



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia

Distribution: General

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RAPTOR SAFE ZONES:

CAN THE VULTURE SAFE ZONE CONCEPT BE APPLIED TO OTHER RAPTORS?

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Introduction

1. The CMS Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) was adopted by Range States at COP12 in October 2017. Action 11.4.4 recommends the development of criteria and the application and promotion of this approach to address all critical threats throughout the Vulture MsAP range.
2. Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs) are a spatial approach to geographically focused conservation action aimed at addressing threats to Old World vultures with the aim of reducing or eliminating the impact of known and emerging threats that are responsible for population declines in these species. VSZs have been established in Asia and Africa, but the nature, criteria and geographic scope of these sites vary considerably.
3. Could a similar concept of Safe Zones focused on the conservation of other migratory raptors across the Raptors MOU range be feasible?

Vulture Safe Zones in Asia

4. The concept of Vulture Safe Zones was initiated by stakeholders in the SAVE consortium in South Asia in response to the Asian Vulture Crisis. The primary aim of these VSZs was to establish areas free of the use of diclofenac and other potentially harmful NSAIDs that pose a threat to vultures.
5. Criteria for these VSZs were developed by the SAVE consortium and sites are considered as preliminary VSZs until all the set criteria for such sites are met. This system has been implemented in four countries: India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Vulture Safe Zones in Europe and Africa

6. The idea of the establishment of VSZs beyond Asia was a key point of discussion at the BirdLife International Summit of the Flyways held in Abu Dhabi in April 2018. The outcome of these discussions was that the concept was not considered a viable option in Europe, but that VSZs with criteria applicable to the more complex suite of threats in Africa could be a feasible approach to support focused conservation action in known vulture strongholds on the continent.
7. Vulture Safe Zones have actually been established in countries such as Zambia, Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe as far back as 2016 prior to the publication and adoption of the Vulture MsAP. Further discussion between various interest groups involved with and interested in the establishment

of VSZs from Range States took place in South Africa in January 2019 and emphasized that a more flexible and diverse approach involving a wider range of stakeholder groups would be required to address the more complex situation encountered across the 58 range states in Africa.

8. Since the South African discussion, several more African VSZs have been established or are under consideration. This includes the first transboundary VSZ between South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe that was announced in January 2020 which facilitates an integrated approach to the conservation of vultures across international boundaries and considers the extreme mobility of vultures who move across international boundaries at will.

9. The implementation of most VSZs in Africa include efforts to assess the effectiveness of these sites and their long-term impact on vulture populations therein and to the meta-population of individual species over time. At this stage, it is however too early to determine whether this approach does indeed bring about effective change and results in halting and reversing population declines within the range of African VSZs.

Action requested:

TAG is requested to consider the need for, feasibility of and process required to expand on the concept of Vulture Safe Zones to include other or possibly all migratory raptors across the Raptors MOU range.