



RESOLUTION

of the 3rd meeting of Kazakh National Committee of UNESCO program "Man and Biosphere",
Kazakh National University,
January 12, 2012, Almaty, Kazakhstan

The third meeting of the Kazakhstan National MAB Committee was devoted to the analysis of the current population status of the Caspian Seal (*Phoca (Pusa) caspica*) and conservation measures in the nature of this species. We brought together 12 members of the committee and 9 guests (full list of participants is attached). The meeting participants heard two keynote presentations: 1) "Establishing of specially protected natural area for Caspian seals in Kazakhstan," speaker **S.R Timirkhanov** - an expert on the organization of protected areas for the Caspian seal project CaspEco, Deputy Director for Science Company "Kazakhstan Center for Ecology and Biological Resources" and 2) "The development of the specially protected nature area system in the North Caspian," speaker **T.S Kerteshev** - member of the Kazakhstan MAB Committee, National Manager of the UNDP/GEF project on Wetlands of Kazakhstan. In addition, the analytical note of MAB Committee member **S.N. Erokhov** "On the issue of suitability of establishing of protected areas for the conservation of the Caspian seal" was circulated among participants of the meeting. As a result of discussion Kazakhstan National Committee of UNESCO «Man and Biosphere" adopted this Resolution.

The Caspian seal is endemic and the only representative of marine mammals in the Caspian Sea and one of the unique elements of the global biodiversity. Taking into account the steady decline in numbers, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) included the Caspian seal in the "Red List" in the category "Vulnerable" in 1996 and moved it into the category "Endangered" in 2008.

The Caspian seal migrates without any restrictions in the entire Caspian Sea and, thus, it's transboundary species and should be protected in all Caspian countries.

The numbers of this species which reached in the early 20th century up to 1 million individuals by 2012 dropped to 100 thousand. Currently, the total number of Caspian seals continues to decline sharply by about 10 thousand individuals per year. The major risk factors contributing to the decrease in the population of this species are: *the death of animals in fishing nets, high mortality of offspring, undeliberate destruction of the young animals in the winter during the passage of ships, as well as ice hunting of whitecoats and lack of feed for pregnant females due to redundant fishing*. In addition, two massive outbreaks in 1997 and 2000-2001 leads to the deaths of thousands of animals and significantly reduced the numbers of this species in the beginning of 21st century. Individual risk factors are agenda for oil production near certain breeding sites and molting concentrations of Caspian seals. Also, while little known risk factor for the Caspian seal is the intensification of oil production on the Caspian shelf in the area of responsibility of all Caspian states.

The conservation of the Caspian seal requires a set of measures to neutralize the established risk factors. One of the most effective measure is creation a network of seasonal or permanent protected areas, covering the areas of concentration of seals during the breeding and moulting, as well as measures of temporal limitation or prohibition of fishing along established migration routes for Caspian seals and seasonal places of aggregations in the North or Northeast part of the Caspian Sea.

Hence and take account of hardships in connection with the delimitation of the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan National Committee "Man and Biosphere" at its special meeting, resolved:



- To support the CASPECO project to create a network of protected areas in the Caspian Sea for conservation of the Caspian seal;
- to support the efforts of Kazakhstan's Government in establishing of the Caspian state natural reserve in the Kazakhstan in the framework of sectoral program "Zhasyl Damu" (2010-2014).
- recommend to authorized government agencies of the Caspian states to organize the monitoring system of the Caspian seal population in their area of responsibility;
- recommend to public and private research organizations of the Caspian states to carrying out of further research in studying of the Caspian seal, to ask the international and national donor agencies to support the funding of such researches;
- recommend to the authorized bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian Federation to develop regulatory acts for the temporal limitation or prohibition of fishing along the established migratory routes of the Caspian seal and seasonal places of accumulations in North or North-Eastern parts of the Caspian sea;
- recommend to the authorized body to the Government of Republic of Kazakhstan put forward in Scientific Committee of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS Secretariat) proposal of inclusion of the Caspian Seal in Appendix 2 of the Convention for consideration at the next Summit of the Convention Sites in view of necessity of intergovernmental cooperation for the conservation of this species;
- recommend to the Forestry and Hunting Committee of Ministry of Agriculture RK as the authorized agency of the Kazakhstan Government to include the Caspian seal in list of rare and endangered species of animals of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as to remove this species from List of valuable animals, which are objects of hunting and fishing, request CaspEco to develop an appropriate explanation;
- to provide interaction with MAB national committees of neighboring countries (Russia, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan) for developing of common strategy for the conservation of the Caspian seal;
- recommend to developers of prepared in 2012 "National Strategy on Biodiversity in Kazakhstan" to include the conservation of the Caspian seal as a priority task.

Chairman of the Kazakhstan National Committee
for the UNESCO-MAB programme

Secretary of the Kazakhstan National Committee
for the UNESCO-MAB programme



R.V. Jashenko

S.V. Kolov

