

## **Report on progress towards the CMS MOU in the period January-June 2008.**

Report compiled by E.J. Milner-Gulland for the SCA

### **Summary**

There has been good progress for saiga conservation in this reporting period. The standard and quality of reporting has also improved dramatically, which means that we are able to monitor progress more effectively.

Several new projects have started in Uzbekistan and Kalmykia, supported by a range of new and continuing funders. The major new MAVA-funded project in Mongolia has begun, coordinated by WWF-Mongolia, and this has led to substantial activity on a number of fronts, particularly anti-poaching and public engagement. In China, a new piece of legislation has closed a major loophole in reporting of horn stockpiles. In Kazakhstan, saiga conservation activities are ongoing. We have no information about activities being carried out in Turkmenistan in this reporting period.

For several of the action points in the MTWP, little discernable action has taken place in this reporting period, or in any previous reporting period; this is of concern, particularly for those measures which were listed as A1 (urgent and high priority). It is necessary to ascertain whether these actions are still considered high priority, and if so to focus on making progress before the next MOU meeting. Priority A1 activities that show no concrete progress are:

Action 1.1. Russia signing the MOU.

Action 3.1. Compliance with CITES recommendations by Russia and Kazakhstan, and lifting of the moratorium on exports.

Actions 9.1/14.2. Establishing captive breeding facilities in Mongolia.

Action 11.2. Public awareness and engagement in the Ural population.

Action 11.3. Conservation planning for the Ural population.

The other A1 actions in the MTWP have seen some action in some range states. In general, there has been encouraging progress towards the goal of fulfilling the MTWP before the next meeting of the signatories to the MOU.

### **Details of activities**

Any information relating to previous reporting periods is presented here because it was not included in earlier reports. We are only able to report on activities that are submitted to us in time for the deadline. NOTE: Those actions that contribute under more than one heading are listed only under the first heading, but with all the relevant action points given in brackets.

#### ***Section 1. Implementation***

Order #39 of the Uzbekistan State Nature Conservation Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008 has included the saiga in the Red Book of Uzbekistan. The State Nature Conservation Committee has also prepared a project on development of conservation methods for the Ustiurt population for the period 2008-2011. (*action 1.2, 1.4, 8.2, 8.3*)

In Kazakhstan, the Government agreed a programme on the conservation of biodiversity (plan # 914, 08.10.07), which includes measures for saiga conservation and management. (*action 1.2, 1.4*)

*Saiga News 6* was published in January 2008, and is currently available in 5 languages. It contains a summary of progress towards the fulfilment of the MTWP, with the full report on the SCA website. (*action 1.5, 5.4*)

In February 2008, a plan for joint activities towards the conservation of the Ustiurt saiga population was agreed between the Governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, for the period 2008-2010. (*action 1.9*)

### ***Section 2. Anti-poaching***

Ongoing anti-poaching work has been carried out in the pre-Caspian region by the Hunting Department of the Republic of Kalmykia, as well as the Chernye Zemli Biosphere Reserve and Stepnoi Reserve, Astrakhan region. The Stepnoi Reserve has received a grant from IFAW for the period Mar-July 2008, to support anti-poaching and awareness-raising activities. Joint anti-poaching activities have been carried out by the Game Department of Kalmykia, the Chernye Zemli Biosphere Reserve and the Stepnoi Reserve. (*action 2.2*).

Ongoing anti-poaching work in Kazakhstan is being carried out by Okhotzoprom, under the auspices of the Committee for Forestry and Hunting, with support from the Government of Kazakhstan as well as the NGOs Arlan (Karaganda region) and Ak-Boken (Kzl-Orda region). In the winter, at least 6 poaching incidents were detected in the area of the Betpak-dala saiga population. (*action 2.2*)

A new specialist inspectorate has been created for saiga protection in the Uzbekistan part of the Ustiurt population (Special Amudarya Inspectorate), with 6 men and two vehicles. (*action 2.2*)

The community-based ranger team in Mongolia now receives good salaries for its members and funds for petrol and motorbike maintenance. It has 7 motorbikes, a vehicle with radio, and other key equipment. It is operating very effectively. (*action 2.2*)

The new Mobile Anti Poaching Unit “Irves-3” in Mongolia detected the poaching of a female Saiga and three Wild asses in November 2007, as well as one Snow leopard in March 2008. All cases are under investigation by the police. (*action 2.2*)

In Mongolia in October 2007, a case of poaching of 54 Saigas from 2006 was reinvestigated, and the original judges who dismissed the case were sacked. The impetus came from WWF-Mongolia. (*action 2.3*)

WWF Mongolia organized a workshop to strengthen cooperation between the Government, scientists and NGOs and particularly to improve control of the illegal wildlife trade. The Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs and the Ministry of Nature and Environment agreed on a joint campaign on crime prevention throughout Mongolia. Conservation-oriented amendments to the Hunting Legislation have been prepared for the Mongolian Government, which were accepted by the Ministry for Environment and approved by parliament. (*action 2.3, 3.7*)

Two staff members from the Mongolian General Police Department were sent to the USA for training on combatting the illegal trade in wildlife products. (*action 2.4, 3.7*)

WWF-Mongolia carried out a training day for saiga rangers, inspectors, volunteers, and community rangers. Training in conservation legislation, survey methodologies and GPS use was carried out by the Institute of Zoology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. (*action 2.4, 3.7*)

### ***Section 3. Sustainable use and trade***

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2007, the Chinese State Forestry Administration, Ministry of Health, State Industry and Commerce Administration, State Food and Drug Administration and State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine jointly announced a “Notice on enhancing the protection of Saiga Antelope, pangolin, rare snake species and management of standardisation of their relevant products for medicine”. This fills a major gap in the control of saiga horn stockpiles. (*action 3.5*)

A new 18 month project funded by FFI and BAT in Uzbekistan started in Jan 2008, focussed on setting up local community saiga monitoring and advocacy groups, based on the hunting association model. These formally constituted, officially recognised groups could form the basis of organised trophy hunting in the area, and are aimed at attracting ex-poachers. (*actions 3.12, 4.2, 4.3, 8.6*)

### ***Section 4. Human factors***

A new programme developing women’s traditional embroidery cooperatives started in Uzbekistan in April 2008, carried out by the SCA along with the NGO “Golden Trail of the Aral”, and funded by WCN. (*action 4.1, 4.3*)

In Kalmykia, a one-year pilot participatory monitoring project started in Jan 2008, funded by the British Council, and implemented by Kalmykia State University and Imperial College London (*action 4.2, 4.3, 8.6*)

In Mongolia, a participatory rural appraisal exercise was carried out with herder communities, to assess the current situation, identify bottlenecks and discuss ways forward for community-based saiga conservation. (*action 4.3*)

In Mongolia, the WAVA saiga project was presented to a wide audience in the Gobi-Altai province on 25-31 October 2007, including local decision-makers, the media and other interested parties. (*action 4.3*)

The ARC-funded project with the Centre for Wild Animals in Kalmykia has come to an end, with outputs including the opening of a Buddhist shrine at the CWA’s Saiga Breeding Centre. (*action 4.3*)

### ***Section 5. Awareness***

In Kazakhstan and Kalmykia, several newspaper articles were published and radio and television news items shown, on the importance of saiga conservation. (*action 5.1*)

The WCN-funded SCA project on public awareness-raising in Uzbekistan is ongoing, and includes work with schools and children’s art clubs. In March-April 2008 saiga events were held at a number of schools. (*action 5.2*)

In Jan-May 2008, the Stepnoi Reserve carried out an SCA-funded project developing an ecotourism trail for visitors. (*action 5.2*)

The Centre for Ecological Projects and the Eco-Biological Centre of the Republic of Kalmykia carried out a children's arts competition on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008, the Day of the Environment. (*action 5.2*)

The WAVA project carried out a needs assessment on education and awareness, with participation from WWF-Mongolia, the Ministry of Education, scientists and NGOs. They have also employed an Education Officer, whose work will include a range of activities involving schools, local communities and the media in general. (*action 5.2*)

The SCA's website at [www.saiga-conservation.com](http://www.saiga-conservation.com) has been upgraded. (*action 5.3*)

### ***Section 6. Mapping distributions***

No new progress.

### ***Section 7. Protected areas.***

A new 12 month project has started in Uzbekistan, funded by FFI, to improve the effectiveness of the Saigachiy Reserve. This will include the preparation of information about the area, and the development of recommendations for reorganisation of the Reserve structure. (*action 7.1*)

### ***Section 8. Monitoring***

In Kazakhstan, aerial surveys were carried out in all three saiga populations from 14<sup>th</sup> April to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2008. Saiga populations continue to grow in the Betpak-dala and Ural regions and decrease in Ustiurt (*action 8.1*).

The Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan carried out an aerial survey in January 2008. (*action 8.1*)

In Mongolia, a population survey was carried out in January 2008 and estimated 3,240 saiga in an area of 13,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This shows an 11.8% increase in saiga numbers in comparison to last year's survey. (*action 8.1*)

In the Pre-Caspian population, monitoring of saiga demography, calving, herd size and structure and distribution has continued to be carried out as in previous years by the Stepnoi and Chernye Zemli reserves (*actions 8.1, 8.2, 8.7*).

An agreement has been signed between the Uzbekistan Ministry of Nature Protection and the Institute of Zoology, for joint scientific monitoring and conservation work, starting in May 2008 for 4 years. (*action 8.2*)

Monitoring of the Ustiurt saiga population in Uzbekistan has been carried out by the Institute of Zoology and SCA, supported by BAT/FFI, and with the participation of local people. (*action 8.2, 8.6*)

A one-year project evaluating the robustness of ranger-collected data on herd size and distributions started in January 2008 funded by the British Council, and implemented by Kalmykia State University and Imperial College London (*action 8.3*).

### ***Section 9. Captive breeding***

The saiga has been included in the Strategic Action Plan of the Dzeiran Ecocentre, Bukhatra province, Uzbekistan. (*action 9.3*)

The Centre for Wild Animals of the Republic of Kalmykia has received two grants towards the continued running of the Yashkul Saiga Breeding Centre. These started in Jan and Feb 2008, and were from the Large Herbivore Foundation and the Rufford Foundation. The grants are for improvement of infrastructure, equipment purchase and core funding to support running costs. (*action 9.3*)

### ***Sections 10-14. Population-specific measures***

*North-west Precaspian:* Progress continues to be good on 10.2 (monitoring), 10.3 (supporting the breeding centre), 10.4 (public participation)

*Ural:* In this population there has been an aerial survey (11.3) and ongoing anti-poaching activities (11.1).

*Ustiurt:* Anti-poaching activity has been strengthened in Uzbekistan, and continues in Kazakhstan (12.1, 12.8). There is continued population monitoring in Kazakhstan by aerial survey and a number of new monitoring initiatives have started in Uzbekistan (12.2). Public engagement activities continue to expand in Uzbekistan (12.4). A new project on the Saigachiy Protected Area has started in Uzbekistan (12.5). A bilateral agreement has been negotiated between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and is ready for signing (12.6).

*Betpak-dala:* Anti-poaching activities are ongoing (13.3).

*Mongolia:* There has been substantial progress on anti-poaching activities (14.1). There has also been substantial work on public engagement and awareness-raising (14.3). Saiga population surveys have been carried out, as well as research on distributions and movement patterns (14.4, 14.5).

### ***Compilation of the progress report***

The full text of the MTWP, for cross-referencing with this report, can be found at [http://www.cms.int/species/saiga/1st\\_saiga\\_range\\_states\\_meeting.htm](http://www.cms.int/species/saiga/1st_saiga_range_states_meeting.htm).

If any new activities in fulfilment of the MTWP, which occurred during the reporting period Jan-June 2008, have not been included in this round-up, please send us details and we will include them in the next round-up. We can't include activities that we have not been informed about.

Please send your reports for the period July-December 2008 by **15<sup>th</sup> December 2008**. Please be *as specific as possible* about the actions undertaken, dates, funders and implementers. Do not include actions which have previously been reported or those which are yet to commence. If projects are ongoing, please mention specific events within the framework of those projects or state which activities have continued throughout the period.

If you want to know more about any activity reported here, contact either the author of the Saiga News article which expands on the activity, the Managing Editor or the editorial team member for the country in question.