

CMS COP13 Highlights: Wednesday, 19 February 2020

Chair Akankwasah Barirega (Uganda) opened the Committee of the Whole (CoW), followed by an update on progress from working groups. The CoW moved swiftly through a long agenda.

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

Conservation Issues: Terrestrial Species: Joint CITES-CMS-African Carnivores Initiative: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.1/Rev.1), highlighting the collaborative initiative on the management of lion, leopard, cheetah, and wild dog populations across 27 range states. The EU, CITES, IUCN and others, welcomed the document.

Conservation of the African Wild Ass: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.2). ETHIOPIA and SENEGAL supported the resolution, noting the importance of engaging local communities in conservation work.

African Elephant Action Plan and Trust Fund: UNEP introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.3). TOGO requested that the resolution establish a clear funding mechanism. Despite UNEP's clarification that the trust fund already provides such a mechanism, TOGO requested that this item be referred to the Terrestrial Working Group.

Sahelo Saharan Megafauna: The Secretariat introduced the document on the proposed continuation, strengthening and potential extension of the concerted action (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.4 and Doc.28.2.4), supported by the EU, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), and SENEGAL. The Secretariat referred amendments to the Terrestrial Working Group.

Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI): The Secretariat introduced the draft revised resolution and programme of work (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.3.5), supported by MONGOLIA, EU, UK, SWITZERLAND, UZBEKISTAN and WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS). UZBEKISTAN highlighted the role of CAMI in addressing border fence issues between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan affecting the population of saiga antelope on the Ustyurt plateau. SWITZERLAND asked to indicate estimated costs of activities. The Secretariat referred the document to the Terrestrial Working Group.

National Reports: The Secretariat introduced the summary of the national reports (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.20), noting that 95 out of 130 parties had submitted them, the highest response rate ever. The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) presented key findings from its analysis of the 79 national reports submitted before the COP13 reporting deadline. She said the analysis called for continued focus on addressing habitat loss and degradation, and for increased support to parties to fulfill the ambitions of the Convention.

BRAZIL called for including support for the analysis of national reports in the core budget, as stated in scenario four in the budget document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.2). The

EU called for improving synergies with the reporting processes of instruments within the CMS family and other MEAs, and suggested amendments to the draft decisions. The CoW agreed to revisit the document after the EU submits comments.

Application of Article III of the Convention: The Secretariat introduced the document on the import or export of CMS Appendix I-listed species (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.21).

The EU, UK, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, ZIMBABWE, NORWAY, and CITES called for an intersessional working group to clarify the nature and scale of the impact of international trade on the conservation status of Appendix I-listed species before reconsidering this issue at COP14. SOUTH AFRICA and CITES noted that commercial utilization can under certain circumstances improve, and not just contribute to the decline of, certain migratory species. ISRAEL, with PERU and WCS, called for adopting an amended draft resolution at COP13 instead of waiting until COP14. The CoW established a contact group.

Review Mechanism and National Legislation Programme: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.22). The EU supported the adoption of draft decisions with changes to reflect Resolution 12.9 provisions on the National Legislation Programme. The CoW agreed to consider the amendments.

Reservations with respect to Amendments to Appendices I and II of the Convention: The EU introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.27.4). ISRAEL highlighted that reservations undermine the goals and effectiveness of the Convention and proposed the inclusion of language to that effect. The Secretariat noted it would take ISRAEL's proposal into account.

Review of Decisions and Resolutions: Review of Decisions: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.23.1), listing decisions to be deleted and renewed. The CoW agreed.

Review of Resolutions: Decisions 12.11 and 12.12: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.23.2), proposing the repeal of Resolution 7.18 (Rev.COP12) and Resolution 6.3 (Rev.COP12) and the deletion of Decisions 12.11 and 12.12. The CoW agreed.

Review of the Conservation Status of Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.24). The EU noted its deep concern that biological resource use is a significant threat facing migratory species. IFAW, supported by BRAZIL, proposed a review of Appendix II species to see if they qualify for Appendix I listings. The CoW noted the document.

Global Atlas on Migration: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.25). INDIA offered support for the development of the atlas, noting that an existing one on birds has been very useful. The CoW noted the document.

Disaggregation of Bird Families and Genera listed under Appendix II: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/

CMS/COP13/Doc.27.3). The Scientific Committee Chair recommended the CoW take note of this document. NEW ZEALAND supported disaggregation, noting that this helps focus efforts on migratory species that need the most help. The EU suggested studying a variety of approaches, noting that disaggregation will have different implications for different species. The CoW noted the document.

Crosscutting Conservation Issues: Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity: Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, COP-appointed Councillor, introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.1/Rev.1). UK, ARGENTINA, PERU, SENEGAL and many NGOs expressed support. CONSERVATION FORCE suggested that human culture and social complexity also be considered. The CoW agreed to the draft decisions in the document.

Energy and Migratory Species: Renewable Energy and Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the draft revised resolution and decisions regarding the Energy Task Force (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.2.1), supported by the EU, BRAZIL, and SENEGAL. The EU stated that the translocation of species should be a last resort, while the modification of the operation of power plants should also be explored. The CoW noted the proposed amendments.

Power Lines and Migratory Birds: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc. 26.4.2.2). INDIA and the EU submitted comments in writing. The CoW noted the comments.

Addressing Unsustainable Use of Terrestrial and Avian Wild Meat of Migratory Species of Wild Animals: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.3) noting that it was not able to complete the analysis on the direct and indirect impacts of wild meat taking, trade, and consumption on terrestrial and avian species due to lack of funding. The EU supported the renewal of relevant decisions with amendments provided in writing. The CoW noted the proposed amendments.

Improving Ways of Addressing Connectivity in the Conservation of Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.4). The EU supported the update on the implementation of Resolution 12.26 and Decisions 12.91 to 12.93. BRAZIL objected to the inclusion of paragraphs referencing the development of radio receiver systems. IUCN proposed referencing their Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group's Guidance for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors. The CoW agreed to the document with changes proposed.

Transfrontier Conservation Areas for Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.5). INDIA agreed to the update of Resolution 12.7 to include the concept of Transfrontier Conservation Areas and the renewal of the current decisions. The EU and Brazil proposed amendments. The CoW noted the proposed amendments.

Community Participation and Livelihoods: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.6). MONGOLIA, BANGLADESH, INDIA, SENEGAL, TOGO, and MALAWI described successful instances of community conservation approaches used in their countries. IUCN proposed that case studies could look specifically at community initiatives enabling connectivity along migratory pathways and suggested amendments to this effect. The CoW noted the document.

Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Aquatic, Terrestrial and Avian Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.7). SEYCHELLES illustrated how they are not able to remove the unprecedented amount of plastic litter washed on the beaches of their 150 islands. INDIA and RWANDA stressed the need for policy support from CMS, while MONGOLIA and ECUADOR suggested using synergies with

other fora, in particular with the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). The CoW noted the proposed amendments.

Climate Change and Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.8). Colin Galbraith, COP-appointed Councillor, noted the dire situation for both migratory species and the climate, and the need for further research into the relationship between the two, and called for funding to support this. BRAZIL opposed introducing additional reporting requirements. RAMSAR called for protection and restoration of carbon-rich wetlands. The Chair suggested, and the CoW agreed, to incorporate Brazil's and EU suggestions within a revised document.

Light pollution: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.9.2). AUSTRALIA, supported by NEW ZEALAND, reported on its national guidelines designed to reduce light pollution and its disorienting effects on wildlife. EU said it supported AUSTRALIA but would forward proposed amendments. The CoW noted the amendments.

Insect Decline and its Threat to Migratory Insectivorous Animal Populations: The EU introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.4.10), including draft decision requesting the Scientific Council to assess the most important factors causing the insect decline and consider the development of guidelines. AUSTRALIA supported the draft decision, subject to availability of resources. The CoW noted the support for the document.

Infrastructure Development and Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CMS/COP13/26.4.11), calling for a multi-stakeholder working group to address impacts from infrastructure development. The EU and BRAZIL proposed changes. MONGOLIA highlighted the importance to refer to best practices from other MEAs. The CoW noted the proposed amendments.

Review of in-session documents

Strategic Plan: The CoW Chair introduced the revised draft decision. The CoW forwarded the draft decision (UNEP/CMS/COP13/CRP14.1) for adoption in plenary.

Options for a follow up to the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023: The CoW Chair introduced the draft decision (UNEP/CMS/COP13/CRP.14.2). In response to comments by SOUTH AFRICA, the Secretariat added reference to establishing a working group. The discussion was adjourned to allow for informal consultations.

In the Corridors

Attending COP13 on Wednesday was an unusual observer: flitting among the rafters during the Committee of the Whole was what one avid birder delegate identified as a myna, a bird whose Sanskrit name means "one who is fond of arguments." This perhaps explains the bird's presence in plenary, where debates heated up over the application of Article III(5) of the Convention. This article, prohibiting the taking of Appendix I listed migratory species, creates what one delegate called "interesting complications" — namely the potential to undermine CMS — when, for example, a species protected under CMS is not prohibited for trade under CITES, the main global instrument for addressing trade in endangered species. The proposed draft resolution and decisions were deemed "overdue" and "a helpful start" by some, but "hasty" by others, who preferred to defer the issue to an intersessional working group for consideration at COP14. Less heated but no less interesting were discussions on the conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity. One delegate heralded CMS for being the first UN body to acknowledge that "humans are not the only creatures on the planet that have culture." Another asserted that any consideration of animal culture shouldn't eclipse "the prevailing importance of human culture." The myna in the rafters would surely disagree.