

CMS COP14 Highlights: Friday, 16 February 2024

The Committee of the Whole (CoW) heard reports from representatives of the Credentials Committee, as well as from the working groups on aquatic, terrestrial, avian, and institutional and cross-cutting issues. CoW Chair Colin Galbraith (UK) noted that discussions for the budget working group were ongoing. In the morning, the CoW approved in-session documents and addressed agenda items related to Concerted Actions (CAs). Following an afternoon of cultural excursions around Samarkand organized by the host country, delegates reconvened in the CoW to review more in-session documents. Chair Galbraith adjourned the evening session at 18:45 and encouraged participants to “be early” to the additional session of the CoW scheduled for Saturday morning.

Review of In-Session Documents

In the morning, the CoW recommended several Conference Review Papers (CRPs) for approval by the Conference of the Parties (COP) without further amendment, on: evaluation of the results of the restructuring of the Scientific Council (ScC); cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); conservation status of migratory species; bycatch; effects of marine pollution on migratory species; recreational in-water interactions and the guidelines for recreational in-water interactions with marine wildlife; implementation of the CMS Appendix I-listing for the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*); African-Eurasian Vultures; wildlife disease; and potential avian taxa for listing.

Two CRPs were recommended for adoption with minor amendments. For the Action Plan for Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region (AEMLAP), BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, supported by the UK and SAUDI ARABIA, requested the inclusion of a reference to buntings (*Emberiza spp.*). For the in-session document on light pollution, AUSTRALIA requested a change to the title of the international guidelines, to distinguish these from existing national guidelines.

The CoW also considered terrestrial and avian wild meat. Following clarification from the Secretariat, the document’s proposed actions, to delete Decisions 13.109-13.112, and to take note of the executive summary in its annex, were recommended for adoption by the COP.

In the evening, several more CRPs were recommended for approval by the COP with no or minor amendments, including on: freshwater fish, including the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*); the prevention of illegal killing, taking, and trade of migratory birds; preventing poisoning for migratory birds; and ecological connectivity (consolidating draft resolutions from [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.2.1](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.2.2](#)); infrastructure and impact assessment; renewable energy and migratory species; and ecotourism and migratory species.

The document on the New Strategic Plan for Migratory Species generated debate regarding a reference to “developing countries”

in the preambular text. The EUROPEAN UNION (EU) expressed concern that this reference was “introducing a new category of parties” to the Convention. BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA, disagreed, citing precedent from other CMS documents and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). NEW ZEALAND clarified that the inclusion of this language in the preamble was a compromise achieved in the working group, but the EU stressed that they did not agree to the compromise. The EU agreed to work with BRAZIL to find a way forward and report back to the CoW on Saturday. Debate on the same issue led to the document on plastic pollution being deferred to the following CoW session as well.

The COP-appointed councillor on birds noted that discussions were still ongoing for the CRP on the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan (SAKERGAP), with a revised document being produced. BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION CENTER stressed the critical conservation status of the species in Kazakhstan and its neighbouring countries and the insufficient involvement of stakeholders in the SAKERGAP development process. He emphasized that discussions on connectivity and transboundary issues must be translated to action. The CoW deferred consideration of the document.

The CoW recommended the CRP on community participation and livelihoods for adoption with minor amendments from the EU and following a short exchange regarding Israel’s proposed language around “harmful” community wildlife interactions. ISRAEL withdrew the proposal following opposition from AUSTRALIA, the UK, NEW ZEALAND, ZIMBABWE, and BRAZIL. BRAZIL highlighted the lack of translation of the document to Spanish as an additional challenge faced by developing countries at the COP.

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

National reports: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.23](#). UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME WORLD CONSERVATION MONITORING CENTRE (UNEP-WCMC) summarized the analysis of the national reports annexed to the document. He reported on findings, including good progress in areas such as strengthened governance arrangements; key priorities for future work including tackling harmful incentives like subsidies; and the reported need for additional resources to reduce barriers to effective implementation of the Convention. The CoW recommended the document for adoption following minor amendments from NEW ZEALAND and the UK.

Implementation of the Concerted Actions process: Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees: The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION (SSC) PRIMATE SPECIALIST GROUP (PSG) SECTION ON GREAT APES (SGA) WORKING GROUP ON CHIMPANZEE CULTURES (WGCC) reported on progress on Nut-Cracking populations of the Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) of West Africa ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.1](#)), supported by BORN FREE FOUNDATION and UGANDA. The document

recommends closing the CA and replacing it with a new one on Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) behavioural diversity and cultures ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.1](#)). The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Giraffe: NIGER, supported by BENIN and BORN FREE FOUNDATION, reported on progress for the Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.2](#)) and requested a renewal of the CA, noting implementation delays due to pandemic disruptions and lack of funding. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Humpback Whales of the Arabian Sea: The Secretariat, on behalf of the ARABIAN SEA WHALE NETWORK (ASWN), reported on progress for Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) of the Arabian Sea ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/32.2.3](#)), noting that a Conservation Management Plan is not yet complete. AUSTRALIA, MALDIVES, ARGENTINA, and INDIA supported renewing the CA. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Eastern Tropical Pacific Sperm Whales: The CMS Scientific Councillor, on behalf of the EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY and RED DE CACHALOTES DEL PACIFICO, and supported by ARGENTINA, reported on Eastern Tropical Pacific Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.4](#)) and requested a renewal of the CA. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Atlantic Humpback Dolphin: The Secretariat, on behalf of the former COP-appointed councillor for aquatic mammals, reported on Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (*Sousa Teuszii*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.5](#)) and recommended the closing of the CA given the approved Species Specific Action Plan (SSAP) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.5.2/Rev.2](#)). The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Harbour Porpoises in the Baltic Sea and Iberian Peninsula: WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION, also on behalf of COALITION CLEAN BALTIC, HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL, and ORCA reported on Harbour Porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.6](#)). Highlighting the new Appendix I listing of the Baltic Proper population and ongoing efforts, she recommended the closure of the CA. The AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS OF THE BLACK SEA, MEDITERRANEAN SEA, AND CONTIGUOUS ATLANTIC AREA (ACCOBAMS) expressed support for ongoing work on the Iberian population of the Harbour Porpoise. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Great Bustard in Asia: MONGOLIA, supported by the EU, reported on the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.7](#)) and sought a continuation of the CA to facilitate the implementation of the revised Action Plan ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.5.3/Rev.1](#)). The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Antipodean Albatross: NEW ZEALAND, also on behalf of AUSTRALIA and CHILE, reported on the Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.28](#)) and recommended a renewal of the CA. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Common Guitarfish and Bottlenose Wedgefish: The IUCN SSC SHARK SPECIALIST GROUP (SSG) reported on Common Guitarfish (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*) and Bottlenose Wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus australiae*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.9](#)) and requested a renewal of the CA, noting that critical conservation planning work had not begun. SENEGAL, MALDIVES, and KENYA expressed support. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

New and extended proposals for Concerted Actions for the triennium 2024-2026: Chimpanzee: IUCN introduced the document related to Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) behavioural diversity and cultures ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.1](#)).

SENEGAL and PAN AFRICAN SANCTUARY ALLIANCE expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

Straw-Coloured Fruit Bat: KENYA introduced the proposed CA for the Straw-Coloured Fruit Bat (*Eidolon helvum*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.2](#)). BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

Pallas Cat or Manul: PALLAS CAT INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE presented the proposal regarding the Manul (*Felis manul*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.3](#)). TURKMENISTAN and INDIA expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

Eurasian lynx: UNEP introduced the proposal, which relates to both the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and its Balkan subspecies (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.4](#)). TURKMENISTAN expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

Franciscana Dolphin: ARGENTINA introduced the proposal regarding the Franciscana Dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*). URUGUAY, BRAZIL, AUSTRALIA, the INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION, and IUCN expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

Oceanic Whitetip Shark: The proposal for the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) was not discussed, as it had been withdrawn.

Blue Shark: LAW OF THE WILD introduced document [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.7/Rev.1](#), on the Blue Shark (*Prionace glauca*). SENEGAL and MALDIVES expressed support. The CoW accepted the proposal.

In the Corridors

“Play hard, work harder” was the motto of the day, as delegates were met with an evening session that cut short planned cultural excursions. The admirable work ethic of COP delegates was evident in the morning as the CoW, once again, sped through approvals of CRPs. The CoW also approved all proposed CAs that will protect fan-favourite species such as the Straw-Coloured Fruit Bat (*Eidolon helvum*), the Franciscana Dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*) and, of course, the beloved “grumpy cat” (*Felis manul*).

The work of the Convention extends far beyond the COP, as demonstrated by the various national and CA implementation reports. It is clear that while some positive progress has been made in the last intersessional period, challenges remain around reporting and resources. The low reporting rate (only 41% of parties) is a perennial issue, but the lack of domestic and external resourcing impacts not only the implementation of CAs—as seen by that of the Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)—but also the ability of certain parties to fully participate in Convention processes. Only 67 parties will be considered eligible to vote when the COP reconvenes on Saturday due to credentialing issues and arrears.

Unlike the relaxed atmosphere in the plenary, tensions ran higher outside of the Falcon room, where the budget working group undertook discussions on these very issues. Coming to an agreement on budget and resource mobilization will be key to ensuring not only the successful implementation of the Convention, but perhaps also to improving participation in reporting and meetings, particularly from under-represented parties and stakeholders. Delegates will be faced with a heavy agenda when the COP resumes on Saturday. Still, as the expression goes, the Devil Ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) works hard, but the CMS COP works harder.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP14 will be available on Tuesday, 20 February 2024 at bit.ly/cms_cop14.