

**NINTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE RAPTORS
MOU (TAG)**

(Monfragüe National Park, Spain, 18-20 February 2025)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/TAG9/REPORT

REPORT

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

I. Welcome and introductions

1. Mr André Botha (TAG Chair) welcomed participants to the ninth meeting of the TAG (TAG9). He thanked Spain for hosting the meeting and introduced the meeting hosts.
2. Mr Borja Heredia (Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, MITECO), welcomed all participants to Spain. He considered the role of TAG vital in providing scientific advice on raptors. Spain had a tradition of conservation management, and was proud of its population of over 30,000 pairs of Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) and successes with Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*), which was recovering and expanding. He noted important conservation challenges, including the deployment of renewable energy, with wind and solar farms impacting steppe birds, such as Little Bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*). He highlighted the importance of Monfragüe as a hotspot for birds of prey in Europe, although the area had been planned for development in the 1960s and 1970s. Mr Jesus Garzón launched a campaign to save this area, which, after a hard fight, was eventually declared as a national park. He considered this to be a strong inspiration in the enduring fight for nature conservation.
3. Ms Carmen Martín (Monfragüe National Park Director) welcomed participants to Monfragüe National Park, whose history of creation was linked to the dedication of conservationists who were committed to defend the area. Recognition of the area's importance and its eventual creation as a national park was largely due to the tireless work of Mr Garzón, who unfortunately passed away in 2024. She noted that a visit to the park had been organized for participants on 20th February, and she thanked the management authority of the park and MITECO for their support.
4. Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi (Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit, CU) thanked the hosts of TAG9, which was the first physical TAG meeting since 2018. Noting that the Raptors MOU had held a meeting in Extremadura to develop the Vulture Migratory Species Action Plan (Vulture MsAP), he looked forward to a productive meeting, covering issues such as the methodology proposed by Spain for reviewing the list of Internationally Important Raptor Sites (IIRS), prioritization of sites and species, and the conservation status assessment.
5. The Chair noted the importance of a physical meeting of the TAG, which he hoped would provide impetus and strengthen commitment to fulfil the TAG Work Plan tasks.

II. Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Chair invited comments on the agenda, none were made. Mr Des Thompson (TAG member) proposed the agenda for adoption, seconded by Ms Vicky Jones (TAG member).

III. Update since the 8th Meeting of TAG

7. The Chair invited Mr Gallo-Orsi to present a review of actions.

III.1 Review of Actions from the 8th TAG meeting (TAG8)

8. Mr Gallo-Orsi presented a review of actions from TAG8. Under the TAG Work Plan (WP) Action 17, the TAG had provided guidance on national threat assessment methodologies and on how to assess threats in terms of indicators, and had recommended using the existing IUCN Threat Classification Scheme (version 3.3). Under Action 20, the CU had developed a questionnaire on raptor monitoring programmes in Asia, to which 24 countries had replied, including from Southeast Asia, providing useful additional information for consideration of expansion of the MOU to this region. Under Action 25, the CU was tasked to collate and disseminate guidelines on raptor reintroduction programmes, under which a number of people had been interviewed. Other actions for the TAG included development of a regional assessment concept, consideration of climate change impacts on raptors and an assessment of national legislation in relation to raptors.

III.2 Report from the Coordinating Unit (CU)

9. Mr Gallo-Orsi presented a report from the CU since TAG8. Outreach activities included meetings with the Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi and the Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority, participation in the BirdLife Africa Partnership meeting in Senegal and the 2024 Indian National Vulture Conservation Conference, whilst the chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission visited the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi to discuss establishment of an IUCN Raptors Specialist Group.
10. Activities under the Vulture MsAP including working with the IUCN Vulture Regional Steering Committee for Asia to align with regional committees of the Vulture MsAP Working Group and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to develop a regional vulture conservation strategy. The CU also collaborated with the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) in relation to Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). Related meetings related were planned for 2025 and 2026.
11. In relation to raptor species, the CU held discussions with the Saudi Falcon Club on Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and, in cooperation with the International Association of Falconers and Conservation of Raptors (IAF), developed a questionnaire for falconers, the results of which would be compared with a similar questionnaire circulated in 2013 to assess changes in falconers' practices. The CU also developed a questionnaire on electrocution which aimed to assess awareness and collect information on ongoing monitoring efforts and on the governance of national electric grids. The Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) Action Plan was approved by the CMS Scientific Council (ScC), whilst Egypt held a national workshop and a species monograph was progressed. For Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), the CU supported a Kazakhstan Action Plan, and steps towards an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP).

12. The CU joined an International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) webinar on electrocution and the IRENA General Assembly session on environmental impacts and benefits of renewables.
13. Ms Lauren Lopes (former Associate Programme Management Officer) left the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi; recruitment for this post and for four new interns was underway.
14. Uganda was set to join the Raptors MOU in March 2025, and discussions were ongoing with other potential new Signatories. In relation to opening discussions with potential new Signatories to the Raptors MOU, Mr Ohad Hatzofe (TAG member) recommended Türkiye, a key country for migratory raptors, and Mr Nyambayar Batbayar (Member of the TAG) recommended China. The Chair congratulated the CU on helping to achieve signing of the Raptors MOU in 2024 by three Central Asia countries.

Action TAG9-1: TAG members were encouraged to promote the Raptors MOU and to help the CU in bringing new countries on board as Raptors MOU Signatories.

III.3 Report on implementation of the SakerGAP

15. Mr Colin Galbraith (Chair, Saker Falcon Task Force, STF) presented the STF report, noting that STF membership needed to be formalized. The Saker Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) aimed to improve the conservation status of the Saker Falcon and to move any trade to a legal, well managed approach through clear actions. Initial progress was very positive. CMS COP14 decided to continue implementation of the SakerGAP and encouraged the use of artificial nests and sustainable harvest quotas in Mongolia, alongside other measures on the natural population. It instructed the STF, resources permitting, to further develop, refine and where legally possible implement an adaptive management and monitoring framework (for which an in-person meeting was needed), promote monitoring and research to fill knowledge gaps, collaborate with the CMS Energy Task Force (ETF), raise awareness on electrocution and build synergies with work under the CMS Initiative for the Central Asian Flyway (CAFI). The STF had good relations with the multi-stakeholder falconry community.
16. Mr Mátyás Prommer (TAG member) informed that a review of the European population of Saker Falcon should be published in March 2025. He also recommended Raptors MOU representation at the 71st General Assembly of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), focused on mediation and falconry, in April 2025 at Doha, Qatar, a country which was legalising wild harvest. Mr Gallo-Orsi noted that the Raptors MOU had not been invited to the meeting in Qatar.
17. Mr Thompson congratulated the STF on its progress, and recommended discussions with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in relation to the European Goose Management Platform (EGMP), which he considered a breakthrough process.
18. Mr Hatzofe expressed concern about increasing trapping levels in the Middle East, possibly related to Saker Falcon conservation success in Europe, that was severely affecting the survival of the Mediterranean populations of Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*). Mr Galbraith replied that there was a complex relation between the taking of Saker Falcon and other species, even within the European context. The illegal harvest and trafficking of Saker Falcon was a key issue to tackle, and measures taken should progress to other falcon species. The scale of Saker Falcon decline was still high across Central Asia, but success in Mongolia was a powerful communication message for other countries to improve powerline safety. He hoped that progress with Saker Falcon would ultimately have a positive influence on other species.

19. Mr Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) questioned what the limiting factor on the Saker Falcon population was in addressing sustainable harvest management. Mr Galbraith replied that the population in Central Asia had increased when artificial nests were used, but this did not apply to Saker Falcon populations in Eastern Europe. There were ecological and cultural differences across the species range, and whilst it was unlikely that populations in Europe would be used for falconry in the future, moving towards a regulated legal system could be a positive step forward.
20. Mr Nyambayar Batbayar (TAG member) considered the project in Mongolia a major success and a leading example project for other countries to follow. However, there were still issues to address, including a lack of public finance and shortcomings in the legal system. The Mongolian government was developing species action plans, but as yet none were developed for birds; there were proposals to extend to Saker Falcon and Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*). Work was underway with powerline companies, some of which were still using dangerous poles, and the Ministry of Energy to ensure that all new powerlines had bird-safe designs.
21. Noting an increase in falconry in Gulf countries, Mr Mohammed Shobrak (TAG member), recommended engaging with falconry clubs, which should be invited to join national task forces, whilst it was also important for the Raptors MOU to take part in the meeting in Qatar. As it was illegal to capture Saker Falcon in Saudi Arabia, other falcons, especially Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and Lanner Falcon, were being caught instead. The STF also needed to consider hybridization, which was a growing issue. Mr Galbraith agreed with the importance of in-person meetings and engaging with falconry clubs, which needed to be a part of the solution.

Action TAG9-2: TAG members were requested to help fill gaps in STF membership for North and East Africa.

III.4 Report on implementation of the Vulture MsAP

22. Mr Botha reported that the Vulture MsAP Coordination Team met in January 2025 to discuss aspects relating to its formulation, and with only ten nominations to the CMS Vulture MsAP Working Group received from governmental agencies of 128 Range States, further nominations to join the group were being sought.
23. Together with Mr Chris Bowden, co-chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Vulture Specialist Group (VSG), and Mr Gallo-Orsi, he had participated in a WOA meeting in Abu Dhabi in October 2024 in relation to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
24. The West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan (WAVCAP) was published in late 2024, although there were challenges for funding its implementation and in finding a champion to take it forward. The A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) in Nigeria was considering to play a leading role.
25. An assessment of the status of vulture conservation in the fourteen countries of the SADC Region plus Madagascar was conducted in 2024, and SADC countries were engaged at CMS COP14. After a Vulture MsAP presentation at a meeting in Cape Town, the African Union (AU) Chair indicated the need to take vulture conservation seriously, leading to a SADC Region assessment. Following endorsement of the assessment report, a draft strategy for vultures of the SADC countries was planned, with the IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) leading the process.
26. There was a need to secure adequate funding for implementation of the Vulture MsAP, whilst an intensive review would be needed for a follow-up plan to be completed by 2027/28,

for submission to CMS COP16 in 2029. Mr Thompson wondered why it was difficult to secure funding for the Vulture MsAP, given the perilous state of vultures. Mr Botha replied that there was good support for the LIFE programme in Europe, but funds were lacking for similar initiatives in Africa or Asia. Some governments could support the development of national strategies, but the only resources for implementing plans were provided through NGO networks. He hoped that the new Working Group (WG) would play a role in raising funds for implementation and would engage more aggressively with donors.

27. Mr Murn Campbell (TAG member) added that funding had also been a major problem for South Asia. Whilst a blueprint was established by NGOs and there was a clear evidence base, there was still a lack of traction in financial support. Mr Botha noted the irony that organizations could often provide funds for more meetings, but not for implementation.
28. Noting that most governments did not have strong policies for species conservation, Mr Hatzofe recommended that consortiums of NGOs, to which governments could join, were needed to encourage them to take the right measures. Ms Jones questioned if some countries had looked at roles and responsibilities, such as establishing a national committee with government and NGO representation to tackle a clear body of work and take responsibility for driving and monitoring implementation. Mr Botha answered that South Africa had done this, and meetings had taken place, but the government did not implement their responsibilities. Mr Murn agreed that implementation was essential, and the non-governmental sector could not achieve everything, especially with respect to legislation.
29. Mr Jovan Andevski (invited expert) suggested not to equate government actions, such as law enforcement, with financial investment. The engagement of the Ministries of Environment and Policy in Spain were impressive, but governments needed to take long-term responsibility, as NGO-led projects, such as LIFE, could end. Real governmental engagement was the only way to provide sustainability.
30. Mr Ramírez noted that multispecies approaches tended to be harder to fund than those more focused on specific activities; identifying specific actions for governmental support could have more success. It was important to ensure that government actions were reported on and went towards implementation of the Raptors MOU and CMS.
31. Mr Thompson considered that the TAG should highlight governmental failures to implement the Vulture MsAP at the CMS COP. There was a strong evidence base and momentum, but it was not having the desired impact in terms of implementation.
32. Mr Shobrak considered that there were positive developments, and that some governments were acting, although sometimes knowledge was lacking. Whilst there had been some progress, Mr Botha considered that implementation of the Vulture MsAP, with many actions planned over three continents, was a major and constant challenge.
33. Ms Darcy Ogada (TAG member) considered it essential to engage with governments to find ways to overcome challenges and to identify effective individuals within governmental organizations to move forward with. Mr Botha agreed, although sometimes invaluable contacts were transferred to different agencies.
34. Ms Jones recommended identifying higher profile global ambassadors for conservation, such as pop stars, famous footballers etc., who could promote vulture conservation; it would be good to identify champions who could raise funds that would directly support the Vulture MsAP. Mr Andevski considered that it was first necessary to improve the public image of vultures before trying to find ambassadors. Mr Shobrak suggested having ambassadors focused on specific threats, rather than on individual species.
35. Noting that Morocco had benefited from a strong collaboration with Spain in bird conservation based on shared bird species, with positive impacts on raptor conservation,

Mr Imad Cherkaoui (TAG member) highlighted that there was still much to do, especially in relation to poisoning and electrocution. He cited the Moroccan national football team, known as the Atlas Lions, as an example of the champions principle. Since the team's recent successes on the world stage, some Moroccan diaspora had started a campaign to reintroduce the Atlas Lion (*Panthera leo leo*) back into the wild in Morocco. Diaspora could be good ambassadors for promoting conservation in other African countries.

Action TAG9-3: The Raptors MOU CU was planning a virtual meeting of the Vulture MsAP Working Group to launch the WG, agree on the TOR and a Workplan and invite further nominations.

Action TAG9-4: TAG members were invited to consider options for and encourage identification of (inter)national ambassadors for vultures and/or the threats they faced.

III.5 Report from the CMS Secretariat

36. Mr Ramírez reported that CMS COP14 had brought very relevant decisions for raptors and their threats, including the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (SPMS) a renewed mandate for global action on flyways, and decisions on the illegal killing of birds (IKB) and energy. The Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity and the Global Initiative on Taking of Migratory Species were launched at CMS COP14.
37. He encouraged TAG members to use the State of the World's Migratory Species and other new CMS reports, which had regional graphs and other useful communication tools. The goals of the Samarkand SPMS 2024-2032 had been approved, and baselines, indicators and actions were being defined, in cooperation with the World Conservation Monitoring centre (WCMC), which presented an opportunity to identify baselines and actions for raptors. He encouraged countries to inform CMS of relevant actions for inclusion. A monitoring framework was also being defined, and the national reporting template reviewed.
38. At CMS COP14 the Southern African population of the Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis*) was moved to CMS Appendix I. Furthermore, the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Initiative was agreed with anticipated establishment of a Coordinating Unit in India, and decisions were made that sought commitments from Parties and others in relation to raptor conservation actions.
39. The ETF had made progress, with a new Programme of Work (POW) being delivered. TAG members were encouraged to provide input to guidance being developed on the format and scope of a database on CMS Appendix I species mortality caused by renewable energy developments; this document would be submitted to COP15. Subregional gaps needed to be identified, e.g. information on powerlines and sensitivity mapping.
40. A key outcome on IKB was the decision to establish a new Task Force in Southwest Asia, with support from Saudi Arabia, although funds were not identified for a scientific review of the scope and scale of IKB in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia.
41. CMS was aiming to disband the Preventing Poisoning WG, whose remit was too wide and difficult to engage with, and governments were unwilling to implement it. The issue of poison baits was largely taken into account by the regional Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds, while CMS would continue to support the EU position on lead, once released, and call a first meeting of the Lead Task Force.

42. CMS considered that the outcomes from TAG9 were vital to refine priorities for raptors, as well as building synergies and encouraging Parties to prioritize vultures. Top priorities for the Vultures MsAP were mobilisation of resources and appointing a full-time coordinator.
43. Ms Jones questioned if there had been a discussion in the ETF on the cumulative impact of energy along flyways (and associated issues like flyway-scale offsetting), and the impact of renewable energy development in single countries like Egypt on migratory species. She also highlighted pesticide knowledge gaps, which seemed pertinent to raptors, but also landbirds, and asked where the ScC might be able to help with identifying and filling relevant knowledge gaps on impact. Mr Ramírez noted that Australia had supported analyses of energy impacts in the Central Asian Flyway; such initiatives were also needed for Africa and the Americas through the flyway approach.
44. Mr Hatzofe and Mr Shobrak noted that completing the national reports for CMS and other agreements was time-consuming and demanding, with much repetition, such as information on species that had not changed status. Mr Ramírez replied that CMS was trying to make the reporting process easier through a simplified tool, with actions linked to the Samarkand SPMS.

Action TAG9-5: The TAG was encouraged to suggest actions to promote synergies between CMS-led activities and the Raptors MOU.

IV. Review of the TAG Work Plan 2024-2026

45. The Chair introduced the session, inviting Task Leaders to provide input in relation to the different actions of the TAG Work Plan. Note that ‘Task’ is synonymous with ‘Action’ in the TAG Workplan, and that items are ordered by task number in the report, which in some cases was different to their order of discussion during the meeting.

Action TAG9-6: The TAG was requested to take note of the Report on progress from Task Leaders and suggest ways to address the challenges.

Task 2. Review proposals submitted to MOS for the inclusion of species in Annex 1 of the MOU

- **Bonelli’s Eagle as a migratory species**

46. Mr Hatzofe presented the proposal to include Bonelli’s Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*) in Annex 1 of the Raptors MOU, and highlighted the regular long range largely directional seasonal movements of juveniles, representing about 10% of the population from Israel and Greece. Results were based on movements of 55 birds tagged in Israel as chicks and about 20 in Greece. He added that when eagles started to breed, they became sedentary.
47. As the movements related to wild birds, Ms Jones considered the case convincing. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that it met the CMS criteria with high confidence and was in line with assessment by the CMS COP-appointed Councillor for Birds. Mr Buij noted that the fact that adults did not migrate could be a distinction, although, as Mr Hatzofe added, Griffon Vultures and other raptors had similar behaviour in this regard.
48. Ms Jones notes that Israel had submitted this proposal to the TAG before, which had asked for more evidence, and if TAG supported this Israel should not need to resubmit.

49. Mr Cherkaoui added that this species was doing well in Morocco, where several birds tagged in France had been recovered, and many recovered birds born in Morocco showed long distance dispersal movements.
50. Mr Shobrak considered that these movements met the CMS definition and were cyclical and predictable. The Chair concurred that using the cyclical and predictable criteria was important.

Action TAG9-7 – Task 2: On behalf of the TAG, the CU with support of Ms Vicky Jones would prepare a TAG proposal for MOS4 to include Bonelli's Eagle in the Raptors MOU Annex 1 (Species List).

Task 3: Review proposals submitted to MOS for the inclusion of sites in Table 3 of the MOU's Action Plan

- **Spain review of List of Sites**

51. Mr Rubén Moreno-Opo (invited expert) presented an assessment of the IIRS list (Table 3 of Annex 3) for Spain. The original list included 768 sites, all of which supported Annex 1 species. However, the site review revealed territorial overlapping between numerous sites designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), leading to amendments in a new proposal, which maintained the whole list of SPAs but refined the proposal of IBAs. He expected that other EU countries, with both SPAs and IBAs would have a similar situation to Spain of territorial overlapping sites. The new proposal resulted in a list of 664 sites for Spain as IIRS, with removal of 104 IBAs that overlapped more than 50% with SPAs.
52. Mr Gallo-Orsi noted that the overlapping sites issue had also been raised by Hungary. The TAG was invited to discuss the methodology carried out by Spain on how to deal with overlap.
53. Ms Jones informed that TAG had previously looked into presenting Table 3 with the spatial relationship between IBAs and SPAs captured, but the spatial relationships between the two were complex and TAG decided it was much simpler to list them separately and maintain separate lists, particularly because it simplified update. She considered the transparency of the approach by Spain was positive, allowing changes to be tracked over time. IBAs on the list were there because of international importance for raptors, so probably some discussion was needed among stakeholders nationally. This was probably good practice for other countries considering site list amendments too, bearing in mind that in general TAG's mandate was limited to review of the technical/ scientific justification for any site amendment proposals.
54. Mr Shobrak noted that the status of IBAs could change over time. In Saudi Arabia some IBAs had become less important, and others more important, whilst within some protected areas there were four to five IBAs. Mr Cherkaoui informed that Morocco was in the process of updating its IBA list, as the original list was over 30 years old, and some original IBAs were no longer important, and new IBAs needed to be assessed based on new information.
55. Mr Jorge Orueta (invited expert) informed that it was possible to make finer analysis now, with new capacity to overlap protected areas and IBAs, and with reference to the Spanish atlas of migratory species to ensure important areas for raptors were not left out. Mr Moreno-Opo added that Spain's intention was not to leave important sites out of the list, but to identify sites/ areas outside of SPAs that had importance for raptors and were not protected, not only for raptors but for other species as well.

56. Ms Arianna Aradis (TAG member) appreciated the analysis conducted by Spain, and was keen to follow this process for Italy, where there was some overlap between IBAs and Natura2000 sites, whilst some IBAs outside of the protected area network included important sites for vulture nesting.

Task 4. Proposed CMS COP resolution on Internationally Important Raptor Sites

57. Mr Gallo-Orsi reported that the IIRS List was the largest network of sites dedicated to raptor conservation. There were efforts to follow a common approach on site conservation across CMS, with recent progress made on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) and Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) leading to wider engagement and coordinated site-level approach.
58. Mr Thompson recommended that the status of the IIRS as the largest site network for raptors and its value should be highlighted. Mr Ramírez added that CMS could promote synergies between regions.
59. Ms Jones recommended providing a link to monitoring on the future IIRS website to incorporate connection with networks of migratory species sites, whilst it was important to also assess site condition.

Action TAG9-8 – Task 4: The TAG was invited to review the draft Resolution on Internationally Important Raptor Sites and the draft Decision and provide comments to the CU by the end of March 2025.

Task 4. Peregrine and HPAI / Canada Proposal

60. Mr Prommer introduced the impact of HPAI on Peregrine Falcon populations and the CITES proposal submitted by Canada to downlist the species. Peregrine Falcons tested positive widely during the 2020-2024 HPAI outbreak, when some monitored populations declined measurably and, in Sweden, were impacted more than other raptor species. The decline was recorded mostly where waterbirds comprised the main prey. The proposal to list the species in Appendix II of CITES was based on its global population increase and more favourable conservation status than other falcons, such as Saker Falcon. Counter to this, the full effects of HPAI on the species was not established globally, and delisting would affect all sub-populations, including those under threat. Legal trade would present an extra burden, especially for small vulnerable populations, which were also prone to collections. He concluded that this might not be the time to downlist the species.
61. Mr Murn questioned why Saker Falcon could not be uplisted to Appendix I of CITES. Mr Prommer replied that countries of the Middle East would not support this option. Mr Cherkaoui concurred, adding that there was a high demand in the Middle East for all falcons and Peregrine Falcon populations could decline if the species was downlisted. Mr Shobrak supported downlisting some of the 22 Peregrine Falcon subspecies, but not all of them and advised that it was important to keep responsible falconers on board.
62. Mr Prommer believed that proper control of falconry and harvesting was needed, and that in an ideal case, when populations were healthy, captive breeding should stop (as wild populations can be sustainably harvested). He considered that traditional Arab falconry was acceptable, with trapping in the northern autumn, use in winter, and release in spring. However, the widespread failure to release birds in spring could lead to population decline. Birds trapped (e.g. in Libya) had been legalized inappropriately in the Gulf region. Falcons were seen as a status symbol, but many people did not know how to keep them.

63. In light of the insatiable demand for sport falconry, Mr Murn believed that the cultural heritage of trapping Peregrine Falcons could not be used as a reason to hunt birds on passage. Mr Hatzofe added that the impacts of irresponsible falconry were clear, and downlisting the species could open the doors to trade. No species of unfavourable status should be downlisted, which would add pressure on vulnerable populations.
64. Mr Thompson believed that the case for downlisting was not strong, and there was a totemic importance to Peregrine Falcon and a dearth of good monitoring data. Ms Aradis concurred that it was not appropriate to downlist the species, as the effects of HPAI were not well enough known, and monitoring in most Range States was low. It was necessary to apply the precautionary principle.
65. Mr Andevski added that downlisting species with good justification should be celebrated as evidence that conservation was working. For the Peregrine Falcon, the only argument so far presented to oppose downlisting was HPAI.
66. Mr Buij and Mr Murn advised the TAG to acknowledge that falconry had an ongoing impact on Peregrine Falcon, and the unsustainable trade of falcons across the world provided justification to counter downlisting, irrespective of HPAI. Rates of trade in species increased when they were downlisted by CITES. The TAG could submit a motion to CITES indicating that it did not agree with the proposal, backed up by relevant information, which should focus on unregulated trade, as HPAI was essentially a transient issue.
67. Mr Gallo-Orsi advised that the TAG needed to find the right wording to explain the potential impact of downlisting a species from CITES Appendix I to II. Mr Thompson considered that lack of monitoring was an issue, and the TAG must make a clear recommendation. Mr Ramírez advised that there was a joint CITES-CMS POW, which could be a good vehicle for CMS input.
68. The Chair advised that the Raptors MOU should pre-empt Canada's proposal and make a formal statement.

Action TAG9-9 – Task 4: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Des Thompson, Mr Mátyás Prommer and Mr Mohammed Shobrak would develop an appropriately worded document with clear justification for the TAG recommendation not to downlist the Peregrine Falcon from CITES Appendix I by the end of April 2025; this would be circulated to the TAG for comment within ten days. The revised document would then be submitted to the Raptors MOU Signatories, who would be encouraged to present it to their CITES counterparts.

Action TAG9-10 – Task 4: The Raptors MOU would provide this document to the CMS ScC by July 2025, for CMS to submit a comment to CITES.

Task 8. Monitor consistency between the IUCN Red List status, Table 1 Category and CMS Appendix listing of species

69. Ms Ogada questioned the status of Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). Mr Gallo-Orsi clarified that there were currently no owls on CMS Appendices, whilst the Raptors MOU Species List included migratory owls. For a species to be added to a CMS Appendix, a Party needed to submit a proposal. Raptors MOU Signatories could propose inclusion of species on the Species List.
70. Ms Jones agreed that Snowy Owl was already a known gap in CMS Appendix I. On the TAG task she recommended waiting for BirdLife International to complete the Raptors MOU Annex I and Annex 3 Table 1 update on the basis of the latest IUCN Red List information

before completing the cross-match with CMS Appendices on this task. The next iteration of the IUCN Red List would be September 2025. However, this would likely be too late to incorporate in time for the next MOS, so TAG would proceed with the cross-match on the basis of the 2024 information. This would leave time for development of any CMS appendix listing proposals ahead of COP15.

Task 9. Clarify the criteria for inclusion of a species in Category 2 of Table 1 of the MOU's Action Plan

- **Regional Assessment**

71. Ms Jones reported that action 9 of the TAG workplan required the TAG to clarify the criteria for inclusion of a species in Category 2 of Table 1 of the Raptors MOU Action Plan, i.e. species considered to have an unfavourable conservation status at a regional level. The TAG was expected to clarify what should be considered as a 'regional assessment'. The Raptors MOU followed IUCN in defining conservation status as unfavourable when any of the conditions defining conservation status as favourable were not met.
72. The TAG needed to define appropriate regions for identifying Category 2 species, for which there were several potential approaches of mapped regions and projections, including zoogeographic regions. Examples were already available from AEWA and CMS, but overall there was no standard model, hence the TAG needed to provide practical guidance that would stand the test of time. Knowledge gaps needed to be taken into account in regional scale assessments, presenting a challenge to apply the precautionary principle. Criteria on availability of information could be used in making regional assessments, whilst there was an option to identify regions of similar size. TAG needed to discuss how to define regions, then deliver guidance to MOS4.
73. Ms Jones presented five points for the TAG to consider, summarised as:
 - Use continental regions or a new definition, such as more equal sized regions
 - How to assess a regional situation as unfavourable in a practical way
 - What guidance was needed to accompany the criteria
 - A practical process to identify potential Category 2 species
 - Any additional sections for the discussion paper
74. Mr Prommer raised the issue of setting different boundaries per species, giving the example of Saker Falcon in Europe, which had a stable population, but the population in Central Europe was increasing, and in Eastern Europe was decreasing. There was a proposal to downlist the Peregrine Falcon, as the species overall was doing well, although the population in Cabo Verde was disappearing.
75. Mr Thompson recommended looking at what was going on with other taxa groups.
76. Mr Murn questioned how the discussion document would be used, and recommended that the TAG guidance had to be very clear and should put numbers on items that would be used within MOS. Terminology such as 'long-term' and 'significant' needed to be defined; an additional set of definitions could be helpful. Mr Gallo-Orsi thought that defining regions in size terms would be appropriate.
77. Mr Murn recommended to use this process as an alert system, by combining defined regions with rates of decline, and identifying rates that would cause alarm, for future proofing.

78. Mr Ralph Buij (TAG member) noted that the Peregrine Fund had used the raptor species list to analyse similarities, and the resulting map was similar to the IUCN map, as there were quite similar threats within the same regions.
79. Ms Ogada raised that there were many species in Africa and Asia with no baseline data and no population data, so rates of decline could not be assessed with any accuracy. Data Deficient (DD) species were often overlooked. Threat categories thus needed to be considered. Mr Shobrak added that there was a lack of baseline data for different species of the Arabian Peninsula, and looking more closely at threats would be very useful in future. He considered that standard regions should be retained across the UN.
80. Mr Hatzofe considered it necessary for the conservation of some species to look at the sub-regional level, but thought the Raptors MOU should stick to established regions.
81. In looking at biogeographic populations or at the subspecies level, Mr Gallo-Orsi questioned how Category 2 could serve as an alarm system. Mr Buij proposed the use of management units.
82. Ms Jones recommended a pragmatic approach of asking regional TAG representatives to look at this issue, and to focus on species occurring in their region that would otherwise be placed in Category 3 (taking account of global population trend, IUCN Red List status and any available assessment made at regional scale) to check that there was no evidence/balance of expert opinion that they actually belonged in Category 2. This would be driven to some extent by regional expertise on the TAG. The Chair added that experts would need to be hand-picked from beyond the TAG, and some would not live within the region. Mr Batbayar noted that Asia was too large to assess as one region.
83. Mr Buij recommended identifying gaps, e.g. based on species trend for a specific part of a range and where there was a need for a better assessment of threats. Capacity for monitoring was a limitation in some regions. Mr Murn added that putting qualitative regional understanding into a quantitative framework presented challenges. Mr Buij considered that this could be looked at through extrapolations for population trend.
84. Mr Cherkaoui noted some particular issues in North Africa, where many raptors had marginal populations, such as Marsh Owl (*Asio capensis*) and Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*), which both had much larger Afrotropical populations. In terms of monitoring in North Africa, there were more data from Morocco than in other countries with knowledge gaps.
85. Mr Andevski suggested identifying indicator species, as data for many species were not widely available.
86. Ms Ogada recommended to keep the process as simple as possible, without rewriting regions, but focus on identifying some baseline criteria, including threats, to help decide why a species should move into Category 2.
87. The Chair raised the issue of applying regionalization to migratory raptors that moved between regions, such as Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*). Mr Batbayar highlighted the need to identify distinct non-breeding areas for this and other species.
88. Ms Jones concluded that a simplified approach would probably work best, but it would be important to maintain a paper trail of the evidence and reasoning for the categorisation in Table 1, and in relation to knowledge gaps the precautionary approach would need to be used with discretion to ensure that not every species with a regional knowledge gap be precautionarily put in Category 2.

Action TAG9-11 – Task 9: Ms Vicky Jones agreed to draft a discussion paper, for TAG comment, on regional assessment that would recommend an approach to the presentation of regions,

unfavourable conservation status, regional guidance and concerning the identification of potential Category 2 species.

Task 10. Support assessments of whether national legislation appropriately protects birds of prey

89. The Chair reported that this had not got underway, and the process was unclear, i.e. was it expected that countries should be approached directly for support? Mr Gallo-Orsi concurred that a discussion with the CMS National Legislation Programme was needed.

Task 11. Support the assessment of the distribution, conservation, and protection status of habitats important for migratory raptors

90. Mr Gallo-Orsi indicated that the project proposal led by AEWA had not progressed. It was important for the TAG to be involved in this assessment once funded.

Task 12. Provide guidance on the Migratory Raptor Safe Zones approach to Signatories

91. The Chair noted that it was necessary to initiate a discussion on this and then see how to reach out. It was a low priority action.

Task 13. Identify information gaps on key breeding areas, stopovers, refuelling, bottleneck, and other congregational and non-breeding sites along raptor flyways

- **Site network analysis**

92. Ms Jones introduced Task 13 (site network analysis). Given funding challenges for TAG work ahead of MOS4 a modular approach was needed, applying it to Annex 3 Table 1 Category 1 species first. The basis of analysis was Table 3 after MOS3, aiming to finalise the list with a wider set of species than in the pilot ahead of MOS4 and to overlay the network of sites for different species and different life cycle stages, and identify major gaps. Background information was needed on congregatory behaviour of the species involved in order to assess whether gaps were genuine gaps in the network or resulting from the species not congregating in that part of the life cycle and therefore site conservation being a less appropriate tool in that part of the range. Tabulated information would be presented for selected species, identifying potential threshold numbers for triggering sites of international importance. The site-based approach would not fit all species.
93. The main expected output was a summary of findings for each Category 1 species, outlining Table 3 comprehensiveness, particularly highlighting species with gaps in the site network for which congregatory information suggested that a site-based approach was appropriate. Thresholds of international importance for threatened species with low populations were invariably low. The aim was to review Table 3 species by species, and determine the number of sites for each species, and where to focus efforts to identify more sites. It was planned to also look at existing protection, government-endorsed data on protected areas, and identify gaps in protection. The TAG was asked if this approach was still pertinent, to provide input to this process, and to consider opportunities for follow up and to improve comprehensiveness of Table 3.
94. Mr Murn informed that there were both behavioural and physical (bottleneck) congregations. Mr Buij added that there were short-term congregations at roosts and longer-term seasonal

- congregations, such as the non-breeding roosts of Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) in Angola. Mr Prommer added that harrier roosts had been identified in West Africa, but not sufficiently in Eastern Africa.
95. Mr Alvaro Camiña Cardenal (invited expert) advised the TAG to follow the IUCN definition of congregatory as a movement pattern.
 96. Mr Gallo-Orsi considered that this work would help to determine where it was necessary to identify more sites; sites could cover different species in different times of their vital cycle. Action in Table 2 (activities) called for the conservation of sites through protected areas or other effective site conservation measures.
 97. Mr Prommer noted the need to take account of changing situations. Sites important for Steppe Eagles in Saudi Arabia were changing, whilst some Red-footed Falcons sites in Angola had been 'protected' by the presence of landmines, which might change with the removal of mines.
 98. Ms Jones noted that, whilst Signatories could review their national lists any time, the TAG could evaluate how to improve information including citizen science or information on numbers of raptors at sites in publications and to look at IBA thresholds of international importance. Mr Shobrak added that IBAs needed to be updated reliably, with an evaluation of criteria, although Mr Gallo-Orsi considered that this could result in moving targets.
 99. Mr Buij noted the need to also identify key sites for non-congregatory restricted range species, whilst tracking data could be used to identify as yet unknown important sites for migratory species. Ms Jones suggested disseminating the gaps, and engaging with the wider community. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that the TAG could recommend focusing on the identification of sites in these areas.
 100. Mr Batbayar advised to build in feedback mechanisms and promotion of protection of the sites identified.
 101. Mr Prommer offered to help with tracking data, Mr Hatzofe also offered to contribute.

Action TAG9-12 – Task 13: TAG members were requested to take note of the plan for the next phase of the Site Network Analysis, and to provide guidance on the identification of sites and gaps by the end of March 2025.

Task 14. Produce guidance on effective habitat and site protection

102. Ms Jones indicated that this task was addressed within Task 15 (Conservation Status Assessment Report 2).

Task 15. Conservation Status Assessment Report (CSAR) 2

103. Ms Jones introduced Task 15, which aimed to summarise the latest information relevant to the conservation status of migratory raptor species and their sites. Sections could potentially include avian influenza, climate change and vole cycles. MOS3 feedback on CSAR1 was that more positive case studies should be included, which the TAG could consider, such as highlighting positive aspects relating to effectively addressing threats, wildlife crime, energy etc.
104. Mr Thompson considered that the CSAR1 was well received by MOS3, and was an important means of reporting, especially on trends in global conservation status, whilst it should be used to show evidence-based success of the Raptors MOU.

105. Ms Ogada recommended that the document should include excellent photos. Mr Gallo-Orsi agreed, and added that it would be useful to refresh the gallery. Mr Prommer suggested checking with Birds of the World for photos.
106. The Chair considered it important to make Range States aware of changes, and encourage them to be more vigilant in monitoring. Mr Andevski suggested inclusion of a summary of work on vultures.
107. The TAG agreed to provide input to the CSAR2, which could include addition of a responsibility index and show responsibility in terms of the importance of countries, and that producing a shorter version of report would be useful.

Action TAG9-13 – Task 15: The TAG was requested to provide input to the CSAR2 proposal and produce a draft document by September 2025, which would include improved visual content and highlight the endangered status of (migratory) raptors.

Action TAG9-14 – Task 15: The CU would produce a visually-appealing summary version of the CSAR2 in time for MOS4.

Task 16. Assess and provide recommendations on the value of new technologies, including satellite tracking to: assess mortality; and identify mortality causes, important sites, distribution range, and migration pathways

108. Mr Hatzofe reported that there was a bank of data at species level in relation to the causes of mortality over time. More information on mortality and morbidity was available for tagged birds, for which some history was available. A student was working on this, and it was hoped that threats could be ranked geographically.
109. Ms Ogada noted that in some countries there were challenges in relation to data sharing, as it was technically not permitted to share data.
110. Ms Jones considered it useful to collate this information and to tease out from the data why tagged birds were dying, although experience from recent work led by BirdLife International indicated that it could be hard to make sense of geographic patterns of mortality information. Mortality of tagged birds would have some bias, as most birds were tagged as juveniles, which were less experienced than adults and likely more prone to mortality during their first movement away from the breeding grounds.
111. Mr Hatzofe added that this was a tool that could provide useful insights, and issues like survival of juveniles were important to consider, as well as human-induced mortality. The plan was to make best practice guidelines on different technologies of tracking. The Chair considered that this would be a good topic for a workshop.

Tasks 16 & 22. Review of best practice of using drones

112. Mr Hatzofe presented a review of drone use for raptor conservation and monitoring applications, and circulated a document on best practice. Planning ahead was essential to minimize disturbance, and drones should only be used if they were clearly the optimal choice. A detailed pre-flight checklist agreed by all team members was an important step, whilst long-term storage of digital output should rely on failsafe methods. Drones could be used to bypass places and improve biosecurity, and for practical procedures, such as insulating powerlines. He referenced a useful document by the USA army on the effect of drones on mammals and birds.

113. Mr Shobrak raised the issue of bird strikes at airports, for instance Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) and Steppe Eagles were attracted to waste within the vicinity of airports in Saudi Arabia. There could be potential to deter bird strikes through the use of drones. Mr Batbayar added that drones were useful to monitor cranes.
114. Ms Jones added that the increasing recreational use of drones, e.g. for photography, should be considered, as disturbance problems would only increase, and regulations would be needed. The Chair added the need to abide by national / local policies.

Action TAG9-15 – Task 16: The TAG was invited to submit comments on the document Review of best practice of using drones by the end of April 2025.

Task 17. Provide guidance on national threat assessment methodologies

115. Mr Botha reported that he was unsure how to approach this. Mr Gallo-Orsi proposed sharing existing IUCN guidance, rather than reinventing the wheel.

Task 18. Study the impact on raptors of locust and *Quelea* control programmes

116. The Chair was not aware of progress, and he would take this up with the lead.

Action TAG9-16 – Task 18: The TAG Chair would enquire about progress in studying the impact on raptors of locust and *Quelea* control programmes with the Task lead, Mr Neil Deacon.

Task 19. Collate and disseminate information on the extent of climate change's impacts on raptors, their habitats and prey

117. Mr Prommer introduced the expected effects of climate change on raptors, including distributional range, with an overall effect of species moving further North, some insect species changes, and the spread of diseases. One effect was the change in mammal populations across Eurasia, with peaks and lows for rodents flattening out and other mammals disappearing, with direct effects on raptors. Raptors were able to physiologically and morphologically adapt to changes to varying degrees. Some had altered migration behaviour. Directions for future research included identifying the most affected species, populations and regions, investigating the combined effect of climate change with other factors, and the degree and rate of adaptation to changes.
118. Mr Andevski noted increasing impacts of disease, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and West Nile Virus on Eurasian vultures. Mr Shobrak noted the related effects of climate change, such as disturbance of vultures in high temperature situations.
119. Ms Jones considered that a case study on raptors and climate change could be a useful contribution to the CMS report on the Status of Migratory Species.
120. Mr Batbayar reported that monitoring breeding raptors in South Mongolia had shown that Short-toed Snake-eagles (*Circaetus gallicus*) died of starvation in very dry years, when predation pressure on nests also increased. Drought situations impacted the prey base. Mr Prommer supported research of raptors' food base, noting that sudden temperature changes impacted insect stages, resulting in a mistiming of migratory raptor movements.
121. Mr Ramírez recommended the Raptors MOU produce documentation showing how climate change impacted raptors, and how habitats could be managed to help them.

122. In relation to rodent changes, Ms Jones recommended taking a holistic system-wide approach, for which new partners and funding sources would be needed. Mr Botha suggested engagement with IUCN Species Survival Groups (SSGs), and added that insect declines were impacting migratory falcons.
123. Mr Thompson reported that the issue of extreme events was raised strongly at the CMS Climate Change meeting in February 2025; research was needed to look into the impact on raptors at the regional level. An example was cyclones affecting Amur Falcons crossing the Indian Ocean. The meeting acknowledged that ecosystem functioning was undervalued, and cooperation was needed between regions.
124. Mr Cherkaoui considered looking into the combined effects of climate change a priority; in Morocco some raptors were declining in the Atlas Mountains possibly linked to an increase in scavengers due to abandoned livestock carcasses. There was a higher mortality of European Honey-buzzards (*Pernis apivorus*) during spring migration, which had also been reported dying in wells. Mr Prommer added that there were many research questions to answer; in southwest Ukraine land use was largely unchanged, yet kestrels appeared to be absent.
125. Mr Ramírez encouraged the TAG to use the Samarkand SPMS as a tool for mobilising resources. Mr Gallo-Orsi suggested a short report for Signatories, pointing to research papers. The Chair thought that the CMS fact sheet on Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) was a good example. The TAG agreed to produce a short report for Signatories and a document for the CMS ScC.

Action TAG9-17 – Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Mátyás Prommer, Mr Des Thompson and Mr Ralph Buij would formulate a concise document for Signatories highlighting the impacts of climate change on migratory birds of prey by the end of June 2025.

Action TAG9-18 – Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Mátyás Prommer, Mr Des Thompson and Mr Ralph Buij would produce a short document for the CMS ScC by the end of August 2025 to highlight the impact of climate changes on raptors linked to the Samarkand SPMS.

Task 20. Support the development of guidance on national monitoring of raptors

126. Mr Gallo-Orsi reported that the CU had used a questionnaire to approach all Range countries in Asia, and had received a good rate of replies including some from outside the Raptors MOU range.

Task 21. Monitor the conservation status of migratory raptors listed in Annex 1

127. Ms Jones indicated that this task would be addressed within Task 15 (Conservation Status Assessment Report 2).

Task 22. Collate best-practice guidance on the use of satellite tags and drones for monitoring raptors

128. The TAG agreed to merge Task 22 with Task 16, where guidance on the use of drones has been reported.

Task 23. Provide guidance and share information on how to identify conservation-related research needs

129. Mr Murn hoped to ascertain the output expected from the TAG in identifying conservation and research needs for raptors, rather than generating a long list of needs, based around a problem-solving framework. He asked the TAG how to identify research needs through existing research priority frameworks for birds of prey and species action plans, such as the Vulture MsAP. He cautioned that it took seven years to find out why vultures were dying in south Asia; it was important to identify the problem first and then diagnose it.
130. Mr Gallo-Orsi suggested the TAG looked to identify the main issues / threats across the board for different regions, such as electrocution, rather than take a single species approach. Ms Jones added that it would be useful to identify topics that could be tackled through Masters and other academic research opportunities. The Chair suggested that a gap analysis would be useful, noting that baseline research on the biology of species was still needed for some species, especially in Africa.
131. Mr Buij questioned the effectiveness of action plans in general, noting that Brazil's evaluation of 38 national action plans revealed that 43% of >2,000 actions were achieved, at least in terms of implementation. Mr Andevski added that evaluation of the European Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) had helped to identify research needs. He considered that there was a research possibility for raptors as bioindicators, especially for heavy metals and veterinary drugs, adding that increased collisions of Red Kites could potentially be linked to their intoxication by drugs. Ms Ogada concurred that using raptors as bioindicators for ecotoxicology, which often had sub-lethal effects, could be put forward as a top research priority. Ms Jones advised the Raptors MOU to discuss the impact of pesticides and bioindicators with the Action Plan for Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region (AEMLAP), where it was also under discussion, as there could be synergies.
132. Mr Shobrak considered that trade, a key threat in some regions, needed to be studied, whilst a literature review of changes in small mammals / prey base would be useful.
133. Mr Buij noted that funding for monitoring and research was often not available.
134. Mr Murn summarized that a tool was needed to help identify gaps in research related to a (group of) species and another tool applicable to all topics to identify priority research needs, divided into species or regions according to gaps identified. The Chair added that the Vulture MsAP could be a good baseline as, since its adoption, >500 papers had been published, giving a good idea of gaps.
135. As an alternative to identifying the top five research needs, Ms Ogada suggested to focus on one issue for an agreed number of years, then move onto something else. Mr Ramírez agreed that this approach could result in products to focus on, and could fit with the CMS mandate for decisions. Putting in place simple monitoring protocols would help Parties understand how well raptors were doing. Ms Jones indicated that there were different priorities for different regions, so a regional approach to identification of research needs could be needed.
136. Mr Heredia (invited expert) suggested that the issue of lead would be good to address, and potentially achieve focused results. Mr Murn compared the results of lead and diclofenac, with research providing irrefutable evidence of impacts in both cases. Whilst governments banned diclofenac in South Asia, lead poisoning was languishing in a legislative loop.
137. Mr Batbayar highlighted the need to build research capacity in some regions, and to attract younger researchers. Monitoring of breeding populations gave more time to engage

students compared to migration research. Mr Prommer noted a lack of capacity to process data. Mr Cherkaoui added that the main information required for reintroduction projects related to habitat and food availability and breeding needs, so monitoring had an important role, as well as community engagement.

Action TAG9-19 – Task 23: Mr Campbell Murn would seek input from the TAG on a list of topics on which to determine priority research needs, after which the TAG would produce a decision-making framework for guiding research on migratory raptors.

Task 24. Advise on matters pertaining to raptor conservation, including in response to the climate-biodiversity crisis

- **Horizon Scanning**

138. Mr Thompson presented ten topics identified from responses to the horizon scanning request: Avian disease, Awareness raising, Climate change, Chemical and drug contamination, Electrocutation, Emerging techniques, Genetic diversity, Human-induced mortality, Human-induced landscape changes, and Microplastics in ecosystems. He sought input from the TAG on how to pool this information, to identify any glaring gaps, and how best to publicise the results.
139. Ms Jones considered that the collapse of small mammal cycles in northern climes could be a gap. Mr Shobrak concurred that small mammal cycles should be considered, noting the link to Steppe Eagle declines.
140. Ms Ogada noted that with many immediate threats to focus on, it would be hard for most countries to consider future issues, such as microplastics. Mr Thompson reiterated the importance of horizon scanning to prepare for future problems, giving the example of poison causing thinning of Peregrine Falcon eggshells. It was agreed that a lack of effective monitoring hindered the ability to detect all issues.
141. Mr Murn considered that there was a lack of data and an over-reliance on models. Priorities were not being taken for human-induced landscape change, especially mining. Mr Thompson added that deregulation could be a real danger on the horizon, whilst the link to regions was important in identifying issues of global concern.
142. Mr Batbayar suggested that migratory raptor bottlenecks could be a gap, and more data were needed, especially in Central Asia. He also considered that reintroductions using inappropriate subspecies was an emerging issue.
143. Mr Prommer postulated that successful species conservation measures could have impacts on other species, for instance Peregrine Falcons usurping Saker Falcon nests.
144. With reference to the topics listed, Ms Jones considered that ‘emerging techniques’ was not a priority topic. Mr Shobrak recommended that under ‘human-induced mortality’, the sub-topic of ‘falconry’ should be replaced by ‘irresponsible falconry’.
145. Mr Andevski suggested that poison and ecotoxicology should be a priority topic.
146. Mr Thompson concluded that four to five months for input to the report would be built into the timeline, bringing results in by the end of August 2025 in time for presenting the report to MOS4 in early 2026.
147. Mr Ramírez advised sharing this plan with some universities to seek their contribution and raise awareness about it. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that the CU would reach out to Signatories

and others, such as the Raptor Research Foundation and raptor email group. Mr Buij added that regional representation and a structured approach were important.

148. Ms Ogada suggested extending the horizon scanning to the Americas. Mr Gallo-Orsi indicated that this was possible through CMS but not through the Raptors MOU. After some discussion, the TAG agreed to extend the exercise to a global level informally through relevant networks, but Mr Shobrak advised that the priority was to focus on the Raptors MOU region first then extend globally as a future step. The TAG agreed to focus on a Raptors MOU horizon scan first, then to build on it in the future.

Action TAG9-20 – Task 24: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Des Thompson would seek further input to a horizon scanning exercise in 2025 across the MOU region, and would take this to a global level thereafter.

Task 25. Collate and disseminate guidelines on raptor reintroduction programmes and promote their application

149. Mr Murn gathered TAG members' thoughts on raptor reintroductions, with questions on when reintroduction methods were going to be recommended by the TAG, exceptions (such as 'vanity projects'), and the expectations from the guidelines. He presented four definitions for TAG members to comment on: Reintroduction, Rewilding, Restoration and Recovery. Rewilding was often not widely supported. TAG members were also invited to select a term for release of birds of prey from several options: Restoration, Reintroduction, Translocation, Supplementation, Rewilding, Local release. He noted that there was a problem in the use of terminology. The term 'Reintroduction' referred to reintroducing a species to an area where it used to live but had disappeared. He also underlined the importance of assessing public perception of reintroduction projects. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that interns had been interviewing some TAG members on this issue.
150. Mr Andevski considered that for 'regionally extinct' species, the term 'restocking' tended to be used, whilst all terminologies should go under 'translocation'. Mr Orueta considered that 'translocation' referred to taking a bird from the wild to another location, and that the term 'rewilding' was in general unhelpful.
151. Mr Murn noted that guidelines for translocations had been revised and were continually being assessed, and he questioned the need to develop anything more complicated than signposting to the IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations. He considered that the beauty of these guidelines was their simplicity.
152. Mr Andevski considered that the Raptors MOU did not need specific guidelines, but methodologies for existing species would be useful. Ms Jones questioned whether the IUCN guidelines covered all the issues relevant to the Raptors MOU; if this was not the case, more specific guidelines under the MOU would be useful. If the IUCN guidelines covered diagnoses of cause and decline etc., then they could be sufficient. Mr Gallo-Orsi added that the relevant action on Table 2 of the Action Plan make specific reference to international guidance, with the number of compliant restocking programmes implemented given as an indicator.
153. Mr Thompson wondered if raptors presented particular challenges that could warrant bespoke guidelines, and if there were specific elements of raptor reintroduction that would warrant specific guidelines. Mr Murn accepted that the IUCN guidelines were generic.
154. Mr Shobrak noted that this issue had been discussed in the Arabian Peninsula, where the rewilding terminology had become stronger. The rationale and reasons for reintroductions were important to consider, including the mistakes and the problems that birds might face.

- Mr Thompson advised that it was important for any problem to identify what needed to be fixed, and to not lose sight of international cooperation. Mr Murn concurred that removing the problem for a species was key prior to reintroduction, as had been shown for condors and for vultures in India and Nepal. However, in some cases reintroduction could be justified if the problem was still present at a low level, so there was a need to quantify the threats. The threat of persecution that eliminated the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) in England and Wales had reached a level low enough for the population to increase; reintroductions would not have been justified if it was required to wait for threats to completely disappear. If a species was likely to benefit from reintroduction, then specific guidelines for raptors could be useful.
155. Mr Buij added that it was not always possible to predict the level of threat before making a decision on reintroduction, and public perception should be determined beforehand. Mr Murn added that public perception was a fluid and moving target, as had been shown with Red Kite reintroductions, for which the word 'rewilding' was no longer referred to in Wales. Mr Thompson considered that unintended consequences of reintroductions was a public perception challenge, and specific guidance on stakeholder engagement would be useful. Mr Murn highlighted the need to involve social scientists in this.
 156. Mr Andevski backed use of the IUCN guidelines, but it would be useful to add some recommendations, especially in terms of the origin of birds that promoted translocation from good stable populations to avoid captive breeding unless it was the only option.
 157. Mr Moreno-Opo indicated that there were 8-12 raptor reintroduction projects in Spain, where the national legislation on nature protection included an article on reintroductions that promoted reintroducing listed species, including those that had disappeared in historic times. The government had to approve all reintroduction projects. The government followed IUCN guidelines adapted to the Spanish situation. Although the guidance focused largely on justifications, the origin was also taken into account.
 158. Mr Buij gave an example of expert advice provided to the government of The Netherlands not to reintroduce White-tailed Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), because the population in Germany was growing, and it was preferable to wait for them to recolonise naturally, which is what happened. Mr Moreno-Opo considered that there were opportunities to make experimental cases. There was a case for the reintroduction of White-tailed Sea-eagles to Spain, where it was extinct, especially in terms of restoring biodiversity and ecological functioning. However, it was important to ensure that no funds were removed from top priority species.
 159. Ms Ogada advised clarity and caution with the guidelines. In Africa much was unknown and unregulated, and guidelines could be copied into national legislation, or misused for personal gain. Mr Murn countered that the published data on African vultures crashing presented strong cases for reintroductions.
 160. Mr Andevski suggested that the TAG should develop a list of priority species for reintroduction. Mr Shobrak considered that national priorities would be useful.
 161. Mr Murn introduced the Conservation Translocation Specialist Group (CTSG) guidelines, and suggested that CTSG could be interested in including an annex on translocation specificities for raptors.
 162. The Chair advised that relatively few countries had guidelines, and although the IUCN guidelines might be quoted, there was scant information on compliance. He suggested that the TAG promote the guidelines, then adapt them after feedback, but ensure that there was a practical workable system including post-reintroduction monitoring. Any shortcomings should be addressed through the TAG and the Raptors MOU. Mr Murn added that the

- individual nature of many species' programmes could promote shortcomings, and it was important to determine the thresholds.
163. Ms Jones commended the Spanish example of governmental oversight, but this could be hard in a country where the government had less capacity; there could be negative consequences of a full government controlled approach, if, for example, administrative processes in a country involved financial hurdles for other competent organisations to carry out needed reintroductions.
 164. The Chair considered that an absence of government guidance could result in a free-for-all. In South Africa there was captive breeding and release of birds in areas with major threats ('Breeding Birds for Blades') and a danger of vanity projects taking hold. It was important to address the threats at a manageable level, and to instil control measures.
 165. Mr Buij gave an example of a White-headed Vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) breeding programme, which was under pressure to release birds, although the threats were still present. There could be situations where populations were declining so fast that there was a case to release some birds from captive breeding programmes.
 166. Mr Camiña Cardenal questioned the position of the Energy Task Force in relation to reintroductions.
 167. Mr Buij cautioned that some government regulations or incentives in relation to restocking and offsetting could be misplaced. Ms Ogada indicated that national decisions were needed, and guidelines for offsetting would only be viable if governments had a programme they could contribute to.
 168. Mr Andevski considered that governments should regulate any reintroduction programme in their country. It was important to monitor mortality and to analyse each programme, which should have an end date, and some ethical flexibility. Ms Aradis gave an example of an ethical problem in Italy in resubmitting a proposal to reintroduce Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*). After taking extensive efforts against poaching and poisoning, fixing poles around nests and other measures, it was clear that threats to vultures remained, but it was a difficult ethical consideration to stop the programme.
 169. The Chair advised that, as well as having criteria for initiating the process of reintroduction, there should also be guidance for when to stop.
 170. Mr Murn considered that the TAG could develop assessment criteria, which could provide data-driven answers, although it would be a major undertaking. The set of specific guidelines could be a bolt-on to the IUCN guidelines, to help Signatories prioritise potential reintroductions.
 171. Mr Buij advised that wildlife conflict needed to be included for raptors. Mr Murn added that the Wildlife Conflict Specialist Group was active in this regard, whilst the social component was also important to consider.
 172. Ms Jones summarised that the TAG position seemed to be to promote the IUCN guidelines but develop complementary guidelines specific to raptors. She recommended that bullet-point guidelines and/or a decision tree approach could be the most appropriate format for specific guidance to complement the IUCN guidelines. Mr Thompson added that a small group could develop a specific document to determine what extra guidance was needed and which regional differences to consider.
 173. The Chair concluded that a draft document should be developed to share with the TAG, taking key headings in the guidelines, to send round the group and decide where more detail was needed with respect to raptors. Mr Murn agreed to take the lead in developing

implementation guidelines, supported by Ms Aradis, Mr Andevski and Mr Thompson. Mr Ramirez encouraged the TAG to formalise the guidelines by the end of September 2025.

Action TAG9-21 – Task 25: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Campbell Murn, Ms Arianna Aradis, Mr Jovan Andevski and Mr Des Thompson would develop by the end of September 2025 implementation guidelines specific for raptor reintroduction to complement the existing IUCN Reintroduction Guidelines; this would start through development of a draft document to seek input on which areas needed more detail with respect to raptors.

Task 26. Contribute to monitoring of awareness-raising activities related to raptors' migration and threats

- 174. Mr Shobrak reported that no action had yet been taken and he sought guidance.
- 175. Mr Gallo-Orsi indicated that this task came from table 2 of the Action Plan which called for the development of a Biodiversity Barometer at the global level.

Action TAG9-22 – Task 26: The CU would explore how to support the development of a raptor-specific sub-indicator for the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership Biodiversity Barometer.

Task 27. Contribute to monitoring of awareness-raising activities at bottleneck sites for raptor migration

- 176. The Chair advised that Ms Fadzai Matsvimbo (TAG member) was the lead, but he was unaware of any actions.
- 177. TAG9 agreed to combine Task 27 (TORs for surveys of awareness-raising activities at raptor bottleneck sites) with Task 28 (monitoring and building capacity and awareness along the East African-Eurasian Flyway).

Task 28. Contribute advice to the development of an East African-Eurasian Flyway bottleneck monitoring project

- 178. Mr Gallo-Orsi reported that some efforts were underway, and a recent paper had been published, however there were currently no resources or time to take this forward.

Task 29. Develop mechanisms for sharing data on raptors that can contribute to the MOU's objectives

- 179. Mr Gallo-Orsi reported that little progress had been made, and the data sharing issue needed to be addressed. It was necessary to consider data availability practices by country, whilst windfarm data presented an obstacle.

V. The way to MOS4

- 180. Mr Gallo-Orsi informed on the key timelines for the TAG. The deadline for all proposals from the TAG was 90 days before the MOS, and for comments on proposals received from Signatories was 60 days before the MOS. All documents for the MOS needed to be published in two languages by 30 days before the MOS.
- 181. He indicated that the CU still needed to find a host for MOS4. He welcomed the input of the TAG in proposing or helping to identify potential hosts. There were approximately 65

Signatories, and there would probably be about 100 participants at the MOS for probably a three-day meeting. The cost could be about \$200,000.

182. There should be at least one TAG meeting (TAG9) before the MOS, which would probably be online in June 2025. He also welcomed TAG members to consider their country hosting TAG10. The cost of hosting an in-person TAG meeting was about \$35,000, but it depended on the level of government support from the host country.

Action TAG9-23: The CU would organise a TAG meeting in June 2025, which would probably be online.

Action TAG9-24: The CU invited TAG members to approach their national MOU Focal Points to consider hosting MOS4.

VI. Any other business

183. The Chair opened the floor for any other business. No points were raised.

VII. Adoption of the List of Actions

184. Mr Gallo-Orsi presented the TAG9 actions, as shown in Annex 1. The TAG adopted the list of actions, which it was agreed would be edited for the report.

VIII. Closure of the meeting

185. The Chair noted the positive development of the TAG over recent years with real engagement and discussion, and meeting in person had been excellent. He thanked everyone for their active participation. He thanked MITECO and the Parque de Monfragüe for hosting the meeting, and commended the Hospederia Parque de Monfragüe for their excellent support. He also thanked all CU staff members for planning and organizing the meeting, and Mr Tim Dodman, the report writer.
186. Mr Gallo-Orsi thanked the Chair for his excellent approach to running the meeting, and thanked all participants for travelling to Monfragüe and for their input. He was very encouraged by the progress made.

Annex 1: TAG9 Actions

Action TAG9-1: TAG members were encouraged to promote the Raptors MOU and to help the CU in bringing new countries on board as Raptors MOU Signatories.

Action TAG9-2: TAG members were requested to help fill gaps in STF membership for North and East Africa.

Action TAG9-3: The Raptors MOU CU was planning a virtual meeting of the Vulture MsAP Working Group to launch the WG, agree on TOR and a Work Programme and invite further nominations.

Action TAG9-4: TAG members were invited to consider options for and encourage identification of (inter)national ambassadors for vultures and/or the threats they faced.

Action TAG9-5: The TAG was encouraged to suggest actions to promote synergies between CMS-led activities and the Raptors MOU.

Action TAG9-6: The TAG was requested to take note of the Report on progress from Task Leaders and suggest ways to address the challenges.

Action TAG9-7 – Task 2: On behalf of the TAG, the CU with support of Ms Vicky Jones would prepare a TAG proposal for MOS4 to include Bonelli's Eagle in the Raptors MOU Annex 1 (Species List).

Action TAG9-8 – Task 4: The TAG was invited to review the draft Resolution on Internationally Important Raptor Sites and the draft Decision, and provide comments to the CU by the end of March 2025.

Action TAG9-9 – Task 4: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Des Thompson, Mr Mátyás Prommer and Mr Mohammed Shobrak would develop an appropriately worded document with clear justification for the TAG recommendation not to downlist the Peregrine Falcon from CITES Appendix I by the end of March 2025; this would be circulated to the TAG for comment within ten days. The revised document would then be submitted to the Raptors MOU Signatories, who would be encouraged to present it to their CITES counterparts.

Action TAG9-10 – Task 4: The Raptors MOU would provide this document to the CMS ScC by July 2025, for CMS to submit a comment to CITES.

Action TAG9-11 – Task 9: Ms Vicky Jones agreed to draft a discussion paper, for TAG comment, on regional assessment that would recommend an approach to the presentation of regions, unfavourable conservation status, regional guidance and concerning the identification of potential Category 2 species.

Action TAG9-12 – Task 13: TAG members were requested to take note of the plan for the next phase of the Site Network Analysis, and to provide guidance on the identification of sites and gaps by the end of March 2025.

Action TAG9-13 – Task 15: The TAG was requested to provide input to the CSAR2 proposal and produce a draft document by September 2025, which would include improved visual content and highlight the endangered status of (migratory) raptors.

Action TAG9-14 – Task 15: The CU would produce a visually-appealing summary version of the CSAR2 in time for MOS4.

Action TAG9-15 – Task 16: The TAG was invited to submit comments on the document Review of best practice of using drones by the end of April 2025.

Action TAG9-16 – Task 18: The TAG Chair would enquire about progress in studying the impact on raptors of locust and *Quelea* control programmes with the Task lead, Mr Neil Deacon.

Action TAG9-17 – Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Mátyás Prommer, Mr Des Thompson and Mr Ralph Buij would formulate a concise document for Signatories highlighting the impacts of climate change on migratory birds of prey.

Action TAG9-18 – Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Mátyás Prommer, Mr Des Thompson and Mr Ralph Buij would produce a short document for the CMS ScC by the end of August 2025 to highlight the impact of climate changes on raptors linked to the Samarkand SPMS.

Action TAG9-19 – Task 23: Mr Murn Campbell would seek input from the TAG on a list of topics on which to determine priority research needs, after which the TAG would produce a decision-making framework for guiding research on migratory raptors.

Action TAG9-20 – Task 24: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Des Thompson would seek further input to a horizon scanning exercise in 2025 across the MOU region, and would take this to a global level thereafter.

Action TAG9-21 – Task 25: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Campbell Murn, Ms Arianna Aradis, Mr Jovan Andevski and Mr Des Thompson would develop by the end of September 2025 implementation guidelines specific for raptor reintroduction to complement the existing IUCN Reintroduction Guidelines; this would start through development of a draft document to seek input on which areas needed more detail with respect to raptors.

Action TAG9-22 – Task 26: The CU would explore how to support the development of a raptor-specific sub-indicator for the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership Biodiversity Barometer.

Action TAG9-23: The CU would organise a TAG meeting in June 2025, which would probably be online.

Action TAG9-24: The CU invited TAG members to approach their national MOU Focal Points to consider hosting MOS4.

Annex 2: Agenda of the 9th Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group to the Raptors MOU

AGENDA

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

- 1. Welcome and introductions**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Update since the 8th Meeting of TAG**
 - 3.1. Review of Actions from the 8th TAG meeting
 - 3.2. Report from the Coordinating Unit
 - 3.3. Report on implementation of the SakerGAP
 - 3.4. Report on implementation of the Vulture MsAP
 - 3.5. Report from the CMS Secretariat
- 4. Review of the TAG Work Plan 2024-2026**
- 5. The way to MOS4**
- 6. Any other business**
- 7. Adoption of the List of Actions**
- 8. Closure of the meeting**

Annex 3: List of Participants

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CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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