

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee meeting
Nairobi, 14 May 2026
09:00 – 12:00 and 13:00 – 16:00 (GMT+3)
Hybrid meeting
Conference Room 4 (in person)
and Microsoft Teams (online)

Agenda item 5: Briefing on the outcomes of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

This background document has been developed by the Secretariat to update the Committee on the key outcomes of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), held in Campo Grande, Brazil, from 23 to 19 March 2026.

Following the presentation, the Committee will be invited to take note of the briefing and engage in an exchange of views with its members and the Secretariat.

Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Summary of Key Outcomes and their Relevance to UNEP's Programme of Work

The 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) successfully concluded on 29 March 2026 with the adoption of a great number of significant outcomes, high-level political support, and a positive spirit of collaboration. Many of these outcomes are directly relevant to the objectives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its 2026-2027 Programme of Work, particularly in the areas of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, addressing pollution and climate change, and multilateral environmental governance. UNEP could play an important role in contributing to the implementation of these outcomes, working in close collaboration with the CMS Parties, partners and the CMS Secretariat.

Key Outcomes of CMS COP15

1. Expansion of Species Protection

COP15 resulted in the inclusion of 40 additional species or populations of species on CMS Appendices I (species in danger of extinction) or II (species in need of coordinated international action), which now include over 1,200 unique species under the 47-year-old Convention. These listings enhance international legal protection for endangered and vulnerable species, including such as iconic species as the cheetah, striped hyena, snowy owl, giant otter, great hammerhead shark, and several shorebird species facing steep population declines.

2. Adoption of species-focused Action Plans

Parties adopted and/or updated multiple range-wide conservation plans for emblematic species including the Jaguar and in key regions such as the Amazon. These plans emphasize science-based conservation, monitoring, and capacity-building.

3. Launch of science-based studies and knowledge tools

COP15 highlighted the importance of strengthening the science-policy interface through the launch and promotion of key assessments and tools to support evidence-based decision-making. These include the Global Assessment of Migratory Freshwater Fishes, which underscores the rapid decline of freshwater migratory species, and the Online Atlas of the Americas Flyways, mapping critical migratory routes for highly vulnerable bird species. The conference also welcomed scientific work on emerging threats, including the potential impacts of deep-sea mining. These initiatives enhance the global knowledge base, support informed policy development, and improve conservation planning for migratory species.

4. Advancing Global Initiatives

COP15 reinforced the importance of addressing global challenges through the advancement of key partnerships and initiatives. This includes the Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity (GPEC), which promotes coordinated international action to maintain and restore connectivity across landscapes and seascapes. The conference also launched the Global Initiative on the Taking of Migratory Species (GTI), aimed at addressing overexploitation of species - driven largely by domestic use for food, local markets, cultural practices, and weak governance - through improved policy frameworks, enforcement, and

awareness. These collaborative platforms support coordinated, cross-border solutions and enhance collective efforts to conserve migratory species worldwide.

5. Addressing Key Threats

The conference also adopted strengthened actions outcomes to address a range of interconnected threats to migratory species. These include climate change, lead pollution, underwater noise, fisheries bycatch, and broader marine pollution.

6. Enhanced Collaboration and Partnerships

COP15 promoted stronger collaboration among governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. It also emphasized synergies with entities such as CITES, IPBES, and CBD with a view to contribute to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). There was a strong push to engage with stakeholder groups as well as to integrate Indigenous and local knowledge into scientific considerations, with a parallel debate on how to balance scientific rigor with multiple knowledge systems.

7. Scaling Up Finance for Effective CMS Implementation

Parties emphasized the need to enhance financial support for the implementation of CMS, including a call for strengthened engagement with the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The conference highlighted the importance of mapping existing funding sources and their accessibility to better understand the current financing landscape, as well as identifying funding gaps and potential resource mobilization options.

Relevance to UNEP's Programme of Work

The outcomes of CMS COP15 not only align with UNEP's Programme of Work but also highlight concrete ways in which UNEP can actively support the implementation of CMS priorities:

1. Supporting Biodiversity Action through Programme Delivery

UNEP can facilitate the implementation of CMS decisions by integrating migratory species priorities into its biodiversity/ecosystems portfolio and supporting countries in translating COP15 outcomes into national policies, strategies, and action plans aligned with the KMGBF.

2. Advancing Ecosystem Connectivity and Restoration and Efforts to Address Overexploitation of Species

UNEP can support initiatives that maintain and restore ecological connectivity, including migratory corridors and flyways, through its work on ecosystem restoration and landscape-level conservation, contributing to the resilience of species and habitats. Similarly, UNEP could engage actively in the Global Initiative on the Taking of Migratory Species (GTI) which cut across priorities on sustainable use, enforcement, and ecosystem resilience.

3. Addressing Key Threats through Integrated Approaches

Through its work on pollution and climate change, UNEP can help address major threats identified at COP15—such as plastic pollution, chemicals, lead ammunition, underwater noise, bycatch, and climate impacts.

4. Strengthening Science-Policy Interfaces and Capacity Building

UNEP can help address data gaps in identifying important habitat for migratory species, population estimates and improved monitoring of migratory species. UNEP is also well placed to provide technical assistance, capacity-building, and facilitate partnerships among governments, and stakeholders.

5. Strengthening Governance and Legal Frameworks

UNEP can support CMS implementation by assisting countries in strengthening environmental governance and legal frameworks. This includes providing technical support for the development, revision, and harmonization of national legislation in line with CMS commitments, as well as promoting compliance and enforcement mechanisms. UNEP can also facilitate policy coherence across sectors and support the integration of migratory species considerations into broader environmental and development policies.

6. Facilitating Resource Mobilization and Strategic Financing

Its role within the broad financing landscape enables UNEP to help access and leverage funding and ensure that resources are directed toward priority conservation actions. As a GEF agency, UNEP plays a key role in designing and delivering projects that directly support CMS objectives. Strengthened alignment between CMS priorities and GEF programming facilitates the design of integrated, cross-regional biodiversity projects, enhances access to financial resources for Parties, and promotes more effective implementation on the ground. It also supports UNEP's broader efforts to scale up nature financing, improve coordination across multilateral environmental agreements, and ensure that biodiversity-related investments are strategic, targeted, and impactful.