

Opening Statement OceanCare

**13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP13),
February 17-22, 2020, Gandhinagar, India**

Agenda Item II: Reports

11.6: Reports, Statements IGOs and NGOs

Distinguished Chair and Delegates, dear CMS Family,

It is exciting and a privilege to be attending this CMS COP13. We wish to take this opportunity and thank the Government of India for hosting this important meeting in Gandhinagar within the State of Gujarat, where Mahatma Gandhi was born. A person who has taught the world so much about the power of the individual as well as the cooperation between people. And what can be achieved by a brave and unwavering pursuit of the change we need to see.

OceanCare is proud of working in close collaboration and within an official partnership with the CMS Family, as well as the many people out there working in the field, within their communities furthering a better co-existence between people and wild animals, between people and nature.

We are facing an alarming rate of species loss as per the recent comprehensive assessment by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the pressure on habitats is ever-increasing, interrupting important pathways and migratory routes, the climate crisis and its impacts on wildlife and people is devastating. A brutal reality leaving us often helpless, frustrated, angry and in some ways paralyzed, almost impossible to believe that we – as a collective species of homo sapiens – are capable to turn the tide, and speed up efforts to bring back the balance. CONNECTIVITY, as theme of this COP, as a concept reflecting upon new governance approaches, and re-connecting with wild animals and nature, couldn't have been selected more timely. But will it be enough?

Dear Delegates, the Convention on Migratory Species is a rare jewel in the world of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Emerging topics have been addressed before they became mainstream, Concerted Actions and Resolutions and Decisions have been passed to progress conservation and turn the described trend that is reality today.

But at the heart of real change is that such decisions, actions and measures are implemented and become an integral part of enforced management actions at national level. By adopting the Review Mechanism and launching the national legislation implementation procedure, you are equipped with the tools for more effective conservation action. However, we are well aware that progress made cannot be categorized as satisfactory compared to its original purpose.

Yes, the challenges facing the future of wild animals are significant, but combining true and meaningful action from within this room and giving local communities a stronger voice can accelerate change. CMS is the Convention that shall provide species specific guidance towards the CBD's post 2020 process. It is the Convention that has so much experience to offer which should be explored once, hopefully, the new High Seas Treaty governing biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is in place. The High Seas, the area which is not just about space, but the heart of this convention by just referring to the migratory routes and connection between coastal habitats.

An example for the beauty of guidance the scientific community offers towards governance processes, is the impressive work undertaken under the IMMAS – Important Marine Mammal Areas – Scheme. There are many other examples where specific action, for instance by addressing underwater noise or the global drivers that result in local issues such as Aquatic Wild Meat can protect marine wildlife.

These are a few examples how CMS has the potential of taking the lead in global and measurable species conservation efforts. Reading the information scientists and conservationists from the field provide, for instance about culture and social complexity in wild animal species and resulting conservation implications is testimony to a Convention that can just be this jewel in turning the tide, once applying such concepts in the field.

On behalf of OceanCare, as well as our colleagues from Wild Migration, Margi and Geoff Prideaux, who have contributed so much in the past two decades to wildlife conservation and the CMS programmes, but can't be with us this time because they lost their home and so much more to the wildfires on Kangaroo Island and face an existential crisis, we have huge hope that this COP marks a new form of CONNECTIVITY with nature. A CONNECTIVITY which is based on working in partnership. A partnership which makes use of the synergies civil society offers to the CMS Family and makes it integral part of a new governance approach.

Where can we launch this necessary process, if not in the region where Mahatma Gandhi was born - the person who taught us the concept of Satyagraha.

Thank you.

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