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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE,
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Wild Birds Regulation Unit

Malta plays active role in facilitating Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean

Following Malta's appointment as Chair of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on the Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds during Bern Convention meeting in Tirana, Albania earlier this year, the Head of the Wild Birds Regulation Unit Sergei Golovkin has also been elected to co-chair the newly-established Convention on Migratory Species Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT). The first meeting of the Task Force took place in Cairo, Egypt, between 12 and 15 July 2016. The meeting was attended by over 50 participants representing Mediterranean state-parties to CMS Convention, Observer states and international inter-governmental organisations and NGOs, European Commission and other stakeholders.

The Task Force has been established under CMS Convention resolution on the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds to facilitate international cooperation as well as the implementation of the existing guidelines and action plans in particular the Tunis Action Plan 2013-2020 for the Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade of Wild Birds. It will also consider whether any new guidelines, action plans or other recommendations to respond to specific problems are necessary. Moreover, it will enable the exchange of information, training and education, law enforcement, deterrence and prevention to reduce the mortality rate among migratory birds.

During the first meeting of the Task Force in Cairo, Governments and observers agreed on the need for stricter penalties, increased surveillance and improved law enforcement, committing to a zero tolerance approach to curb the illegal slaughter of migratory birds in the Mediterranean. As a result, the [Cairo Declaration](#) on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean Region as well as a detailed Programme of Work (PoW) until 2020 were adopted.

Besides representing Malta and co-chairing the meeting together with Mr. Borja Heredia representing CMS Convention Secretariat and Dr. Moustafa Fouda who chaired the first meeting of the Task Force on behalf of host nation Egypt, Mr. Golovkin also represented the Bern Convention network of Special Focal Points. As part of his contribution to the meeting, Mr Golovkin presented an overview of the Tunis Action Plan and its implementation by parties of the Bern Convention. He also gave a separate presentation on the eradication of illegal killing, trapping and trade in wild birds in Malta, and in particular, a detailed overview of the legal, administrative and enforcement reforms implemented over the past three years. Presentations can be downloaded from <http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/1st-meeting-intergovernmental-task-force-illegal-killing-taking-and-trade-migratory-birds>. Upon Malta's initiative, which received wide support from amongst Task Force participants, the Task Force agreed to develop an objective internationally-recognized scoreboard to measure the progress of the work programme.

While the specific measures needed to tackle bird crime will vary for each country, the Task Force has agreed to strengthen three key areas focusing on immediate measures from a legal perspective, continuous monitoring and conservation actions as well as increased awareness campaigns and educational schemes. The Task Force will work as a catalyst to gather the information scattered amongst diverse international organizations, and will help experts coordinate their work, offering amongst other things a remote online workspace.

The Mediterranean basin is currently a hotspot for illegal killing and trapping and MIKT is the first Pan Mediterranean Task Force to be developed, having a distinctly regional focus and aiming to be replicated for other parts of the world.