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OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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SAKER FALCON TASK FORCE

The attached document has been submitted by the Secretariat at the request of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals in relation to agenda item 13 on *Cooperation with organizations and multilateral environmental agreements*.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*



Saker Falcon Task Force

Report to the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Background

The Saker Falcon¹ (*Falco cherrug*) was up-listed to Appendix 1 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) at the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) held in Bergen, Norway during November 2011. The species has, in addition, been more recently up-listed by IUCN to globally 'Endangered', as a consequence of a population trend analysis which indicated that the species may be undergoing a very rapid decline.

At the same time as the CMS up-listing of the species occurred, the need for a Saker Falcon Task Force (STF) was recognised and this was formally established by CMS. Resolution 10.28², adopted at the COP10 states that the Parties agree to provide financial and other resources to the operation of the Task Force and to the implementation of the Concerted Action in cooperation with the Signatories of the Raptors MoU, Range States and other interested parties. The Task Force is now bringing together Range States of the Saker Falcon, as well as co-operating Partners and other interested parties, to develop a coordinated Global Action Plan (SakerGAP). Importantly, this will include a management and monitoring system for the species. The CITES Secretariat is represented on the Task Force and has recently agreed an 'internal cooperation agreement' with CMS to contribute funding for some of the key work areas and outputs from the Task Force.

The Saker Falcon Task Force provides a unique opportunity to promote the effective conservation of the species throughout its range. It is anticipated that the Task Force will play a key role in creating an internationally co-ordinated response to improve the status of the Saker Falcon, including developing robust mechanisms to ensure the controlled and sustainable use of the species for falconry purposes, within an adaptive management framework.

The work on the Saker falcon fits within wider initiatives on the conservation and management of birds of prey, and particularly within the framework of actions initiated under the UNEP/CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in African and Eurasia (Raptor MoU).

¹ <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=3619>

² http://www.cms.int/bodies/COP/cop10/resolutions_adopted/10_28_saker_e.pdf

The following summarises the progress of the Task Force so far.

The 1st Meeting of the Saker Falcon Task Force

The 1st Meeting of the STF was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 29 March 2012. It was hosted by the Coordinating Unit (CU) of the Raptors MoU, which is generously supported by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, on behalf of the Government of the UAE. Twenty seven participants from 14 different countries, including Government officials and representatives from international and non-Governmental organisations, attended the Meeting.

The objective was to bring together key stakeholders to review and agree Terms of Reference for the Task Force, and to agree on a clear Work Plan for 2012–2014, including adopting an international Single Species Action Plan protocol. The core objective of the 2012-2014 Work Plan is Objective 9 '*Develop a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan*', which was agreed to be led by CMS and the CU of the Raptors MoU.

During the Meeting, participants were requested to take responsibility for leading and driving forward a range of critical tasks to better understand the threats facing the species, and to identify how best to tackle them.

Outcomes of the 1st Meeting³

After welcoming remarks by Nick P. Williams (Programme Officer, Raptors MoU) and the election of Chairman Prof. Colin Galbraith (CMS Scientific Councillor) and Vice Chairman Mr. Umeed Khalid (Ministry of National Disaster Management, Pakistan) the Participants reviewed the pre-disseminated meeting documents.

The Participants formulated and agreed on 46 Action Points within the following key issues:

- Terms of Reference and Membership of the Task Force (Action Points 1-5),
- IUCN listing (Action Points 6-8),
- International Single Species Action Planning (Action Points 9-10)
- STF WorkPlan 2012-2014
 - Objective 3: 'Financial planning and fund raising' (Action Points 11-16)
 - Objective 4: 'Review Relevant international policies and legislation' (Action Points 17-19)
 - Objective 5: 'Carry out stakeholder analysis and develop stakeholders' network' (Action Points 20-22)
 - Objective 6: 'Conduct a knowledge gap analysis' (Action Points 23-25)
 - Objective 7: 'Examine the issue of sustainable use' (Action Points 26-30)

³ A full report of the 1st Meeting of the Saker Falcon Task Force is available at:

http://www.cms.int/species/raptors/pdf/saker_tf_report_072012.pdf

- Objective 8: 'Plan and implement fieldwork' (Action Points 31-33)
- Objective 9: 'Develop a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan' (Action Point 34)
- Objective 10: 'Advocate, educate and raise awareness' (Action Points 35-36)
- Objective 12: 'Plan future STF Work' (Action Points 37)
- Fundraising (Action Points 38-43)
- Timeline and Summary (Action Points 44-46)

Four task-oriented Working Groups were established to specifically address Objectives 4, 6, 7 and 8 in the WorkPlan. These Groups will operate mainly by e-mail correspondence and by teleconference.

The key agreement reached at the 1st Meeting was a clear 'road-map' for the development of a Global Action Plan for the conservation and management of the species. Importantly, this will include work related to sustainable use, leading in due course to the development of a management system to be agreed by all the stakeholders involved. This will relate closely to work on the sustainable use of a range of species undertaken by CITES. It is envisaged that the Task Force will learn from these other species examples to formulate the principles and practices to be adopted in any management system for the Saker falcon.

Saker Falcon Side Event at the 1st Meeting of Signatories to the UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU

A Side Event meeting was held as part of the 1st Meeting of Signatories to the UNEP/CMS Raptors MoU held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 9-11 December 2012. This provided the opportunity for a range of Saker Falcon Range States and other interested parties to be informed of the work of the Task Force and for a discussion on the *modus operandi* and proposed outcomes of the work.

Fundraising efforts

The work of the Task Force spans a wide range of complex issues, requiring the development of an integrated approach across research, monitoring and capacity building whilst retaining a focus on the practicalities of managing the species over huge areas of land. This work requires adequate funding to enable the Task Force to be effective.

The Task Force operates in an inclusive manner, involving Governments and their Agencies, conservation bodies, falconry organisations, as well as a range of specialists. A Stakeholders' Action Planning Workshop is scheduled to take place in 2013, to develop the SakerGAP.

In order to ensure the implementation of the Task Force's 2012-2014 Work Plan, including the organisation of a Stakeholders' Workshop, the CU of the Raptors MoU prepared several international funding proposals between May and October 2012, with the focus on Objective 9 of the overall WorkPlan, 'Develop a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan'.

As a result, the Saudi Wildlife Authority generously agreed to contribute US\$ 60,000 to fund research required to fill key knowledge gaps in advance of the planned Stakeholders' Workshop. The European Commission granted US\$ 100,000 to fund the Stakeholders' Workshop to develop the SakerGAP and the CITES Secretariat agreed to contribute US\$ 20,000 for work directly related to trade and to the sustainable use of the Saker Falcon.

Forward Plan

Now that some of the necessary funding for the next stage of activity has been raised, the implementation of the 2012-2014 Work Plan is continuing and gaining momentum with the preparation of the SakerGAP to be initiated in detail. The WorkPlan includes actions to gather important background information thematically (Objectives 4-8), and will be undertaken through on-line and face-to-face stakeholder consultations. This process will follow the international Single Species Action Planning protocol developed by the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), in conjunction with BirdLife International. This tried and tested procedure will be extended from the standard focus on specialists to include wider stakeholders involved with Saker Falcons, including falconry and trade interests.

The Saker Falcon Task Force is mandated to develop the SakerGAP for submission to CMS COP11, scheduled to take place in the latter part of 2014.

Working with CITES

The work of the Task Force will assist in the wider implementation of CITES and the following key outcomes are expected:

Activity 1: Develop a framework document for controlled sustainable use of the Saker Falcon under an adaptive management framework that conforms to the needs of CITES and incorporates robust monitoring and feedback mechanisms

- a) Co-ordinate and oversee the development of a framework for development of adaptive management programmes and methods for making sound Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) for the Saker Falcon, to determine whether taking free-living specimens will have a negative impact on the species in the wild, and to provide guidance on ensuring that harvest and international trade are sustainable for wild Saker Falcon populations (making a non-detriment finding – NDF).
- b) The framework document will:
 - a. include non-country-specific methods for carrying out an assessment of distribution and abundance, population trends, threats to populations and other relevant factors;

- b. provide generic guidance for developing a science-based population monitoring system, and establishing adaptive management programmes for harvesting of and trade in Saker Falcons, taking into consideration the results of surveys, impacts of harvest and protection regimes, etc.
 - c. incorporate lessons learned from the experiences of and outputs produced by Mongolia, with regard to NDFs for Saker Falcons; and
 - d. include a section on how sustainable, legal and traceable trade can contribute to the livelihoods of rural communities, with reference to CITES Resolution Conf. 13.2 (Rev. CITES CoP14) on *Sustainable use of biodiversity: Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines*.
- c) The framework document will be written in a format which enables the guidance and methods to be applied with further country-specific amendments in Saker Falcon Range States where it breeds and which are covered by CITES decisions, and in a style which facilitates translation into relevant languages, should such work be undertaken. The framework document will not include country-specific guidance and methods apart from the Mongolian example.
- d) Encourage and stimulate stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the framework document, thus increase their awareness about the conservation, sustainable management and trade of wild-sourced Saker Falcons.

Activity 2: Review relevant international policies and legislation relating to sustainable use of the Saker Falcon for falconry and trade

- a) Undertake a review of relevant international policies, legislation and guidelines, including those concerning the protection and management of the species, and those addressing illegal taking, illegal trapping and illegal trade.
- b) Identify any overlaps, omissions and contradictions in existing laws, policies and guidelines, and formulate advice for addressing these issues at national level.

Action requested

Parties to CITES, Saker Falcon Range States and other stakeholders are requested to:

- Note the establishment of the Saker Falcon Task Force and its progress to date, including in particular, the intention to develop a Global Action Plan for the species, incorporating guidance on the conservation and sustainable use of specimens of wild-origin for falconry purposes.
- Consider actively supporting the work of the Task Force, including, if appropriate, by contributing to the Stakeholders' Workshop planned to be held later in 2013.