



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS5/Doc.2

Original: English

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE SAIGA ANTELOPE

FIFTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE SAIGA ANTELOPE

Astana , Kazakhstan , 12 – 14 March 2025

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Background

1. The Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga spp.*) (Saiga MOU) is the only international agreement dedicated to the Saiga Antelope that covers its entire range and that was signed by all of the Saiga Range States. The agreement was concluded under the auspices of CMS, and the CMS Secretariat acts as the Secretariat of the MOU (Saiga MOU, Paragraph 10). The Secretariat's functions include: to act as the Depository of the MOU; to convene regular meetings hosted by and organized in collaboration with one of the undersigned Range States or any cooperating organizations; to determine in consultation with Signatories the format of the national report. In addition to these responsibilities, the Secretariat facilitates the implementation of the MOU and the associated Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP), by, for example, organizing technical meetings in the inter-sessional period or commissioning technical publications to inform decision makers, when resources become available.

Saiga MOU and CAMI

2. The Saiga Antelope is a species covered by the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), which was officially launched in 2014 by the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to CMS in Quito, Ecuador in November 2014, including its first Programme of Work. In September 2019, the Second CAMI Range State Meeting took place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, where the Programme of Work (POW) was revised and updated for 2021-2026 and, subsequently, adopted at COP13 in Gandhinagar, India in February 2020 along with the POW in its Annex.
3. CAMI was designed to provide a governing framework to conserve migratory mammals and their habitat in the wider Central Asian region. It aims at bringing together and harmonizing implementation of existing CMS instruments and mandates. All Signatory States of the Saiga MOU are also Range States of CAMI.

4. The Third Meeting of Range States to CAMI is planned for 24-26 June 2025 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (tbc). The Meeting will revise the Programme of Work for the Initiative (CAMI POW) in accordance with Decision 14.167 d) *with the aim of streamlining its actions to focus on cross-cutting activities that benefit multiple species and to reflect updated CMS mandates relevant to the region, in alignment with Parties' commitments to the Global Biodiversity Framework, ensuring that emerging threats such as climate change are understood and included.*
5. Therefore, the revised draft Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope 2025-2030 (Saiga WP) contained in [UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS5/Doc.4](#), follows a different approach than the previous Medium-Term International Work Programme for 2021-2025. The Secretariat suggests that threats impacting and activities addressing not only Saiga Antelopes, but also other species covered by CAMI will be included in the revised CAMI POW, whereas the Saiga WP 2025-2030 shall focus on saiga-specific activities.

Meetings under the Saiga MOU

6. In response to a request from the Government of Kazakhstan, and in line with the MTIWP for the Saiga MOU (2021-2025), the CMS Secretariat organized the Consultative Meeting, 'Identifying solutions to human-wildlife conflict involving Saiga Antelopes in Kazakhstan', in cooperation with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee (FWC) of Kazakhstan, the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) and UNDP Kazakhstan and with funding from the Government of Germany, Government of Kazakhstan, ACBK and UNDP Kazakhstan. The meeting took place in two parts online from 28 February- 1 March 2023 and in person in Astana, Kazakhstan from 25-27 May 2023. The meeting participants developed and endorsed '[the Conservation and Management Strategy for Saiga in Kazakhstan](#)', with a particular focus on alleviating the human-wildlife conflict resulting from Saiga herds entering agricultural areas and communal lands.
7. A follow up meeting of technical experts and the FWC to identify progress and challenges in implementing the strategy and to agree on next steps was held on 9 September 2024 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, organized and funded by the ACBK and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and facilitated by the Secretariat. The meeting agreed on [Next Steps in Implementing the Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Saiga in Kazakhstan](#).
8. The Secretariat scheduled the Fifth Meeting of Signatories to the Saiga MOU (Saiga MOS5) for the first quarter of 2025 to ensure a timely revision of the Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope, aligning it with the review of CITES Decision for consideration by the 20th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CITES. Saiga MOS5 is hosted by Kazakhstan and organized by the CMS Secretariat in cooperation with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan.
9. The Secretariat's responsibilities in this regard include: preparation of the invitations and registration of the participants, preparation of the meeting documents, maintenance of the [Saiga MOS5 website](#), and the preparation of the Meeting Report. The Secretariat will receive technical support from the ACBK, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) in preparing the Overview Report, Saiga WP and the Meeting Report.

Other meetings

10. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP14) hosted by the Government of Uzbekistan, took place in Samarkand from 12-17 February 2024. [COP14 Decisions](#) are relevant for the conservation of the *Saiga spp.* For instance, Decisions 14.1-14.4 on the *Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species*, 14.167-170 on the *Central Asian Mammals Initiative*, 179-181 on *Pastoralism and Migratory Species*, 14.194-196 on *Ecological Connectivity* and 14.201-203 on *Infrastructure Development and Migratory Species*.

Technical publications

11. In line with Resolution 14.16 on Ecological Connectivity and a recommendation arising from the Midterm Review Meeting of CAMI on Vilm Island, Germany, 16-19 April 2018, the CMS Secretariat commissioned the study '[Mapping Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for the Central Asian Mammals Initiative](#)' (updated 18 June 2023). The report contains key transboundary areas of importance for the conservation of the Saiga and relevant recommendations for strengthening transboundary cooperation, which were integrated into the draft Saiga WP 2025-2030.
12. Furthermore, in order to implement mandates of the CAMI POW 2021-2026 in relation to community engagement and sustainable use, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) commissioned a study on '[Potential for Community-based Wildlife Management in Central Asia](#)' for the CMS Secretariat. Saiga is one of the focal species of this report and its recommendations were integrated in the draft Saiga WP 2025-2030.

National Reports

13. Paragraph 6 of the MOU requires Signatory States to submit National Reports to the Secretariat. It also directs the Secretariat to transmit the Reports to each of the Range States and cooperating organizations and compile an Overview Report on the basis of information at its disposal.
14. The Signatory States have been asked to provide national reports for this meeting using the National Report Format endorsed by Saiga MOS3. As of 12 February 2025, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Federation and Uzbekistan have submitted their national reports and these are available as information documents at the [Saiga MOS5 website](#).
15. The draft Overview Report for Saiga MOS5 (UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS5/Doc.3) was prepared by ACBK and FZS for the CMS Secretariat based on the National Reports and project reports submitted by cooperating organizations.
16. The Secretariat noted that the current format of the National Reports does not provide for a straightforward assessment of how the Work Programme has been implemented. Therefore, the Secretariat requests to be provided with a mandate to elaborate a new reporting format that will be consistent with the structure and content of the updated Saiga WP (to be discussed under Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda).

Status of Signatures and Technical Support

17. As of today, the Saiga MOU has five Signatory States. Including all Range States of the species: Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan (where the species went extinct), and Uzbekistan. Additionally, nine cooperating organizations have signed the MOU. These are: Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), International Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation (CIC), Naturschutzbund Deutschland -Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA), Species Survival Commission, Antelope Specialist Group of IUCN, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International, as listed on [the Saiga MOU website](#).
18. Among the cooperating organizations, ACBK and SCA provide technical support to the Secretariat in accordance with the *Terms of Reference for Provision of Technical Support to the CMS Secretariat for the Implementation of the Saiga MOU* (annexed to this document). After the endorsement of the new Saiga WP (2025–2030) the Terms of Reference should be updated by the Secretariat and sent to Signatory States and the organizations involved for renewed approval.
19. Within the framework of CAMI, two experts, Ms. E.J. Milner-Gulland, Professor at the University of Oxford and Mr. Steffen Zuther, researcher and project manager at the FZS, currently serve as Species Focal Points for Saiga in the CAMI framework. They provide technical expertise in line with the [Terms of Reference for CAMI Species Focal Points](#), which are currently being updated in preparation for the Third Meeting of Range States to CAMI.

List of National Focal Points

20. Based on the information provided through the National Reports the Secretariat compiled a preliminary list of National Focal Points in UNEP/CMS/Saiga/MOS5/Doc 5.

Action Requested

21. The Signatories are requested to take note of this report.

ANNEX

**Terms of Reference for Provision of Technical Support to the CMS Secretariat for the Implementation of the Saiga MOU
(December 2021)**

| Activity | Mandate | Lead | Priority |
|---|--|---------------------|----------|
| Preparation of technical documents for Workshops and Meetings of Signatories to the Saiga MOU | | | |
| 1. Support the CMS Secretariat to ensure that the reports (national and project) submitted to the CMS Secretariat prior to Saiga MOS5, are both timely and of high quality. This may include assistance to Signatories and reporting organizations in order to ensure a harmonized way of reporting and consistency in the data provided, if requested by the reporting Signatories and/or organizations. | MOU text, Paragraph 6; Annex 2, Article 3, Paragraph 7 | SCA/ACBK | High |
| 2. Prepare the Overview Report for Saiga MOU implementation and species status based on National Reports and Project Reports submitted to the CMS Secretariat and under the guidance of the CMS Secretariat prior to Saiga MOS5. | MOU text, Paragraph 6 | SCA/ACBK | High |
| 3. Revise national and project reporting forms, and draft other technical documents for the technical workshop under the Saiga MOU and Saiga MOS meetings, in collaboration with other organizations (e.g. IUCN-SSC ASG) and the CMS Secretariat, as mandated by the meetings of Signatories to the Saiga MOU and as requested by the CMS Secretariat. | Annex 2, Article 3, Paragraph 7 | SCA | Medium |
| Communication and Outreach | | | |
| 4. Maintain and regularly update the Saiga Resource Center with its various features (including a library of documents, photos, videos and maps, and an interactive database where users can register as stakeholders and input information about their projects, and links to the official CMS documents and technical publications, such as the MTIWP, Saiga MOU text, etc.) | MTIWP 2021-2025 1.3, 5.7 | SCA | High |
| 5. Explore the possibility of exchanging data on Saiga and Saiga habitat among Range States and stakeholders, using the Saiga Resource Centre, if appropriate. | MTIWP 2021-2025 6.5 | SCA/CMS Secretariat | Medium |
| 6. Periodically (at least every second month) contribute short news articles (max 1 page) for publication on the CMS' Saiga MOU website with links to the original sources, project websites, initiatives and organizations, as appropriate, and including at least one image. These can also be a repost of a selected article from the Saiga News, for example. | MTIWP 2021-2025 5.7 | SCA and ACBK | Medium |

| Activity | Mandate | Lead | Priority |
|--|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <p>7. Continue production of <i>Saiga News</i> to foster communication between stakeholders on progress in Saiga conservation. This would include a section in each issue devoted to the Saiga MOU (outlining progress under the MTIWP), and also the ongoing publication of information and articles of relevance to the MTIWP. <i>Saiga News</i> should continue to play an important role in enabling Range State conservationists and scientists to share their work with a broad audience in their own languages.</p> | <p>MTIWP 2021-2025 1.3</p> | <p>SCA</p> | <p>High</p> |
| <p>8. Advertise <i>Saiga News</i> on the CMS website, by sending to the Secretariat selected articles from Saiga News with an image to be posted on the website and request the CMS Secretariat to post it, establishing a link with the <i>Saiga News</i> page.</p> | <p>MTIWP 2021-2025, 5.8</p> | <p>SCA, CMS (upon request)</p> | <p>Medium</p> |
| <p>9. Approach other relevant regional, national and international organizations that may be interested in establishing links to <i>Saiga News</i> on their websites</p> | <p>MTIWP 2021-2025, 5.8</p> | <p>SCA/ACBK</p> | <p>Medium</p> |
| <p>10. Create a database of Saiga-related projects carried out by various actors throughout the Saiga range using the Project Reports submitted to the CMS Secretariat as basis. Performing further research to find relevant initiatives and conservation activities and contacting the respective organizations, if needed, to include the timescale, actors, location, actions carried out, conservation outcomes and, where possible, lessons learned</p> | <p>MTIWP 2021-2025, 1.3</p> | <p>Consultant hired by SCA or ACBK with contribution from both organizations and guidance from CMS Secretariat</p> | <p>High by next MOS</p> |