

**53<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

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**REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL**

*(Prepared by Narelle Montgomery, Chair of the Scientific Council)*

Summary:

This report contains highlights of Scientific Council activities that have been undertaken since StC52.

## REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

### Background

1. Since StC52, the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council has not held a meeting. However, a great deal of work has progressed over the last 12 months. Highlights from each of the thematic areas is outlined below.

### Engagement with other fora

2. As Chair of the Scientific Council, a number of meetings and workshops have been attended. A notable highlight is the involvement with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (**IPBES**), and its Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP). I attended two sessions of the MEP as an observer in the lead up to the 9th Plenary session (IPBES-9, 2-9 July 2022), which provided an opportunity to showcase the CMS proposal for an IPBES assessment on connectivity.
3. The inclusion of the assessment on connectivity in the IPBES rolling program of work was considered at IPBES-9, with the decision taken that an initial scoping process will be undertaken by the MEP with input from relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other organizations for consideration by IPBES-10, to be held in the second quarter of 2023. IPBES-9 further decided to consider, at its tenth session, requests, inputs and suggestions for a second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services and an assessment on ecological connectivity, based on an initial scoping, as well as any requests, inputs and suggestions received in response to the call that will be issued.
4. As Chair of the Scientific Council, I will attend the next meeting of the MEP (27-29 September) and again take the opportunity to highlight the importance of undertaking this assessment for all governments. Supporting guidance will be prepared by the Secretariat for provision to all CMS Parties that are also IPBES members to assist in ensuring this activity continues.

### Cross-cutting issues

5. The COP-Appointed Councillor for Birds, Dr Stephen Garnett, is leading an ambitious project to create a **Global Species List** – creating one global taxonomic reference point. Work is continuing, with a meeting held in Leiden in late June 2022. That meeting put forward a recommendation to the Catalogue of Life (COL) Global team that a new group be created to refine the recommendations on list governance further. The hope is that improved governance will increase confidence in the legitimacy of the lists emanating monthly and annually from COL so there is a greater chance that they will be adopted broadly by MEAs, governments and other frequent users of lists.
6. A working group on **Connectivity** was established by the 5th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council. The primary objective of the WG is to support the delivery of relevant tasks concerning ecological connectivity contained in the Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee of the ScC and to promote awareness of connectivity in other fora, particularly in discussions regarding the implementation of connectivity-related goals and targets of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the further development of its monitoring framework. In addition, significant progress has been made to promote ecological connectivity in other fora and global processes in collaboration with many partner organizations.

7. The Expert Group on **Animal Culture and Social Complexity** will be holding a workshop to identify priority species and populations on the CMS Appendices, and to provide advice to Parties on rapid assessment techniques and how to augment existing conservation efforts using insights on aspects of sociality. A one-day virtual workshop involving all interested Expert Group members will be held in October 2022 at which sub-groups for intersessional work will be formed and sub-group leaders appointed. A follow-on meeting in early 2023 will then review results of the work of the sub-groups and agree the recommendations.
8. A significant project is currently underway on the **Review of the Conservation Status of CMS-listed Species**, and an assessment of the impact of direct use on the conservation status of species listed on Appendix I. Thanks to financial contributions from the governments of Australia, Switzerland and the UK, the CMS Secretariat, through a consultancy with WCMC, is producing two reports - *Assessment of the impact of direct use and trade on the status of Appendix I-listed species* and a *Review of the eligibility for listing of Appendix I-listed species*, drafts of which have been circulated to Sessional Committee members. The selection of species for an in-depth assessment is ongoing, and discussions are underway to extend the original agreement to also cover the assessment of the conservation status of individual Appendix II-listed species and advance the development of the conservation status report.
9. A CMS Technical Workshop on **Light Pollution**, facilitated by the COP-Appointed Councillor for Marine Pollution, Mark Simmonds, was convened from 29-31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 to develop additional guidance for landbirds and bats. It is planned to consolidate the draft additional guidance with the guidelines already adopted by COP13, and submit the consolidated document to the Sessional Committee for review.

#### Aquatic issues

10. The COP-Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals, Dr Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, has stepped down from the role. Suitable nominations will be sought and considered by the Sessional Committee prior to COP14.
11. However, he is still continuing his work on **Important Marine Mammal Areas** which to date has identified 173 IMMAs – which can be found in [www.marinemammalhabitat.org](http://www.marinemammalhabitat.org) – encompassing habitat of 30+ marine mammal species listed in at least one of the CMS Appendices. It should be noted that Parties will receive a Notification requesting to make use of the identified IMMAs, and to support scientific research about marine mammal habitats and other migratory species in the high seas.
12. The **Joint Noise Working Group** of CMS, ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS is currently reviewing the *Best Available Technology (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) for Three Noise Sources: Shipping, Seismic Airgun Surveys, and Pile Driving*. Following extensive consultation, the review is expected by the end of 2022. It will then be passed on to the Sessional Committee for intersessional review, after which it will be issued as a CMS Technical Series.
13. The Joint Noise Working Group remains responsible for any advice to the Secretariats and technical advisory bodies of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS on marine noise, deciding on the content, scope and nature of the advice it develops independently based on its work plan and in consultation with the Secretariats.
14. It should also be noted that Parties will receive a Notification requesting their input with respect to experiences and lessons-learned in the application of the EIA Guidelines (Dec.13.58 b), to enable the Scientific Council, with support from the Joint Noise Working Group, to provide advice to COP14.

15. On 2 June 2022, following extensive consultations of the Range States, Scientific Council and other relevant stakeholders, the **Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) for Hawksbill Turtles in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region** was adopted by the first four Range States. The SSAP focuses specifically on use and trade of the species, seeking to integrate the actions necessary to address trade and use at both the domestic and the international level. Scientific Councillors from some of the Range States engaged in the written commenting phase, the sub-regional workshops and the plenary during which the SSAP was finalized. Activities now focus on encouraging more Range States to adopt the SSAP for their use.
16. Thanks to funding from the Government of Monaco, draft guidelines for **recreational in-water interactions** with marine species: cetaceans, sirenians, pinnipeds, marine turtles, sharks, mobulid rays, stingrays, seabirds have been developed. Following consultation, the finalized guidelines will be presented to Sessional Committee and COP14.
17. Thanks to funding provided by the Principality of Monaco, preparation of a gap analysis and identification of future priorities is being developed for the **Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans**, in preparation for a new work programme to be considered at COP14.

#### Avian issues

18. The Working Group on **African-Eurasian Migratory Land Birds** (AEML WG) has developed a new Programme of Work 2021-2026 (POW). In conjunction with developing the new POW, a situation/SWOT and problem analysis was also undertaken, which will feed into future progress reports on the AEML Action Plan.
19. A **Power Line Working Group** (PWG) has been established under the Energy Task Force (ETF). This group provides a forum to discuss guidance when relevant new developments on reducing the impact of power lines on birds become available. Current activities of the group include promoting mainstreaming migratory species conservation into powerline industry decision-making through stakeholder mapping and engagement; monitoring implementation and impediments through surveys; and stimulating communication/information exchange and research through data sharing.
20. The **Energy Task Force** has been very active, and have provided inputs to the Good Practice for Post-construction Bird and Bat Fatality Monitoring Handbook, developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC - World Bank Group), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), as well as promoting their guidance material at various online and in-person events such as of UNFCCC (MENA Climate Week, SB56), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and others.
21. The establishment of the **Intergovernmental Task Force to Address Illegal Hunting, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway** (ITTEA) is progressing, with invitations to join the Task Force issued to all range states through both the CMS and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Secretariats.

#### Terrestrial issues

22. The CMS Intersessional Working Group on **Linear Infrastructure** met on 27 June to 1 July at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm, Germany. The Group is composed of over 20 experts, including representatives from environmental and infrastructure related institutions of CMS Parties from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, international financial institutions, scientific and impact assessment communities, and NGOs, to discuss the impact of infrastructure on migratory species and their habitats. The Group found a lack of consideration for migratory species in infrastructure development planning and limited

availability of and accessibility to data on migratory species and linear infrastructure. The Group identified insufficient awareness on the importance of animal movements and a low capacity for implementing international policy. In particular, although existing CMS guidance were recognized as resourceful and practical tools to mitigate impacts on migratory species, there was a low level of awareness and implementation of these guidelines in relation to infrastructure development among decision-makers across sectors.

23. Recommendations were agreed including: increasing awareness and capacity of infrastructure planners, developers and financiers of the needs of migratory species; including specific consideration for migratory species in infrastructure planning and impact assessment within policies and guidance of international and national funding institutions and infrastructure planners and developers; and increasing data availability and accessibility for infrastructure planners, developers and the science and conservation community. The report and accompanying recommendations from the working group will be submitted to the Scientific Council for consideration.
24. An intersessional working group on **Asiatic and North-East African Cheetah** was established to develop of a coordinated conservation and recovery strategy for Cheetah across North-Eastern Africa and its former Asian distribution. With the support of the Government of the United Kingdom, a report is being prepared to assess the genetic and conservation status of the Asiatic Cheetah (*A. j. venaticus*) in Iran based on best available data to determine whether supplementation from other Cheetah populations is needed. The report and accompanying recommendations from the working group will be submitted to the Scientific Council for consideration.
25. An intersessional working group on **African Cheetah** was formed to review the conservation status of Cheetah populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe and their potential inclusion in Appendix I of CMS. A report is being prepared by cheetah experts under the aegis of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group. The report and accompanying recommendations from the working group will be submitted to the Scientific Council for consideration.

#### Recommended action

26. That Standing Committee is recommended to take note of the report.