Establish a Resource Mobilization Coordination Group to coordinate fundraising and resource mobilization efforts in support of the implementation of the LACAP.
 - d) Designate focal points from the participating organizations to participate in the work of the Resource Mobilization Coordination Group.
 - e) Identify a lead organization to lead the Resource Mobilization Coordination Group and coordinate its activities, encouraging the members of the Coordination Group to initiate engagement with potential donors and funding partners, based on the opportunities identified in Annex I and to deliver the outputs as per draft resource mobilization framework in Annex II and the respective section of the LACAP.

ANNEX I**OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE LOWER AMU DARYA CONNECTIVITY ACTION PLAN FOR THE BUKHARA DEER****Introduction**

This document provides an overview of potential funding opportunities that could support the implementation of the Lower Amu Darya Connectivity Action Plan for the Bukhara Deer (LACAP). It is intended to provide initial information to the proposed Resource Mobilization Coordination Group and other relevant stakeholders to be used for identifying funding opportunities for coordinated funding proposals that align with the objectives of the Action Plan. The overview includes opportunities for mobilizing national resources, project-based financing and longer-term sustainable financing mechanisms.

The funding opportunities presented below are indicative and are intended to facilitate discussions and next steps for resource mobilization. Eligibility, funding priorities and application procedures vary between funding mechanisms and remain subject to the respective donor requirements and future calls for proposals. The overview should therefore be considered as background information for the framework activities provided in Annex II and respective sections of the LACAP. The coordination group may choose to update this overview, if necessary as new funding opportunities emerge and priorities evolve.

Strategic entry points for financing Bukhara deer habitat restoration and conservation

Successful and lasting conservation of Bukhara deer largely depends on securing its habitat and preventing further habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation. Tugai forests are highly threatened riparian ecosystems that provide critical habitat not only for the Bukhara deer but also for a diverse assemblage of rare, endemic and threatened species, including CMS-listed birds and fish, as well as other species of conservation concern that are not listed on CMS Appendices. This broader biodiversity value should be taken into account when identifying and developing funding opportunities for Bukhara deer conservation at both national and international levels. In particular, greater integration of plans, strategies and conservation actions targeting different species and components of the same ecosystem could help maximize synergies, avoid duplication of efforts, and strengthen the overall ecological impact and effectiveness.

Bukhara deer conservation, in particular habitat restoration, conservation and securing habitat connectivity involve consultations and cooperation with multiple stakeholders. Therefore, also funding for such activities should be pursued through a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach that links biodiversity conservation with ensuring provision of ecosystem services and supporting local livelihoods.

Beyond biodiversity benefits, conservation of tugai forests can play a role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, water quality improvement as well as soil stabilization. These ecosystem functions can be underlined to utilize the alignment of biodiversity conservation with climate adaptation, sustainable land use and water agendas and to secure necessary funding to achieve multiple objectives.

Tugai ecosystems in the lower Amu Darya are shared between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The aspect of transboundary cooperation further opens opportunities to address specific funding streams dedicated to strengthening transboundary conservation efforts for enhanced connectivity, exchange of experiences and the restoration of a transboundary Bukhara deer population in the lower Amu Darya.

Furthermore, support of local communities for conservation measures is indispensable given the proximity of agricultural lands to Bukhara deer habitat and the competition for water between agriculture and the nature reserve. Illegal killing of Bukhara deer is a serious threat to the population

mostly as a response to crop raiding by the deer and resulting human-wildlife conflict. Some approaches to increasing local community support for Bukhara deer conservation include creating opportunities for local communities to develop and benefit from ecological tourism, such as guided tours featuring Bukhara deer observation, and involving local residents more directly in the conservation and management of Bukhara deer habitats. (See recommendations on non-extractive use of Bukhara deer from the BfN-CMS Study “[Potential for Community-based Wildlife Management in Central Asia](#)”). Projects and national funding streams could therefore target community engagement and include conservation-linked benefits for local livelihoods.

1. National Funds

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) provide an important policy framework for mobilizing domestic and international funding for Bukhara deer conservation. Positioning conservation actions within the implementation of the NBSAP could facilitate access to national funding and strengthen eligibility for international biodiversity and climate finance.

In Turkmenistan, the NBSAP is currently under development, with actions for the conservation of rare species and their habitats planned to be included. It would be advisable to ensure that the LACAP, particularly the aspect of transboundary cooperation, is adequately reflected in the NBSAP. This would help strengthen national ownership of its implementation and create additional opportunities to mobilize both domestic and international financial resources for biodiversity conservation.

Within Uzbekistan’s NBSAP, several priority actions may be relevant to LACAP. These include Action 1 of the NBSAP, on strengthening monitoring of flora and fauna and improving analysis of biodiversity data, could support long-term monitoring of Bukhara deer populations and their habitats. Action 9, promoting the integration of biodiversity conservation into key economic sectors, creates opportunities to incorporate deer conservation and habitat connectivity into land-use planning, water management, forestry and agriculture. Furthermore, Action 15, covering the restoration and creation of tugai forests, aligns closely with efforts to restore and reconnect critical Bukhara deer habitat. These could be used as strategic entry points to facilitate funding for relevant activities of the LACAP.

2. Project Funds (subject to successful applications by the coordination group members and other stakeholders)

In addition to national funds, targeted project funding may be helpful in addressing the disrupted connectivity of Bukhara deer in the lower Amu Darya landscape. Project concepts might be more competitive if not exclusively focusing on one species, but rather adopting an ecosystem-based focus, including the conservation of wetlands and all related endemic species, such as the Bukhara deer, sturgeons and migratory birds listed on CMS as well as endemic reptiles and plants. In addition, adopting a landscape level integrative approach to such proposals may be advisable, incorporating all or some of the strategic entry points mentioned above, depending on the priorities of each funding opportunity.

For example, depending on the priorities and situation of individual countries as well as funding cycle criteria once they are announced, the International Climate Initiative of the German Government (IKI), the Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF) as well as the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) could be well suited to support key LACAP objectives.

2.1 International Climate Initiative of the German Government

The [International Climate Initiative \(IKI\)](#) is one of Germany’s principal funding mechanisms for international climate and biodiversity action, financed by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN), in cooperation with other German ministries depending on the funding window. IKI supports the implementation of the **Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC** and the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, including through actions on climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and biodiversity

conservation. For Bukhara deer conservation, the most relevant IKI priorities are conserving biological diversity in line with CBD targets and adapting to the impacts of climate change, through wetland restoration/conservation.

The following ecosystem functions of tugai forests can be highlighted and incorporated in the activities of a project proposal:

- **Carbon sequestration and storage:** Restoration of tugai forests enhances carbon sequestration by storing carbon in soil and biomass
- **Reducing flood risk** by storing excess water during heavy rainfall and releasing it slowly.
- **Buffering drought impacts** by improving water retention and maintaining groundwater recharge.
- **Protection against erosion** by stabilizing riverbanks.
- **Improvement of water quality**, increasing the resilience of freshwater systems.
- **Maintaining biodiversity** by providing resilient habitats and ecological refuges for endemic species and migratory species as climate conditions change.
- **Enhancing landscape connectivity**, allowing Bukhara deer and other species to shift their ranges in response to changing climate conditions.

2.2. Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF)

[The Kunming Biodiversity Fund \(KBF\)](#) is a biodiversity financing mechanism established in 2024 under the leadership of the Government of China, in strategic partnership with UNEP, to support developing countries in accelerating implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). It complements existing biodiversity finance mechanisms, including the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), and focuses on translating global biodiversity commitments into concrete action at national, regional, and local levels.

The KBF's priorities are structured around several key outcome areas: (1) restoration and protection of ecosystems to improve biodiversity and ecosystem services; (2) mainstreaming biodiversity into policies, planning and strategies; (3) promoting sustainable use of biodiversity; (4) increasing engagement of businesses and consumers in biodiversity conservation; (5) strengthening resource mobilization for biodiversity conservation; (6) improving capacity, cooperation and monitoring for biodiversity implementation; and (7) addressing threats such as invasive alien species.

A project centred on Bukhara deer habitat connectivity in the Lower Amu Darya landscape, combining wetland restoration, tugai forest restoration, ecological corridor designation, and transboundary cooperation with Turkmenistan, would align well with several KMGBF targets and might thus be a good opportunity. The priorities and conditions of each funding cycle may change and will be published on the Fund's website.

2.3 Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF)

The [Global Biodiversity Framework Fund \(GBFF\)](#) is particularly relevant to the conservation of Bukhara deer and habitat connectivity in the Lower Amu Darya landscape, as it supports large-scale biodiversity initiatives addressing species conservation, ecosystem restoration, ecological connectivity and sustainable land and natural resource management. In the Lower Amu Darya landscape, GBFF could therefore provide an opportunity to scale up and finance priority measures identified through a habitat connectivity planning process, including restoration and improved management of tugai habitats, strengthening ecological connectivity, addressing pressures such as unsustainable grazing and other habitat degradation, and supporting long-term conservation of the Bukhara deer population. GBFF resources are accessed through accredited GEF agencies, such as UNEP and UNDP, in cooperation with national governments and GEF Operational Focal Points. The Fund could therefore be particularly relevant for developing a larger, integrated financing proposal

for the Lower Amu Darya that links Bukhara deer conservation, ecosystem restoration, connectivity and climate resilience.

3. Sustainable financing

Given the global importance of the Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve (LABR) (e.g. reflected in its UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves listing), exploring sustainable financing approaches could support the long-term conservation of its tugai forest ecosystems and associated biodiversity. The area combines globally threatened ecosystems with internationally important populations of the Bukhara deer and other endemic and threatened species. Investments in the area could therefore generate multiple and measurable conservation benefits, including improved habitat connectivity, ecosystem restoration and species recovery, while also supporting ecosystem services and local livelihoods.

A range of financing mechanisms could be explored, including payments for ecosystem services, biodiversity credits, climate adaptation finance, carbon finance linked to tugai forest restoration, conservation trust funds and blended financing models. It is important, however, that these approaches are carefully assessed, taking into account the ecological and socio-economic context, as well as possibly requiring significant upfront investment to establish restoration activities, robust monitoring and verification systems, and effective long-term governance to ensure financial sustainability beyond initial donor support.

In Central Asia, UNDP's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) has already supported Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan in analyzing biodiversity finance needs and identifying financing solutions, including strengthened protected area financing, biodiversity offsets, ecotourism, carbon-related approaches and other resource mobilization mechanisms. In the frame of BIOFIN UNDP is currently working together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan to identify financing options for the country's biodiversity conservation. In addition, the BfN-CMS report 'Funding options for the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)' provides a resource for considering innovative financing approaches alongside government budgets, donor funding and private-sector engagement.

Building on existing initiatives and studies, cooperation with UNDP BIOFIN and other relevant partners could support a more detailed assessment of the feasibility of different financing mechanisms for LABR and identify the most promising concepts for inclusion in future funding programmes.

As a first step, it may be useful to assess in detail which mechanisms are ecologically, legally and financially feasible in the Lower Amu Darya landscape context and which could realistically generate conservation and community benefits for the Bukhara deer at sufficient scale. The most promising options could then be incorporated into future project proposals or national financing strategies, including proposals seeking initial investment to establish the necessary governance, capacity, monitoring and restoration measures.

ANNEX II

DRAFT RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOWER AMU DARYA CONNECTIVITY ACTION PLAN FOR THE BUKHARA DEER (LACAP)

Activity	Priority	Lead ¹	Supporting organizations	Deadline	Notes
National funds					
1. Integrate relevant activities into national budgeting plans for protected area management, species monitoring, surveys and protection measures.	1	National Committee for Ecology and Climate Change of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NCECC) and Ministry of Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan (MEP)	All relevant organizations, as needed	January, 2027	In Uzbekistan in particular, ensure that activities of the Action Plan are included under action 1, 9 and 15 of the NBSAP; that legislation on ecological corridors is developed and resources dedicated to protection regimes. In Turkmenistan, ensure that elements of the Action Plan are included in the NBSAP.
2. Provide a brief report to the coordination group	1	NCECC and MEP (assign persons)	-	In January 2027	
Project funds					
3. Develop a proposal on wetland conservation and connectivity restoration in the lower Amu Darya as a climate adaptation measure covering Bukhara deer, CMS-listed fish species and birds as flagship species for IKI.	2	tbc	CMS (component on migratory species), relevant coordination group members, other partners	To be determined by the new call for proposals, which is expected to be announced during or after the UNFCCC COP in 2026.	Potential topics to be addressed: Bukhara deer habitat management to ensure more even distribution of individuals; other aspects of species' conservation; livestock grazing management; water management; fire risk reduction; involvement of local communities; establishment of ecological corridors.

¹ Roles of organizations to be confirmed

Activity	Priority	Lead ¹	Supporting organizations	Deadline	Notes
4. Prepare a draft project proposal to the KBF fund, potentially combining wetland restoration, tugai forest restoration, ecological corridor designation, and transboundary cooperation with Turkmenistan.	2	tbc	Relevant coordination group members, CMS Secretariat on migratory species component	2027	In accordance with the gaps identified in the <i>Global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework</i> .
5. Evaluate the possibility of a project proposal to the GBFF.	2	tbc	Relevant coordination group members	December 2026	Include conservation of tugai ecosystems with Bukhara deer as a flagship species; sustainable land use management; and community-based eco-tourism.
Sustainable finance					
6. Evaluate possibilities and determine necessary steps to be taken to develop sustainable financing mechanisms for LABR in cooperation with UNDP BIOFIN.	3	tbc		Within a project	Incorporate suitable finance components into project proposals to explore these options in more detail, building on the report 'Funding Options for CAMI' and the work within BIOFIN.
7. Include these steps into funding proposals and, possibly, national funding strategies.	3	tbc		Within a project	