

CMS COP13 Highlights: Sunday, 16 February 2020

On Sunday, delegates, non-governmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations convened for a High-Level Segment to discuss priorities for migratory species conservation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, highlighting the importance of connectivity in tackling the unprecedented threats facing migratory species. In the first session of the Segment, several Ministers described their own work and views on the role and importance of CMS and how its priorities should be reflected in the Framework. In the second session, representatives of several intergovernmental organizations and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), were asked to reflect on the Ministers' views, CMS, and ecological connectivity.

High-Level Segment: Priorities for Migratory Species Conservation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Abhilash Khandekar, journalist, welcomed speakers and participants to the High-Level Segment. Prakash Keshav Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change, India, expressed pride in India's recent success in recovering tiger, elephant, and rhinoceros populations. He noted the importance of NGOs and local communities in protecting and conserving biodiversity, and that it is possible to live in harmony with migratory species. He remarked that 2020 could be a "super year" for biodiversity and lay the foundation for the coming decade, and that the draft Ghandinagar Declaration on priorities for migratory species would incorporate suggestions from the High-Level Segment.

Amy Fraenkel, Executive Secretary, CMS, remarked that this is the first CMS COP since the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) sounded the alarm that a million species might be lost in the coming decade, including many migratory species. She noted that many CMS Appendix 1 species are in decline, and that it is time to "take a long hard look" at how to step up action. She described how CMS is uniquely positioned to inform the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and to ensure coherence and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other MEAs. She said that key relevant priorities included in

the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (CMS/COP13/Doc.17) include: ecological connectivity; collective implementation; National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs); and species-specific commitments.

Khandekar then introduced the panel of ministers, state secretaries, and ambassadors. Following this, he moderated the panel discussion with a series of specific questions. On a question of what CMS COP13 meant for India, Javadekar stressed that this COP is crucial on a global scale, with cooperation needed beyond political boundaries. On potential commitments for international cooperation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Chea Sam Ang, Cambodia, stressed that the international community has an obligation to preserve habitats and migration corridors for generations to come.

Regarding actions and commitments needed to reverse the current extinction trend, Sveinung Rotevatn, Norway, stated that biodiversity must be mainstreamed across all sectors, including through nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches. Babul Supriyo, India, seconded that migratory species cannot speak for themselves.

On the question of how current examples of successful government policies could be taken up in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Kumari Weerasekara, Sri Lanka, and Muhammed Ali Tatwany, Saudi Arabia, offered examples of environmental governance in their countries. Jochen Flasbarth, Germany, quoted former US President John F. Kennedy and urged participants to ask themselves what they could do to advance CMS and to implement instruments to protect migratory species. Tomislav Čorić, Croatia, pointed to connectivity solutions in Croatia and stressed that the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must include strict goals and numbered targets in order to be successful.

On the role of migratory species in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and NBSAPs, Yann Wehring, France, called for urgent action and agreed with the proposed 2030 target for the protection of 30 percent of the planet as interconnected nature reserves. He also stressed that climate change and biodiversity loss need to be addressed coherently.

Keshav Varma, Global Tiger Forum, citing the recent World Economic Forum report finding that more than 50 percent of global GDP is at risk due to loss of nature, asked how industry is

planning to invest in nature conservation. Coric emphasized that the only choice is to embrace sustainability.

Sue Lieberman, Wildlife Conservation Society, emphasizing that greater ambition is needed to maintain the integrity of ecosystems and ensure connectivity, asked the panel whether they are willing to commit to protect 30 percent of their land by 2030, as stated in the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Flasarth opined that this is not ambitious enough and that the impact of different economic sectors needs to be addressed to avert biodiversity loss.

The following session hosted representatives of several intergovernmental organizations and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). When asked about her thoughts on the previous session's discussions and CMS COP13, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Convention on Biological Diversity, noted that the Post-2020 Framework will be simple, transformative, but unlikely to include targets other than those already in the Aichi Targets. She noted that the Framework is expected to guide countries in their work at the national level but not provide all the answers. She also emphasized that connectivity and species are already reflected in the current Zero Draft.

Asked what actions and commitments are needed to reverse species decline, Ovais Sarmad, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), highlighted the role of National Determined Contributions (NDCs). Martha Rojas Urrego, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, emphasized the importance of preserving habitats, such as wetlands. Ivonne Higuero, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), stressed the need to have indicators that will measure parties' progress in achieving the new targets.

John Scanlon, African Parks, noted that CMS is the only convention connecting species with habitats and emphasized that the current Zero Draft fails to reflect that. Fraenkel added that the language on species in the Zero Draft could be stronger.

Khandekar asked the speakers to reflect on the importance of ecological connectivity in their work and in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Scanlon was encouraged that the Zero Draft draws links with climate change and the SDGs, noting the importance of moving beyond looking at biodiversity in isolation. Higuero highlighted the high cost of conservation, arguing that without financial means for implementation, the Framework will get nowhere. She urged cooperation with all stakeholders to finance activities. Fraenkel called for a better use of the connectivity concept within the Zero Draft.

In addressing a question on the role of the private sector, Rebecca Lent, International Whaling Commission, stated that multisectoral work is absolutely crucial, and spoke on the importance of moving beyond only market assessments when addressing social and economic impacts.

Theresa Mundita Lim, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, noted that migratory species conservation has helped highlight the need for transboundary and multisectoral cooperation. Joyce Msuya, UNEP, highlighted important indigenous and community

initiatives drawing on simple measures to protect migratory species.

On how the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework might recognize the role of organizations in implementing components related to their mandates, Martha Rojas Urrego, Ramsar, stressed that the Framework should address habitats and reflect the contributions of all MEAs. She underscored the importance of reducing the reporting burden on parties through synergies among indicators, enabling them to use fewer resources and be more efficient in implementation.

Sarmad called for "inclusive multilateralism" involving not just government actors but civil society, individuals, and the private sector to implement the goals and objectives of MEAs. Msuya highlighted UNEP's mandate to deliver on biodiversity and climate change by working closely with the thirteen conventions associated with it.

Higuero stressed that implementation is up to parties. She noted that measuring success is the biggest challenge facing biodiversity conventions, and suggested using pre-existing indicators.

Reflecting on his time with CITES, Scanlon said that the problem was not a lack of cooperation among secretariats across conventions, but rather an ongoing failure of implementation in spite of this. He called for less emphasis on synergies at the higher level and more on synergies at the field level.

While acknowledging the merits of integrating the Post-2020 Framework with the Paris Agreement and SDGs, Fraenkel underscored the value of a species-focused approach in motivating people and governments to take action.

Before closing the panel, audience questions and comments focused on the need for a Global Biodiversity Framework for all, meaning all conventions and stakeholders, including cities, youth, communities, and indigenous peoples.

In the Corridors

If one word could sum up Sunday's High-Level Segment discussion, it would be connectivity. In the context of CMS, this normally refers to maintaining linkages between key migratory sites, but Sunday it was also used to highlight the need for linkages between the various MEAs in which migratory species are implicated, such as CITES, CBD, Ramsar, and others. Some emphasized the need to demonstrate the relevance of CMS to processes that have access to greater levels of funding, namely climate change and the SDGs. Others insisted on the need to inspire and achieve political will on the basis of the intrinsic value of the species themselves, and the moral imperative to prevent harm and maintain ecological integrity. In any case, one thing most delegates agreed on was the need for more funding to spur implementation, but opinions differed on how to secure this. Some delegates noted that funding will flow in the direction of firmer commitments, while others countered that firm commitments are difficult to make without increased funding. Delegates remained optimistic that COP13 could help move this forward. As one delegate put it, "We need to be able to say in plain terms, here is what we need to do, here is why, and here is how we are going to do it."