



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING
CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE
USE OF THE SAIGA ANTELOPE (*Saiga tatarica tatarica*)
Almaty, Kazakhstan, 25-26 September 2006

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF SIGNATORIES

Agenda Item 1: Welcoming remarks

1. The CMS Secretariat Agreements Officer, Mr. Lyle Glowka, opened the meeting and introduced Mr. Naurazbay Khadyrkeyev, Chairman of the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Mr. Khadyrkeyev welcomed the participants to Kazakhstan, noted that many prominent organisations from many countries were represented, and expressed gratitude to CMS and CITES for bringing so many people together. Mr. Glowka then introduced Ms. Zhanar Sagimbayeva of the UNDP Kazakhstan Office, who also welcomed the delegates and outlined a draft GEF proposal aimed at conserving biodiversity of steppe ecosystems. Mr. Tom de Meulenaer, CITES Senior Scientific Officer, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the CITES Secretariat and summarized some outstanding trade issues.

2. Mr. Glowka also welcomed the delegates and thanked the Government of Kazakhstan for providing financial support to make possible the meeting, and the two-day Technical Workshop, which preceded the meeting from 23-24 September. He was particularly grateful for the strong logistical support the participants and CMS had received to date from the staff of the Forestry and Hunting Committee and Ohotzoprom (Kazakhstan), which worked closely with the Committee. In addition, he noted that the meetings would not have been possible without the generous financial support provided to CITES by the European Commission and to CMS by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the United Nations Development Programme (Kazakhstan) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. He thanked the IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group and the European Sustainable Use Specialist Group for acting as the Secretariat's technical adviser and for preparing a number of documents for the meeting. Mr. Glowka then read a brief statement from Robert Hepworth, CMS Executive Secretary, thanking the Range States for their attendance and participation and expressing Mr. Hepworth's best wishes for a successful meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Signing ceremony

3. Mr. Glowka explained that a signing ceremony is a normal part of CMS MoU meetings. The Range States who had not yet signed were invited to consider signing the MoU at the meeting. He invited Mr. Khadyrkeyev to sign the MoU on behalf of the Forestry and Hunting Committee. Mr. Glowka thanked him and observed that with this signature, the MoU entered into effect. Representatives of three international non-governmental organisations - Fauna and Flora International, Frankfurt Zoological Society, and Wildlife Conservation Society - then signed the MoU as co-operating organisations. There followed a short adjournment to allow a press conference to take place.

Agenda Item 3: Election of officers

4. The meeting elected Mr. Khadyrkeyev (Kazakhstan) as Chair of the meeting. Mr. Khadirkeyev thanked all the delegates for participating in the meeting and for their efforts in Saiga conservation. He then handed over to Mr. Khairbek Mussabaeyev, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Forestry and Hunting, who chaired the rest of the meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule

5. The meeting accepted the Chair's proposal that it operate without formal written rules of procedure but would follow generally accepted rules of procedure for international fora.

6. The Secretariat introduced the meeting documents list (CMS/SA1/3/Rev.4). The final list of meeting documents is reproduced as Annex 3 to this report. The list of participants appears at Annex 1.

7. The agenda was adopted without amendment. No items for discussion under Agenda Item 10 were notified. The adopted agenda is reproduced as Annex 2 to this report.

Agenda Item 5: Opening statements

8. The Chair invited opening statements from governmental delegates.

9. The representative of Uzbekistan reported that the government had signed the MoU and was prepared to take concrete steps to conserve Saiga and to cooperate with other governments in this endeavour.

10. The representative of Turkmenistan reported that the government had also signed the MoU and was determined to fulfil its responsibilities.

11. The representative of Kazakhstan welcomed the fact the government had signed the MoU and said that Saiga conservation would be implemented under the auspices of the CITES and CMS agreements. Kazakhstan also wished to conclude bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries to strengthen protection of migratory populations.

12. The representative of Mongolia reported that they were very happy to participate in the meeting and cooperate in conservation efforts for Saiga. They were satisfied with the results of the Technical Workshop and also pleased that one of the main consumer countries was also participating in the meeting.

13. The representative of China reported that they had been cooperating with CITES and CMS for many years. The government had signed other CMS MoUs and is currently conducting an internal review with regard to the Saiga MoU.

14. The representative of Russia stated that they were pleased to be taking part in the meeting. Russia paid particular attention to Saiga and was ready to cooperate with other countries on its conservation.

15. The Chair invited opening statements from co-operating organisations.

16. The representative of the International Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation expressed pleasure at being able to participate in the meeting and reported that they would continue to work for Saiga conservation.

17. The representative of Fauna and Flora International reported that they were happy to participate in the meeting. Their work so far had been on social surveys and small scale public engagement initiatives in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and they hoped to continue and expand this work.

18. The representative of Frankfurt Zoological Society, also speaking on behalf of WWF, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Association for Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan reported that they were happy to participate in the meeting. They supported the many initiatives for Saiga conservation and looked forward to continuing their work. RSPB had signalled an intention to sign the MoU as a collaborating organisation.

19. The representative of Wildlife Conservation Society reported that they were happy to participate in the meeting. Their work encompassed trade surveys in China and scientific research and conservation work on Mongolian Saiga.

20. The Chair invited a report from the Technical Workshop that preceded the meeting.

21. Dr. David Mallon, Co-Chair of the IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group and chair of the Technical Workshop that preceded the MoU Meeting, reported on the Workshop's key points:

- Over 50 people had attended the Technical Workshop. These comprised representatives of all Range States, recent Range States, scientists, researchers and people involved in all aspects of Saiga conservation.
- All projects engaged in Saiga conservation and all organisations working on these projects were present, as well as representatives of the sustainable use of Saiga products.
- Three documents were reviewed, revised and recommended to the MoU meeting. This work had been carried out both in working groups and in plenary sessions.

Agenda Item 6: Report of the Secretariat

22. Mr. Glowka explained that the report of the Secretariat was composed of sub-Agenda Items 6.1 (Status of signatures), 6.2 (List of designated national contact points), and 6.3 (Any other matters). Two documents supported this item: document 4 (Report of Secretariat) and information document 1 (Status of Signatures).

Agenda Item 6.1: Status of signatures

23. Mr. Glowka noted that as of today, three out of four Range States had signed the MoU so the MoU had entered into effect. Eight co-operating signatory organisations had indicated their intention to support the MoU's implementation. He invited the representatives of Russia and China to indicate their intention to sign the MoU.

24. The representative of Russia reported that signing the MoU was under consideration, but that some technical issues had still to be discussed.

25. The representative of China reported that an internal review and evaluation of the MoU was currently under way.

Agenda Item 6.2: List of designated national contact points

26. Mr. Glowka circulated the list of officially designated contact points, from the three signatory Range States plus Mongolia and China. The meeting took note of the Secretariat's report and invited the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation to consider officially designating a national contact point. The updated list of designated national contact points is attached to this report as Annex 4.

Agenda Item 6.3: Any other matters

27. The Chair advised that the Secretariat had no additional matters relevant to its report to raise. No additional issues were raised by the meeting participants.

Agenda Item 7: Review of MoU and Action Plan implementation

28. Mr. Glowka explained that every meeting of the Signatories should review the conservation status of *Saiga tatarica tatarica* and implementation of the Action Plan. Agenda Item 7 was therefore composed of sub-agenda item 7.1 (Saiga conservation status) and sub-agenda item 7.2 (Status of implementation). The Secretariat's Overview Report had been prepared by IUCN/SSC's Antelope Specialist Group and European Sustainable Use Specialist Group on behalf of the CMS Secretariat and communicated by the Secretariat as required by paragraph 6 of the MoU. The relevant documentation for the Agenda Item included documents: CMS/SA-1/5/Add.1 (Overview report); CMS/SA-1/Inf. 3.3 (Signatory reports); CMS/SA-1/Inf. 4.2 (Collaborating organisation's reports) and CMS/SA-1/Inf. 5.1 (Non-signatory reports).

Agenda Item 7.1: Saiga conservation status

29. Mr. Glowka reminded the meeting that "conservation status" is not defined in the MoU, however, the Convention on Migratory Species defines it as "the sum of the influences acting on the migratory species that may affect its long-term distribution and abundance" (Art. I (1)(b)).

30. On behalf of the Secretariat, Dr. Mallon presented a summary of the conservation status of Saiga. The information provided in the draft Overview Report was reviewed and amended at the Technical Workshop prior to the meeting and latest figures for three of the five populations were updated. Recent increases in numbers have been reported and it was tentatively concluded that the severe decline has stabilised and that some populations may be beginning to recover.

31. The meeting took note of this portion of the Overview Report as presented by the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 7.2: Status of implementation

32. The Chair invited Dr. Mallon to provide a brief summary of the Overview Report on behalf of the Secretariat. Dr. Mallon explained that the Overview Report had been compiled from the national report forms and project report forms submitted prior to the meeting, along with additional information available to IUCN/SSC. National report forms were received from all six Saiga Range States and recent Range States. Twenty-two project report forms had been received, representing all currently known Saiga conservation projects. These project reports were summarised in a table (CMS/SA-1/Inf/6). The Technical Workshop had reviewed and amended the report and agreed a final version for recommendation to the MoU meeting. The revised Overview Report is attached to this report as Annex 5, the Project Report Summary as Annex 6. National report formats and project report forms are included in the documentation for the meeting as Annex 7 and Annex 8.

33. The Chair then invited the signatory Range States, Russia, Mongolia and China to make brief verbal reports.
34. Uzbekistan reported that hunting had been banned since 2002. The Ustiurt Plateau contained few settlements, but prospecting for oil and gas and construction had negative effects for Saiga. A round-table meeting with stakeholder organisations had been held to discuss conservation of Saiga and their habitat. Monitoring would be continued and captive breeding was being considered.
35. Turkmenistan reported that numbers of Saiga occurring in winter depended on climatic conditions. During the 1970-80s the population reached 15,000-25,000. At the present time, Saiga did not occur every year, and numbers reached a maximum of 2,000. A number of protection measures had been taken and the government planned to strengthen these.
36. Kazakhstan reported that three Saiga populations occurred in the country, covering 10 administrative *oblasts*. Annual censuses had shown an increase in numbers since 2003. Funding for Saiga conservation had also increased since 1993 and for 2006; 109.2 million tenge had been allocated. Very large protected areas had been established or were planned. Over 100 articles on Saiga had been published in the mass media during 2005-2006.
37. Russia reported that the status of Saiga populations in the country was relatively stable as a result of conservation measures taken, and numbers were currently 5,000-25,000. Annual monitoring of demographic structure and reproductive potential of females was carried out, together with an evaluation of threats. There was a large wolf population in the area of distribution and up to 500 were shot annually. There are plans to increase monitoring, intensify protection and develop captive breeding.
38. Mongolia reported that agreement had been reached with China on information exchange regarding Saiga products and trade use. The main problems affecting Saiga in Mongolia were lack of funding, very harsh environmental conditions, and small size of the current population. Future plans included upgrading the status of protected areas for Saiga, maintaining existing programs and developing captive breeding for reintroduction.
39. China reported that wild *Saiga tatarica tatarica* populations had become extinct by the 1960s. A captive breeding herd had been established in 1987. Stocks of Saiga horn amounted to 155.5 tons in 1994. Fifty-six products in Chinese Traditional Medicine (CTM) use Saiga horn and 6-10 tons of horn are consumed per year on average. Stocks are currently being surveyed and registered, and there are plans to reduce the number of products utilizing Saiga horn and the number of factories involved in processing. The government will cooperate with Range States and INGOs on Saiga conservation and is interested in discussing ways of establishing an enabling mechanism to use funds from CTM for *in situ* conservation to realise sustainable use of Saiga.
40. In the ensuing discussion, the possible use of funds from the CTM industry to aid conservation in Range States was welcomed. The possibility of existing horn stocks being utilised in trade to help meet the heavy demand was also raised. In response to a question posed by the Chair, it was pointed out that a lack of funding hindered MoU implementation in some cases. Improved bilateral cooperation would enhance protection in transboundary areas. Better collaboration between Range States and between governments and NGOs was desirable. One intervention from the floor raised the issue of international trade in Saiga skins but the existence of this trade could not be corroborated.
41. There were no further comments on, or proposed amendments to, the format of the Overview Report and the Projects Summary.

Agenda Item 8: Future implementation and further development of the MoU and Action Plan.

42. The Secretariat introduced Agenda Item 8 as being composed of sub-agenda items: 8.1 (National reporting and information management), 8.2 (MoU coordination) and 8.3 (Priorities for implementation: work programme to support the Action Plan's implementation).

Agenda Item 8.1: National reporting and information management

43. The Secretariat introduced the draft reporting format found in document CMS/SA-1/6/Add.1 (draft national report format) and document CMS/SA-1/6/Add.2 (draft project report form). The Technical Workshop had not recommended any amendments to these. The meeting was invited to provide comments on the drafts, as well as to consider more generally the national reporting issue, the general issue of information management and, the ways and means to improve the submission rate of national reports. Comments were also invited on the feasibility of developing Internet-based reporting.

44. The meeting suggested:

- Circulating current forms for updating, rather than blank forms, to reduce the amount of unnecessary work;
- There may be possible problems with sensitive data in an online system; and
- An updated Projects Summary would be useful and easy to produce.

45. The meeting invited the Secretariat to explore the feasibility of internet-based reporting and to move forward on this if a funding opportunity arose. The Secretariat advised that the national report format would be limited to meetings of the Signatories, but that attempts would be made to maintain an updated projects database. The national reporting format and project report forms endorsed by the meeting are attached to this report as Annex 7 and 8 respectively.

Agenda Item 8.2: MoU coordination

46. After the Secretariat introduced document CMS/SA-1/7 (MoU Coordination), the Chair invited the meeting to consider the general issue of MoU coordination and in particular the Secretariat's proposal to outsource some aspects of MoU coordination to a collaborating organisation. This was in keeping with CMS's developing practice of outsourcing the implementation of MoUs to support meeting preparation, project (development including fundraising), membership development and range-wide awareness raising.

47. The meeting took note of the Secretariat's proposal and invited the Secretariat to explore potential opportunities.

Agenda Item 8.3: Priorities for implementation: work programme to support the Action Plan's implementation

48. Mr. Glowka introduced the draft Medium-term International Work Programme that had been developed on behalf of the Secretariat by IUCN/SSC's Antelope Specialist Group and European Sustainable Use Specialist Group. The Chair invited the Antelope Specialist Group to introduce the document and the relevant recommendations from the Technical Workshop.

49. Dr. Mallon explained that the draft programme was derived from the MoU Action Plan and was intended to reflect the highest priorities for action over the next five years. The vision guiding the document had been the restoration of Saiga to levels where sustainable use was again possible. The

draft programme had been reviewed at the Technical Workshop by two sets of working groups who considered the actions first thematically and then by individual populations. A number of amendments were made and the Technical Workshop recommended the revised draft to the meeting.

50. Mr. de Meulenaer proposed a small amendment to the overall goal and measure of success. With this amendment, the Medium-term International Work Programme was endorsed by the meeting and is attached to this report as Annex 9.

Agenda Item 9: Next meeting of the Signatories

51. The Chair introduced the agenda item and invited the Secretariat to introduce the relevant documents and the general issues. Mr. Glowka introduced document CMS/SA-1/9 (Next Meeting of the Signatories) and explained the costs incurred in holding meetings and the amount currently allocated to the Secretariat to support agreement development and servicing. He suggested that meetings should be held regularly and raised the possibility of linking the meeting to others, to save costs.

52. On behalf of the Secretariat, Mr. Glowka expressed appreciation to the Forestry and Hunting Committee for hosting the MoU meeting and to the financial co-sponsors of the MoU meeting and the Technical Workshop.

53. The Chair invited the meeting to comment. National representatives agreed that the next meeting should be held in two years time. There were varying views on holding a stand-alone meeting or a joint meeting. The Chair suggested that a decision may depend in part on financial circumstances. There was also a consensus that a Technical Workshop should again be held in conjunction with the meeting.

54. The Chair invited offers to host the next meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Any other business

55. The Chair invited the meeting to raise any other issues not covered under the previous agenda items.

56. Dr. Fremuth (Frankfurt Zoological Society) indicated that the MoU coordination could be hosted by the Association for Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan and that financial support may be available.

57. Dr. Neronov reminded the meeting that Range States would be represented at a Man and the Biosphere meeting organized by UNESCO in October 2006 and Saiga would be included on the agenda.

Agenda Item 11: Closure of the meeting

58. There being no other business, the Chair concluded by saying that the meeting had considered all issues effectively and that this was in part due to the attendance by so many participants at the Technical Workshop as well as the MoU meeting. On behalf of the host country, he thanked the CMS Secretariat for the logistical and substantive preparations, all the participants for their attendance and their contributions, and the translators for their efforts. The meeting was declared closed at 17.10 on Monday 25 September 2006.