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Twenty-ninth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-29) of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)

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Moscow, Russian Federation

REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda)

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

Note by the Secretariat

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Since the adoption of the Nature Conservation Strategy at the twelfth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-12) in 2007, NEASPEC has promoted transboundary and intergovernmental cooperation for the conservation of flagship species and their habitats: Amur tiger, Amur leopard, Snow leopard, Black-faced Spoonbill, White-naped Crane, and Hooded Crane. Under the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030, the programme seeks to strengthen cooperation on species and habitat conservation, promote ecological connectivity, and support the implementation of global and national biodiversity strategies.

2. Habitat loss and fragmentation, infrastructure development, agricultural practices, climate change, and human-wildlife conflict affect these species across their habitat ranges. NEASPEC has supported joint research monitoring, and capacity building to address these challenges. Recent work has focused on connectivity conservation for migratory birds and strengthening cooperation among institutions engaged in transboundary big cat conservation.

3. At SOM-28, held on 22-23 September 2025 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, member States reviewed progress under both areas and approved the activity plan for 2026. Implementation has continued through monitoring and analytical work, technical workshops, development of cooperation arrangements, and dissemination of programme outputs.

II. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE 2026 ACTIVITY PLAN

Knowledge Production: Research and Policy Advice

4. The secretariat has continued implementing the Project “Connectivity Conservation for Habitats of Flagship Migratory Birds in North-East Asia (Black-faced Spoonbills, Hooded Cranes, and White-naped Cranes)”, funded by the Russian Federation with a total budget of US\$299,789. The project combines demographic and habitat studies, assessments of the impacts of energy infrastructure and agricultural practices, and capacity building. Five Letters of Agreement have been signed with implementing partners: the All-Russian Research Institute for Environmental Protection, the Federal State Budgetary

Institution State Nature Biosphere Reserve “Daurysky”, the Federal State Budgetary Institution Joint Directorate of Kedrovaya Pad’ State Nature Biosphere Reserve and Land of the Leopard National Park, the International Crane Foundation, and the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Monitoring and research activities are ongoing, with implementation continuing through the end of 2026.

5. The energy infrastructure study has been published following its presentation at SOM-28. A complementary study on the impacts of agricultural practices is being undertaken by Dr. Keyu Bai of the Alliance of Biodiversity International and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), with completion expected in the first Quarter of 2027. Together with the monitoring results, these studies will inform policy recommendations and further capacity building on migratory bird and habitat conservation.

6. The secretariat has also continued supporting the revision of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Black-faced Spoonbill for 2026-2036, in cooperation with the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group and experts as authors. Following the Technical Review Meeting in September 2025, the revised Action Plan was presented at a soft launch event during the EAAFP twentieth anniversary on 15 July 2026. Further discussions among authors and experts have informed ongoing refinements to the text. The secretariat remains in consultation with the authors and relevant partners on its finalization and next steps towards dissemination of the report as well as submission to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

Knowledge Sharing: Capacity-building

7. The secretariat co-organized the Training Workshop on Migratory Bird Conservation and Wetland Management in North-East Asia with the Land of the Leopard National Park on 18-20 May 2026 in Barabash, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation. Following the July 2025 workshop in Mongolia, this was the second capacity-building workshop under the migratory bird project. Participants exchanged experience on monitoring methods, habitat management, bird-friendly agricultural practices, and responses to pressures from energy infrastructure and climate change. Discussions identified consistent monitoring, access to data, habitat connectivity, and community

engagement as priorities for continued cooperation. The meeting report is provided in Annex I.

8. The secretariat also organized the “Workshop for the Establishment of the Big Cats Network and Transboundary Conservation of Amur Tiger, Amur Leopard, and Snow Leopard in North-East Asia” on 21-22 May 2026 at the Land of the Leopard National Park. Participants shared experience from China, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation on population monitoring, data exchange, ecological corridors, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. Discussions highlighted the need for sustained technical exchanges and compatible monitoring approaches across habitat ranges. The workshop report is provided in Annex II.

9. The workshop also reached consensus on draft Terms of Reference for the proposed North-East Asian Big Cat Network. The draft envisages a voluntary network to support information exchange, scientific cooperation, and capacity building, complementing existing cooperation mechanisms and respecting national requirements and data ownership. The draft Terms of Reference, including the proposed organizational arrangements, are submitted to SOM-29 for consideration in Annex III.

10. The secretariat is preparing the “Capacity-building Workshop on the Impacts of Energy Infrastructure and Agricultural Practices on Migratory Birds and Their Habitats in North-East Asia”, planned for 27 November 2026 in Moscow, Russian Federation, in conjunction with SOM-29. Drawing on analytical studies under the ongoing Project, the workshop will introduce connectivity conservation approaches and practical measures to address pressures from energy infrastructure and agricultural practices. It will also provide an opportunity for government representatives, researchers and conservation practitioners to exchange experience and identify priorities for cross-sectoral cooperation on migratory bird and habitat conservation.

Knowledge Dissemination: Outreach

11. The report “Assessing the impacts of Energy Infrastructure on Migratory Birds and Habitat Integrity in North-East Asia”, prepared by Dr. Who-Seung Lee of the Korea Environment Institute, has been published on the NEASPEC website. It examines collision risks, habitat fragmentation, and disruption of migratory movements, and considers

approaches to incorporating ecological connectivity into energy planning. The report provides a reference for policymakers and practitioners in assessing and reducing impacts on migratory birds and their habitats.

12. The summary report “Transboundary Cooperation for Conservation of Amur Tigers, Amur Leopards and Snow Leopards in North-East Asia”, prepared by Ms. Anoushka Ali, has also been published on the NEASPEC website. It consolidates findings from cooperation between protected areas in China and the Russian Federation, Amur tiger conservation in the Lesser Khingan Mountains, and research on Snow leopard subpopulations along the Mongolia-Russian Federation border. The report supports further exchanges on population monitoring, habitat connectivity, and transboundary conservation.

13. Work on the proposed knowledge-sharing platform has progressed through conceptual development and expert consultations. At the May 2026 big cat workshop, Dr. Jeong Eun Lim of the National Institute of Ecology, Republic of Korea, presented findings from a stakeholder survey and proposals for organizing and sharing information. Participants identified needs for a common information structure, stronger links among experts, and a channel for exchanging research findings and conservation practices. They emphasized voluntary participation, data security, and appropriate access arrangements, considering a phased approach beginning with public and restricted interfaces and clear user guidance. The secretariat subsequently obtained a quotation for platform development. However, the quoted cost exceeds the available budget, and technical development is currently on hold. Further work will require technical arrangement within available resources or additional support, including from the private sector.

14. NEASPEC became the forty-third Partner of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), with membership taking effect on 28 September 2026. EAAFP is a voluntary partnership bringing together governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats along the flyway. NEASPEC joins other international partners, including the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat, and Ramsar Convention

Secretariat. Membership provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation across the flyway, building on NEASPEC's ongoing research, capacity building, and technical exchanges.

III. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR 2027

15. As 2027 marks twenty years since the adoption of the Nature Conservation Strategy, an update is proposed to reflect implementation experience and evolving conservation priorities, in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030. The secretariat proposes to prepare a revised draft through consultations with member States, including National Focal Points and relevant experts, for review and endorsement at SOM-30 in 2027.

16. The secretariat also proposes to complete remaining work under the migratory bird project, including the agricultural impact study, and disseminate its findings. For the big cat conservation area, subject to SOM-29's consideration of the proposed Network and its Terms of Reference, initial coordination would focus on priorities for information exchange and capacity building. Further development of the knowledge-sharing platform would be guided by member States' advice and available resources. The proposed activity plan for 2027 is provided in Annex IV.

IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

17. The Meeting may wish to request member States to:

- (a) Take note of the progress made under the biodiversity and nature conservation programme since SOM-28;
- (b) Provide views and guidance on the proposed update of the Nature Conservation Strategy for review and endorsement at SOM-30;
- (c) Review the draft Terms of Reference for the North-East Asian Big Cat Network (Annex III) and consider endorsing the establishment of the Networks and its Terms of Reference;
- (d) Provide guidance on further development of the knowledge-sharing platform, including possible technical and financial support; and

- (e) Review and approve the proposed activity plan for biodiversity and nature conservation in 2027 (Annex IV).

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