



“NATURE KNOWS NO BORDERS”: TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION IN THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of wild Animals (CMS), also referred to as the Bonn Convention, in 1979. Its main objective is to preserve migrating wild animals species and their habitats across their whole migratory range, which frequently crosses several nations and continents. The convention acknowledges the particular difficulties faced by migratory species, including habitat loss, poaching, climate change, and other dangers that necessitate global collaboration for their conservation.

Keywords: *Environment, Migratory Species, Conservation, Endangered, Cross Border, Marine Biodiversity, Global Cooperation, Coordination, Climate Change*

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of CMS is the idea that migratory animals ought to be safeguarded over their whole journey. In order to protect endangered species, the treaty encourages nations to work together through agreements and action plans. It separates species into Appendix I (for endangered species) and Appendix II (for species that need international cooperation for

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conservation). Since its adoption, CMS has been pivotal in fostering global partnership for the conservation of numerous species, including whales, migratory birds, sea turtles, and African elephants.

From February 15 to 22, 2022, Gandhinagar, India, hosted the 13th Conference of the parties (COP 13) to the convention on the conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). An important turning point in international efforts to protect migratory species, their habitats, and ecosystems was reached with this multinational gathering. The CMS, sometimes referred to as the Bonn Convention, is a global agreement that aims to conserve migratory species and their habitats. The phrase “Nature knows no boundary” was created by Indian environmentalist Dr. J. S. R. Prakash. He emphasised the interdependence of ecosystems and the necessity of global collaboration in environmental preservation with this remark. The tagline emphasises the notion that nature, including migratory species and wildlife,

Events such as the convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) COP 13 made extensive use of it, demonstrating the significance of cross-border conservation for migratory species protection.

Background of CMS

The CMS, established under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1979, is a global framework that encourages the protection of migratory species, whether terrestrial, aquatic, or avian. The core principle of the convention is to conserve migratory species across their entire migratory range, which often spans multiple national borders. Through the CMS, countries can collaborate to address the unique challenges faced by these species, from habitat degradation to illegal poaching.

The Role of COP 13 with the Theme “Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home”

COP 13 was a critical meeting for CMS parties to review and strengthen the global conservation efforts for migratory species. This biennial conference provided a platform for decision-making and setting priorities for the conservation of species that face the threats of climate change, habitat loss, and human activities. It brought together government officials, environmental organizations, scientists, and conservationists to discuss strategies and share progress on the implementation of CMS agreements.

The main goals of COP 13 were:

1. To assess the progress made since the previous COP.
2. To adopt new conservation measures and agreements.

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3. To establish new initiatives to protect migratory species.
4. To secure financial and political commitments from member countries.

Key Outcomes and Decisions at COP 13

Several important decisions were made during COP 13, reflecting a growing global commitment to the conservation of migratory species.

1. Adoption of New Conservation Agreements:

COP 13 saw the adoption of multiple new agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to protect migratory species, including marine animals, birds, and terrestrial species. Notably, the conference focused on the conservation of species such as the African elephant, the whale shark, and various species of migratory birds.

2. Climate Change and Migration:

One of the central themes was the impact of climate change on migratory species. As climate change alters migration patterns, ecosystems, and weather conditions, the CMS developed new strategies to monitor and mitigate these effects. It was recognized that climate change could disrupt migratory corridors, with far-reaching consequences for the species dependent on them.

3. Addressing Human-Wildlife Conflict:

Another key issue discussed was human-wildlife conflict, particularly the negative impacts of human activities like infrastructure development, poaching, and urban expansion on migratory species. Delegates agreed to strengthen partnerships between countries to address such conflicts and reduce their impact on wildlife.

4. New Commitments to Marine Conservation:

COP 13 also emphasized the protection of migratory marine species, such as sea turtles, whales, and sharks. The conference resulted in enhanced commitments to protect marine biodiversity, with a focus on reducing by catch, protecting marine habitats, and improving the international cooperation necessary for marine conservation.

5. Mobilizing Financial Resources:

An important agenda item was the mobilization of financial resources for conservation programs. COP 13 emphasized the importance of financing for the conservation of migratory species and endorsed the creation of new funding mechanisms to support national and

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regional conservation initiatives. Several donor countries pledged new financial contributions to help implement conservation strategies.

6. Strengthening the Capacity of Countries:

Another key area of focus was strengthening the capacity of countries to implement CMS decisions. Developing nations, particularly those with rich diversity but limited resources, received support in the form of technical assistance, funding, and training. This was aimed at ensuring that conservation efforts could be successfully carried out on the ground.

7. Inclusion of New Species in the CMS Appendices:

During the conference, several migratory species were added to the CMS Appendices, which lists species in need of international protection. By including these species, member countries are obligated to take steps to protect them, including improving their habitats and regulating hunting practices.

During the 13th conference of the parties (COP 13) to the convention on the conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) held in Gandhinagar, India, several migratory species were added to the CMS Appendices. These additions aimed to enhance global conservation efforts and promote international collaboration for the protection of these species. The species added were:

1. The Indian Ocean Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*)

Status: Added to Appendix I of the CMS, which includes species that are endangered and require strict protection.

Reason for Addition: Whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, face threats from by catch, habitat destruction, and overfishing. This addition ensures better protection of their migratory routes across the Indian Ocean.

2. The Dugong (*Dugong dugon*)

Status: Moved to Appendix I of the CMS.

Reason for addition: The dugong also known as the sea cow, is threatened by habitat degradation, accidental entanglement in fishing nets, and poaching. The addition to Appendix I calls for immediate conservation actions to protect this species across its range.

Significance of the Location – Gandhinagar, India

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Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat, India, was chosen as the venue for COP 13, reflecting the growing importance of Asian nations in the global conservation dialogue. India, home to diverse migratory species, including the endangered Indian elephant, Siberian crane, and the Asiatic lion, has played an active role in supporting CMS initiatives. The choice of Gandhinagar also highlighted India's commitment to biodiversity conservation and its leadership in regional environmental efforts.

The conference in India also provide a platform to showcase the country's rich biodiversity and conservation successes. India's efforts in conserving migratory species and its engagement in CMS agreements were highlighted during the conserving, setting an example for other nations in the region.

Challenges and the path Forward

Despite the significant progress made at COP 13, numerous challenges remain in the conservation of migratory species. Habitat loss, poaching, climate change, and human-wildlife conflict continue to threaten these species across their migratory routes. For effective conservation, countries need to strengthen transboundary cooperation, enhance data collection, and promote the active involvement of local communities on conservation efforts.

Additionally, the CMS needs to focus on the implementation of the agreements reached at COP 13. Effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, along with adequate funding, are crucial to ensuring the success of these initiatives.

STAKE HOLDERS AT COP 13

AT the COP 13 various national, regional, and international departments and organizations played a vital role in ensuring the success of the conference. The event required collaboration among government agencies, conservation organizations, and experts from multiple fields to address the diverse challenges of migratory species conservation. Below are the key departments and organizations involved:

1. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), India

Role: As the host country, India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was the primary governmental body responsible for organizing the event. MoEFCC played a key role in facilitating discussions, coordinating logistics, and ensuring that India's conservation priorities were represented.

Involvement: The Ministry hosted key sessions, led India's delegation, and showcased its own efforts in protecting migratory species, such as the endangered Indian elephant and Siberian crane.

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2. Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

Role: A premier research institute in India focused on wildlife conservation, the WII was actively involved in providing scientific expertise and data during the conference. It helped support the preparation of materials, reports, and policy recommendations.

Involvement: the WII contributed to technical sessions and shared research on migratory species, biodiversity, and conservation strategies in India and the South Asian region.

3. Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, India

Role: This ministry was involved in discussions related to the conservations of marine migratory species, such as whales, dolphins, and sea turtles, which are vital to India's marine biodiversity.

Involvement: The Ministry worked on fostering collaborations for marine conservation, ensuring that the protection of marine migratory species was considered in the broader conservation framework.

4. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Role: UNEP is the parent organization of the CMS and played a pivotal role in coordinating the international aspects of the conference.

Involvement: UNEP helped facilitate the broader goals of the CMS, provided technical support, and played a key role in the decision-making process regarding species listings, conservation agreements, and funding mechanisms.

5. CMS Secretariat

Role: the CMS Secretariat, based in Bonn, Germany, is the body responsible for the administration of the Convention, including organizing the conference of the parties (COP)

Involvement: The Secretariat coordinated the logistical aspects of COP 13, including managing documents, organizing sessions, and ensuring that the conference proceeded smoothly. It also facilitated negotiations, communicated with the parties, and ensured that the resolutions were drafted and implemented.

6. State Governments of Gujarat, India

Role: The Local government of Gujarat, where Gandhinagar is located, played a crucial role in providing logistical support, ensuring venue arrangements, and supporting local initiatives.

Involvement: Gujarat's Department of Forests and Environment coordinated the local conservation efforts, ensuring that the state's biodiversity, such as migratory bird habitats and conservation of wetlands, was highlighted during the conference.

7. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Role: The IUCN, an influential global conservation organization, was involved in providing technical input and guidance on biodiversity conservation strategies.

Involvement: the IUCN helped in addressing specific concerns related to migratory species, provided expert advice on conservation policies, and facilitated discussions around the science and management of migratory species.

8. Conservation on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat

Role: The CBD Secretariat works closely with CMS to promote biodiversity conservation.

Involvement: The CBD Secretariat participated in discussions around broader biodiversity framework and the integration of migratory species conservation within the global biodiversity agenda.

9. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Conservation Groups

Role: Various international and local NGOs played an essential role in advocating for the protection of migratory species and highlighting conservation issues during the conference.

Involvement: Organizations such as BirdLife International, WWF, and Conservation International provided expertise, data, and recommendations related to the conservation of migratory birds, marine species, and terrestrial mammals. They also facilitated dialogue among government and other stakeholders, pushing for stronger international commitments.

10. Research Institutions and Experts

Role: Various research institutions and specific experts were involved in providing evidence-based inputs, sharing the latest research on migratory species, and assisting in developing conservation strategies.

Involvement: Institutions such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the International Crane Foundation (ICF) contributed scientific knowledge on species' migratory patterns, population dynamics, and conservation needs.

11. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Role: The UNDP was involved in supporting conservation projects and helping mobilize funding for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation, especially in developing countries.

Involvement: UNDP played a role in facilitating discussions on integrating conservation into sustainable development goals and climate change adaptation strategies.

12. International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Role: The IMO is concerned with the conservation of marine migratory species, particularly in relation to shipping impacts.

Involvement: It contributed to discussions about reducing ship strikes, pollution, and other maritime threats to marine species, including cetaceans and sea turtles.

13. Customs and Border Control Authorities

Role: These department were involved in ensuring that illegal wildlife trade, including the trafficking of migratory species and their parts, was discussed and addressed at the conference.

Involvement: Customs and border control agencies contributed to discussions on strengthening regulations and improving enforcement against wildlife trafficking.

CONCLUSION

COP 13 of the CMS held in Gandhinagar was an important event in the global conservation landscape. The conference provided a platform for countries and organizations to strengthen their commitment to protecting migratory species and their habitats. The decisions made during the conference will have lasting effect on the conservation of migratory species and will help to ensure that future generations inherit a more sustainable and biodiverse planet.



COP 13 of CMS was a collaborative effort involving various government ministries, international organizations, research institutions, conservation group, and technical experts. Their collective contributions ensured the success of the conference, which made significant progress in advancing the conservation of migratory species globally. As the world continues to face unprecedented environmental challenges, international cooperation through forums like COP 13 remains essential for protecting the planet's most vulnerable species.

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