

**SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL COMMENTS**  
(arising from ScC-SC2)

**CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN VULTURES**  
**UNEP/CMS/COP12/DOC.24.1.4/Rev.1**

**GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT**

Councillors congratulated the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU, and all partners and stakeholders involved, on the development of a comprehensive Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vulture (Vulture MsAP).

It was suggested that the Vulture MsAP could be considered as a model for future action planning, not least because by brigading species together represents a potentially efficient and effective way in which to develop conservation action plans for groups of species with key similarities.

**COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS/ INCLUDING PROPOSALS FOR TEXT REVISION**

**Page 2, para. 3** – Agreed deletion and insertion typos (in red).

- In November 2014, CMS Parties ~~and~~ adopted CMS Resolution 11.14 - Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways at ~~the~~ 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) in Ecuador. This resolution established the mandate to develop a Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP), under the auspices of the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU). The mission was to bring together representatives of Range States, partners and other stakeholders, to develop a coordinated Action Plan for submission to the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP12) in October 2017.

**Page 2, para.4** – Agreed corrections of minor error and spelling of scientific name (in red)

- The Second Meeting of Signatories (MOS2) to the CMS Raptors MOU held in Norway in October 2015, formally recognized all Old World vultures (except the Palm-nut Vulture) as migratory species by listing them in ~~Annex 1 Table 1 of Annex 3~~ of the Raptors MOU. Furthermore, MOS2 tasked the Technical Advisory Group of the Raptors MOU to support the Coordinating Unit in facilitating development of a Vulture MsAP, encompassing all 15 species that are obligate scavengers: Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*, White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*, Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*, White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus*, Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris*, Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*, Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Cinereous Vulture *Aegyptius monachus*, and Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*.

**Page 3, para. 6** - Agreed additional text (in red).

- Poisoning of various forms, direct and indirect, intentional and otherwise is a serious threat throughout the ranges of African-Eurasian vultures. Other threats, also operating over large areas, although to varying extents, include collisions with powerlines and wind turbines, electrocution on power infrastructure, habitat loss and degradation, decreasing food availability, human disturbance ~~some of which is intentional due to perceived interactions with livestock~~ and fragmentation of remaining populations.

**Page 5, para. 21** - Agreed minor corrections to text (in red).

- Financial contributions were made by Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and the Environment and Protected Areas Agency, Sharjah, on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Government of Switzerland, and the Regional Authorities of Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha, on behalf of the Government of Spain, plus in-kind support from BirdLife International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB – BirdLife UK) and the Vulture Conservation Foundation, ~~as well as~~ ~~of the~~ wider support in the form of working time contributed by all the members of the Vulture Working Group. Without all of these valuable contributions the Vulture MsAP could not have been developed.

**Annex I - Page 6 para.4 (unnumbered)** – Agreed correction to spelling of scientific name (in red).

- ... Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotuos*.

**Annex I - Page 6, para. 5 (unnumbered)** – Agreed minor changes and additional text (in red).

Aware that the precipitous population declines experienced in recent years by most African-Eurasian vulture populations have been driven by anthropogenic factors; primarily poisoning by poison baits set illegally: a) to protect livestock from predators but unintentionally kill vultures; b) by poachers, deliberately targeting vultures to prevent them drawing attention of wardens to illegally killed Elephant; ~~and~~; c) for the deliberate collection of vultures for belief-based use; and, d) by vultures feeding on carcasses contaminated with the veterinary drug, diclofenac, in South Asia; but also due to a range of other threats including: habitat loss or degradation, decreasing food availability, **lead poisoning**, mortality caused by electrocution on powerline poles, collision with wind turbines and other energy generation and transmission infrastructure, human disturbance and fragmentation of remaining populations.

**Annex I - Page 7, para. 2 (unnumbered)** – Agreed to insert a new paragraph. (in red).

- **Noting also potential synergies between action needed to stop poisoning and illegal killing of Vultures and action needed under CMS initiatives on African mammals established by COP12/Doc.24.3.5 on Conservation and Management of the African Lion, (*Panthera leo*), COP12/Doc.24.3.1.2 on Conservation and Management of Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*), COP12/Doc24.3.3 on Adoption of the African Elephant Action Plan and COP12/Doc.24.4.7 Addressing Unsustainable Use of Terrestrial and Avian Wild Meat.**

**Annex I – Page 7, para 3** – Agreed to insert new sentence of text (in red).

- **Urges Parties and encourages non-Party Range States to implement existing measures under CMS, including on sustainable land use under the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan, and on poisoning under the action plans for lion, cheetah, wild dog and African elephant to be adopted at COP12;** the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), Raptors MOU and other relevant international environmental treaties, especially where these contribute to the objectives of the Vulture MsAP, in order to increase the resilience of African-Eurasian vultures and their potential to adapt to environmental change.

**Annex 2 – Page 9, para. 12CC** – Agreed inserted of additional paragraph b) (in red).

- **Report to COP13 on the decisions taken as a result of working with the CMS Vulture Working Group, CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group, CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative and CMS Energy Task Force clearly to define synergies and a clear division of labour in tackling poisoning and interactions with energy infrastructure.**

**Annex 2 - Page 9, para. 12DD** – Agreed additional text (in red).

- Report to the next Meeting of Signatories of the CMS Raptors MOU and subsequent meetings of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council, **on progress in implementation of these decisions and the Vulture MsAP and advise future Meetings of the Conference of Parties of any outstanding scientific issues relating to the conservation of vultures.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO COP12**

The Avian Working Group unanimously endorsed UNEP/CMS/COP12/DOC.24.1.4 (Rev.1), including the three Annexes, namely Annex I – Draft Resolution; Annex 2 - Draft Decisions; and, Annex 3 - Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) at COP12.