UN environment programme

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

CMS

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/Inf. 27

MOS4 AT A GLANCE: ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

Why MOS4 matters

MOS4 will be held at the Cresta Sprayview Hotel, Victoria Falls, from 30 November to 2 December 2026, at the kind invitation of the Government of Zimbabwe. It is the first Meeting of Signatories since MOS3 (Dubai, July 2023) and the first to be held in Africa. Since MOS3, the MOU has grown from 61 to 66 Signatories with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Uganda and Zimbabwe joining. CMS COP15 (March 2026) adopted the Steppe Eagle Global Action Plan and recognised the sites in Table 3 of Annex 3 as Internationally Important Raptor Areas (IIRAs) under Resolution 15.10.

The case for action remains pressing. The Second Conservation Status Assessment Report (CSAR2) shows that 34 per cent of the 94 Annex 1 species are globally threatened or Near Threatened and 53 per cent are declining. Vultures are worst affected, with 93 per cent threatened or Near Threatened, eight of them Critically Endangered. Coordinated flyway-scale action has reversed declines of the Egyptian Vulture, Eastern Imperial Eagle and Saker Falcon in parts of Europe, which shows that the MOU can deliver results.

Status, implementation and conservation initiatives

Review of implementation (agenda item 12). Signatories will consider CSAR2 for endorsement (Doc.12.4), the Site Network Analysis for the 31 Category 1 species (Doc.12.3), and the Synthesis of National Reports (Doc.12.2). With 26 reports received (39 per cent of Signatories), the reporting rate is the highest to date.

Conservation initiatives (agenda item 13). The Meeting will review the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan, whose Working Group is not yet operational and which must be reviewed before 2029 (Doc.13.2); the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan following COP15 (Doc.13.1); the Steppe Eagle Global Action Plan (Doc.13.4); the Sooty Falcon International Single Species Action Plan (Doc.13.5); and follow-up to Resolution 15.10 on IIRAs (Doc.13.3). It will also decide on a proposal by the Netherlands to establish a Raptor Flight Safety Working Group, given that some 70,700 raptor strikes were reported to ICAO in 2016–2024 (Doc.13.6).

Amendments to Annex 1 and Table 1 of Annex 3 (agenda item 14.1). The TAG proposes adding the Bateleur (Category 1) and Bonelli's Eagle (Category 3), which would bring Annex 1 to 96 species, together with a revised approach to identifying Category 2 species (Doc.14.1).

Way forward to update the List of Sites

Table 3 of Annex 3 lists 7,495 sites, all now recognised as IIRAs. However, the list was largely compiled from 2014–2015 IBA and SPA datasets. The Site Network Analysis found genuine gaps for 16 of the 31 Category 1 species, concentrated in Africa, South and Central Asia, Mongolia and China and in the non-breeding season. The average protected-area coverage of listed sites is 87.4 per cent in Europe, 50.7 per cent in Africa and 25.5 per cent in Asia.

MOS4 is invited to adopt immediate amendments: Italy's comprehensive update of its national entries, which the TAG supports provided species below international thresholds are excluded

(Doc.14.2), and TAG corrections concerning the United Kingdom, Cyprus and species nomenclature (Doc.14.3). For the longer term, a phased approach is proposed (Doc.14.4):

a) Signatories review the potential new sites and qualifying populations in Annex A, drawn from BirdLife IBA and KBA data, the Steppe Eagle Global Action Plan and expert input, and carry out surveys with a view to submitting proposals at MOS5;
b) Signatories confirm the administrative changes in Annex B (codes, names, boundaries and delisted sites), which the Coordinating Unit would apply after MOS4;
c) national entries are reviewed before each Meeting of Signatories, using the revised Site Proposal and Amendment Form (Doc.14.6 (Rev.1)), and the TAG develops guidance on sites that no longer meet the criteria.

All proposals will be verified by the TAG and adopted by Signatories by consensus. Several Signatories have already submitted written comments on the inclusion of IBAs (Docs.14.4.1a–d), so discussion at MOS4 is essential to agree an approach that all Signatories can support.

Potential expansion of the geographic scope

The current scope covers the Afrotropical and most of the Palearctic realm but excludes Japan, the Korean Peninsula, East and Southeast Asia and Australasia. Doc.14.5 compares two options: extension to 14 East and Southeast Asian countries (A+B), and a further extension to Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (A+B+C). Interim analysis shows that 44 of the 94 Annex 1 species have ranges beyond the current scope, including 11 Category 1 species, such as the Slender-billed Vulture (74 per cent of its range outside the scope) and the Red-headed Vulture (36 per cent).

MOS4 is not asked to amend Annex 2 now. It is asked whether to mandate preparatory work: the Coordinating Unit, with the TAG and the COP-appointed Councillor for Birds, would validate the analysis, compare the two options, identify additional species for Annex 1, consult the countries concerned and seek the advice of the CMS Scientific Council. It would report to MOS5 and distinguish preparatory costs from the longer-term implications for staffing, reporting and meetings.

Workplans for the Coordinating Unit and the TAG (2027–2029)

Coordinating Unit (Doc.9). Proposed priorities are continuity through handover to the incoming Coordinator; support to the TAG and new working groups; renewal of the Saker Falcon Task Force and review of the SakerGAP; review of the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan and implementation of the West African and SADC vulture plans; implementation of the Sooty Falcon and Steppe Eagle plans; advancing IIRAs; support to national strategies and accession; and resource mobilisation. Signatories are invited to guide these priorities.

TAG (Docs.15.1 and 15.2). The Meeting will appoint eight TAG members, seven of them new, and adopt a workplan of 18 actions. They comprise six core tasks, five very high priorities (including extending the site gap analysis to Category 2 species, a protocol for sensitive IIRA data and a climate change synthesis) and seven high priorities (including the effectiveness of protection at listed sites and poisoning from locust and quelea control). Leads, timelines and costs will be set at TAG12 in early 2027.

Funding (Doc.16.1). Delivery depends on resources. The current Coordinator retires on 31 December 2026, and the post faces a funding gap of USD 74,525 in 2027. Since MOS3, six Signatories have contributed USD 107,517 in total. Signatories will choose among three funding scenarios for 2027–2029, with annual targets of USD 195,000, 300,000 or 400,000.

Expected outcomes

By the close of MOS4, Signatories are expected to have endorsed CSAR2; adopted amended Annex 1 and Tables 1 and 3 of Annex 3; agreed the way forward for updating the List of Sites up to MOS5; decided whether to proceed with assessing a wider geographic scope;

established the Raptor Flight Safety Working Group; renewed the TAG and adopted its workplan; guided the Coordinating Unit's priorities; agreed a funding scenario that secures the Coordinating Unit; and identified a host for MOS5.

Why Signatories participation matters

Amendments to the MOU and its Annexes, and financial matters, are decided by consensus (Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure). The decisions on species, sites, scope and funding will therefore reflect the views of the Signatories present, and several bear directly on national entries in Table 3. Signatories are invited to confirm participation and send delegations with original credentials; review Docs.14.1–14.6 and 16.1 and consult nationally in advance; consider pledges and interest in hosting MOS5; and propose side events.

All meeting documents are available at: https://raptors.cms.int/meeting/fourth-meeting-signatories-raptors-mou