

CMS COP14 Highlights: Thursday, 15 February 2024

The Committee of the Whole (CoW) heard updates from working groups and approved in-session documents. In the morning, delegates addressed agenda items related to the interpretation and implementation of the Convention, and in the afternoon, reviewed proposals to amend the CMS Appendices.

Review of In-Session Documents

Several CRPs were approved, in some cases with minor amendments, and forwarded to the Conference of the Parties (COP) for adoption, including on: resource mobilization; the Atlas on Animal Migration; review mechanism and national legislation programme; fish aggregating devices; vessel strikes; Important Marine Mammals Areas; aquatic wild meat and the Action Plan to address aquatic wild meat harvests in West Africa; definition of the terms “range state” and “vagrant”; Important Shark and Ray Areas; seagrass ecosystems; conservation priorities for cetaceans; marine turtles; Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Angel Shark (*Squatina squatina*) species-specific action plans (SSAPs); African Carnivores Initiative (ACI); pastoralism and migratory species; conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity; and insect decline and its threat to insectivorous animal populations.

The in-session document on Action Plans for birds was recommended for adoption by the COP following a proposal by BANGLADESH, supported by INDIA, to include a reference to the development of a SSAP for the Indian Skimmer (*Rynchops albigollis*).

Other in-session documents required more substantive revisions. The UK requested changes to the in-session document on freshwater fish including the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) aimed at facilitating Secretariat and party work on this issue and ensuring the Scientific Council’s (ScC) involvement in developing a multispecies action plan, among other edits.

The EU and the UK proposed minor amendments to the CRP on community participation and livelihoods. ISRAEL, opposed by ZIMBABWE and CONSERVATION FORCE, requested language noting potential negative impacts of Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ (IPLCs) traditional practices on migratory species. The SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY (SLC) highlighted that the Convention has yet to truly recognize Indigenous Peoples as partners, calling on parties to honor their international commitments. The UK requested a minor change to the CRP on renewable energy and migratory species, with the EU requesting further time for consultation. AUSTRALIA requested to harmonize terminology relating to IPLCs across all CRPs.

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

The CoW addressed the following agenda items. Unless otherwise specified, discussions continued in relevant working groups or CRPs will be produced.

Action Plans for Birds: Action Plan for the Christmas Island Frigatebird (*Fregata andrewsi*): AUSTRALIA, on behalf of the PHILIPPINES, and supported by BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, introduced the SSAP (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.5.2/Rev.1). The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Action Plan for the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Asia: MONGOLIA introduced the SSAP (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.5.3). The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

African-Eurasian Vultures: The Secretariat introduced the document, including draft amendments to Resolution 12.10 on the conservation of African-Eurasian Vultures (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.6/Rev.1).

Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan (SAKERGAP): The Secretariat introduced the document, including draft amendments to Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP12) (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.7/Rev.1).

Terrestrial species conservation issues: Joint Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-CMS ACI: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CMS/COP14/29.1/Rev.1. CITES, UGANDA, and SENEGAL highlighted a range states meeting held in Uganda in 2023. INDIA noted his government’s International Big Cat Alliance programme.

Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna: Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Concerted Action (CA): The Secretariat summarized progress in implementing the CA for the eight concerned species and the proposal to close this CA following the ScC’s recommendation (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.2.1/Rev.1). EGYPT suggested including additional megafauna species in future work. ISRAEL noted concerns about captive breeding and reintroduction programmes for hunting purposes. The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Sahelo-Saharan Megafauna Initiative (SSMFI): MOROCCO introduced UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.2.2, including the proposal to amend Resolution 9.21 (Rev.COP13) by establishing the SSMFI, which will extend to include adjoining habitats and the African Wild Ass (*Equus africanus*). The EU suggested an amendment to clarify funding is contingent on available “external” resources. The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Central Asian Mammals Initiative: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.3/Rev.2.

African elephant: African Elephant Action Plan: ZIMBABWE introduced UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.4.1 and its relevant CRP, which provides a 2023 revision of the Plan. KENYA requested reference to “new and innovative funding models,” with the EU proposing “instruments” rather than “models.” The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

West African Elephant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.4.2, which the CoW recommended for adoption without amendment.

African Wild Ass: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.5/Rev.2](#) with draft decisions on the conservation of the African Wild Ass (*Equus africanus*). The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Jaguar Conservation Measures: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.6.1](#), including draft decisions on Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) conservation measures, and noted working group discussions to merge them with draft decisions in [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.6.2](#) on potential joint CITES-CMS Jaguar work.

Initiative for the Jaguar: COSTA RICA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.6.2](#), including a draft resolution on a CMS Jaguar Initiative. He emphasized the importance of this platform for enhanced cooperation, resource mobilization, and conservation action for Jaguars.

Pastoralism: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.29.7](#) on pastoralism and migratory species, including draft decisions, and noted ongoing discussions in the terrestrial working group.

MOU Signing Ceremony: ARGENTINA, on behalf of the signatory parties, and CMS signed a MOU on the conservation of High Andean Flamingos (*Phoenicoparrus jamesi* and *P. andinus*) and their habitats.

Amendment of CMS Appendices

Eurasian and Balkan Lynx: NORTH MACEDONIA introduced the proposal to include the Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in Appendix II and Balkan Lynx (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*) in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.1/Rev.1](#)). TURKMENISTAN, BORN FREE FOUNDATION, and NORTH MACEDONIA noted that these species meet the criteria to be considered “migratory” as set out by Resolution 13.7. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Pallas’s Cat: KAZAKHSTAN introduced the proposal to list the Pallas’s Cat, or Manul (*Felis manul*), in Appendix II of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.2/Rev.1](#)). TURKMENISTAN and BORN FREE FOUNDATION highlighted the species’ conservation status and transboundary range. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Guanaco: PERU introduced the proposal to include the Guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*) in Appendix II ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.3](#)). ARGENTINA and the WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS) underlined their commitment to future conservation and management work. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Lahille’s Bottlenose Dolphin: ARGENTINA introduced the proposal to include Lahille’s Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus gephyreus*) in Appendix I and II of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/31.4.4](#)). The UK and the INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC) supported the proposed listing. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Harbour Porpoise: The EU introduced the proposal to list the Baltic Proper population of the Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.5](#)). The UK, OCEAN CARE, and WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION (WDC) supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Peruvian Pelican: PERU introduced the proposal to list the Peruvian Pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*) in Appendix I and II of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.6](#)). ARGENTINA and BRAZIL expressed their support. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Magellanic Plover: CHILE introduced the proposal to list the Magellanic Plover (*Pluvianellus socialis*) in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.7/Rev.1](#)). BRAZIL and PERU supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Bearded Vulture: SOUTH AFRICA introduced the proposal to list its population of the Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*

meridionalis) in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.8](#)). ZIMBABWE for the AFRICAN GROUP, SENEGAL, MALAWI, and UGANDA supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Sand Tiger Shark: BRAZIL introduced the proposal to list the Sand Tiger Shark (*Charcharias taurus*) in Appendix I and II of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.9/Rev.2](#)). ISRAEL, SENEGAL, the UK, COSTA RICA, MALDIVES, IUCN, and others supported the proposal. AUSTRALIA noted that the distribution map in the revised proposal did not accurately reflect the Australian population, with studies confirming that Eastern Australian populations are not migratory. She cautioned that including ineligible species may weaken the objectives of the Convention. PANAMA clarified that the revised document recognizes the lack of movement of Eastern Australian populations. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Blackchin Guitarfish: ISRAEL introduced the proposal to include the Blackchin Guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculus*) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea population of this species in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.10](#)). SENEGAL and IUCN supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Bull Ray: ISRAEL introduced the proposal to include the Bull Ray (*Aetomylaeus bovinus*) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea population of this species in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.11](#)). SENEGAL and EGYPT supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Lusitanian Cownose Ray: ISRAEL introduced the proposal to include the Lusitanian Cownose Ray (*Rhinoptera marginata*) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea population of this species in Appendix I of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.12](#)). EGYPT supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposal to the COP for adoption.

Gilded and Laulau Catfish: BRAZIL introduced proposals to include the Gilded Catfish (*Brachyplatystoma rousseauxii*) and the Laulao Catfish or Piramuta (*Brachyplatystoma vaillantii*), in Appendix II of CMS ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.13](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.14](#)). He stressed that these proposals would support collaborative measures among range states to promote conservation and sustainable use. The EU, Uruguay, for the SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION, and WCS supported the proposal. The CoW recommended the proposals to the COP for adoption.

In the Corridors

“Something incredible has happened: we have concluded our business for this afternoon.” Delegates applauded this statement, partly in surprise, partly out of relief: catching up on and then meeting the agenda’s objectives meant approving what some called a “Herculean pile” of conference room papers, and recommending the induction of over a dozen new species into the Convention’s appendices. All in a good afternoon’s work. One seasoned attendee noted that even the Manul, which “looks like a grumpy old Scot on a bad hair day,” must be smiling.

Others shared more sobering assessments. “It’s all well and good to stand up and applaud, but the reality is that these species are going onto the Appendices because they’re being decimated,” a delegate sighed. “I dream of the day when we finally start taking species off the lists.” Another pointed to the fact that, for all the victories in the Committee, some of the most important questions—like those deliberated by the budget working group—were still to come. “I hope people can get rest,” they noted. “They’ll need it.” With only half a day’s work pending on Friday, some delegates were clearly excited to explore their host country. One looked forward to trying the famous Uzbek rice dish called plov for the first time. “They say it makes you strong—good!” they laughed. “We need to finish strong!”