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Submission by Switzerland of comments on documents proposing amendments for upcoming Meeting of the Signatories to the Raptors MOU (MOS3) in Dubai, July 2023

Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for the invitation to the third meeting of the Signatories to the Raptors MOU (MOS3) taking place beginning of July 2023 in Dubai/UAE, sent by email on 5 April 2023. Switzerland sees with delight the ambitious goals set to attain together with the Signatories and the Cooperation Partners of this important MOU under the umbrella of the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

As stated in the notification 2023/002 from 18 January 2023, we take – in accordance with the ROP, specifically Rules 16.3 (c) and (d) – the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed amendments to the MOU text and the annexes as in document: UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc. 14.1.

First of all, we would like to thank you for the very good quality of the documents provided for comments. They are comprehensible and easy to follow. It should also be noted that one can tell they were discussed in detail during the Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) with renowned birds of prey specialists. Thank you for the suggested amendments which seem adequate to streamline the texts and the annexes to prepare the Raptors MOU and its signatories for the future.

Hereafter, allow us to present our feedback: We do not have comments on the amendments to the MOU text, Annex 1 and 2. We believe it is important that the signatories discuss the proposed text amendments during the upcoming MOS3 to find consensus. In Annex 3 (“action plan”), we appreciate the streamlined ‘Priority Actions’. In table 1 of Annex 1, we read with concern that a considerable number of species have to be up-listed as their population status deteriorated.

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But we see with relief that two species important in Switzerland, Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) and Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) could be down-listed: the Black Kite from Category 2 to 3 and the Red Kite even from Category 1 to 3. As a result, only the Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) ranks as a resident (introduced) specie on Category 1 in Switzerland.

We have two general comments on table 2 in Annex 3 ("action plan"), Firstly, we believe that the timetable (timescale) foreseen for the activities, while important and very ambitious, is from our national perspective unfortunately by no means realistic. As an example, let us see Activity 1.3. Although we have been trying for half a decade to implement a partial lead ban, because of political decisions in parliament, it has not been possible. Secondly, we welcome the addition of "where appropriate" to paragraph 2.3, as in paragraphs 2.2 or 3.1. Although we have an important bearded vulture population shared with other countries over the alpine arc, feeding stations ("vulture restaurants") are not absolutely necessary in Switzerland, or suitable as a quality indicator, as we have good wild ungulate populations and thus sufficient food for the necrophagous birds of prey.

Our main concern of the documents to be commented on applies to the Table 3 of Annex 3 ("action plan"). In Switzerland, in 1999, on the basis of 29 bird species (5 raptor species) which met the international criteria, 31 IBAs have been designated by SVS/BirdLife Switzerland and the Swiss Ornithological Institute Sempach. To this date, the Important Bird Areas have not been officially recognised by the federal government or the subnational governments of the cantons. Already in December 2018 during the 3rd TAG meeting taking place in Switzerland, we explained in detail that the proposed IBA's are not the appropriate sites to protect the migrating birds of prey in Switzerland. Since then we started several projects to find more suitable areas. Unfortunately, out of political constraints, it was not possible in due time before MOS3 to propose perimeters of sites, which would be agreed on by the federal office, the cantons and the relevant NGO's. To get sites officially listed, we would need a mandate of the Federal Council, which we are not able to obtain at the moment. Hence, we need to place a reservation to the proposed list. We ask the Secretariat to take note of this reservation by this letter, as Switzerland will not be able to attend the upcoming MOS3 in physical presence out of resource constraints.

We propose the following changes to the proposed amended Table 3 (List of sites) (UNEP/CMS/RAP-TORS/MOS3/Doc. 14.1 / Addendum 7):

Except with site 3277 (Pre-alpine region of Gurnigel), Switzerland asks to delete the proposed sites 3265, 3271 – 3276, 3278 – 3281, 3283, 3284, 3289.

Table 3 should also include the following text alongside the name of the country with an asterisk: "Pursuant to paragraph 12 of the Raptors MOU, Switzerland has in 2019, developed a national conservation strategy titled "*Raptor and Owl Conservation in Switzerland - Strategic Guidelines and Management Priorities*". Switzerland is not currently in the position to propose additional international sites but remains committed to submitting further an additional list of internationally important sites for raptors when the political decisions allow to do so. "

We are of the opinion that this is a justifiable way forward given the difficult circumstances that we have raised above. At this stage one additional point seems also important to mention. The 14 newly proposed IBAs have no responsibility for Category 1 species. All species which qualify for the Swiss listed IBA's are listed only under category 3, with one exception: 6 sites are important for the Common Kestrel (*Falcon tinnunculus*). But, in Switzerland it only qualifies as near threatened (NT), it is very abundant and the population is developing positively.¹

¹ Swiss Ornithological Station, Information on the Common Kestrel vogelwarte.ch - Common Kestrel (26.04.2023)

As mentioned above, due to resource constraints, it is unfortunately not possible for us to present our concerns at MOS3 in July 2023 in Dubai/UAE. We ask therefore, that our comments presented in this letter will be considered as our official statement to the listing proposals and be reflected in the official report.

Thank you for your understanding. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

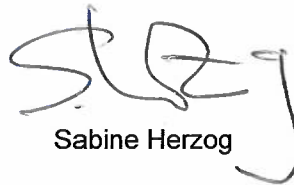
Kind regards

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