

**56<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

*Bonn, Germany, 25 – 27 March 2025*

UNEP/CMS/StC56/Outcome2

**CMS REVIEW MECHANISM:**

**CMS STANDING COMMITTEE LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA**

Dear [National Focal Point],

At its 56<sup>th</sup> Meeting, the Standing Committee of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), acting as a Review Body, considered the File No. 2021/01: *Project development at the Vjosa-Narta Protected Landscape – Albania* under the Review Mechanism of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

As Chair of the Standing Committee, and at its request, I am writing to thank the Government of Albania for its engagement to date and to convey the outcomes of the meeting, as outlined in *Findings and Measures regarding the Vlora Airport Project* (UNEP/CMS/StC56/Outcome1), and to offer the assistance of the Standing Committee and the Scientific Council, if needed, in addressing this implementation matter.

The Standing Committee encourages the Government of Albania to consider:

- a) Carrying out a comprehensive ecological assessment of the Dalmatian Pelican and other CMS Appendix I-listed species identified and occurring in the vicinity of the construction site of the Vlora International Airport and the Narta Lagoon. This assessment should focus on the characterization of the migratory routes, the feeding and breeding locations used by the occurring CMS-listed species, and on the potential impacts that could be involved in both the construction and post-construction operations. These studies could be part of the Wildlife Monitoring Programme requested by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention;
- b) Based on the results of the comprehensive assessment, whether to withdraw or modify the ongoing construction and/or the operation works of Vlora Airport, and if needed, restore the landscape to its original state. If the results of such assessment conclude that mitigation and compensation measures are advisable, a management plan for the entire construction/operation site should be defined, in coordination with the management actions considered for the surrounding protected areas of the Vjosa National Park. This management plan should define the mitigation and compensation measures needed for this site, and ensure an adequate monitoring of the construction/operation activities at Vlora Airport. This includes measures to track the impact of airport operations on migratory species, ecological connectivity, habitat conservation, as well as adaptive management strategies to mitigate potential long-term effects of the airport's operations, especially in relation to noise pollution, habitat fragmentation, and risks to flight safety and bird migratory routes;
- c) Based on the results of the comprehensive assessment, ensuring that the disturbance to migratory bird species in the Narta Lagoon and surrounding habitats is mitigated. This should include considering the expansion of the Vjosa National Park area to include the relevant areas for the mentioned species in and around Vlora International Airport;

- d) Engaging deeper with relevant stakeholders, including local and international conservation organizations and experts, to ensure the protection of CMS-listed species and their habitats in the area;
- e) Developing a written implementation plan in line with Resolution 12.9 paragraph (g), in consultation between the Standing Committee and the Party concerned, to be submitted to the Standing Committee identifying challenges and appropriate steps to address the concerns and implement the advice provided, a time frame for when those steps should be completed, and means to assess satisfactory completion;
- f) Suspending the construction and/or operation of the Vlora International Airport until sufficient ecological and species-specific data is gathered, and the conservation of CMS Appending I-listed Species is ensured.

The Standing Committee invites the Government of Albania to, at any time, provide any additional information that may be relevant for the consideration of this file. The Standing Committee, further, requests a progress report on the implementation of these considerations to be submitted at the 57<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee of the CMS.

The Standing Committee offers assistance to the Government of Albania and, together with the Scientific Council, remains committed to collaborating with the Government of Albania to address the concerns raised and to support efforts to ensure the protection of migratory species in the country.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Caroline Daisley

Chair of the CMS Standing Committee