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RAPTORS MOU

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.13.2

CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN VULTURES

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU and the Vulture Coordination Team)

Summary:

This document reports on progress in implementing Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14) *Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures* and related CMS Decisions as mandated by Decision 14.156.

The document provides an overview of progress in implementing the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP), including findings from the Mid-term Implementation Review, key developments in addressing principal threats to the 15 species covered by the plan, the adoption of the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan (WAVCAP), updated national reporting from Signatories, and interagency cooperation.

The Meeting is invited to consider measures to strengthen the coordination and implementation of the Vulture MsAP and its regional tools, including options for mobilizing the necessary financial and in-kind support.

Background

1. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), at its 12th meeting (COP12, Manila, 2017), adopted Resolution 12.10 *Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures*, in which it adopted the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) and urged Parties and encouraged non-Party Range States, partners and stakeholders to implement it as a matter of priority. It requested the Secretariat to facilitate the continuation of the Vulture Working Group, subject to the availability of funds.

2. At its 13th meeting (COP13, Gandhinagar, 2020), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 13.50–13.53 on the conservation of African-Eurasian vultures. Decision 13.53 directed the Coordinating Unit (CU) of the Raptors MOU to report to each subsequent Meeting of Signatories and to meetings of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council. The Third Meeting of Signatories (MOS3, Dubai, 3–6 July 2023) received a report on implementation under document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.13.2.

3. At its 14th meeting (COP14, Samarkand, 12–17 February 2024), the Conference of the Parties to CMS adopted Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14) *Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures*, amending the Resolution to align with updated strategic frameworks, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2022. The amended Resolution inter alia calls on Parties and stakeholders to be aware of the risk to vulture populations from the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza. COP14 also adopted Decisions 14.148 - 14.156. Decision 14.156 directed the Secretariat to report on implementation of those Decisions to the next Meeting of Signatories and to COP15.

4. At its 15th meeting (COP15, Campo Grande, 23–29 March 2026), the Conference of the Parties to CMS adopted new Decisions 15.170 - 15.172 on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures. Decision 15.172 directs the Secretariat to report on the implementation of these Decisions to the next Meeting of Signatories of the Raptors MOU and to CMS COP16.

5. The present document implements that mandate. It updates the information provided to MOS3 in document UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.13.2 and to COP14 in document UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.6/Rev.1 and COP15 in document UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.26.6, drawing on information gathered through the Vulture Coordination Team and national reports submitted by Raptors MOU Signatories and Cooperating Partners.

The Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (Vulture MsAP)

6. The Vulture MsAP covers the geographic ranges of all 15 species of migratory African-Eurasian vultures (Table 1 below). These species are one of the most threatened groups of migratory birds in the world: of the 15, 11 are globally threatened and 8 are categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List; only 1 remains classified as Least Concern. The plan sets out 12 objectives, with a framework of actions encompassing 124 activities. It also contains information on, or links to, existing subsidiary plans: the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Balkan and Central Asian Populations of the Egyptian Vulture

(Annex 4 to the Vulture MsAP), the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Cinereous Vulture (Annex 5), and a Blueprint for the Recovery of South Asia's Critically Endangered Gyps Vultures (Annex 6).

7. The Vulture MsAP Strategic Implementation Plan, published in February 2020 with financial support from the Federal Office for the Environment of the Government of Switzerland, provided a preliminary inventory of activities and further developed priorities for delivering the agreed framework.

8. The Vulture MsAP[1] is used in the assessment of vulture-related proposals for funding under the EU LIFE Programme, and has been cited in more than 140 peer-reviewed scientific articles. The direct links with the South Asia regional plan and species action plans have added important credibility and profile for generating external and government support for prioritised actions. Its value has also been recognized more widely beyond its original scope: Members of the Vulture Coordination Team (VCT; see below) have also advised on the development of the Multi-species Action Plan for Bustards[2] and the proposed Multi-species Action Plan for New World Vultures.

Table 1: Conservation status of African-Eurasian vulture species covered by the Vulture MsAP

Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Raptors MOU Category**	**CMS Appendix**	**Global IUCN Status**
Bearded Vulture	*Gypaetus barbatus*	1	I*& II	NT
Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*	1	I & II	EN
Red-headed Vulture	*Sarcogyps calvus*	1	I & II	CR
White-headed Vulture	*Trigonoceps occipitalis*	1	I & II	CR
Hooded Vulture	*Necrosyrtes monachus*	1	I & II	CR
Himalayan Griffon	*Gyps himalayensis*	1	II	NT
White-rumped Vulture	*Gyps bengalensis*	1	I & II	CR
White-backed Vulture	*Gyps africanus*	1	I & II	CR
Indian Vulture	*Gyps indicus*	1	I & II	CR
Slender-billed Vulture	*Gyps tenuirostris*	1	I & II	CR
Cape Vulture	*Gyps coprotheres*	1	I & II	VU
Rüppell's Vulture	*Gyps rueppelli*	1	I & II	CR
Griffon Vulture	*Gyps fulvus*	3	II	LC
Cinereous Vulture	*Aegypius monachus*	1	II	NT
Lappet-faced Vulture	*Torgos tracheliotos*	1	I & II	EN

IUCN Red List categories: CR = Critically Endangered; EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable; NT = Near Threatened; LC = Least Concern.
* The listing of the Bearded Vulture in CMS Appendix I applies to *Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis (Southern African population).*

Mid-term Implementation Review of the Vulture MsAP

9. The Mid-term Implementation Review (MTIR) of the Vulture MsAP, as envisaged in the plan, was commissioned by the Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit (CU) and completed by the VCT with funding from the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD). The review was launched in early 2023, with a questionnaire circulated to all Range States including Raptors MOU

[1] https://raptors.cms.int/publication/multi-species-action-plan-conserve-african-eurasian-vultures-vulture-msap-cms-technical
[2] UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.26.4.2/Annex 1

Signatories and Cooperating Partners, CMS Parties and other vulture experts. Further consultation took place at the European Vulture Conference (Cáceres, Spain, November 2023, organised by the Vulture Conservation Foundation, VCF), with the final report completed in the first quarter of 2024 (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Inf.16c)[3] and presented at a side event at CMS COP14.

10. The MTIR provided a comprehensive overview of the implementation of the Vulture MsAP for the period 2017 - 2023 and assessed progress towards its 12 objectives. The findings confirm that significant progress has been achieved in certain regions, in particular Europe, notably through the EU LIFE financial instrument, and South and South-West Asia under the SAVE Consortium, but that considerable gaps remain in coordination capacity and financial resources across much of the plan's geographic scope, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. The MTIR confirmed the continued relevance of the plan's objectives and recommended strengthening coordination mechanisms and securing dedicated funding at all levels.

The Vulture Coordination Team

11. Representatives of three organizations, together with regional experts, support the implementation of the Vulture MsAP through the Vulture Coordination Team (VCT), facilitated by the Coordinating Unit (CU) of the Raptors MOU. The current members are listed in Annex 1 to this document. The VCT is facilitated by the Raptors MOU CU. It meets regularly to share information, review funding opportunities and plan for promoting the Vulture MsAP at meetings and forums. Its activities contribute to Objective 12 of the Vulture MsAP, which aims to advance vulture conservation through effective promotion and implementation of the plan. The VCT has ensured that the Vulture MsAP maintains its relevance and influence among the conservation community in the intersessional period between MOS3 and MOS4.

12. Following a call for nominations and funding issued through Notification 2024/027 (November 2024), no financial support was offered and only a small number of countries nominated members to the formal Vulture Working Group mandated by Decision 14.155. A number of meetings were held with potential regional coordinators, but the lack of resources remains a major impediment to establishing the formal working group structure. The VCT has continued to function in an interim capacity, funded by the core budgets of the participating organisations, maintaining the operational continuity of Vulture MsAP coordination.

Implementation of the Vulture MsAP: selected progress under key objectives

Objective 1 – Reducing Mortality from Poisoning

13. Objective 1 of the Vulture MsAP aims to significantly reduce the most important threat to vultures: the mortality of vultures caused unintentionally by toxic substances used, often illegally, in the control and hunting of vertebrates, as well as intentional poisoning for the collection of vulture body parts. Ongoing activities include:

[3] The Mid-Term Implementation Review is also available at: https://raptors.cms.int/publication/mid-term-implementation-review-multi-species-action-plan-conserve-african-eurasian

- Engaging with government agencies and local communities to raise awareness of harm caused by poison baits and to promote non-toxic pest control alternatives;
- Building the capacity of law enforcement and conservation agency staff. In Africa, over 7,000 rangers, police officers and veterinarians from 24 countries have been trained since 2017 by members of the IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group (VSG) and NGOs. In Europe, the Wildlife Crime Academy has trained well over 400 enforcement officers, toxicologists and veterinarians in wildlife crime forensic techniques, with a further 700 trained through follow-up national courses;
- Maintaining regional and national databases on wildlife poisoning events, including the African Wildlife Poisoning Database, the Balkan Wildlife Poisoning Database, and national databases in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Hungary, North Macedonia, Portugal, and Serbia;
- Implementing the LIFE projects “BalkanDetox” and “WildLIFE Crime Academy” across many European countries, including 7 Balkan countries, through which national working groups against poison baits have been established, road maps developed and improvements to national legislation proposed, and in some cases approved.

14. In Saudi Arabia, two supplementary feeding sites for vultures (“vulture restaurants”) have been operational since 2024, providing safe food and supporting local vulture populations. In Oman, the Environment Society of Oman continues to collaborate with the national waste management authority to monitor the use by raptors of a feeding station in Dhofar. A significant legal milestone was recorded in Guinea-Bissau, where, in late 2022, a man was sentenced to four years and two months’ imprisonment for poisoning and killing 50 Hooded Vultures (*Necrosyrtes monachus*). This was the first conviction for an environmental crime in Guinea-Bissau and the first custodial sentence in Africa for vulture poisoning, establishing an important legal precedent. The conviction followed sustained engagement by the Raptors MOU CU, the VCF, the IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group and BirdLife International, including a workshop held in Guinea-Bissau in May 2022 to strengthen institutional preparedness to prevent and respond to wildlife-poisoning incidents. These efforts need to be sustained, as several further mass-mortality events involving Hooded Vultures were identified in the country and the wider region.

15. The same organisations undertook a similar mission to The Gambia in November 2025, at the request of the Government of Gambia and in response to five mass-poisoning incidents between May and July 2025 that killed nearly 100 Hooded Vultures. The mission brought together government officers, rangers, NGO staff, local stakeholders, and international vulture experts for five days of intensive training, strategic planning and fieldwork.

<u>Objective 2 – Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)</u>

16. Objective 2 of the Vulture MsAP aims to recognize and minimize vulture mortality caused by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), a category of veterinary medicines responsible for the collapse of several South Asian vulture populations. Significant progress has been achieved in South and South-East and West Asia, primarily under the coordination

of the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) consortium. The SAVE Regional Blueprint Recovery Plan is updated annually[4].

17. Veterinary use of diclofenac is now banned in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Iran, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan and the Socotra Archipelago, while bans and other regulatory restrictions are under discussion in several additional Range States, including Bhutan and Kazakhstan. In Saudi Arabia and Jordan, workshops resulted in recommendations that veterinary use of diclofenac should be reduced and that it should be dispensed only with a prescription. The workshop in Jordan also recommended that veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturers include warning labels on relevant products.

18. Protocols and advisories have also been introduced in several European countries, including Spain, which support particularly high densities of vulture. Monitoring has identified some weaknesses in the regulatory system, although vulture mortality attributable to NSAIDs has not so far been detected on a scale that prompted stronger regulatory action. Research has confirmed that meloxicam and tolfenamic acid are vulture-safe and effective alternatives for veterinary use. India and Bangladesh have also banned veterinary use of aceclofenac, ketoprofen and nimesulide following further safety studies in India, where testing of flunixin and paracetamol is ongoing.

19. The Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU established a working group on NSAIDs in 2022, which developed a fact sheet on NSAIDs and their impact on vultures and other scavenging raptors. The fact sheet has been published on a dedicated webpage[5].

20. The IUCN Vulture Specialist Group and CU met with representatives of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) to discuss awareness-raising needs among veterinary authorities, and plans are being developed for vulture experts to participate in WOAH capacity-building activities. Furthermore, in cooperation with the CMS Working Group on Migratory Species and Health, a joint WOAH-CMS Factsheet for veterinary authorities and practitioners on the effects of NSAIDs on Vulture and other scavenging raptors was produced (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Inf.20)[6]. Studies of vulture microbiomes are also being conducted in Europe as part of a One Health approach.

21. The VCT is urging governments and the pharmaceutical industry to implement the CMS Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP15) *Preventing poisoning of migratory birds,* particularly the requirement for all veterinary NSAIDs to be tested for vulture safety as part of the licensing process for all NSAIDs intended for veterinary use.

Objective 3 – Lead Poisoning from Ammunition

22. Objective 3 of the Vulture MsAP aims to fully implement the phasing out of lead ammunition by hunters, as set out in Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP15). A series of national workshops and consultations across southern Africa over a long period has led to the drafting (now out for consultation) of a "Regional strategy and transition roadmap for phasing out lead ammunition in southern Africa", commissioned by BirdLife International under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Zimbabwe has adopted its first

[4] The latest version is available at: https://save-vultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SAVE-Blueprint2025Final.pdf
[5] https://raptors.cms.int/page/non-steroidal-anti-inflammatory-drugs-and-vultures
[6] The Fact sheet is also available at: https://raptors.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/vulture-emergency-v6-150526.pdf

National Vulture Lead strategy for 2025-2035. This follows the development of the SADC's regional vultures conservation strategy (see below). The United Kingdom has decided to ban lead from the majority of shots used for hunting. The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)'s Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) supported the restriction proposal on lead in outdoor shooting and fishing in 2022, recommending a shorter transition period for the phase-out of lead gunshot in hunting; the Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis adopted its opinion in December 2022. In October 2026 the European Parliament supported the proposal by the European Commission to prohibit the sale, carrying, and firing of lead gunshot in nature, extending past the previous wetland restrictions into fields, forests, and general countryside. The proposal includes a 7-year transition period to adapt to non-toxic alternatives.

23. Through Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP15), CMS Parties continued the Intergovernmental Task Force on Phasing Out the Use of Lead Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights (Lead Task Force) and invited Parties to mobilise resources for its coordination and activities.

Objective 4 – Trade in Vulture Parts for Belief-based Use

24. Objective 4 of the Vulture MsAP aims to reduce and eventually halt the trade in vulture parts for belief-based use. Poisoning for belief-based use has been identified as a major and growing threat across Africa. Incidents are increasing in West and Southern Africa and becoming more frequent in Central and East Africa, driven by rising local and international demand for vulture body parts used in traditional practices. Large-scale poisoning events in Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (among others) illustrate the widespread and escalating nature of this threat.

25. NGO-led initiatives in The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Nigeria are addressing this issue at the national level. Conservation programmes in Nigeria and Niger have reportedly contributed to reduction of between 80 and 90 per cent in the number of stalls selling vulture parts in some key areas. The first Southern African regional workshop on belief-based use, held in Johannesburg on 28 August 2025, brought together representatives from 12 governments, NGOs and traditional healer associations to address this challenge. A study on belief-based use and its impact on vultures across Africa is envisaged under COP15 Decision 15.171 b) to guide targeted interventions.

Regional Initiatives and Interagency Cooperation

Europe

26. The EU LIFE financial instrument has continued to provide effective co-funding for vulture conservation in Europe, with activities implemented beyond the EU's borders. Significant LIFE projects contributing to Vulture MsAP implementation include:

- BalkanDetox LIFE and LIFE WildLIFE Crime Academy (which has trained hundreds of enforcement agencies to investigate adequately poisoning cases across Europe);
- LIFE GypConnect and LIFE GYPACT (which has reintroduced successfully the bearded vulture in southern France, Massif Central and the Pre-Alps);
- LIFE Rupis on the conservation of Egyptian vulture in Portugal and Spain;

- LIFE Bearded Vulture Bulgaria (currently reintroducing the bearded vulture in Bulgaria and consolidating the successful reintroduction of cinereous vultures in Bulgaria);
- LIFE GYPRESCUE (which has reinforced the threatened island population of bearded vultures in Corsica);
- LIFE with Vultures Cyprus (which has successfully saved the griffon vulture from extinction in Cyprus);
- LIFE Aegypius Return (responsible for a trebling of the cinereous vulture population in Portugal, which has been downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered at the national red list);
- LIFE Safe for Vultures, which has doubled Sardinia's griffon vulture population and led to the natural recolonization of the Egyptian Vulture;
- the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE Project, through which flyway-level actions have helped to stabilize the easternmost European population of the Egyptian vulture. The species was categorized as Vulnerable in the 2021 European Red List assessment. A review of the Egyptian Vulture Flyway Action Plan, contained in Annex 4 to the Vulture MsAP (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Inf.16a)[7], was also completed under the project. The project received the LIFE Citizens' Prize at the 2026 LIFE Awards in recognition of its conservation achievements and strong public support.

South and South-East Asia

27. The SAVE consortium and the inter-Governmental Regional Steering Committee (RSC) have supported the prioritisation of regional vulture-conservation actions. Together, these mechanisms have helped to maintain the profile of and attention to those actions. The functioning of SAVE has remained dependent on NGO support but is moving towards a more partner-driven initiative. The RSC has continued to operate through its rotating chair, although limited government ownership and resourcing remain significant challenge.

Africa

28. The West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan 2023 - 2043 (WAVCAP) (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Inf.14a)[8] was finalized by the Raptors MOU CU following extensive stakeholder engagement, including a three-day workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2022. The workshop brought together CMS National Focal Points, CITES National Authorities and other government representatives, as well as academics and NGOs from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The workshop was supported with funding from EAD.

29. The WAVCAP was submitted to the 7th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC7, 17-20 September 2024), which recommended its adoption without

[7] The Egyptian Vulture Action Pan is also available at: https://raptors.cms.int/publication/flyway-action-plan-conservation-balkan-and-central-asian-populations-egyptian-vulture

[8] The WAVCAP is also available at: https://raptors.cms.int/page/west-african-vulture-conservation-action-plan-2023-2043

change (see Annex 2 of UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC7/Report). The 56th meeting of the CMS Standing Committee (StC56, 25-27 March 2025 see para 137 of UNEP/CMS/StC56/Report) subsequently adopted the WAVCAP. Summaries in French[9] and Spanish[10] have been produced and made publicly available. The WAVCAP provides an operational framework for implementing the Vulture MsAP in West Africa, focusing primarily on addressing vulture take driven by belief-based use. To promote the implementation of the WAVCAP, a workshop co-hosted by the Government of Nigeria, and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation is scheduled to take place in Abuja on 3-5 November 2026. Raptors MOU Signatories in West African Range States are urged to contribute actively to its implementation.

30. Building on the WAVCAP model, the Secretariat contributed to the development of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan by supporting a situation analysis of vultures and their conservation in Southern Africa (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS4/Inf.24). The SADC Plan was launched in Johannesburg on 26–27 August 2025. The Secretariat has held discussions with the SADC Secretariat and CMS Parties in the region on aligning coordination of the SADC and CMS Action Plans and is exploring similar engagement with other Regional Economic Communities.

31. Result 11.3 of the Vulture MsAP, “Environmental and socio-economic values of vultures are understood and promoted”, includes an action to conduct a total economic valuation (TEV) of vultures. A first published assessment[11] estimated the total economic value of ecosystem services in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe at slightly more than USD 250 million per year. The estimate was largely attributed to existence and bequest values and to the sanitation and pest-control services provided by vultures, strengthening the economic, health and welfare case for their conservation.

Middle East

32. Although vultures are legally protected under national legislation throughout the Middle East, no country in the region has yet developed a national action plan for the species group. In Saudi Arabia, nest monitoring and breeding surveys for the Eurasian griffon vulture, the Egyptian vulture and the lappet-faced vulture have continued in the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Royal Natural Reserve, while other protected areas have identified these species as conservation priorities.

33. Research to improve understanding of vulture movements was undertaken in Oman and Saudi Arabia for the lappet-faced vulture and the Eurasian griffon vulture, and a survey of the Egyptian vulture was planned for Socotra, Yemen. In Jordan, periodic and regular monitoring of Eurasian griffon vulture nesting areas was conducted within the Dana Biosphere Reserve. In response to electrocution and collision associated with medium-voltage power lines, several high-risk hotspots were insulated in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and memoranda of understanding were concluded with the electricity companies concerned.

[9] https://raptors.cms.int/fr/publication/west-africa-vulture-conservation-action-plan-french-summary
[10] https://raptors.cms.int/es/publication/west-africa-vulture-conservation-action-plan-spanish-summary
[11] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2025.101775

34. In Jordan, a shutdown-on-demand protocol was applied as required at all wind energy facilities throughout the year. In addition, a national database on bird monitoring at wind energy developments was established to track the implementation of the agreed mitigation protocols and to evaluate the programme periodically.

Cooperation with CITES

35. Cooperation with CITES has continued, particularly in relation to West Africa. Following the adoption of CITES Decisions 18.186–18.192 at COP18 in 2019, and their subsequent revision at COP19 and COP20, the CMS and CITES Secretariats commissioned UNEP–WCMC to review trade in and sentinel poisoning of West African vultures. At CITES COP20, the White-backed Vulture and Rüppell's Vulture were transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I following the adoption of a proposal submitted by several West and Central African Range States. This strengthens controls on international commercial trade in the two species. VCT members provided information to the proponents and recommended that the Hooded Vulture and other African vulture species be considered in future proposals.

36. These activities are closely linked to implementation under Objective 1 because poisoning is a principal means of obtaining vulture body parts. Parties and NGO partners have continued efforts to disrupt illegal trade and reduce demand by supporting traditional practitioners and consumers in moving away from the use of wild-sourced vulture parts. This work also contributed to implementation of the Joint CMS–CITES Programme of Work 2020–2025.

Avian Influenza

37. The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza (HPAI) continues to pose a risk to vulture populations already under pressure from other threats. Cases of vulture mortality attributable to HPAI have been recorded across multiple regions, and in several vulture species. Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14), Conservation of African-Eurasian vultures, calls on Parties and stakeholders to monitor the prevalence of HPAI in wild and domestic avian populations and to take timely and effective actions to reduce transmission between domestic and wild migratory birds. The CU encourages Range States to take the necessary steps to prevent and combat the disease where it could impact vultures.

National reporting

38. In preparation for COP15, a questionnaire was circulated through Notification 2025/018 to all CMS Parties, Raptors MOU Signatories and Cooperating Partners. A webinar was held on 15 July 2025 to support respondents, attended by representatives of 21 range states. Completed questionnaires were received from Belgium, Croatia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Pakistan, Spain and Togo. A full report summarizing responses received (CMS/COP15/Inf.26.6a) was prepared by the Raptors MOU CU.

39. Several countries, particularly in Europe, are actively engaged in implementing the Vulture MsAP. The main findings by theme are as follows:

- **Partnerships**: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Spain have developed

partnerships with conservation groups, particularly anti-poaching initiatives, often through the EU LIFE Programme, contributing to efforts to combat poisoning and illegal killing.

- **Training**: Training courses focusing on handling poisoning incidents, forensic analysis and judicial investigations have been delivered in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Spain, primarily through the Wildlife Crime Academy.

- **Best practices**: France has a National Action Plan to improve food availability for vultures. Spain promotes new laws on lead shot use and shares guidelines with other countries. Morocco disseminates success stories from raptor rehabilitation centres through visits and publications. Croatia adopted a National Action Plan for the Griffon Vulture, based on the Vulture MsAP. Greece adopted a local action plan to combat the use of poison baits, while Bulgaria adopted a National Action Plan to Combat the Illicit Use of Poisons in the Wild.

- **Protocols and regulations**: National protocols are in place in Croatia, France, North Macedonia, Portugal and Spain, and in many other European countries, for managing rescue centres, responding to poisoning incidents and regulating feeding stations. National road maps and investigation protocols for wildlife poisoning have been developed for all Balkan countries, building on Spanish experience.

- **Technology**: GPS tracking has become standard practice in many Range States. At any one time, hundreds of vultures are being monitored using GPS tags in Europe and Africa, with smaller numbers tracked in Asia. Online databases for reporting wildlife mortality, early-warning systems and digital public-education tools are also in use in several countries.

- **National strategies**: Several countries have finalized or are developing national vulture conservation strategies. Progress has been reported from the Balkans, Tanzania and Southern Africa. Spain has 16 regional conservation plans for vultures in addition to national-level plans. Zimbabwe, which adopted the first national vulture action plan in Africa, has updated the plan for the period 2025-2035.

- **Challenges**: Common challenges include limited financial resources, insufficient staffing and data gaps. Morocco notes difficulty securing species-specific funding. Spain identifies improving national and EU regulations on lead ammunition and anticoagulant rodenticides as a priority challenge.

Discussion and Analysis

40. Overall, implementation of the Vulture MsAP demonstrates that sustained regional coordination, targeted investment and international cooperation can deliver measurable conservation gains. Nevertheless, significant disparities remain among regions, particularly regarding coordination capacity, sustainable financing and implementation of actions addressing poisoning, belief-based use and other key threats.

41. Significant progress has been made in regions that received dedicated funding from governmental and intergovernmental sources, particularly the EU LIFE financial instrument. However, in other regions, notably across much of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, the successful execution of the Vulture MsAP relies on enhancing coordination capacity, for which no dedicated resources have yet been secured.

42. In South and South-East Asia, the SAVE consortium, with important engagement from the RSC, remains dependent on external NGO support. Sustaining and further developing these coordination mechanisms will require proactive government engagement and adequate resourcing. More broadly, sufficient financial resources are needed to: (a) support coordination and resource-mobilisation efforts; and (b) facilitate implementation of the Vulture MsAP throughout its geographic scope.

43. The operationalization of the Vulture MsAP Working Group and its regional structures, as mandated by CMS Decisions 14.155 and carried forward by COP15 with Decisions 15.170(b) and 15.171(d), remains a priority. The absence of a formally constituted and resourced Working Group limits systematic coordination of implementation at the regional level. The CU is exploring ways of engaging Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the coordination of regional committees.

44. Recognizing that this constraint is financial rather than technical, the CU has prepared an indicative budget for the coordination of the Vulture MsAP for the period 2027–2029, which is set out in Annex 2 to the present document. The budget covers, as its first and overriding priority, the establishment of a dedicated Vulture MsAP Coordinator, together with provision for regional coordination capacity, the servicing of the Vulture MsAP Working Group and its regional structures, the convening of regional meetings and the associated travel, communication and reporting costs. Experience during the present intersessional period has demonstrated that coordination provided on a voluntary basis and absorbed within the core budgets of the participating organizations, has preserved continuity but cannot be sustained indefinitely and is not commensurate with the scale of the conservation emergency facing the 15 species covered by the Plan. Unless resources on the scale indicated in Annex 2 are secured on a multi-annual basis, the Working Group mandated by CMS COP14 and reaffirmed by Decision 15.170 b) cannot be operationalized, and the regional disparities identified by the Mid-term Implementation Review are likely to persist and to widen. Signatories may wish to consider the range of modalities available for financing the post, including voluntary contributions, the secondment of personnel, hosting arrangements with a Range State, a Regional Economic Community or a partner organization, and engagement with philanthropic and private-sector donors.

45. The adoption of the WAVCAP represents a milestone in the implementation of the Vulture MsAP in West Africa. Translating the Plan into operational action requires political commitment from Range States and RECs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and sustained financial investment. The trend of increasing belief-based use poisoning incidents across West, Southern and East Africa is deeply concerning and warrants urgent, targeted intervention. The study on belief-based use envisaged under COP15 Decision 15.171 (b) will help guide such efforts.

46. The case for placing Africa at the center of the next phase of implementation is compelling. Nine of the 15 species covered by the Vulture MsAP occur in Africa, and the continent accounts for the steepest and most rapid declines recorded among them: the hooded vulture, the white-backed vulture, Rüppell's vulture and the white-headed vulture have undergone severe population declines and are listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, while mass poisoning events of the kind reported in paragraphs 14 and 15 above continue to remove hundreds of birds. Africa nevertheless remains the region with the least dedicated coordination capacity and the smallest share of secured funding. Redressing that imbalance will require not only external financial support, but also political leadership from within the region. African Signatories and Range States may therefore wish to consider assuming a lead role in the intersessional period ahead, including by identifying one or more lead countries to champion vulture conservation, by nominating members to the Vulture MsAP Working Group and its African regional structures, by offering to host or to second regional coordination capacity, and by working through the Regional Economic Communities, notably ECOWAS, SADC, the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to embed the objectives of the Vulture MsAP, the WAVCAP and the SADC VCSAP within regional environmental programmes and budgets.

47. The continued engagement and support of Signatories and Cooperating Partners to the Raptors MOU is critical to ensuring that the Vulture MsAP delivers on its objectives within the plan's 2017–2029 timeframe. Signatories are encouraged to report on their national implementation activities, to inform the Secretariat's reporting to COP16.

Priorities for the next intersessional period

48. Building on the progress achieved in implementing the Vulture MsAP, and taking into account the relevant CMS Decisions, the following priorities have been identified for the intersessional period ahead of the Fifth Meeting of Signatories (MOS5):

- securing resources for the Vulture MsAP Working Group and regional coordination, in line with CMS Decision 15.170(b), and initiating timely preparations for the review and update of the Vulture MsAP before the end of its current implementation period in 2029;
- addressing belief-based use and the associated poisoning of vultures, in West, Central and Southern Africa, including by supporting the activities envisaged in CMS Decision 15.171(b);
- maintaining momentum on the regulation of veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) harmful to vultures, and on poison-response systems, in line with CMS Decision 15.147(d) directed to Parties, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, donors and others; and
- strengthening national reporting on vulture conservation, and its integration into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), in line with CMS Decisions 15.170(d) and Decisions 15.170(e).

Action requested

49. Signatories are reminded that Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14) Conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures and CMS Decision 15.170 already set out a comprehensive framework of actions for Parties, non-Party Range States, Cooperating Partners and other stakeholders, including on developing partnerships with anti-poaching and related initiatives; engaging with and supporting the Vulture MsAP Working Group; supporting the Mid-term Review of the Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan; integrating the findings of Mid-term Reviews into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs); and providing the Coordinating Unit with information on implementation in time for the Secretariat's reporting to COP16. Signatories, Range States, Cooperating Partners and stakeholders are reminded of, and urged to continue implementing, these existing mandates. The actions below are proposed to complement, and not replace, those already adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

50. The Meeting is invited to:

(a) take note of this document and the findings of the Mid-term Implementation Review of the Vulture MsAP, and thank the members of the Vulture Coordination Team for their work, much of which has been undertaken on a voluntary basis;

(b) recognize that voluntary arrangements alone are insufficient to coordinate the implementation of the Vulture MsAP across its full geographic scope, and encourage Signatories, Cooperating Partners and other stakeholders to provide financial or in-kind support for the implementation of the Vulture MsAP and its regional instruments, including the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan 2023–2043 (WAVCAP), the SAVE Blueprint Recovery Plan and the SADC Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (VCSAP) 2025–2035;

(c) consider the indicative resource requirements set out in Annex 2 to the present document and the possible modalities for financing dedicated coordination capacity, including voluntary contributions, secondments and hosting arrangements, or a combination of these modalities;

(d) invite Signatories, Cooperating Partners and other donors in a position to do so to indicate, during the present Meeting or in writing to the Coordinating Unit by 30 October 2026, the financial or in-kind support they may be able to provide, and request the Coordinating Unit, subject to the level of interest expressed, to convene a donor round table during the intersessional period;

(e) invite African Signatories and Range States to play a leading role in the next phase of implementation, including by coming forward as lead countries to champion vulture conservation in the region and by nominating representatives to the Vulture MsAP Working Group; and request the Coordinating Unit, in consultation with African Signatories, to explore and strengthen cooperation with the relevant Regional Economic Communities, in particular the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with a view to integrating the objectives of the Vulture MsAP, WAVCAP and SADC VCSAP into regional environmental programmes and budgets, and identifying potential regional sources of finance; and

(f) encourage Signatories, Range States and Cooperating Partners to contribute to the review and update of the Vulture MsAP, with a view to submitting an updated plan for consideration by the CMS Conference of the Parties in 2029.

Annex 1

Membership of the Vulture Coordination Team

Name	Affiliation/role	VCT function
André Botha	Co-Chair, IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group	Acting Overarching Coordinator
Jovan Andevski	Vulture Conservation Foundation	Acting Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia
Chris Bowden	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Acting Regional Coordinator for the rest of Asia
Mohammed Shobrak	Regional expert	Acting Regional Coordinator for the Middle East
Roger Safford	BirdLife International	Member
José Tavares	Vulture Conservation Foundation	Member
Nicola Crockford	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Member

Annex 2

Indicative resource requirements for selected activities supporting implementation of the Vulture MsAP, 2027–2029

as per CMS Programme of Work for the intersessional period between COP15 and COP16 (UNEP/CMS/COP15/Resolution 15.1/Rev.1/Annex 6)

Activity 1.1.25 - Vulture Multi-Species Action Plan (MsAP): coordination, convening of Range State meetings and implementation of priority actions

Mandate: Action Plan Resolution 12.10 (Rev.COP14) and Decisions 15.171 and 15.172

Object of expenditure	Years			Total
	2027	2028	2029	
Full-time Coordinator	50,000	50,000	50,000	150,000
Consultant for updating the MsAP	40,000	50,000		90,000
Meeting (incl. participants travel)	10,000		10,000	20,000
Grants / consultancies	30,000	30,000	30,000	90,000
Total funds required	**130,000**	**130,000**	**90,000**	**350,000**

Activity 1.1.26 - Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan Undertake Mid-term Review of the Cinereous Vulture Flyway Action Plan

Mandate: Action Plan Decisions 15.171 and 15.172

Object of expenditure	Years			Total
	2027	2028	2029	
Consultant	20,000			20,000
Meeting (incl. participants travel)	40,000			40,000
Total funds required	**60,000**			**60,000**

Activity 1.1.27 - West Africa Vulture Conservation Action Plan Coordinate, convene Range States meeting and implement priority actions

Mandate: Action Plan Decisions 15.171 and 172

Object of expenditure	Years			Total
	2027	2028	2029	
Part-time Coordinator	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000
Meeting costs, including participant travel	30,000		30,000	60,000
Grants / consultancies	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000
Total funds required	**75,000**	**45,000**	**75,000**	**195,000**

Activity 2.6.7 Convene regional workshops on veterinary use of NSAIDs; development of guidelines on regulating NSAIDs

Mandate: Resolution 15.2, Decision 15.149

Object of expenditure	**Years**			**Total**
	2027	**2028**	**2029**	
Meeting (incl. participants travel)	20,000		20,000	40,000
Consultant	40,000			40,000
Total funds required	**60,000**		**20,000**	**80,000**

Total indicative resource requirements for Activities 1.1.25, 1.1.26, 1.1.27 and 2.6.7: USD 685,000.