

CMS COP15 Highlights: Tuesday, 24 March 2026

The Committee of the Whole (CoW) of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) met in morning and afternoon sessions and working groups met over the course of the day.

Administrative and Budgetary Matters

Resource mobilization: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.14.3](#) on exploring options for a dedicated CMS financial mechanism, including through the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

BRAZIL, with PANAMA, CHILE, and COSTA RICA, supported such a mechanism, while the EU, UK, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, and MONACO opposed, citing duplication risks.

CoW Chair Khalid Cherki (Morocco) referred the item to the cross-cutting and institutional issues working group.

Strategic and Institutional Matters

Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.15](#).

NEW ZEALAND, EU, UK, and AUSTRALIA expressed concerns about, while BRAZIL supported, certain indicators and actions for Target 4.3, which is on parties securing and mobilizing resources to implement the Convention by 2029.

CoW Chair Cherki referred the item to the working group on cross-cutting and institutional issues.

Scientific Council: Sessional Committee Members: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.16.1/Rev.2](#) on candidates for the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC). The CoW referred the item to the working group on institutional and cross-cutting issues.

Overview of the Working Groups and Task Forces Established under the CMS Scientific Council and its Sessional Committee: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.16.2/Rev.1](#). The CoW noted the document.

Election of Parties to the Standing Committee: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.17](#). CoW Chair Cherki urged regional groups to seek agreement.

Collaboration with Other Entities: Synergies and Partnerships: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.18.1](#). The CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) underscored the power of partnerships to protect species, pointing to the recovery of the saiga antelope. UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) urged for coherence across multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

The CoW finalized the draft decisions for consideration by the COP.

Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.18.2](#). IPBES underscored their relevance to CMS. NORWAY, SOUTH AFRICA, and BORN FREE FOUNDATION called for more cooperation.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

CMS Contribution to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.18.3](#).

The EU urged CMS to participate in the global review of collective progress on GBF implementation. KENYA, SENEGAL, and UNEP emphasized the role of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Communications, Outreach and Information

Management: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.19](#), highlighting the launch of the State of the World's Migratory Species (SWMS) interim report.

BRAZIL suggested calling for more than just financial support. The EU said communications should be tailored to the general public, and outreach should include other MEAs. KENYA proposed using the SWMS interim report for fundraising.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Scientific Assessments and Reports

Conservation Status of Migratory Species: Development of the Next State of the World's Migratory Species Report: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.20.1/Rev.1](#). Parties suggested amendments to draft decisions including to: ensure studies reflect integrated approaches and replicable best practices; provide guidance on CMS Appendix I obligations in CITES permitting processes; and seek a simplified approach for parties submitting data on migratory species.

CoW Chair Cherki referred the item to the working group on cross-cutting and institutional issues.

State of the World's Migratory Species - Interim Report (2026): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.20.2/Rev.1](#) and UNEP presented findings, underscoring that key biodiversity indicators for CMS-listed species are trending negatively, requiring accelerated efforts to scale up action. The CoW noted the report.

Atlas of Animal Migration: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.21/Rev.1](#).

The CoW noted the document, and the decisions will be finalized for adoption by the COP.

Interpretation and Reporting on Implementation of the Convention

Review Mechanism and National Legislation Programme: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.23](#). KENYA supported, and BRAZIL opposed, creating a CMS Multistakeholder Legal Task Force on Legislation.

The Secretariat will produce a CRP.

Review of Decisions: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.24](#), on the deletion or continuity of decisions not otherwise included in COP15 documents. The EU recommended renewing decisions on seabirds, marine wildlife, and plastics. The Secretariat agreed to retain the decisions noted by the EU.

Crosscutting Conservation Issues: Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Migratory Species: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.1](#); comments from the ScC ([Doc.28.1/Add.1](#)); an analysis of illegal and unsustainable taking ([Inf.28.1a](#)); and a report on the impact of take and trade of migratory birds for consumption in Africa-Eurasia ([Inf.28.1.b](#)).

BRAZIL suggested language “urging” instead of “proposing” financial support. The EU opposed the reference to multiple systems of knowledge, concerned that it may equate these with science. ZIMBABWE said there was no value in emphasizing domestic-level drivers. WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS) supported establishing a Global Initiative on Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Migratory Species, and the amendments proposed by BRAZIL and EU. KENYA welcomed a Global Initiative and urged a dual approach with strengthened enforcement and community inclusion. BORN FREE FOUNDATION suggested keeping the operative paragraph on wildlife repatriation.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Ecological Connectivity: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.2/Rev.1](#), a survey on links with infrastructure ([Inf.28.2a](#)) and a concept note for the Global Partnership for Ecological Connectivity ([Inf.28.2b](#)).

BRAZIL and EU supported the amendments to the resolution on communication and information management, and SENEGAL supported these actions without further amendments. EAST ASIAN-AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP (EAAFP) urged considering ecological networks beyond corridors.

The Secretariat will produce a CRP.

Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TCAs): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.3](#). The EU welcomed the transboundary tool, though noted low engagement in testing it. BRAZIL proposed streamlining reporting burdens. ETHIOPIA requested including examples of TCAs from their bilateral agreements with neighboring countries. SOUTH AFRICA opposed elements of the draft decision, citing inadequate consultation with Southern African Development Community countries. UNEP noted that any further investment and development of the tool must be done based on explicit demand and need.

The Secretariat will produce a CRP.

Communities and Livelihoods: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.4](#). BRAZIL suggested recognizing artisanal fishers and the vital role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The EU cautioned mandating the ScC with broad topics, given limited resources. WCS warned that the issues being addressed are not exclusively scientific. KENYA, with ETHIOPIA and SENEGAL, called for further consideration of human-wildlife conflict.

The Secretariat will develop a CRP.

Wildlife Health: The Secretariat presented [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.5/Rev.1](#). ARGENTINA opposed any reference to the World Health Organisation (WHO), from which it has withdrawn, and to the One-Health approach. BRAZIL requested the Secretariat facilitate resource mobilization for this work in partnership with relevant development banks. PERU called for referring to “highly pathogenic” avian influenza. UNEP said highly pathogenic bird flu underscores the importance for people of good climate and environmental health. BORN FREE FOUNDATION lamented the lack of recognition of the linkage between human health and animal welfare.

The CoW Chair referred this agenda item to the cross-cutting issues working group.

Pastoralism: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.6/Rev.1](#), recommending extending the Working Group on Pastoralism’s mandate.

ARGENTINA stressed references to WHO-related processes and instruments should not be mandatory. The EU agreed to adopt draft decisions provided a change suggested by the ScC is included. GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS urged for evidence-based policies that support sustainable rangeland stewardship.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Light Pollution: The Secretariat presented [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.7/Rev.1](#). NEW ZEALAND noted the importance of addressing the growing threat of light pollution on migratory species. The EU suggested several amendments.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Insect Decline: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.8/Rev.1](#). The EU urged promoting scientific research, and with BRAZIL, proposed retaining language from the Rio Declaration. BRAZIL also called for strengthening the

scientific basis, extending monitoring, and integrating sectoral approaches to implementing decisions.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Cumulative Effects Assessments: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.9/Rev.1](#) with draft decisions on cumulative effects assessments (CEAs).

SOUTH AFRICA, with UGANDA, noted only two parties had responded to the notification requesting information on national policies regarding CEAs and requested further consultations. The EU suggested awaiting the outcome of ScC work on developing a CMS definition of CEA.

The CoW Chair referred the item to the working group on cross-cutting and institutional issues.

Infrastructure: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.10/Rev.1](#).

BRAZIL suggested recognizing that the impacts of infrastructure are not uniform. The EU said it was premature to mention social impact assessments for animal culture given ongoing work on this matter by the ScC.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Renewable Energy: The Secretariat presented [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.11](#).

The EU opposed a reference to “nature-safe design,” noting that renewable energy development will always entail risks despite best planning practices. The UK called for ensuring parties’ actions are compatible with existing legal frameworks.

The INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC) highlighted their joint research initiative with Australia to investigate the impacts of offshore renewable energy development on cetaceans.

INTERAMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE stressed the need for meaningful participatory consultation with Indigenous Peoples and coastal communities to ensure the expansion of renewable energy is ecologically sound and socially grounded.

The Secretariat will produce a CRP.

Climate Change: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.12/Rev.1](#).

BRAZIL called for further clarifying the proposed modalities of the Decision Framework, and suggested adding sustainable use to the list of core conditions under the Framework. The UK encouraged parties to make active use of the working group on climate change’s outputs and tools.

IWC, AUDUBON SOCIETY, INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE (IFAW), and BORN FREE FOUNDATION supported the breadth of work undertaken by the working group and at the expert workshop convened in early 2025, and suggested amendments in writing.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.13/Rev.1](#).

KENYA noted a need to shift conservation practices toward protecting animal culture and social complexity. SOUTH AFRICA, with ZIMBABWE, called for a focus on species under threat. SOMALIA urged for capacity building and increased cooperation and sharing of local and traditional knowledge in this emerging area of work.

The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

In the Corridors

On the second day of COP15, with “connecting nature to sustain life” as its slogan, occasional disconnections from the power grid added to the sense that this was by no means going to be an easy job. A loud bang and scattered power outages startled delegates over lunch, and balky WiFi also meant they were periodically disconnected from the online documents so central to COP15’s work.

Even so, the CoW found itself ahead of schedule – mostly by diverting items to the cross-cutting issues working group, which as one delegate quipped “risks becoming another CoW.” COP15 is still in its early stages, but some worry that by pushing off so many items, more work will pile up at the end. Meanwhile, delegates resorted to using their phones as hotspots, risking ballooning data bills, and proving that digital ecosystems also connect us all.