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18th October, 2014.

To all Delegates to the Convention on Migratory Species CoP 11

Dear Delegate,

Prior to the 10th Congress of the Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species, in Bergen, Norway, the International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF), made contact with all delegates to this conference, by letter, regarding the conservation of the Saker Falcon. The history behind this letter is as follows:

At COP9, Croatia proposed up-listing of the entire Saker Falcon population to Appendix 1. At this conference, The Resolution proposed by Saudi Arabia postponed the decision to COP10 to get more reliable data on the Saker population status. Unfortunately in the inter-sessional period, these actions were only partially fulfilled. As a result the EU, on motivation from Hungary, proposed an up-listing of the Saker Falcon to Appendix I. Whilst the Resolution was put forward by the majority of EU Member States, a number of Member States placed reservations on the up-listing, especially in light of the success of the Mongolian Project encouraging sustainable use of the Saker Falcon. This work was carried forward to the Animals Committee & Standing Committee of CITES, where Andrew Dixon, of International Wildlife Consultants, worked with the Mongolians to secure a continuation of the existing derogations.

In the week before the COP10, the IAF delivered a Statement supported by CIC (The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation) and FACE (The European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation), to all Parties of CMS essentially urging that the sustainable use element be taken into account for the conservation of Saker falcons. This resulted in significant discussion at the Standing Committee and, in order to find consensus, a Saker Working Group (SWG) was established. The SWG conducted 7 meetings, with 38 members, representing both State delegates and NGO's. The IAF, CIC and FACE took part. During the discussion, many elements raised in the statement were used and discussed. As in the IAF letter to Delegates, it was emphasized that up-listing is not a solution itself, but rather that a Global Action Plan for the Saker is necessary and urgently needed.

The final Resolution that was passed not only gave an exemption for the population in Mongolia but explicitly recognised the contribution of sustainable use programmes to the conservation of Saker Falcons and allows future exemption possibilities for parties that wish to implement sustainable use programmes. Another very positive outcome was the role taken by the Raptors MoU (which was dormant until recently) in leading this initiative.

Subsequent to this Resolution, the IAF have become signatories to the Raptors MoU, and have been active within the Saker Task Force which was established by this MoU. Janusz Sielicki, IAF Conservation Officer took part in all working groups and general meetings, Fernando Feas, IAF Ex-situ Conservation Officer was elected a member of Technical Advisory Group of Raptors MoU. The population model prepared by Mr Sielicki is included in the outcome of the Saker Task Force.

The Saker Task Force has developed a Global Action Plan for the Saker Falcon (Saker GAP) and this plan proposes three Flagship Projects to initiate the conservation program for this species.

The first of these Flagship Projects envisages the establishment of an “Internet Portal to Develop Trust”. This proposal is for a multilingual portal to build trust by linking falconers, trappers, falcon hospitals and researchers in an exchange of information that enables estimation of harvests and sizes for Saker Falcon populations. It will also encourage best practice, most importantly for not trapping adults in breeding areas. Costing an estimated €25,000, it would facilitate a more expensive system to manage trade in Sakers if a voluntary approach is inadequate. Trappers and falconers will be encouraged to register by a prize-linked smart-phone survey. The IAF has proposed that they will fund and manage this project, in cooperation with CMS/UNEP, BirdLife and other interested parties.

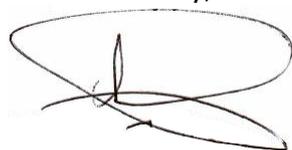
We would propose that this represents a very significant development, not only for conservation of this iconic species – the Saker Falcon – but also representing a significant achievement through the cooperative engagement of hunters and other conservators and through the recognition of the value of sustainable use to the conservation effort.

I would like also to invite you to visit us at the side event **“Falconry and falconer’s as pioneers in sustainable wildlife management as a conservation tool”** on **Friday 7 November** start at 13:15 until 14:15, room “ENRIQUEZ A”.

I also ask you to please feel free to contact **Mr Janusz Sielicki** (sielicki@iaf.org), **IAF Conservation Officer**, who will be present at the whole COP 11 and will run the side event.

We look forward to our further engagement with you at the forthcoming CoP 11 and to your support for this endeavour.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Lombard

President: International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey.