

MINUTES OF SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL APPRAISAL COMMITTEE (TFAC) OF THE R&D SCHEME FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT OF THE MoEF&CC HELD ON 14th AUGUST 2020 AT INDIRA PARYAVARAN BHAWAN, MoEFCC, NEW DELHI THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING

The **17th meeting of the Technical and Financial Appraisal Committee (TFAC)** of the Scheme on R&D for Conservation & Development of the MoEFCC was held as a VC Meeting under the chairmanship of Prof C.R. Babu on **14th August, 2020** at MoEFCC, Indus Conference Hall, Ground Floor, Jal Wing, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. Advisor (RE), MoEF&CC and Member-Secretary of the TFAC welcomed the Chairperson and members of the TFAC for the meeting. List of participants is at **Annexure-1. The special TFAC meeting was held to consider “the Visionary Perspective Plan (2020-2030) for Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats and Landscapes in the Country” prepared by the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore**, a “Centre of Excellence” of the MoEFCC. The agenda for the meeting is given at **Annexure-2**.

1.0 Confirmation of Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting of TFAC held on 31.07.2020

The minutes of the Sixteenth meeting of TFAC held on 31.07.2020 were confirmed.

2. ROAD MAP FOR Implementation of a **“Visionary perspective Plan (VPP) (2020-2030) for Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, habitats and Landscapes in the Country”**

2.1 MS informed that the aforesaid agenda was listed for consideration on the 16th meeting of TFAC held on 7th August 2020, but due to paucity of time was deferred and is being considered today.

2.2 Birds are a very important class of animals that contribute not only to human welfare but also for stability of ecosystems through the various ecosystem services and functions that they perform. One of the major environmental concerns in India is the declining populations of birds. If populations of various bird species continue to decline, this would directly result in increase in insect populations, especially of locusts and grasshoppers which can devastate agriculture and impact the country’s agricultural economy, which is already under severe strain. Birds also play an important role in control of rodent populations.

2.3 India is one of the mega-biodiversity countries with substantial number of species belonging to various taxa including more than 1300 species of birds, several of which are endemic, restricted to certain locations or bio-geographic zones. Of the 1306 bird species recorded in India, **72 species of birds are endemic (i.e found only in India), 96 species are classified by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as threatened;** these include **17 Critically Endangered, 21 Endangered, and 58 Vulnerable species.** In addition, **another 81 species of Indian birds are Near-threatened** and 4 are Data-deficient. Some of the regions – the Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Indo-Burma Region (NE India) and Nicobar Group of Islands are categorised as **“Global Biodiversity Hotspots”**- regions with abundant species which are under severe threat. In addition, a

total of 554 sites in India have been designated as **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)** by Bird Life International in 2016, of which 245 IBAs are outside the Protected Areas (PAs) (National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries) network which require conservation. Many of the aquatic bird species are an important part of aquatic ecosystems such as wetlands. There are presently 20,1503 wetlands (above 2.25 ha) in the country. Most of the wetlands in the country are under stress due to impacts of urbanisation, agricultural residue due to run offs and destruction of habitats. The wetlands with high avian biodiversity require specific management plans for conservation.

2.4 Member-Secretary informed that considering the ecological services that birds perform and their role in the stability of ecosystem functioning, and in order to give impetus and priority to conservation of avian biodiversity, the SACON Society in its 27th Meeting held on 24th August 2019 chaired by Hon'ble Minister (EF&CC) decided that a **“Visionary Perspective Plan for Conservation of Avian Diversity”** shall be prepared by SACON. Based on the aforesaid decision, the MoEFCC and SACON have prepared a 10-year **“Visionary Perspective Plan for Conservation of Avian Biodiversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats and Landscapes in the Country (2020-2030)”**. The main objective of the Visionary Perspective Plan (VPP) is to prepare a long-term perspective plan on priority areas for conservation of avian biodiversity, their ecosystems & habitats and landscapes in the country. In this context, 15 major Programmes are envisaged and various priority Projects/Activities are proposed there under for implementation over the next 10 years (2020-2030). These are to be implemented over short-term 2020-2024 (4 years or less), medium-term 2024-2027 (4-7 years) and long-term 2027-2030 (upto 10 years) periods and to be extended beyond Year 2030 based on review and evaluation.

2.5 The Draft VPP prepared by SACON was deliberated in a Stakeholder consultative Meeting in the MoEFCC held on 19.12.2019, wherein representatives of relevant Departments of State Governments of all States and UTs, MoEFCC Divisions and Institutions such as the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, GB Pant National Institute for Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Almora, Zoological Survey of India, Botanical Survey of India, National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management, Chennai, National Biodiversity Authority of India, etc and other expert institutions such as the Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai, Sectoral experts and representatives of sectoral Ministries such as Ministry of Jal Shakti (Water Resources, Ganga Rejuvenation and River Development), Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare (Department of Agriculture & Cooperation and Department of Fisheries and Dairy Farming), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, NITI Aayog were invited to provide their suggestions and inputs on the Draft Visionary perspective Plan for 2020-2030 for Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats and Landscapes. *The* Draft Plan was well received and the proposal was welcomed as a necessary step in the overall conservation of avian biodiversity. The invitees were of the view that conservation of avian diversity, their ecosystems, habitats and landscapes and programmes there under require focussed attention.

2.6 The Draft VPP was revised based on inputs received from the meeting and circulated to various Departments of GoI and State Governments and uploaded on the MoEFCC website seeking wider comments. The Final VPP was approved by Hon'ble Minister (EF&CC) in May 2020. SACON has been assigned the Focal Institution for the implementation of the

VPP. The Final VPP is to be circulated as an E-Document by SACON to various Central Ministries, Departments of the State Governments and relevant institutions. The Visionary Perspective Plan is a Framework Document on which specific Projects and Programmes would be prepared.

2.7 The Visionary Perspective Plan (VPP) for the Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats and Landscapes in the Country 2020-2030 **will be dovetailed with existing Plans, on-going Schemes and Programmes** for the conservation of biodiversity at the Central and State level, including the National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP), 2017-2031; the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP), 2008; National Mission for Himalayan Studies (NMHS); National Water Mission; National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Environment (NMSHE); National Coastal Mission, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems, Wetland Rules, 2017; National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA) Guidelines, 2019, National Sustainable Coastal Zone Management, Climate Change Action Plan and other relevant programmes and schemes of the GOI and of the State Governments. This will ensure that there is no duplication of work already carried out/on-going.

In this context, it was informed that the Wildlife Division of the MoEFCC has already provided details of ongoing projects under implementation on avian diversity (including RET species) conservation, conservation of their habitats including wetlands, IBAs, projects on migratory species, etc. There are ongoing projects on species such as Great Indian Bustard, lesser Florican, Sarus Crane, Andaman Swiftlet, etc. Director, SACON must undertake detailed discussions with Wildlife Division of the MOEFCC to ensure synergy and avoid duplication.

2.8 The VPP on Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats and Landscapes in the Country (2020-30) is to be implemented by various stakeholders including various Ministries and Departments at the Central and State levels in collaboration with various partner institutions and organisations, with the MoEFCC as the focal Ministry in the GOI and the Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore as the focal Institution there under.

2.9 The Visionary Perspective Plan consists of, **82 Action Points and 188 Thrust Areas under the following 15 Major Programmes for implementation over the next 10 years (2020-2030):**

1. Conservation of Rare, Endangered & Threatened (RET) Bird Species of India and Implementation of Species Recovery Plans (SRPs).
2. Conservation of Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) of the Country Outside Protected Area (PA) Network.
3. Conservation of Protected Areas (PAs) with High Avian Biodiversity.
4. Conservation of Avian Biodiversity at the Landscape Level.
5. Conservation of Inland Aquatic Ecosystems with High Avian Biodiversity.
6. Conservation of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems with High Avian Biodiversity.
7. Conservation of Migratory Birds.

8. Impacts of Developmental Projects and other Anthropogenic Activities on Avian Biodiversity and Habitats.
9. Curbing Illegal Trafficking of Birds in India.
10. Conservation of Avian Biodiversity in Urban Areas.
11. Surveillance and Monitoring of Avian Diseases.
12. National Plan for Nature Education and Awareness for Conservation of Avian Biodiversity and their Habitats.
13. National Capacity Building Programme for Protection and Monitoring of Avian Biodiversity and Habitats.
14. Mainstreaming Conservation of Avian Biodiversity with other Government of India Schemes and Programmes.
15. Implementation of International Protocols and Conventions in Conservation of Avian Biodiversity.

2.10 Member-Secretary clarified that although a time-line of 10 years (2021-2031) has been given for the implementation of the VPP, the programmes would continue beyond 2031 as activities and measures for conservation of avian diversity is a mandate of the MoEFCC and a continued effort of all stakeholders. The purpose of the VPP is to launch a specific Scheme for undertaking specific projects and programmes of the identified Thrust Areas and Action Points under each of the 15 major programmes given above. It was stated that due to COVID, the scheme has not come through during FY 2020-21. It is proposed to initiate the programme from 2021-2031 coinciding with the 15th (2021-2026) and 16th (2026-2031) Finance Commission Cycles. SACON would, during the current Financial Year FY 2020-21, prepare **State Level Action Plans** in consultation with State Forest Departments and in particular the Wildlife Departments and other line departments of Centre and States such as Environment, Agriculture, Water Resources, Health, Urban Development, etc.

2.11 With this introduction, Director, SACON gave a Power Point Presentation on Specific Action Points, Thrust Areas under each chapter and proposed projects under each of the 15 Programmes of the VPP.

2.12 The Committee after discussions on the presentation made by Director, SACON, came to the following conclusions:

- The Visionary Perspective Plan has been prepared very well, is comprehensive and would serve as a Framework Documents for preparation of specific plans, programmes and projects for addressing the broad areas identified under the 15 Programmes. The 15 Programmes also cover the entire gamut of issues that require being addressed for conservation of avian diversity, their ecosystems, habitats and landscapes in the country.
- As a first step, SACON would undertake and prepare a detailed status of work done and data already available in each of the 15 Programmes. This is to ensure synergy with institutions already working on the Thrust areas in each of the 15 Programmes and to avoid duplication of efforts. Literature review is very essential in identifying

gap areas. Networking and establishing synergy with institutions already working in various areas is also very essential.

- The information available in literature generated by our vast University system, institutions and organisations working in various fields of bird conservation and also on dedicated websites should be made available in a digital platform on a web portal at SACON for use of all stakeholders. Linkages should be established with the relevant State Departments, and other institutions in the country. The Portal should serve as the platform for providing status of projects and programmes undertaken under the VPP. State wise data and information on IBAs, PAs, RET species, Urban species, species in trade, etc would require being collated and assembled in a digital platform on the web portal at SACON. Funds could be provided to SACON by MoEFCC during FY 2020-21 for developing this web portal.
- During the current FY 2020-21, SACON would prepare State Level Action Plans in consultation with State Forest Departments and various line departments directly concerned with thrust areas of the 15 programmes of the VPP and the specific projects that could be taken up under the Thrust Areas relevant/of priority to that State. State Level Action Plans should include a large number of projects that are required for conservation of avian diversity.
- For specific priority projects of State Level Action Plans, each State would submit the projects to Ministry for funding during FY 2021-22. Prioritisation of projects is an important step, since funds may be limited, at least during the initial phase. Although funds would be released to SACON, the projects are to be implemented with the help of State Departments or co-partnering with State Government Departments. This will ensure their acceptance and smooth implementation of projects. The specific objectives, expected outputs of each project should be drawn up at the start of the project leading to specific outcomes for conservation of avian diversity, their ecosystems, habitats and landscapes, which is the primary objective of the VPP and of the MoEFCC. Technical Institutions and Universities working in such areas should be roped in and made a partner as it is not feasible to support funding of all projects identified and for their implementation using MoEFCC grant.
- Inter-State issues such as at landscape level, impacts of developmental activities of one State impacting another at landscape level etc can be addressed through Regional Action Plans under the VPP involving several States.
- Conservation Plans for RET species and Species Recovery Plans are long-term programmes and are expected to be implemented over 10 years and beyond. However, long-term projects of 10 years are to be implemented based on specific outputs and outcome under short-term (4 years or less), medium-term (7 years or less) and long-term activities (10 years or more).
- RET species selected should be those on which work is not being carried out presently.
- It was clarified that no building or construction activities are proposed under the VPP.

- Based on comments received from various stakeholders and the Integrated Finance Division of the MoEFCC, the proposal of SACON for establishment of a National Centre for Avian Disease (NCAD) at SACON with technical manpower, equipment and infrastructure, has been deleted in the Final VPP document. SACON would instead establish synergy with institutions such as National Institute of Communicable Diseases, Indian Veterinary Research Institute, etc for undertaking projects on zoonotic diseases due to birds.
- If the progress of the project implementation is encouraging, then ploughing in more funds through either grant through a Central/Centrally Sponsored Scheme or through institutional funding mechanism could be explored.
- To summarise, the VPP is a good framework document. SACON must play a dynamic role as the Focal Institution of the MoEFCC to successfully implement the VPP over the next 10 years. Director, SACON may immediately begin the process for preparation of a data base and identification of gap areas for implementation of specific projects under State Level Action Plans to be taken up after consultative process with State Governments for funding.

3.0 Any other business with permission of Chair

The Meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

ANNEXURE-1**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF FOURTEENTH MEETING OF TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL APPRAISAL COMMITTEE (TFAC) OF R&D SCHEME FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT HELD AS VC ON 30.07.2020 IN MoEFCC**

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|----|--|-----|------|------------------|
| 1. | Prof. C. R. Babu (Retd.), Prof Emeritus and former Pro-VC, University of Delhi | ... | | Chairperson |
| 2. | Dr.M.Dwarkanath | ... | | Member |
| 3. | Dr. Advait Edgaonkar, representing Director, Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal | | | Member |
| 4. | Dr.K.Chandra Sekar, Scientist, representing Director, GBPNHE | ... | | Member |
| 5. | Shri Venkatrama Sharma representing Director, National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), Mo Earth Sciences | ... | | Member |
| 6. | Shri G.Rambabu, Scientist, CPCB | ... | | Member |
| 7. | Dr.T.Chandini, Advisor, MoEFCC & | ... | | Member-Secretary |

SPECIAL INVITEES

8. Dr.K.Sankar, Director, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore
9. Shri Pratap Singh, Ex-PCCF, Department of Forest, Government of Mizoram.
10. Dr R. Suresh Kumar, Scientist E representing Dr.Dhananjai Mohan, Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
11. Dr.Manoj Nair, CCF, Government of Odisha

MOEFCC

1. Shri Pankaj Ahlawat, ASO
2. Shri Rabindra Sah,
3. Shri Goldie, Office Assistant

LIST OF PROJECT INVESTIGATORS (PIs), OF SALIM ALI CENTRE FOR ORNITHOLOGY AND NATURAL HISTORY (SACON), COIMBATORE, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 17th TFAC MEETING

1. Dr. Rajah Jayapal, Senior Principal Scientist
2. Dr. P.R. Arun, Senior Principal Scientist
3. Dr. S. Muralidharan, Senior Principal Scientist
4. Dr. P. Balasubramanian, Senior Principal Scientist
5. Dr. Shomita Mukherjee, Senior Principal Scientist
6. Dr. P. Pramod, Principal Scientist
7. Dr. M. Mahendiran, Senior Scientist
8. Dr. P.V. Karunakaran, Principal Scientist
9. Dr. Manchi Shirish, S, Principal Scientist
10. Dr. Qumra, Senior Scientist
11. Dr.S.Babu, Senior Scientist

**Government of India
Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change
(Research in Environment)**

**AGENDA FOR 17th Meeting of the Technical & Financial Appraisal Committee (TFAC)
on R&D Scheme for Conservation & Development**

Date: 14.08.2020 (Friday)

Venue: VC meeting in Indus Conference Hall, Jal Wing, Ground Floor, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi

Time: 10.30 AM onwards

1.0 Confirmation of Minutes of 16th TFAC meeting held on 07.08.2020

2.0 **Special Agenda Item on** ROAD MAP FOR Implementation of a “**Visionary perspective Plan (VPP)** (2010-2020) for Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, habitats and Landscapes in the Country” of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore

3.0 Any Other Matter with the Permission of the Chair
