



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN POPULATION OF THE GREAT BUSTARD (*Otis tarda*)

8-12 April 2013, Szarvas, Hungary

CMS/GB/MoS3/REPORT

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Agenda Item 1.0: Welcoming Remarks

1. Mr. Levente Körösi, Deputy Head of the Department of Strategy of the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development opened the Meeting welcoming participants in the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate in Szarvas. He said that Hungary was proud to be home to the largest Great Bustard population in Central Europe. The species was very important to Hungary and would hopefully become a great conservation success story.
2. The habitat of Great Bustards was mainly agricultural lands that were used by humans and therefore its protection required a different thinking and needed to involve various groups of stakeholders including farmers, civil society, hunters and state authorities to engage jointly in the conservation of this species. It also included the development and implementation of agri-environmental schemes to ensure that cultural and extensively managed landscapes were maintained as the crucial habitat for Great Bustards.
3. He further pointed to important topics on the agenda to be discussed during the next two days such as the new Medium-Term International Work Programme 2013-2016 (MTIWP 2013-2016), the joint research programme as well as the extension of the geographical scope of the MoU to cover additional countries. The most important issues for Great Bustard conservation included the sustainable management of its habitat and predator control. He thanked the CMS Secretariat, the colleagues from the National Park and especially the Department for Strategy for their tireless efforts to organize this Meeting. He then handed over to Ms. Melanie Virtue (UNEP/CMS Secretariat) to chair the Meeting until the election of officers.
4. Ms. Virtue expressed her gratitude and appreciation to the Hungarian Government for hosting and organizing the Meeting of Signatories (MoS) in such a professional way. She especially thanked the Hungarian MoU Contact Point, Ms. Anna Práger, who had done an outstanding job in preparing and arranging this Meeting. The cooperation with all Hungarian colleagues had been a real pleasure. She also highlighted the benefits of organizing the two day Scientific Symposium prior to MoS3 as many key issues were already discussed in appropriate detail, setting the stage for the policy work to be accomplished.
5. She mentioned that already 19 species MoUs had been developed under the auspices of CMS. Fourteen of those were under the direct responsibility of her work as Agreements Officer at the Secretariat in Bonn, Germany, and all needed to be serviced and coordinated

appropriately. Due to a serious lack of capacity and resources, many MoUs suffered from the absence of a dedicated Coordinator. She expressed her regret for not having the capacity to put more resources into the coordination of the Great Bustard MoU at the moment and that she was looking forward to discuss ways and means with participants about how to ensure effective and sustainable coordination of the MoU.

6. The main advantage of the Great Bustard MoU was, according to Ms. Virtue, the strong commitment and expertise as well as the great professionalism of the Great Bustard community with a clear focus on the species. This was surely a great resource and support to the implementation of the MoU. She mentioned that the Tenth Conference of the Parties of CMS (COP10) requested the Secretariat to initiate a viability analysis of all MoUs in order to assess which ones function well and to identify key success factors. The Great Bustard MoU was successful, she suggested because of the ownership and commitment of its Signatories.

Agenda Item 2.0: Election of Officers

7. Ms. Virtue (CMS) asked for nominations for the position of the Chair. Germany proposed Mr. András Schmidt from Hungary to act as Chair, referring to his professional and successful chairmanship during the scientific symposium. As there were no objections to this proposal, Mr. Schmidt was elected as Chair of the Meeting. Ms. Virtue then requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Ms. Práger (Hungary) proposed Mr. Rainer Raab from Austria to be the Vice-Chair. As there were no objections, Mr. Raab was elected as Vice-Chair.

Agenda Item 3.0: Adoption of the Agenda and Meeting Schedule

8. Mr. Schmidt thanked the delegates for their trust in electing him Chair. He especially highlighted the outstanding support and assistance of Ms. Linette Lamare (CMS Secretariat) for her tireless work and excellent cooperation in the organization of this Meeting, which had proved to be invaluable.

9. He mentioned that the last MoS in 2008, agreed to work without written formal Rules of Procedure (RoP) and he asked whether delegates were happy to continue this practice. As there were no further comments, his proposal was adopted. He then asked for comments on the Agenda and Ms. Virtue pointed out a change in the Schedule, where Agenda Item 7.5 (MoU Coordination), would be moved forward to be discussed in the morning of the second day of the Meeting. The Agenda was adopted by the Meeting. (Attached as Annex 1 to the present Report).

Agenda Item 4.0: Opening Statements

10. The Chair invited delegates and observers to make short statements regarding their past or planned contribution to the MoU. He also said that the MoU seemed to work very well on national level but that international coordination was less active (e.g., the maintenance of a coordinated international data base) and that inter-sessional work in general was more difficult.

11. The Chair went on to summarize the outcomes of the preceding Scientific Symposium. It was divided into five interactive sessions, focusing on the use of guidelines and on main challenges for Great Bustard conservation. Participating experts provided overview as well as

detailed presentations, presenting their work on the species, as well as results and challenges. He noted that this information would also feed into the official MoU Meeting.

12. During the first two sessions of the Symposium, threats from predation were discussed as well as guidelines on securing wintering grounds of Great Bustards; reducing negative impact of infrastructure power lines and afforestation; and habitat management. Another session focussed on agri-environmental schemes to maintain adequate habitats, and compared experiences from the EU and non-EU countries. He highlighted the presentation of Ms. Aimee Kessler from the Central Asian Great Bustard Project and the rather worrying situation of Great Bustards in the Central Asian region.

13. Further discussions centred on research activities and identified main gaps in research as well as high priority activities to fill those gaps. Such high priority activities would also be included in the new Medium Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) 2013-2016 to be discussed under Agenda Item 7.2.

14. Captive rearing and release of Great Bustards was another topic discussed at the Symposium. He thanked the National Park for organizing the excursion which had provided valuable insight into practical Great Bustard conservation and habitat management. Participants had had the opportunity to visit the Great Bustard rescue centre, and learned about methods of trapping predators as well as the role of extensive agriculture. He then opened the floor and invited statements from delegates. No further statements were made.

Agenda Item 5.0: Reports

Agenda Item 5.1: Report of the Secretariat

15. Ms. Virtue (CMS) introduced Doc.5.1 and mentioned that CMS was acting as the Secretariat to the MoU and as its depository. Thirteen countries had signed the MoU, with the Czech Republic being the last Signatory (2008) to sign. Four co-operating organizations had also signed the MoU, namely, BirdLife International (BLI), IUCN, the International Game Council (CIC) and the CMS Secretariat. The Range States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland and Slovenia had not yet signed the MoU and the Secretariat would continue communication with them to encourage them to sign the MoU. CMS also maintained the list of designated contact points (Inf.4) to which 12 Signatories had provided relevant information. Ms. Virtue reminded delegates to inform the Secretariat should there be any changes.

16. Ms. Virtue also highlighted relevant outcomes of CMS COP10, including Resolution 10.11: *Power lines and Migratory Birds* (Review of conflict between birds and power lines), Resolution 10.26: *Minimizing the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds*, which also included the establishment of a working group to deal with this issue in more detail. She also mentioned the current development of a new CMS website which will also include the Great Bustard MoU. This should be ready and online by the end of this year.

17. CMS had developed online workspaces to facilitate the inter-sessional work of the Scientific Council and also of the Sharks MoU. She highlighted the possibility to use this online discussion forum also for the Great Bustard MoU coordination. CMS was also developing a joint online reporting system to improve and streamline the reporting process for CMS Parties. COP10 also adopted Resolution 10.9: *Future Structure and Strategies of the CMS and CMS Family*, which included the assessment of MoU implementation and coordination, as well as ways to strengthen the capacity of the Agreements Unit. She

highlighted the development of the new CMS Strategic Plan, which would be a global strategic plan on migratory species conservation and would be aligned with Aichi Targets of the CBD.

18. Ms. Práger (Hungary) referred to the proposal to expand the geographical scope of the MoU, which would also include Serbia as a Range State. The Hungarian government had already made some efforts to engage Serbia, *inter alia*, through a visit to the Serbian Government. She requested the Secretariat to provide greater support in this process to increase the number of Signatories and involve them in the joint conservation measures. Mr. Rastislav Rybanič (Slovakia) mentioned that it might be helpful to use bilateral contacts and involve the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to invite those countries to sign and engage with the MoU.

19. Ms. Nela Miauta (Romania) expressed support for the Hungarian proposal to extend the geographical scope to include Italy, Montenegro, the Russian Federation and Serbia. Ms. Virtue (CMS) confirmed that the Secretariat would increase its efforts to recruit more Signatories.

20. The Chair then invited the Secretariat to report on credentials. Ms. Virtue reiterated the importance of credentials and thanked the countries that provided such letters. She reported that of the 13 Signatories, 9 countries were participating in this Meeting and 8 of them had submitted credentials to the Secretariat that were found to be in order.

Agenda Item 5.2: Overview Report

21. The Chair introduced the Agenda Item saying that most of the information contained in the document had been discussed at the Symposium and he asked whether there were any specific further comments. He drew attention to the table on population status and asked participants to pay particular attention to the figures. The report had been compiled by Hungary based on the national reports received and information could be misunderstood so he asked countries to check the figures provided for their country. He suggested going through the table and checking figures country by country.

22. Ms. Miauta (Romania) asked for clarification whether the figures were estimates for all populations or only for breeding populations. The Chair clarified that the data only referred to breeding populations. This was changed accordingly in the report. Mr. Attila Nagy (Milvus Group Association Romania) asked for clarification regarding the estimates for transboundary populations provided by different countries. The Chair said that the purpose was to get the best estimate and that figures should not be doubled, but that the table should provide the combined total numbers for the mid-European breeding population. The table now included the figures from the national reports. Some countries however had not submitted any reports or data. In such cases information had been obtained from scientific publications and literature.

23. The Chair pointed out that the numbers should refer to the most recent estimates (2012). Ms. Jelena Kralj (Croatia) said that she could provide data for Serbia referring to the Serbian presentation at the Symposium. She pointed out that there should be a distinction between Serbia and Montenegro and that the birds only bred in Serbia. The figures for Serbia were inserted in the document based on the information from the Serbian presentation at the Symposium. It was clarified that the figures only referred to the breeding populations in Serbia.

24. Participants went through the table and countries provided their updated figures (see Doc.5.2/Rev: *Overview Report*). For countries not present, such as Russia and Serbia, information was included from their presentations at the Symposium. Discussion arose about

the interpretation of figures provided by the Russian Federation. The Chair proposed to consult again with the Russian scientists to confirm the figures. Participants also discussed the data from Spain and whether the populations were really increasing. The Chair said that there was literature available suggesting an increase in the populations. Some small populations were declining but the overall population was increasing. Germany mentioned that this was also true for Portugal. Information was based on the species fact sheet of BLI.

25. Regarding the populations in the United Kingdom, participants agreed that this population would be considered a breeding population as it was resident and thus had the potential to breed even if there was as yet no clear evidence of them doing so. Mr. Volodymyr Domashlinets (Ukraine) said that he needed to consult again with national scientists and that he would provide the correct figures after the meeting.

26. Participants agreed to extend the table to include the Central Asian population. Ms. Kessler (Central Asian Great Bustard Project) provided estimates for Kazakhstan and Mongolia as well as for Siberian Russia. Data from China were also available from 2007 but were not reliable.

27. Mr. Nagy (Milvus Group Association Romania) suggested separating the sub-species in the table because the Kazakh subspecies was European and the Mongolian subspecies was the Asian sub-species. The Russian Federation would have to be consulted to submit information on population estimates for the Asian population of the sub-species. So far the Russian Federation only provided data for the mid-European population (nominate sub-species).

28. After further discussion it was concluded that the table would include population estimates for all countries where the mid-European populations of Great Bustards occurred. The relevant data would be derived from available literature, except for countries where there was already good cooperation such as the Russian Federation. Such countries would be requested to provide direct input. The table would thus include information on the global breeding population. Countries such as Morocco, that used to have a breeding population, would also be included in the table.

29. Ms. Virtue (CMS) pointed out that official information the Secretariat received from Armenia, which indicated that Great Bustards were observed in that country but no further data on numbers were available. However, Armenia had requested to be recognized as a Range State of this species. The country should therefore also be included in the table as a migration passage State. Germany said that Great Bustards could only be in Armenia irregularly, especially as the birds had not been seen in Azerbaijan for almost 30 years although this country was historically a more important part of the range than Armenia.

30. It was agreed that the final table should distinguish between MoU and non-MoU countries. A different table would be included to provide the population numbers for other European countries and will provide information concerning the Asian sub-species as well.

31. With those amendments, the revised table and overview report were adopted. It was agreed that the table would be sent to the Russian Federation and the Ukraine to fill in the correct information or confirm the available data. Both countries should provide the information within one month of receipt of the report. After this deadline, the report would be considered final and adopted. (Attached as Annex 2 to this Report).

Agenda Item 6.0: Review of MoU and Action Plan Implementation

Agenda Item 6.1: Review of the Conservation Status of the Great Bustard Populations in the Agreement Area

32. As the delegates had already reviewed the conservation status and Great Bustard populations under Agenda Item 5.2, it was decided to directly move on to the next item.

Agenda Item 6.2: Status of Development and Implementation of National Work Programmes

33. The Chair said that the development of national work programmes was aimed to include more specific information to implement the broader international action plan. He highlighted the benefits of having such a national work programme which would complement the action plan and the MTIWP. National work programmes were submitted by Signatories for MoS1 in 2004. He asked participants about their opinion regarding the usefulness of having such a work programme for the national level in addition to the two international action documents. He suggested that each delegate expressed his opinion on this topic.

34. Ms. Práger (Hungary) said that the international documents include long-term actions and the MTIWP medium term actions. The national plans would be a good tool for implementation at the national level. Hungary submitted its national work programme at the first MoS1 (2004) and she explained the overall structure of this document. It included objectives, main threats and intended achievements, and was only four pages long. However, this plan was outdated and would have to be updated. Hungary already started this updating process and intended to accomplish a new national work programme, which should be in line and correspond with the MTIWP. The Chair added that this would be a useful tool to translate the actions identified at the international level into national activities.

35. Mr. Vitalie Grimalschi (Moldova) indicated that there was no such national plan in his country. Ms. Miauta (Romania) stated that there was also no national work programme in Romania although there was clearly the necessity to develop one. She said that they intended to establish a working group including the CMS Scientific Councillor, the CMS National Focal Point and other relevant stakeholders. The work would be coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. The working group would identify key issues including possibilities for cross-border cooperation. It would first focus on the reduction of main threats and the increasing anthropogenic pressures.

36. Mr. Rybanič (Slovakia) mentioned that his country did not have a national work programme but that there was a process to update the national environmental plans. In this context there would also be a prioritization of activities for the Great Bustard populations. It would probably be a short document but it would be useful in outlining current priorities.

37. Mr. Domashlinets (Ukraine) said that there was an outdated national work programme which needed to be updated to include recent activities in the frame of the MoU. Part of this programme had already been implemented, especially the increase in the penalty for hunting red data species including Great Bustards. Two years ago a programme for the environmental protection had been initiated and this programme included measures for migratory species and Great Bustard and this would also be updated but was already a good tool.

38. Mr. David Waters (The Great Bustard Group, U.K.) referred to the existing LIFE+ project which included the adoption of an Action Plan for Great Bustards. However, this plan was not an official document and only a reference document for the relevant NGOs.

39. Mr. Torsten Langgemach (Germany) said that conservation in Germany was organized at the federal level. The population of the neighbouring state was nearly extinct, but there was no planning process. The work programme for Brandenburg was developed in the mid-nineties and although not updated still formed the framework of their work. Some details especially regarding the methods were changed and he considered revising this programme and changing it from a three-year to a four-year cycle for both federal states where Great Bustards occurred.

40. Ms. Alena Vacátková (Czech Republic) mentioned that there was no national work programme in her country but a working group had been established to develop a national action plan. The main focus of this plan was restoration of habitat and schemes for good agricultural practices. The reference to the MoU action plan was very useful in this process.

41. Ms. Kralj (Croatia) said that an unofficial national work programme had been prepared but it had never been approved as it was not foreseen in the national law. It had to be called a species action plan. However, the development of such a plan for Great Bustards would be priority for the coming years.

42. Mr. Manfred Pöckl (Austria) said that the administrative processes were similar to Germany's. The Great Bustards occurred only in Lower Austria and Burgenland States. There was a transboundary population with Hungary and Slovakia. The project documentation (for the EU LIFE+ project) could be considered a national action plan.

43. Ms. Práger said that in Hungary there was an official action plan. This was quite detailed and also available in English but it had a different aim. The one she had mentioned earlier was especially referring to the MoU it was developed to implement the MoU. So this was a different purpose. The national work programme should include national level actions but refer to the plans under the MoU.

44. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) wanted to know whether this plan was only for four years. Hungary replied that there were no explicit deadlines mentioned in the national work programme itself. It set out the general measures and objectives and then referred to the relevant paragraphs of the MoU and Action Plan and what Hungary intended to do, to implement those actions.

45. The Chair concluded that all of the countries with regular populations had some sort of document for national action planning and that the national work programme was considered important and not redundant. The second conclusion was that the new Action Plan that was proposed for adoption at this Meeting did not include the national country actions (Part 2: County specific). The second part of the current old Action Plan was proposed for deletion and this should be kept in mind.

46. Ms. Virtue (CMS) requested that as and when countries were developing and adopting such national work programmes, they should send a copy to the Secretariat for publication on the CMS website.

Agenda Item 6.3: Status of Implementation of the Medium-Term International Work Programme (2008-2012)

47. Ms. Práger (Hungary) introduced the Agenda Item by explaining that no separate document had been prepared but suggested that the Meeting should go through the old MTIWP (2009-2012) and discuss which activities had been implemented or not and why. She then went through the document line by line and included information on what had been achieved and what needed further action. She also noted which activities should be maintained and included in the new MTIWP (2013-2016) to be discussed later during the Meeting.

48. The delegates discussed each objective and measure separately. After this exercise, the Chair concluded this review of the previous MTIWP, highlighting that it had also provided valuable input regarding the deliberations for the new MTIWP. It was apparent that much of the former plan had been implemented, but that more work still needed to be done.

Agenda Item 7.0: Future Implementation and further Development of the MoU and Action Plan

Agenda Item 7.1: Amendment of the Geographical Scope of the MoU: Recognition of Additional Range States

49. The Chair introduced the topic referring to document Doc.7.1 as well as to the discussions on this topic at the last MoS2. At that time participants had already agreed to the extension of the geographical scope of the MoU to include the following four countries: Italy, Montenegro, the Russian Federation and Serbia.

50. He clarified that this amendment did not need to be consulted with those new countries but that the Signatories could agree at any of their meetings to amend the MoU and to decide that these countries should be considered Range States and eligible to sign it. Doc.7.2 outlined the rationale for why those countries were within the range of the MoU and home to the mid-European Great Bustard populations.

51. The main aspect requiring further discussion was the inclusion of the Russian Federation as this country was also home to the Eastern Asian sub-species. So the question would be whether the whole country should be included or whether a reference should be made to limit the range to the European part of Russia where the mid-European Great Bustard populations occurred.

52. Mr. Zoltán Czirák (Hungary) stated his country supported the proposed amendment of the MoU and to include those four countries. He referred to the fact that CMS Appendix I only included the Middle-European population, while the entire species was included in Appendix II. It was however evident that the species was not only threatened in Europe but also in Asia. He, therefore, proposed that the Meeting should consider agreeing on an action point saying that a proposal should be prepared for the next CMS Conference of the Parties to list the entire species in Appendix I of the Convention.

53. Before opening discussion on this intervention the Chair first invited comments on the inclusion of the four additional countries to the range of the MoU. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) mentioned that there had already been consensus among the participants at MoS2 in 2008 that those four countries should be included in the MoU.

54. Slovakia asked for clarification regarding the process following this decision. Ms. Virtue (CMS) explained that the Signatories could take such a decision at any of their meetings and adopt the amendment of the MoU. In fact, the relevant four countries were already informed prior to the Meeting and invited to participate highlighting this issue. Should this Meeting conclude that the range of the MoU should be extended, those countries would be informed accordingly and invited to sign the MoU.

55. The Chair confirmed that the new countries would not be obliged to sign the MoU but they would become Range States and be eligible to sign, just as some existing Range States were non-Signatories. Ms. Práger (Hungary) pointed out that this item was in fact already discussed at MoS1 in 2004, but that the decision had not been implemented and therefore it had been discussed again at MoS2 in 2008.

56. Hungary asked whether it was common practice that countries which were not a contracting Party to CMS could nevertheless sign an MoU under CMS. Ms. Virtue replied that this was indeed possible and that the Russian Federation was not a Party to CMS but a Signatory to the Saiga Antelope and the Siberian Crane MoUs.

57. Hungary stated again its support for the inclusion of the Russian Federation to the MoU. He also stated that the listing of the entire species in Appendix I of CMS would have strong conservation benefit and it might also help to engage countries such as Mongolia.

58. Mr. Raab (Austria) said that there was consensus at MoS2 that only the European part of Russia should be included. Otherwise the range would become very vague and more additional Range States would have to be included such as Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Spain. This would however transform the current MoU into a general Great Bustard MoU and not only for the mid-European populations. He, therefore, proposed to only include the European part of Russia.

59. Hungary supported the statement made by Austria as this was also in line with the current CMS listing. However, as suggested, this might change in the future so there might be further discussion on this if and when the entire species was listed on Appendix I.

60. Ms. Práger (Hungary) reiterated that there was already a document on this issue tabled at MoS1 outlining exactly the same thoughts and arguments tabled at the present Meeting. Germany urged delegates to take a final decision at this Meeting. The new Range States should then be invited to sign, especially as the Russian Federation had already expressed interest in signing the MoU.

61. There was broad agreement for this suggestion and the Chair invited comments on the Hungarian proposal to consider listing the entire species in the Appendix I of CMS. Ms. Kessler said that she would be happy to support the preparation of the proposal and to provide the necessary data. Hungary noted that while European countries could help prepare the proposal, it would be best coming from one of the Range States of the Asian sub-species. Ms. Kessler offered to consult her Mongolian colleagues on this. She also said that there was some evidence that the European population in the Russian Saratov region was in contact and exchanging with the Kazakh populations of Great Bustards. The Meeting took note of this information.

62. The Chair then moved to adopt the proposed geographical expansion of the MoU. Discussion arose about how this decision should best be reflected in the revision of the MoU. The amending protocol was reviewed to reflect the discussions and text was included

highlighting the necessary amendments of the MoU text. There was also discussion related to the fact that some countries were mentioned in capital letters in the original version of the MoU and others not. It was agreed that all country names should be written in lower case.

Agenda Item 7.2: Amendment of the MoU Action Plan

63. The Chair introduced the topic (Doc.7.2) and the draft Action Plan which had been prepared by BLI for the entire Western-Palearctic population, a larger area which exceeded the scope of the MoU.

64. He explained that Hungary had made the suggestion of replacing the present Action Plan which consisted of two parts and to adopt the proposed Action Plan. Signatories had been invited to provide comments on the new Plan. Hungary and the Czech Republic had provided comments in writing within the deadline, while Germany had indicated its comments verbally. As the Hungarian comments seemed to be the most comprehensive ones, he invited Ms. Práger to present those comments while incorporating them in the Action Plan. This would give delegates the opportunity to discuss the amendments step by step.

65. Before going into details, the Chair asked whether there was support for the Hungarian proposal to replace the current Action Plan with the new one. Ms. Miauta (Romania) said that they considered the replacement a necessity and supported the proposal. Romania would conduct all the necessary measures in particular to reduce habitat loss and degradation, which were the most urgent threats and this should be reflected in the new Action Plan.

66. She highlighted several important aspects that were of priority for Romania referring, *inter alia*, to protected areas but also integrated landscape management outside them. Romania had also undertaken action to prevent construction of wind farms in critical Great Bustard habitat. Among Romania's priority measures was also strengthening of collaboration with neighbouring countries. She thanked all experts for their valuable experience and expertise shared during the Scientific Symposium.

67. Participants subsequently discussed the process of amending the Action Plan and incorporating the various and often comprehensive comments already received. To save time, the Chair asked whether the written comments could be adopted as they were, as countries had had enough time to study them prior to the Meeting, or whether delegates felt that there was a need to go through each of them during the Meeting.

68. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) suggested that delegates should indicate whether they had additional comments. If this was not the case, he suggested that he could discuss Germany's comments, which also related to the comments made by Hungary, bilaterally with Hungary in order to incorporate them and afterwards present them to the Meeting in one document for consideration.

69. As no further interventions were made, the Chair accepted Germany's proposal to establish a small working group consisting of Germany, Hungary and Austria to jointly amend the Action Plan according to their comments and present the amended document to the Meeting in "track changes" afterwards.

70. The Chair decided to break for 60 minutes for the working group to convene. After this break the Meeting would continue with Agenda Item 7.2 as planned.

71. The Meeting resumed at 1700 hrs. Germany reported the results of the work of the working group, which comprised delegates from Hungary, Austria and Germany. All comments were now included in the document except for some editorial details which could be fixed later.

72. Ms. Práger (Hungary) led the Meeting through each part of the Action Plan in detail and explained the changes that the working group incorporated. She *inter alia* highlighted that there was some conceptual discussion as the new Action Plan had been drafted by BLI and that there was a need to adapt it to the MoU. This should be reflected in the title to make clear that this was the Action Plan of the MoU, adapted from the BLI document of wider scope.

73. Discussion arose on what qualified as Great Bustard habitat and whether this included potential habitat as well (point 1.3.3 regarding prevention of destructive activities such as wind farms etc.). The new Action Plan did not specify a lead country but only stated to which countries the particular action was applicable. The MTIWP in turn would be more specific in this regard. The Meeting also decided to remove the time scale column and only have time indications in the MTIWP.

74. Slovakia said that it would be good to have a short paragraph pointing out the comparison of the two Action Plans (the MoU one and the original one from BLI). A paragraph would be useful highlighting what was the relation of those two documents and which changes had been made and why.

75. Ms. Virtue (CMS) suggested that the inserted text could be highlighted in a separate colour to indicate what had been included or changed to make it easier to compare both versions. So in addition to one clean version there would be one “colourful” comparison version.

76. While the Action Plan itself was approved, Mr. Langgemach (Germany) pointed out some mistakes in Annex II of the document. Mr. Raab (Austria) noted that there were mistakes for Austria as well. Germany suggested giving a deadline of one month for countries to review the table and provide the correct information.

77. Discussion arose on the content and purpose of the table in Annex II. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) suggested that all countries should be removed that are not relevant for the MoU such as Spain or Portugal. The Secretariat was asked to request BLI to provide information to update the table with the IBAs. Slovakia suggested removing all non-MoU Range States. He also said that if there were mistakes those should be communicated to BLI. So he suggested that the information regarding the table should be provided from the different countries after consultation with the national BLI partners and communicated to the Secretariat.

78. The Chair agreed with the proposal from Slovakia and Germany’s proposal to delete countries outside the range of the MoU. The following countries would be deleted: Kazakhstan, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. It was also agreed that in Annex I of the document, the columns of North Africa, Iberia and Middle East should be removed. It was also noted that several countries of the MoU were not included in the table. Slovakia mentioned that the table only included countries with key sites for the conservation of the species which was the reason why some countries were not included.

79. It was decided that Signatories submit their changes to the Secretariat within one month of receipt of the report. After that the Secretariat would send those comments to BLI for final check and completion regarding countries that had not responded to the deadline.

80. The Chair invited further comments. Germany said that in the email to all national contact points, which would request countries to provide the correct data for the Annexes, they should also be asked to mention new and recent literature that should be added to the reference list of the Action Plan.

81. With those changes the Action Plan was adopted by consensus, with the Meeting noting that there was still information from Signatories pending that needed to be included in the Annexes of the document with a deadline of one month. (Action Plan attached as Annex 3 to the present Report).

Agenda Item 7.5: MoU Coordination

82. The Chair introduced the Agenda Item saying that coordination was currently lacking as there was no dedicated person leading at the international level. In particular, there was no person devoting part of their time for regular communication work for the MoU.

83. He said that there had been discussions between Germany, Hungary and Austria on this matter. These countries had agreed that it would be useful to have more regular meetings at least between these countries. Also the idea of developing a joint LIFE+project to be implemented in these countries had been discussed. Coordination could perhaps be provided within the framework of this project. These three countries had agreed that it would be feasible to arrange an annual meeting of Great Bustard experts. The coordination of the MoU could be connected to this. Maybe it was more feasible to share the coordination work between these three countries, with each country undertaking coordination for one year on a rotational basis.

84. As Hungary had organized this Meeting and would be very busy with the follow-up, Ms. Práger could take over the overall coordination of the MoU until 1 September 2014, including sending out emails and inviting comments etc. Next year (until 1 September 2015), Austria could take over and then in the third year it would be Germany (until the next MoS4 in 2016 and the follow-up work afterwards).

85. Germany liked the idea of sharing the coordination work. The first year would consist of follow-up by Hungary, with Austria taking the middle year, doing intermediary work and then Germany in the third year as this would also be related to the organization of MoS4. This might require that there is an additional person to help with that, maybe through BLI. He wanted to find some funding for that. The challenge might be for the second year for Austria as then the tasks were not clearly defined.

86. Mr. Raab (Austria) said that if a transboundary LIFE+ project was to be realized, this would require considerable amounts of work. He asked whether CMS could sign a letter of support for this LIFE project proposal highlighting the international importance. Ms. Virtue replied that the Secretariat would certainly do so as in fact supporting NGOs or Signatory States in the application process for a project was common practice.

87. Germany said that it would also be important to have guidance from the Secretariat for the preparation of next Meeting, maybe in form of guidelines outlining timelines and steps for the organization. This would be very useful for countries when organizing Meetings. Ms. Virtue said that there were currently no such written guidelines but that the Secretariat would surely be able to provide such assistance and would be looking into this to provide the required information.

88. Ms. Virtue (CMS) inquired about the interest of BLI and noted that it was very active in the Aquatic Warbler MoU but seemed to be less involved with this one. Slovakia said that BLI probably had less capacity to attend this Meeting and to become more active, there might be a need to increase communication. The Secretariat was asked to communicate with BLI on this.

Agenda Item 7.3: Adoption of new Medium-Term International Work Programme (2013-2016)

89. The Chair requested Ms. Práger (Hungary) to guide the Meeting through the new MTIWP 2013-2016. She said that MoS1 had adopted a MTIWP and MoS2 reviewed it and approved it until the period 2012. It therefore needed updating. She explained the layout and how it was based on the Action Plan.

90. The new MTIWP had been prepared by Hungary in cooperation with Austria so it currently contained information that these countries thought important as well as information gleaned from national reports. However, this was now the opportunity to go through each line to give Range States the chance to contribute and indicate their responsibilities and objectives.

91. The Chair explained that the column timeline had been deleted from the Action Plan and included here. The timeline would stipulate the year by when the activity should be completed.

92. Germany said that the column with measures to be taken was the most important part providing the most guidance. So there should not be empty rows on action points if possible. Ms. Práger said that it might not be possible to find concrete measures for each line and it needed to be realistic as well.

93. Ms. Práger (Hungary) went through the draft document line by line and the delegates discussed in detail each Action and Measures to be taken separately - with determining the Priority, the Time table and the Lead countries and collaborators for each measure. She included all information in the draft MTIWP (2013-2016) accordingly.

94. Austria noted that it was important to align activities with the Joint Research Programme.

95. Ms. Práger (Hungary) said that the four headings of the Joint Research Programme had already been included as action points in the MTIWP and those should now be filled in with concrete measures. The new MTIWP would also include or maintain the most important and high priority measures of the old plan.

96. High priority actions of the old MTIWP and the concrete priority studies identified in Session 5 of the Scientific Symposium would be incorporated in the new MTIWP by Ms. Práger and Mr. Langgemach (Germany) by 1 September 2013. With those revisions, the new MTIWP 2013-2016 was adopted. (Attached as Annex 4 to the present Report).

Agenda Item 7.4: Adoption of Guidelines

Agenda Item 7.4.1: Guidelines for Reinforcement and Reintroduction of the Great Bustard

97. Germany introduced the document (Doc.7.4.1) which they had prepared. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) noted that the guidelines had been available for several months on the CMS website and that comments had been received from some countries and had already been incorporated. After further discussions with Hungary during the present Meeting, he suggested to finalize the document and then send to CMS for final posting.

98. The Chair inquired about the nature of the comments. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) clarified that the comments received were related to very detailed technical issues. He also referred to the new IUCN guidelines on reintroduction which were now much more comprehensive. However, they had not necessarily improved in his opinion, as they left all options open, depending on the species and the project.

99. Ms. Práger (Hungary) asked about the title of the document and whether it was not more about rearing and reintroduction of birds. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) said that reinforcement referred also to restocking to give new genetic material. The term in the IUCN guideline was now conservation translocation. It was clarified that the term reinforcement covered captive breeding, rearing and release.

100. The Meeting adopted the guideline (Annex 5 to the present Report), noting that Germany would send the final updated document within the next month to the CMS Secretariat for posting on the website.

Agenda Item 7.4.2: Guidelines for Monitoring of Population Parameters and of the effects of Management Measures

101. Mr. Raab (Austria) introduced the document (Doc.7.4.2) saying that the document had also been published on the web for some time now and everybody had had enough time to study it. Germany had provided some small comments.

102. The Chair asked for clarification about the nature of the changes suggested. Germany had offered pictures from chicks for example and other small comments that related only to the two annexes of the guideline.

103. The guideline was adopted (Annex 6 to the present Report), noting that Austria would send the final updated document within the next month to the CMS Secretariat for posting on the website.

Agenda Item 7.4.3: Guidelines for best practice on mitigating impacts of infrastructure development and afforestation of the Great Bustard

104. The guideline was introduced by Mr. Raab (Austria). It was an update of a previous guideline. Mr. Nagy (Milvus Group Association Romania) said that part 3.4 on other infrastructural development might need amendment and that he would provide the necessary text to the author.

105. Germany mentioned that it had a great deal of information on wind farms and that he would send two comprehensive documents on the topic to Mr. Raab (Austria) to include. Mr. Raab said that it would be useful if Mr. Langgemach (Germany) could point out what text should be included based on this literature. This would make it easier to incorporate relevant aspects.

106. The guideline was adopted (Annex 7 to the present Report), noting that Austria would collect those additional comments and send the final complete document within the next month to the CMS Secretariat for posting on the website.

Agenda Item 7.4.4: Great Bustard Joint Research Programme

107. The Chair introduced the Agenda Item saying that this document had already been extensively discussed line by line at the Symposium and that no further introduction was

needed. Austria noted that at the Symposium no lead countries were identified, at least not for all actions. The delegates went through each of the action points and included lead countries. While going through the document, further comments were raised and incorporated. With these changes, the Joint Research Programme was adopted. (Attached as Annex 8 to the present Report).

Agenda Item 7.4.5: Guidelines on Measures to Secure the Successful Wintering of Great Bustards

108. The Chair explained that this document was a draft guideline not proposed for adoption at this stage, but the Meeting should agree on a procedure for finalization and adoption. The draft guideline had been prepared by Hungary after being initiated at the last Meeting (MoS2). It had not been possible to finalize the draft.

109. He pointed out that the document would include two parts, one part for populations that bred and wintered at the same place and it would include guidance about how to prevent the animals from migrating. The other part would be mainly for the Russian population as this was migratory and wintering in the Ukraine. He asked Ukraine to write this second part about how it managed the wintering habitat, possibly also using ideas from part one, which had been written by Hungary. Those two parts should then be compiled into one document.

110. Ms. Kralj (Croatia) noted that part one was also about the Carpathian population and that the current text only elaborated on how migration should be prevented but did not include guidance on what to do if migration took place. She volunteered to provide a page with some measures that could be undertaken in that case.

111. Firstly, Ukraine could write part two and Croatia the offered contribution by 30 September 2013. Hungary would then incorporate it and send the final draft to the Secretariat for circulation among Signatories and for invitation of review and final comments to be provided by 31 December 2013. Hungary would then incorporate all contributions and compile the final document for publishing by the Secretariat on the CMS website. After this date the guideline would be considered adopted. (Attached as Annex 9 to the present Report).

Agenda Item 7.4.6: Guideline on Predator Control Strategies

112. The Chair noted that Hungary had committed to draft this guideline. Hungary would send it first to Germany for review (by 31 October 2013) and then it would be posted on the CMS website by 31 December 2013 by the Secretariat so that Signatories could provide comments. However, as the development of this guideline was also included as an action point in the MTIWP with the timeframe of 2014, there would not be another deadline for the drafting process.

Agenda Item 7.4.7: Study of the different agri-environmental Schemes for the Benefit of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)

113. This guideline which was still in its first draft form, had also been made available on the CMS website. The Chair referred to the general introduction of the guideline which consisted of country-specific measures and needed to be written by each country as the Agri-Environmental Schemes differed from country to country.

114. He proposed that each country prepare the country specific parts within the deadline of 30 September 2013 and send it to Hungary. Hungary would then compile the final draft by

31 December 2013 and send it to the Secretariat for a final circulation. After that, the guideline would be adopted intersessionally. Hungary would take the lead in this process.

Agenda Item 7.6: Any other matters

115. The Chair invited participants to raise any other matters. Germany said that during the lunch break additional discussions had taken place to further expand the geographical range to include all populations but that he preferred not to raise this issue again, as it had already been discussed at length. Slovakia agreed that it was better to leave the range as it was currently. There were no further interventions.

Agenda Item 8.0: Next Meeting of the Signatories

116. The Chair explained that in keeping with the current frequency of three years, the next Meeting would be foreseen to take place in autumn 2016. He asked for any offers to host the next Meeting.

117. Germany said that he had discussed this with his team and with the Director of his organization and that they were ready to host the Fourth Meeting and welcome delegates to MoS4 in Germany. The meeting concurred and the Chair thanked Germany for their offer.

Agenda Item 9.0: Any Other Business

118. No other business was raised.

Agenda Item 10.0: Closure of the Meeting

119. The Chair expressed his thanks to the participants for their active and lively contributions, and that they went successfully through a full and comprehensive agenda. They had adopted a new Action Plan to the MoU, a new MTIWP 2013-2016, the Joint Research Programme and several guidelines, and had accomplished a huge amount of work. He congratulated the participants and thanked them again for their active participation.

120. He then turned to the Secretariat and Ms. Virtue explained briefly the revisions of the Amending Protocol to amend the MoU. The text was put on the screen for the Meeting to consider. After that, the Chair and Ms. Virtue both signed the Amending Protocol on behalf of the Meeting. Amending Protocol attached as Annex 10 to the present Report).

121. Mr. Langgemach (Germany) thanked the Chair for his great work and the Hungarian Host Government for its generosity and the welcoming and friendly atmosphere throughout the whole week. He had been impressed about the great support and professionalism showed by all staff involved in the convening of this Meeting. The Participants List is attached as Annex 11 to the present Report).

122. The Meeting closed at 1600 hrs. on 12 April 2013.