



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



WHAT IS CMS?

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is a global environmental treaty convened under the aegis of the United Nations Environmental Programme. This framework convention aims to conserve and sustainably manage avian, aquatic and terrestrial migratory species, and their habitats, throughout their range.

CMS organizes transboundary cooperation for species migrating across or outside national boundaries, such as cetaceans. It provides the legal framework for conservation measures throughout the migratory range and strives to maintain or restore a favorable conservation status of the species and their habitats. Where applicable, sustainable use may be permitted. The Convention provides a platform to develop and tailor measures according to particular conservation needs.

At present, 115 countries plus the EU have become a Party to CMS, and the number is rising steadily. Neither Canada nor the United States are among these yet.

HOW DOES CMS PROTECT CETACEANS?

A key instrument of the Convention is the listing of species on one or both of the two Appendices, which are updated at every meeting of the Conference of Parties.

Appendix I lists migratory species that are endangered – that means threatened with extinction – throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Taking of specimens of Appendix I species is generally prohibited and Parties allowing exceptions must inform the Secretariat. Signatory states strive toward strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring their habitats, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Appendix I includes 15 cetacean species, including humpback, finback and northern right whales. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.

Appendix II lists species with an unfavorable conservation status that would significantly benefit from the international co-operation that could be achieved through an international agreement for their conservation and management. Parties that are Range States of Appendix II species are therefore encouraged to conclude agreements for the conservation and management of those species or geographically separate populations of those species. Appendix II currently contains 43 cetacean species, some of which are also listed on Appendix I.

Parties to CMS meet every three years to review progress in the implementation of previous decisions and agree on priorities for the coming years. These decisions, called resolutions and recommendations, cover a wide range of issues relevant for cetaceans, such as bycatch and entanglement, ocean noise, pollution, marine debris, ship strikes, disturbance, climate change effects, prey depletion and many more. Most resolutions call on Parties to focus on certain concrete actions, as well as request the Convention's Scientific Council to gather relevant information and provide further guidance. The most recent Conference of the Parties was held in November 2011 and a comprehensive Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans was adopted, strengthening the role of CMS in protecting this important species group.

CMS also acts as a framework under which regional agreements for specific species or taxonomic groups can be concluded.

Currently four cetacean-related agreements are in existence: ASCOBANS, a legally-binding treaty for small cetaceans in northern and western Europe, ACCOBAMS, which is also legally-binding and covers cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, as well as two non-binding Memoranda of Understanding for the Pacific Islands Region and the Atlantic coast of Africa.

CONTACT

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