

## Results of UN Species Conservation Conference are a rollercoaster ride

### OceanCare conclusions from preliminary results of UN Conference on the Conservation of Migratory Species in India

*Gandhinagar, February 20, 2020:* Today, Thursday, the negotiation rounds of the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) ended. The conference will be concluded on Saturday with the formal adoption of various decisions and resolutions in Gandhinagar, India. The Gandhinagar Declaration drawn up by the Indian government is also still being negotiated by the country representatives. The international marine protection organisation OceanCare is drawing first, mixed conclusions.

"In many areas, the states at the UN Conference to protect wild animals in India have made ambitious decisions. However, it is doubtful whether these will halt or even slow down the ongoing extinction of species. The failure of states to implement existing conservation measures, even for Appendix I species, is too obvious. Moreover, the opportunity was missed to clearly prohibit trade in species strictly protected under the Convention," says Nicolas Entrup, head of OceanCare's delegation, drawing a mixed conclusion.

OceanCare continues to see implementation as the greatest shortcoming in international species conservation. "When it comes to the core issues, the states continue to hide behind the usual lip service and prevent any change of direction. The financial resources for the major species protection challenges at international level are lacking, and there are no sanctions for those states that fail to comply with the conservation requirements of strictly protected and endangered species. And with the big issues, such as industrial fishing, there is no change from 'business as usual'. It is a shame that even a clear ban on trade in species strictly protected by the Convention was rejected. Only Israel, Switzerland and Peru have been spirited on this issue", explains Entrup.

In the run-up to and during the conference, OceanCare has raised awareness about the consequences of local fish stock exploitation by international fishing fleets on fishing communities in West Africa. The resulting pressure to secure food in other ways leads to intensified hunting of endangered species in coastal waters and estuaries. Turtles, manatees, dolphins and crocodiles are among those affected by increased hunting. Shark and ray species are also increasingly affected by targeted hunts. A regional action plan is to address the problem, also taking into account socio-economic aspects in order to improve the living conditions of the local population.

Overview of concrete results of the species conservation conference:

- The role of civil society within the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species: While OceanCare had hoped for clearer, and more ambitious language in the decision and resolution, the final text is nevertheless a step forward. The contribution of civil society organisations to the conservation of wildlife is indispensable. Now the cooperation is to be given a more formal standing, albeit process is still slow. For OceanCare the ultimate goal of this process is the elevation of participation of civil society in the decision-making processes of international environmental and species conservation agreements. This step would be a fundamental shift away from the current system and would offer the opportunity to counteract biodiversity loss with new concepts.

- Inclusion of shark species in the CMS Appendices:  
In view of the acute threat to sharks from direct hunting, overfishing and bycatch, OceanCare welcomes the listing of the Oceanic White-tip Shark in Appendix I and the listing of the Smooth Hammerhead Shark and Tope Shark in Appendix II of the Convention. Australia has once again exposed itself as being Janus-faced. While it is one of the most progressive states opposing whaling, Australia has opposed a global listing on the smooth hammerhead shark listing proposal and urged to exclude the Australian population.
- Culture in animals and consequential conservation measures:  
Sperm whales and killer whales, which use group-specific communication, chimpanzees that use tools to crack nuts, and dozens of other examples have been subject to a discrete branch of research for years. The Parties now agreed on a working process to pursue the approach of conserving different animal cultures. The Convention on Migratory Species is the world's pioneering convention in this area. The conservation measures derived from this could be revolutionary.
- Action plans:  
The concerted action plans for, among others, sperm whales of the eastern tropical Pacific, humpback whales of the Arabian Sea, Irrawaddy dolphins, South Asian river dolphins, and porpoises in the Baltic Sea and Iberian Peninsula were adopted.
- Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs):  
The decision stipulates that signatory states should base the designation of marine protected areas on scientific data from the IMMA Task Force. In particular, research projects are to be facilitated to identify important marine mammal areas in international waters, too. The results are to be made available for the UN Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the high seas), which account for around 40% of the ocean surface. This new high seas treaty is currently being in the final round of negotiation.
- Underwater noise:  
In the run-up to CMS COP13, OceanCare commissioned Dr. Lindy Weilgart, Dalhousie University, to prepare an overview of available technologies and management procedures that measurably reduce underwater noise and can be considered "best practice". Applying these practices to cargo shipping, oil and gas exploration, and offshore wind energy construction would significantly reduce underwater noise. OceanCare, of course, rejects any new oil exploration in order not to miss the climate targets. The states agreed to subject the document to a review process for consideration as a recommendation for management authorities.

Further links and information:

- Media briefings on [Dropbox](#)
- OceanCare website: <https://www.oceancare.org/en/>
- Policy briefings and further information: [www.oceancare.org/cmscop13\\_conf-docs](http://www.oceancare.org/cmscop13_conf-docs)
- Information about the conference: [www.cms.int](http://www.cms.int)
- The theme of the conference is "CONNECTIVITY": The concept captures that the various conservation treaties are interlinked, that there is a need to connect to protect wildlife, and that habitats of migratory species need to be connected.
- Follow discussions on social media: #CMSCOP13

Media contacts in Gandhinagar until 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 (time difference CET +4h30):



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#### About OceanCare

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education.

OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and UNEP/MAP. OceanCare has also been accredited as a Major Group to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter.