



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



PRESS RELEASE

United Arab Emirates Joins Convention on Migratory Species Reaffirms Strong Commitment to International Raptor and Dugong Conservation

Bonn/Abu Dhabi, 23 May 2016 – The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA) and Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) committed themselves to advancing their cooperation to conserve migratory species of wild animals, by the UAE's recent accession to CMS as its 123rd member state, and the extension of the long-standing financial and in-kind support of CMS Office - Abu Dhabi by EAD on behalf of the Government of Abu Dhabi Emirate.

The accession of UAE to CMS reinforces the already strong links between the country and the CMS family. The UAE has been a key partner in developing and supporting CMS agreements on migratory birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) and dugongs (Dugong MOU). The country is also a signatory of specialized CMS agreements on migratory sharks and marine turtles. All four instruments have action plans that catalyze national-level conservation activities with the aim of coordinating these across the species' migratory paths through international cooperation. The UAE has long recognized the importance of international cooperation to conserve migratory species.

Welcoming UAE to the Convention, Dr. Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS, said: "The accession of UAE to CMS builds on the leadership it has already been demonstrating regionally with respect to migratory species conservation. We look forward to UAE continuing to project its leadership at a global level."

The UAE has a rich diversity of marine and avian fauna. The country's long coastline boasts an abundance of marine wildlife such as dugongs, whales, dolphins, marine turtles and sharks, and provides resting and foraging grounds for migratory birds on the Eurasian and Central Asian flyways, with migratory falcons playing an integral part of our national cultural heritage."

The UAE being a contracting party to Ramsar, CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognizes the importance of developing synergies in its implementation of CMS and other treaties through the UAE National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2014-2020).

"We, and our future generations, are defined by the environments in which we live. The conservation of our environment at a time of growth and global climate change is the bedrock of a strong and prosperous economy and society while also providing an important link to our UAE heritage. That is why we see it as one of the highest priorities on our government's agenda and we will continue to play a key part within the international efforts on issues relating to biodiversity and wildlife. Today's important announcement is an important step in this work", said H.E. Dr. Thani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment.

Since 2009 significant financial and in-kind contributions from EAD, on behalf of the Government of the UAE, have supported the operation of CMS Office - Abu Dhabi which provides secretariats coordinating the Raptors and Dugong MOUs. Extending the arrangement by which the office was

established in Abu Dhabi, H.E. Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Secretary General of EAD and Dr. Bradnee Chambers signed an agreement in Abu Dhabi and Bonn, respectively.

“The Gulf hosts the world’s second largest dugong population, with the greatest numbers found in the waters off the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The UAE lies along the migratory pathway for 42 of the 93 species of African-Eurasian migratory birds of prey under the Raptors MOU, including the threatened Sooty Falcon, and the endangered Saker Falcon and the Egyptian Vulture as well”, Dr. Chambers said.

H.E. Al Mubarak added, “For many years we have been amassing technical expertise and data on the status of migratory and resident species populations in the UAE and using this information to develop appropriate protection and management strategies. Given the migratory nature of so many species it is only fitting that we support other nations in the development of their conservation plans. By working together in a cohesive manner, we multiply our chances of success”.

“The Raptors and Dugong MOUs support the conservation actions of Abu Dhabi and the entire UAE. They provide a platform for the nation to co-operate regionally with other countries that share these migratory animals as they pass through our country at different times of the year. Migratory species play an important role in the UAE’s culture and heritage and are critical elements in maintaining environmental health and quality of life, while also contributing significantly to economic sectors such as fisheries and tourism.”

EAD’s support has enabled CMS Office - Abu Dhabi to undertake a wide range of carefully targeted activities. Major intergovernmental initiatives have included developing partnerships, holding meetings of MOU Signatories, hosting expert group meetings, developing single and multi-species action plans, and leveraging multilateral finance for conservation projects in developing countries.

Mr. Lyle Glowka, Head of CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, noted that the Office represents a unique collaboration between CMS and EAD to conserve migratory species for the benefit of present and future generations: “EAD and CMS share the same values. This combined with EAD’s significant investment, support and technical expertise has been critical to our mission of promoting international cooperation across the vast range of the migratory animals we work on, and is one of the many ways the UAE has demonstrated its leadership on migratory species conservation.”

Note to Editors:

About the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is the only global biodiversity-related treaty specializing in the conservation and sustainable use of a wide array of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species, their habitats and migration routes. Contracting Parties to CMS work individually and cooperatively to ensure a favourable conservation status for migratory species across their range. At present, there are 123 Parties to the Convention. The CMS Secretariat’s headquarters are located in Bonn, Germany. www.cms.int

CMS Agreements of relevance to the UAE:

Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) www.cms.int/raptors

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU) www.cms.int/dugong

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA) www.ioseaturtles.org

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (Sharks MOU) www.cms.int/sharks

About CMS Office - Abu Dhabi

CMS Office - Abu Dhabi is the largest presence of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals outside the seat of the secretariat. It has been hosted by Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates since 2009. The Office coordinates two CMS Memoranda of Understanding (MOU): on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU) and on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU). The Office also addresses common threats to migratory species of regional interest including birds, marine mammals and marine turtles.

About Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD)

The Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) was established in 1996 to preserve Abu Dhabi's natural heritage and to raise awareness about environmental issues. EAD is Abu Dhabi's environmental regulator and advises the government on environmental policy. It works to create sustainable communities, and protect and conserve wildlife and natural resources. EAD also works to ensure integrated and sustainable water resources management, to safeguard clean air and to minimize climate change and its impacts. www.ead.ae

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