

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

*(Dubai, 3-6 July 2023)*

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UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.9

**REPORT OF THE COORDINATING UNIT**

*(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)*

**Summary:** This document summarizes the activities of the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU since MOS2.

1. The Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU has its seat at the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, which is hosted by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) on behalf of the United Arab Emirates.
2. Since the Second Meeting of Signatories to the Raptors MOU (MOS2, Trondheim, October 2015), the Coordinating Unit has actively assisted Signatories in implementing the provisions of the MOU. This report provides a summary of the key activities and accomplishments undertaken by the Coordinating Unit since August 2015.

### **Personnel**

3. Throughout the reporting period, the following changes in personnel have taken place:
  - a. The current Programme Management Officer leading the Coordinating Unit assumed his functions in March 2021, following the resignation of his predecessor in February 2020. During the interim period, functions were assumed by the Executive Coordinator of the CMS Office – Abu Dhabi;
  - b. The current Associate Programme Management Officer supporting the Coordinating Unit assumed her functions in April 2022, following resignation of her predecessor in December 2021. The latter in turn was recruited in February 2020, following resignation of a previous officer. During the interim period from December 2021 and April 2022, the Coordinating Unit counted on the support of a recruited Individual Contractor;
4. Notwithstanding these staffing changes, the Coordinating Unit has consistently delivered on its functions of supporting the Raptors MOU, providing support to Signatories, the Technical Advisory Group, and the Saker Falcon Task Force, and engaging in species-specific initiatives.

### **Status of Signatures**

5. During the reporting period, efforts by the Coordinating Unit to increase the number of Signatories to the Raptors MOU resulted in an increase from 53 to 61 Signatories. Croatia and Israel signed the MOU in November 2015, followed by India in 2016. In 2017, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Saudi Arabia became Signatories, with Jordan joining in 2019, followed by Ethiopia in 2020.
6. Voluntary contributions were received from France, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Slovak Republic, and Sweden. These contributions, which were based on the UN scale of assessment (document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS2/Report/Annex VII](#)), complemented the core support provided by the EAD on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, which has generously supported the Raptors MOU since 2009. Additional contributions have been pledged for 2023. The financial status and future funding of the MOU are discussed in document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.16.1](#).
7. More recently, several countries have been approached by the Coordinating Unit and invited to join the Raptors MOU including Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Mauritania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda and Uzbekistan. Countries were selected both strategically and opportunistically, and a prioritised list of range states, based on the presence of globally threatened bird of prey in their territories has been developed (see Annex 1 to the present document). Whilst most of these priority countries are located in Africa, the Coordinating Unit recognises a need for increased efforts in Asia, where only 40 percent of Range States are currently Signatories.

## National and Regional Raptors Conservation Strategies

8. Paragraph 12 of the Text of the MOU envisages that the Raptors MOU Action Plan ([Annex 3 to the MOU](#)) would be translated into national or regional strategies, or equivalent documents and that Signatories would prepare and submit these to the Coordinating Unit “within two years of signing the Raptors MOU”. However, by early 2018 (nine years after the Raptors MOU had come into effect) the Coordinating Unit had not received any national or regional strategies from Signatories.
9. Consequently, in February 2018, the Coordinating Unit communicated with Signatories, suggesting the postponement of the Third Meeting of Signatories (MOS3). Instead, it was proposed that the interim period be utilized by Signatories to make a collective and focused effort, with active support from the Coordinating Unit, to develop their national or regional raptor conservation strategies.
10. The proposal put forth by the Coordinating Unit received overwhelming support from Signatories. Subsequently, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of countries providing updates on the status of their national strategies through ad hoc questionnaires and national reports. These received strategies have been shared through a dedicated [webpage](#) on the Raptors MOU website facilitating information dissemination.
11. In August 2018, a call for applications requesting for support for the development of national raptor conservation strategies was launched. The Coordinating Unit took initial steps to advance the development of those documents by offering financial support for, and participating in a national raptor conservation strategy workshop organised by Pakistan in January 2020. A second workshop was scheduled to take place in 2022, but had to be postponed indefinitely due to political instability in the country. Despite this, the Coordinating Unit remains committed to supporting Pakistan in this regard. The Coordinating Unit also highlights and welcomes the ongoing work of Morocco and South Africa in delivering their national raptor conservation strategies.
12. Considering the slow progress toward achieving the target of 75% of Signatories with a national strategy proposed in the 2018 questionnaire by the Coordinating Unit), document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.12.4](#)) provides a detailed analysis of the current status and aims at opening a discussion on the relevance of the provision of paragraph 12 of the MOU Text and on the way forward.

## National Contact Points

13. Paragraph 10 of the MOU Text states that each Signatory will designate a National Contact Point (NCP) for all matters relating to the implementation of the MOU and communicate the name and address of that contact point to the Coordinating Unit once established.
14. The Coordination Unit has maintained a database with the names and contact details of all National Contact Points. Ahead of the present meeting, the Coordination Unit has approached all Signatories via their NCPs and, as necessary, via their CMS National Focal Points, to maintain its contact records updated. The information that the Coordinating Unit receives from Signatories is regularly updated on a dedicated [webpage](#) of the Raptors MOU website. Signatories are reminded to inform the Coordinating Unit of any updates on their NCPs.
15. To facilitate the designation of NCPs, an updated National Contact Point Designation Form that Signatories can fill-in has been created by the Coordinating Unit. This form is available on a

dedicated [webpage](#) of the Raptors MOU website.

### **Review of the Action Plan**

16. Pursuant to paragraph 8 of the Action Plan (Annex 3 to the MOU) the document came into effect with the MOU (i.e. November 2008) for a period of seven years and should be revised two years before its expiration. A revised version should be submitted to Signatories for their approval.
17. A review of the Action Plan was contracted by the Coordinating Unit in 2019, being finalised and published in April 2020 (see documents [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.1](#) and [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.2](#) [only available in English]).
18. The review identified several areas that would benefit from reconsideration as to enhance the clarity of the Action Plan. The review consequently resulted in the proposal of amendments to the MOU Text, to the text of the Action Plan and to the activities detailed in Table 2 of the Action Plan. These proposed amendments are described and presented in document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.14.1](#).

### **Technical Advisory Group**

19. The Coordinating Unit has continued to support the activities of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Since MOS2, the TAG met formally three times: the Third Meeting of the TAG ([TAG3](#)) took place from 12 to 14 December 2018, in Sempach, Switzerland; the Fourth Meeting of the TAG ([TAG4](#)) took place online from 13 to 15 December 2021; and the Fifth Meeting of the TAG ([TAG5](#)) also took place online, on 14 December 2022. The TAG met informally twice and online (13 April 2021 and 24 April 2022). Since MOS2, The Coordinating Unit worked with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the TAG to organise the meetings of the Group, including drafting and circulating agendas and documentation. The Coordinating Unit also participated in the selection of new TAG members, as required in the [Terms of Reference of the TAG](#). A full report of the activities of the TAG is presented in document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.10](#).

### **Saker Falcon Task Force**

20. The Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) was established under the auspices of the Raptors MOU at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10, Bergen, November 2011) and via Resolution 10.28 (since repealed). [Resolution 11.18\(Rev.COP12\)](#) instructs the STF to actively promote the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP).
21. A full report on the work of the STF is provided in document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/13.1](#).
22. The Coordinating Unit has provided support to the STF since its establishment and worked with its members and Chair to support the implementation of the SakerGAP, including by:
  - a. Engaging three short-term consultants to support the work of the STF and its Discussion Groups;
  - b. Convening the [Fifth](#) (STF5, Online, June 2020), [Sixth](#) (STF6, Online, 20 October 2020), [Seventh](#) (STF7, Online, December 2020), [Eighth](#) (STF8, Online, 8 March 2022) Ninth (STF9, Online, 21 March 2023) and Tenth (STF10, Online, 17 April 2023) and Eleventh (STF11, Online, May 2023) Meetings of the STF;
  - c. Facilitating a side event on the SakerGAP at CMS COP13 (February 2020);

- d. Facilitating the work of the two Discussion Groups set up by the STF to address electrocution and the development of an adaptive management framework for the sustainable use of Saker Falcons; and
- e. Preparing reports of the meetings of the STF and making them available on a [webpage](#) of the Raptors MOU website.

### **African-Eurasian Vulture Multi-species Action Plan**

23. The [CMS Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways 2014-2023](#) mandates the development, adoption and implementation of species action plans for all African-Eurasian Vultures via the Raptors MOU, with the exception of the non-migratory Palm-nut Vulture (*Gypohierax angolensis*).
24. In 2017, the [African-Eurasian Vulture Multi-species Action Plan \(VMsAP\)](#) was adopted by CMS via [Resolution 12.10](#), which inter alia “[r]equests the Secretariat, through the Coordinating Unit of Raptors MOU, to facilitate continuation of the Vulture Working Group and its associated structures (Vulture Steering Group and proposed Regional Implementation Committees) and team of coordinators, including by continuing to encourage engagement, communication, cooperation and collaboration between the stakeholders, by means of (regional) meetings and workshops, subject to the availability of funds”.
25. On several occasions, the Coordinating Unit included the above activity in its fundraising efforts, but without success. The Coordinating Unit supported the work carried out voluntarily by the members of the Vulture Coordination Group, which is composed of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Vulture Specialist Group, and of representatives of BirdLife International and the Vulture Conservation Foundation. The Group has been instrumental in exchanging information on relevant ongoing conservation projects, research outcomes and legislative changes.
26. The Coordinating Unit has continued to support the implementation of the VMsAP through a wide range of activities, including :
  - a. Producing and publishing (in February 2020) the Vulture MsAP Strategic Implementation Plan (document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.5](#));
  - b. Facilitating two side events at CMS COP13 on the threat of poisoning and Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) for vultures (February 2020);
  - c. Contributing to the Mid-Term Review of the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Balkan and Central Asian Populations of the Egyptian Vulture (EVFAP); and
  - d. Coordinating and supporting the Mid-Term Implementation Review of the VMsAP expected to be completed by early 2024.

Further detail on the implementation of the VMsAP is provided in document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.13.2](#).

27. In support of the implementation of the VMsAP, the Coordinating Unit contributed to the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project with funding provided by EAD. This funding supported the following activities:

- a. Organization of a session promoting the Vulture MsAP at the European Vulture Conference hosted by the Vulture Conservation Foundation in Portugal (1 – 4 October 2019);
  - b. Development of a West African Vultures Conservation Action Plan to address the belief-based use of vultures, including organization of a workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2022.
28. The Coordinating Unit has collaborated with the CITES Secretariat and CITES Animals Committee to address the decline of West African Vultures and organize financial support for the United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC) Review on Trade and Sentinel Poisoning in West Africa (document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.11](#)). It also collaborated with the CITES Secretariat and the CITES West African Vultures Working Group in drafting decisions submitted to the 19th Meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties (COP19, Panama City, November 2022) to ensure that they aligned with the VMsAP.
29. The Coordinating Unit has also drafted an amendment to Resolution 12.10 and proposed draft decisions for discussion at the [Sixth Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council](#) (ScC-SC6, Bonn, July 2023) and eventually at the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties ([COP14](#), Samarkand, October 2023).
30. The Coordinating Unit convened an informal NSAIDs Working Group established on request of TAG that developed a fact sheet (see document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.13](#)) and a [webpage](#) to raise awareness about the threat that these drugs pose .

### **Other Species initiatives**

31. The Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) was identified at the First Meeting of Signatories (MOS1, Abu Dhabi, December 2012; document [CMS/Raptors/MoS1/Report/Annex VII](#)) as a priority species for which an action plan should be developed. To finalise an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Sooty Falcon, the Coordinating Unit has hired a consultant and revived a Sooty Falcon Working Group composed of species experts and Range State representatives. More information on this work is provided in document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Doc.13.3](#).
32. The Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) was identified as a priority species at TAG3 (see [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/TAG3/Report](#) decision TAG3-15). A survey was circulated by the Coordinating Unit in November 2019 to 87 Steppe Eagle Range States and Signatories to seek views on the development of an ISSAP for the species. Whilst there was wide support for the activity, no voluntary financial support has been offered to date to take the work forward.
33. Other cross-cutting initiatives that the Coordinating Unit has participated in include actions on poisoning, illegal killing and bird-safe power infrastructure, including participating in the following meetings:
- a. Second and Sixth Meetings of the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF; ETF2, Bonn, September 2017; ETF6, online, February 2022); and
  - b. First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Meetings of the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT; MIKT1, Cairo, July 2016; MIKT2, Sliema, June 2017; MIKT3, Rome, May 2019; MIKT4, online, June 2021; MIKT5, Valencia, June 2022).



34. The Coordinating Unit has also been involved in raising the interest of relevant Range States on a South West Asia initiative on illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds by supporting and participating in two meetings in Jordan (October 2021 and October 2022) and one in Kuwait (June 2022).
35. In addition, a cooperative framework was developed with the CMS Ambassador for Avian Migratory Species for collaboration on her expeditions, including the Round Britain Climate Challenge and the Flight of the Osprey.
36. Finally, relevant implementation reports have been submitted to the CMS Scientific Council, Standing Committee and Conference of the Parties.

### **Project Development**

37. The Coordinating Unit has cooperated with the CMS and AEWA Secretariats and the Africa-Eurasian Migratory Landbird Working Group in the development of the project “Identifying priorities for the conservation and management of migratory bird habitats in Africa, Europe and Asia”. The project will contribute to delivering on the General Conservation Measures (paragraph 8 of the MOU Text) and Priority Action c) (Conserving bird of prey habitats) of the Action Plan and Activity 3 (Habitat conservation) in Table 2 of the Action Plan. Information on this project is presented in document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Inf.13.7](#).

### **Communications**

38. Since MOS2, the Coordinating Unit has communicated regularly with Signatories, Cooperating Partners, non-signatory Range States, stakeholders and other interested parties, primarily via email. The Coordinating Unit has circulated documents and relevant information approximately on a monthly basis. In addition, the Coordinating Unit has held bilateral communications with Signatories and others, relating to the Raptors MOU and its implementation.
39. The Raptors MOU [website](#) is actively maintained and updated and news items are regularly published on its landing page. Since MOS2, the Coordinating Unit has published 67 of the latter.
40. The World Migratory Bird Day have been promoted every year by the Coordinating Unit and the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, most often in collaboration with the Dubai Municipality, which has regularly organized public events involving schools and the general public.

### **Coordinating Unit Workplan**

41. The Workplan of the Coordinating Unit for the triennium 2024 - 2026 will be shaped by the outcomes of deliberations by Signatories during the present meeting. However, some core activities can already be outlined, notably:
  - a. Operating the Coordinating Unit to provide efficient and effective support to Signatories (and non-signatory Range States) to promote and assist the implementation of the Raptors MOU and associated Action Plan;
  - b. Providing administrative support to the TAG, including by organizing at least one physical meeting between MOS3 and the Fourth Meeting of Signatories, and subject to resource availability, supporting the implementation of the TAG Workplan and the selection of candidates proposed as new members ahead of MOS4;

- c. Supporting Signatories in developing their national or regional raptor conservation and management strategies in line with Activity 6 of the Action Plan of the Raptors MOU, pending the discussion on document [UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/12.4](#);
- d. Ensuring that threats to migratory birds of prey are mainstreamed and properly addressed in avian-related initiatives being led by the CMS Secretariat (e.g., on illegal killing of birds, energy infrastructure, poisoning and direct persecution) by actively participating in relevant initiatives, including the MIKT and the ETF;
- e. Maintaining the Raptors MOU webpage, as to share information, best practices, and success stories relevant to the conservation of migratory birds of prey;
- f. Overseeing the finalization and publication of the Mid-Term Review of the VMsAP and of the ISSAP for the Sooty Falcon;
- g. Supporting, subject to resource availability, the coordination structures as envisaged in the [VMsAP](#), the [SakerGAP](#), the ISSAP for the Sooty Falcon, and any further relevant species action plans.
- h. Overseeing the development and publication of an updated SakerGAP, subject to resource availability;
- i. Supporting the development of ISSAPs for priority species and their endorsement by Signatories and CMS Parties, subject to resource availability;
- j. Supporting Signatories in the development and implementation of raptor monitoring initiatives at the regional or flyway level, subject to resource availability;
- k. Supporting the project Identifying priorities for the conservation and management of migratory bird habitats in Africa, Europe and Asia, subject to resource availability;
- l. Developing and implementing an East African-Eurasian Flyway bottleneck sites monitoring project, subject to resource availability; and
- m. Supporting an assessment of the existing national and international bird of prey monitoring protocols and programmes in Asia, subject to resource availability.

### **Action requested**

42. The Meeting is invited to:

- a. Note the contents of this report and seek any clarifications, as needed;
- b. Urge Signatories to inform the Coordinating Unit of any updates in their NCPs by filling out the form mentioned in paragraph 15 above and returning it to the Coordinating Unit;
- c. Encourage Signatories, Range States, Cooperating Partners and stakeholders to work collaboratively to mobilize resources, including through voluntary financial contributions,



to enable implementation of the key initiatives highlighted in this report;

- d. Encourage Signatories, Cooperating Partners and other relevant stakeholders to invite Range States of migratory birds of prey to join the Raptors MOU.
- e. Alert the Coordinating Unit about any additional activities that may warrant inclusion in its Workplan 2024 - 2026, and support the Coordinating Unit in raising the resources to to implement it.

**Table 1** – Ranking of non-Signatory Range States of Raptors MOU, based on the number of threatened (Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened) and declining species occurring in their territories. Source: [C. McClure et al 2018. State of the world's raptors: Distributions, threats, and conservation recommendations. Biological Conservation 227: 390-402.](#)

Rank	Country	Raptors MOU species	No. of threatened Raptors MOU species	No. of declining Raptors MOU species
1	Sudan	49	11	27
2	Eritrea	36	10	22
3	South Sudan	39	10	21
4	Tanzania, United Republic of	42	8	21
5	Mauritania	37	8	20
6	China	58	7	28
7	Russian Federation	56	7	25
8	Uganda	41	7	21
9	Cameroon	35	7	18
10	Afghanistan	34	7	17
11	Central African Republic	33	7	17
12	Namibia	32	7	15
13	Kazakhstan	45	6	19
14	Benin	32	6	17
15	Bangladesh	32	6	16
16	Kyrgyzstan	36	6	16
17	Rwanda	33	6	16
18	Tajikistan	36	6	16
19	Botswana	30	6	15
20	Oman	30	6	15
21	Zimbabwe	32	6	15
22	Türkiye	40	5	18
23	Azerbaijan	38	5	17
24	Bulgaria	39	5	17
25	Georgia	36	5	17
26	Greece	38	5	17
27	Iraq	36	5	17
28	Nigeria	34	5	17
29	Bhutan	33	5	16
30	Malawi	33	5	15
31	Mozambique	32	5	15
32	Turkmenistan	32	5	15
33	Zambia	33	5	15
34	Kuwait	31	5	14

Rank	Country	Raptors MOU species	No. of threatened Raptors MOU species	No. of declining Raptors MOU species
35	Uzbekistan	33	5	14
36	North Macedonia	37	4	15
37	Guinea-Bissau	22	4	12
38	Swaziland	22	4	9
39	Austria	32	3	15
40	Serbia	37	3	15
41	Ukraine	36	3	15
42	Albania	35	3	14
43	Moldova	32	3	14
44	Montenegro	35	3	14
45	Qatar	20	3	11
46	Algeria	28	2	14
47	Malta	21	2	13
48	Cyprus	26	2	12
49	Libya	25	2	12
50	Bosnia and Herzegovina	32	2	11
51	Bahrain	18	2	9
52	Sierra Leone	22	2	9
53	Lesotho	15	2	4
54	Belarus	29	1	12
55	Slovenia	30	1	12
56	Latvia	26	1	11
57	Poland	28	1	11
58	Lithuania	26	1	10
59	Andorra	16	1	9
60	Estonia	25	1	9
61	Liberia	23	1	9
62	Gabon	15	1	6
63	Cape Verde	7	1	2
64	Sri Lanka	20	0	9
65	Liechtenstein	17	0	8
66	Ireland	11	0	5
67	Iceland	5	0	2
68	Mauritius	1	0	1
69	Seychelles	1	0	1
70	San Marino	1	0	0
71	Sao Tomé and Príncipe	2	0	0