

CMS COP14 Highlights: Wednesday, 14 February 2024

Chair Colin Galbraith (UK) opened the Committee of the Whole (CoW), followed by an update on progress from working groups. The CoW moved resolutely through a long agenda of items for which, unless otherwise specified, discussion continues in relevant working groups. The CoW will later review CRPs.

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

Cross-cutting conservation issues: Threats: Climate change: The Scientific Council (ScC) introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.4.1/Rev.3](#). SOUTH AFRICA requested reference to “ecosystem-based adaptation.” The INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE (IFAW), on behalf of 15 other NGOs, stressed the role of migratory species in mitigating climate change. MALDIVES called for baseline data on the climate-related degradation of migratory habitats. FAUNA AND FLORA highlighted the role that Indigenous Peoples and local communities can play in mitigation and adaptation.

Insect decline and its threat to migratory insectivorous animal populations: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.4.2/Rev.1](#).

Light pollution: The ScC introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.4.4](#) with proposed amendments to CMS light pollution guidelines for wildlife (Res.13.5). NEW ZEALAND suggested making the draft guidelines available on the CMS website.

Plastic pollution: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.4.5/Rev.1](#). The EUROPEAN UNION (EU) requested harmonized guidance on fishing gear. MALDIVES stressed the need to end pollution across plastic’s life cycle.

Conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.5/Rev.1](#). The UK and BORN FREE FOUNDATION stressed the practical implications of animal culture for conservation. The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) submitted a statement on *Human and Animal Culture*. The EU proposed amendments to distinguish local communities from Indigenous Peoples.

Tourism: The UK introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.6/Rev.1](#), proposing amendments to Resolution 12.23 to endorse new guidelines on ecotourism and migratory species. INDIA requested reference to local communities. BORN FREE FOUNDATION said this work can strengthen related IUCN guideline implementation. Noting “recreation” went unmentioned in the document, BRAZIL requested work on this.

Review mechanism and national legislation programme: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.24](#), including a proposed study to determine whether national legislation can be an effective deterrent to species being taken in violation of the Convention. The EU, with MADAGASCAR, OCEAN CARE, and the WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

(WCS), underlined the importance of the national legislation programme. MADAGASCAR, with WCS and the UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO), requested that the Secretariat encourage strengthened national legislation.

Review of Decisions: The Secretariat summarized the list of COP13 Decisions proposed for renewal or deletion ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.25](#)). The EU provided two amendments: to retain Decision 13.16 and paragraph a) of Decision 13.71. The CoW recommended the document for adoption as amended.

Definition of the terms “range state” and “vagrant:” The ScC reported on intersessional work to develop guidance on these terms, noting that the document is not recommended for adoption ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.26/Rev.1](#)). Several parties said no further work on this issue is necessary. ZIMBABWE, with the UK, SOUTH AFRICA, NEW ZEALAND, and AUSTRALIA, supported more work and urged parties to consider adopting the voluntary guidelines. NEW ZEALAND suggested making the guidance available online.

Amendment of CMS Appendices: Taxonomy and nomenclature: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.1/Rev.1](#), which recommends a new taxonomy for aquatic marine mammals. The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Guidance on the disaggregation of families and genera listed in Appendix II: The ScC introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.2/Rev.1](#). The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Potential avian taxa for listing: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.3](#). The EU wished to “take note of” rather than “endorse” the list of non-CMS-listed avian species that have unfavourable conservation statuses. BANGLADESH announced plans to propose the Masked Finfoot (*Heliopais personatus*) for inclusion in CMS Appendices.

Implementation of the Concerted Action process: Concerted Actions (CAs): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.1/Rev.1](#), including proposed revisions to Resolution 12.28 (Rev.COP13) to clarify CA implementation.

Assessment of progress in the implementation of Concerted Actions and possible proposals for their extension: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2](#). The CoW recommended the document for adoption.

Aquatic species conservation issues: Fisheries-induced threats: Bycatch: The COP-appointed councillor for bycatch introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.1.1/Rev.1](#). COOK ISLANDS emphasized that CMS should not adopt draft decisions in the domain of national fisheries administrations. NIGERIA stressed that bycatch should be considered alongside unregulated fishing.

Marine pollution and other threats: Fish aggregating devices (FADs): The COP-appointed councillor for marine pollution introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.1.2/Rev.1](#). EGYPT, with OCEAN CARE, supported the proposed study of

FADs as marine debris, encouraging close collaboration with partners such as the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS).

Maltreatment and mutilation of seabirds in fisheries: The Chair of the intersessional working group presented [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.1.3/Rev.2](#). BRAZIL noted that this issue extends beyond his country. EGYPT suggested broadening the geographic scope of the draft decisions. The CoW recommended the document for adoption by the COP.

Effects of marine pollution on migratory species: The COP-appointed councillor for marine pollution introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.2.1/Rev.2](#). EGYPT requested enhanced cooperation at national and regional levels. OCEAN CARE emphasized funding requirements for the proposed workshop.

Marine Noise: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.2.2/Rev.2](#), noting that the aquatic working group discussions had addressed the issue and produced a CRP. AUSTRALIA, supported by EGYPT, shared her country's national guidelines on underwater noise, noting these will be shared with the ScC.

Vessel Strikes: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.2.3/Rev.1](#) and highlighted discussions by the aquatic working group and the available CRP. OCEAN CARE, on behalf of IFAW and the WORLD WILDLIFE FUND (WWF), underlined the threats posed by vessel strikes to marine species and noted progress made through voluntary commitments by shipping companies, national measures, and other international collaboration.

Marine pollution and other threats: Deep-sea mining: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/27.2.4/Rev.1](#), [UNEP/CMS/COP14/27.2.4/Add.1](#), and a letter from the Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.27.2.4](#)). Several delegates supported a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining, citing a lack of evidence regarding its impact on marine migratory species and habitats. Others stressed the need to remain within the mandate of the Convention.

Marine wildlife watching: Recreational in-water interactions: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.3.1/Rev.1](#), noting the prepared CRP.

Area-based conservation management: Important marine mammal areas (IMMAs): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.4.1](#), noting that a CRP was available. BAHRAIN and EGYPT stressed the need to consider marine mammal areas in the Arabian Gulf. WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION (WDC) strongly recommended that parties that had not yet contributed to the IMMA process do so.

Important shark and ray areas: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.4.2/Rev.1](#).

Seagrass ecosystems: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.4.3](#). The UAE proposed preambular text emphasizing parties' collective commitment to seagrass.

Marine mammals: Conservation priorities for cetaceans: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.5.1/Rev.1](#). EGYPT warned against overlap with other documents on different marine issues. BRAZIL underlined the lack of resources impeding capacity-building workshops.

Marine mammals: Single species action plan (SSAP) for the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.5.2/Rev.2](#), noting that the aquatic working group did not propose additional changes. The CoW recommended the revised document for adoption.

Sirenians, pinnipeds, and otters: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.5.3/Rev.1](#). EGYPT called for an Action Plan on the Red Sea Dugong.

Marine turtles: Marine turtles: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.6.1/Rev.1](#), and reported on ongoing discussions in the working group that will lead to a CRP.

The SEA TURTLE CONVENTION expressed her commitment to continue collaborative work with the IUCN Sea Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the ScC. INDIA encouraged engagement by parties in developing other marine turtle action plans. WWF pointed to their ongoing review of marine turtle legislation in the Asia-Pacific ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.27/6/1](#)) and encouraged parties to engage in this process.

SSAP for the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean region: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.6.2/Rev.1](#). SENEGAL and EGYPT noted that the geographic scope of this SSAP could be expanded globally. COOK ISLANDS noted capacity difficulties in nominating separate representatives to observe on the steering committee group. COOK ISLANDS, with the PHILIPPINES, urged capable parties and organizations to provide technical and financial support for this SSAP.

Fish: SSAP for the Angel Shark (*Squatina squatina*) in the Mediterranean Sea: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.7.1](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.7.1/Add.1](#). IUCN stressed that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the last strongholds of this species.

Freshwater fish including the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*): The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.6.2/Rev.1](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.6.2/Add.1](#).

Implementation of the CMS Appendix I-listing for the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*): MALDIVES introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.7.3](#). The EU and Senegal noted the vulnerability of this species to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and trade.

Avian species conservation issues: Prevention of illegal killing, taking, and trade of migratory birds: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.1/Rev.1](#), [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.1/Add.1](#), and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.28.1](#). AUSTRALIA praised progress made on this issue during the intersessional period.

Action Plan for migratory land birds in the African-Eurasian region: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.2](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.2/Add.1](#).

Preventing poisoning of migratory birds: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.3](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.3/Add.1](#). SOUTH AFRICA and BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL mourned the lack of progress made by the COP13-mandated *Intergovernmental Task Force on Phasing Out the Use of Lead Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights*.

Flyways: The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.4.1/Rev.1](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.4.1/Add.1](#).

Initiative for Central Asian Flyway: INDIA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.28.4.2](#). BANGLADESH, UZBEKISTAN, WWF, and BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL expressed support.

In the Corridors

"This Valentine's day, we're all hungry for love," sighed one delegate on Wednesday. Participants' schedules were hectic as they ran between CoW sessions, working groups, side events, and bilateral meetings. One could be forgiven for mistaking them for migratory animals in search of feeding grounds.

In plenary, discussions addressed the serious high-level threats affecting migratory species, from marine pollution to deep-sea mining. The importance of words was also on the agenda, notably in different interpretations of "vagrant" species, and new taxonomy lists that are fundamental to the Convention's work.

As the sun set outside the Congress Centre, CoW Chair Colin Galbraith applauded those lonely hearts still present: "You've helped the world...but not any other relationship you have."