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The Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP12), which is being hosted by the Government of the Philippines, will take place from 23 to 28 October 2017 at the Philippine International Convention Center, in Metro Manila.

Held every three years, the CMS COP is the supreme decision-making body for the conservation of wildlife at a global level.

Ministers and decision-makers from more than 130 countries and representatives of the international conservation community and media as well as the private sector will decide on the policies shaping urgent international conservation action for the three years to come and beyond. As an important event in the United Nations' environmental calendar, it will attract the attendance of leading players such as Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment, and the heads of other global treaties and agencies.

The slogan of the Conference is: **Their**

Future is Our Future - Sustainable Development for Wildlife and People

highlighting the fact that humans and wildlife are inseparably dependent on each other and the interlinkages between nature conservation and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. As well as stressing the intrinsic value of species and our responsibility to protect them, the slogan reflects the indispensable contributions of wild animals to sustainable development and the many socio-economic benefits people derive from them in the form of food, pollination, pest control, medicinal and genetic resources and ecotourism.

On 23 October, the official opening of the Conference will set the scene for an intense week of negotiations.

With an agenda that aims at addressing issues of global significance with impacts on a wide range of threatened species in need of protection, the Conference will adopt policies that will turn the tide to ensure the long-term survival of migratory species:

GLOBAL UNITED NATIONS WILDLIFE CONFERENCE AND ITS HIGH LEVEL EVENTS

The loss of wildlife is startling and has reached unprecedented levels. According to latest studies, populations of mammals, birds and fish fell by 58 per cent between 1970 and 2012 and indications are that the overexploitation of ecological resources will contribute to a further 67 per cent decline in wildlife by 2020. Taking urgent actions to halt these losses and reverse the negative trends is imperative.





Record number of species proposed for listing.

Thirty-five species have been proposed from all continents as a vote of confidence in the Convention as the lead forum for protecting migratory wildlife. These species are part of the common heritage of mankind and range from some of the world's most well-known species like the Giraffe, the Lion, the Whale Shark, the Chimpanzee to some of the most endangered one on the planet such as the Gobi Bear and Asian Wild Horse. Many of these species are part of the common heritage of mankind.

Stepping up efforts to protect marine life.

Whales, dolphins, marine turtles and seabirds have suffered greatly due to a range of human activities. Comprehensive guidelines will be put forward on appropriate environmental impact assessment of activities generating noise in the marine environment as well as on sustainable boat-based wildlife watching. Parties will also be called to take new actions to address bycatch and marine debris specifically on the disposal of microplastic and ghost nets.

Avoiding a collapse of African vultures.

Vultures play a fundamental role in cleaning up animal carcasses and preventing the spread of disease, but are being killed on an unprecedented scale across Africa, poisoned for several reasons, taken for use in traditional medicine and electrocuted on power lines. At COP12, several species may be granted greater protection and an International Action Plan for African-Eurasian Vultures will be submitted for endorsement.

Targeted actions to stop illegal killing of birds.

The last COP set up a task force to examine the problem in the Mediterranean region and to implement actions to protect migratory birds. The solutions identified

could be applied in other regions that are hotspots for this problem and COP12 hopes to emulate this successful initiative in Asia. Furthermore, several tailor-made action plans will be presented for adoption for the Yellow-breasted Bunting, the European Turtle Dove, the Far Eastern Curlew and Baer's Pochard – all of which have seen alarming declines in recent years.

Strengthening cooperation in the American flyway.

CMS involvement in their conservation is also expected to culminate in the adoption of an Action Plan to coordinate conservation work in the Americas complementing efforts in the other flyways where CMS and its instruments are very active.

African carnivores to gain prominence on political agenda.

CMS already has an initiative for Central Asian Mammals, which provides a common framework to coordinate conservation activities in the region and coherently address major threats, and now a similar approach is being proposed for Africa to cover the Lion, the Cheetah, the Wild Dog and the Leopard.

Measures to increase efforts to conserve African Elephants being massacred for the ivory of their tusks.

Other animals on the continent are also in serious decline including the African Wild Ass and Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes. For the latter, an Action Plan which was adopted nearly 20 years ago will be reviewed – with the successes and set-backs assessed and future actions agreed for the antelope and gazelle species of 14 Range States across North Africa.

Ensuring sustainable use of bushmeat.

Special attention will be also given to the increasing demand for aquatic bushmeat

which has negative implications on both species conservation and human health.

Trophy hunting: can it make a useful contribution to conservation? – for some species and some localities, it seems that a case can be made. A dedicated resolution will be brought to COP12 to provide guidance and resolve this contentious issue.

Prioritizing actions on the ground to fight climate change. Concrete plans and adaptation measures have been devised and will be put forward to support species with coping with rapidly changing environments.

Minimizing conflicts between deployment of energy and wildlife conservation. This important issue is on the agenda to promote progress made and request member states to reaffirm their obligations.

For the week of the COP, global attention will be on the government officials and representatives of the international conservation community, as they set the course to secure the future of endangered wildlife.

High-Level Events

As a prelude to the COP itself, High-Level Events will be held 22 October.

A Leadership Dialogue Breakfast, chaired by Erik Solheim, will offer an opportunity to government representatives to discuss the interlinkages between the CMS agenda and the main theme of the forthcoming session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA3) „Pollution Free Planet“. An outcome of the Breakfast is expected to be agreement of a message to be conveyed from the COP to UNEA3.

A High-Level Panel Discussion will be held in the afternoon and will involve dignitaries, several leaders including the executives of international organizations, and ministers from around the world. The discussion, which will be facilitated by a leading international broadcast journalist, will aim to address the interlinkages between sustainable development and the

conservation of wildlife with a special focus on migratory species and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The format will be in an open round table setting comprised of panellists who are expected to engage in an interactive debate. The discussion will result in a Declaration which will be presented to the Conference for its consideration and adoption.

In the evening, immediately after the High-Level Panel Discussion, the Secretariat will hold an award ceremony under the Migratory Species Champion Programme. This Programme aims to involve and recognize governments, organizations or individuals that provide medium- to long-term support for the implementation of specific initiatives. The Migratory Species Champion Programme was launched during the previous COP in 2014 in Quito, Ecuador. In Manila, several new Champions are expected to be honoured.





Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.

CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures. Since the Convention's entry into force, its membership has grown steadily to include 124 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. The depositary is the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. CMS complements and co-operates with a number of other international

organizations, NGOs, and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector.

CMS acts as a framework Convention by encouraging States to conclude global or regional agreements tailored to the conservation needs of individual or groups of species throughout their range. CMS and its daughter agreements, known as CMS Family, determine policy and provide further guidance on specific issues through their Strategic Plans, Action Plans, resolutions, decisions, and guidelines.