

## FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE SAKER FALCON TASK FORCE (STF15)

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### A PROPOSED CMS DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE SAKER FALCON

#### Background

CMS Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) urges Parties, Range States, and stakeholders to actively support the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force (STF). The Resolution instructs the STF to actively promote the implementation of the Saker Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) and coordinate its review. It instructs the STF also to further develop, refine, and implement, where legally possible, and following best practice, an adaptive management and monitoring framework to improve the present conservation status of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and to promote monitoring and research whilst minimizing the impacts of illegal taking and use, energy infrastructure and other key threats on birds. See Annex 1 for details of a legal opinion providing context for the work of the STF. The Saker Falcon Task Force is now nearing the completion of the development of an innovative Adaptive Management Framework concept. The current membership of the STF is listed in Annex 2 for information.

The following outlines the governance structure and modus operandi required to implement a system of adaptive management for the Saker Falcon. This document proposes a decision-making framework at the global level in order to provide an overview and direction for the conservation and management actions required. This approach is designed to be inclusive and to use and develop the best available science, fed into best practice population and scenario modelling to inform decisions.

Note that at the national level, quotes would be proposed by national governments' Management and Scientific Authorities, or if different, national wildlife conservation authorities. National Governments are responsible for translating such international frameworks into national laws, policies, and regulations and thus would be responsible for the national implementation of the Saker Falcon AMF. Appropriate levels of take that the population can support would be determined by the STF through international population and information and scenario modelling fed by the best available data on key parameters for each affected population.

#### Existing key structures – at the international level.

- **The CMS Conference of the Parties (CMS COP)** provides the overall strategic direction for the work of CMS including the Saker Falcon Task Force through adopting Resolutions and Decisions. The decision on listing the Saker Falcon on Appendix I or II and the application of sustainable use of the species is made by the CMS Conference of Parties (CMS COP). The CMS COP also approves the overall guidelines for sustainable use, and international population management strategies.
- **CMS Scientific Council** makes recommendations to the COP on such issues as research on migratory species, specific conservation and management measures in relation to

threats to migratory species, the inclusion of migratory species in the Appendices.

- **The Saker Falcon Task Force (STF)** derives authority directly from the CMS COP through Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14). The STF takes forward the implementation of the Resolution, reporting on progress to forthcoming CMS COP15, scheduled for early 2026. It reports also to Meetings of the Signatories to the Raptor MoU and to the CMS Scientific Council. These latter two bodies provide valuable sounding boards on some of the key issues involved.
- **The Raptor MOU, Technical Advisory Group and the Coordinating Unit.** Meetings of the Signatories to the Raptor MOU and the related Technical Advisory Group (TAG) provide important guidance for the work of the STF. The Coordinating Unit facilitates the work of the STF, ensuring the delivery and cost- effectiveness of the work.

### **Proposed governance and modus operandi**

It is proposed that the STF, acting under renewed mandate to be considered at CMS COP 15, continues to implement Resolution 11.18 (Rev.COP14) and uses the following approach to decide on the level of any take of Saker Falcons from the wild. This will be implemented only where legally possible, to be proposed to COP. Any take should be in line with the recovery objective of the SakerGAP, and the legal, ecological, conservation and social safeguards that must be in place to ensure that any quota is sustainable and does not cause any detriment to existing wild populations across the full range of the species. The STF will continue to report to subsequent CMS COPs on the effectiveness of this approach.

The membership of the STF shall be:

- Chair and Vice Chair – as elected at the 1st Meeting.
- STF Secretariat – to be provided by CU of the Raptors MOU
- 2 CMS Scientific Councillors – including the Chair of the Scientific Council
- 3 – 4 representatives from Central and East Asia (core breeding areas)
- 2 representatives from Europe and Eastern Europe (breeding areas)
- 2-3 representatives from the Middle East (migration/wintering areas and falconry)
- 1-2 representatives from North and East Africa (wintering areas)
- 2-3 representatives from NGO partners
- 1 independent Specialist Technical Advisor (ornithologist)
- 1 representative from CMS Secretariat
- 1 representative from CITES Secretariat

The STF will meet every year to review progress in the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan and its Annual work plan. Meetings of the STF should be held in person, if resources allow, otherwise they should be held online.

The STF will meet one year ahead of CMS COP to review the results of national populations monitoring, national reports on taking of Sakers and the outputs of the latest population/scenario modelling made by an independent research group or researchers, and make recommendations for the preliminary maximum level of take supported by the latest available data. The recommended maximum level of take and all opinions expressed in the discussions shall be shared with CMS Scientific Council and Raptors MOU TAG for advice to COP and then presented at COP as part of the STF reporting.

Thereafter, following best practice, they will meet annually to review any new population and taking data, re-assess the modelling and review the recommended maximum level of take. The Raptor MOU should be informed of the outcome of the deliberations of the STF.

Any decisions on the recommended level of any quota at the international level should, where possible, be reached by consensus. If voting is required to arrive at the STF recommendation, then each member of the STF would have one vote and the Chair would have an additional casting vote in the event of a tie. Decisions on national quotas should be made through a three-level (international, national and local) engagement of stakeholders.

The STF should establish an independent scientific process to undertake a prioritized assessment of the numbers and trend of Saker Falcon populations in each region of the world so that the full life cycle (breeding, migration and wintering) of the species is periodically reviewed. Such an independent assessment should feed into population modelling being used to inform the decision on any quota and any significant data or information gaps should be assessed by the STF when making any decision applying precautionary principles.

Revision of the Terms of Reference for the STF is now required. This should in particular, include the new role in taking forward the operation of the adaptive management approach outlined here, along with the need to meet pre-defined sustainability safeguards, implement conservation action and to mitigate the impact of illegal activities on Saker Falcon populations. A proposed revised Terms of Reference for the STF is at Annex 3.

#### **Decision 14.160 Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan**

The decision calls the Secretariat, subject to the availability of external resources: to organize regional workshops of the Saker Falcon Task Force within the triennium 2024-2026 in the breeding range, to promote the implementation of the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (SakerGAP) and to review and update the SakerGAP as the document timeline has passed.

Revising SakerGAP will require the organization of regional workshops and consultancy services for a total of 90.000 USD.

#### **Annex 1.**

Legal context for the work of the Saker Falcon Task Force.

#### **Annex 2.**

Present membership and role of the Saker Falcon Task Force.

The STF has prepared detailed Saker Falcon AMF guidelines. The STF currently includes the representatives of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, CMS Parties and Range States, conservation, falconry and research organizations and independent technical and scientific experts.

#### **Annex 3.**

Proposed revised Terms of Reference for the STF.