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About 99 per cent of the EU residents live in areas where the night sky is polluted and approximately 50 per cent are not able to see and enjoy the Milky Way, our Galaxy.

However, effects of light pollution on humans who can of course survive and can use tools to orientate themselves during the night are less devastating than the consequences for animals.

The impacts on animals are diverse and complex. Light pollution can for instance confound animal navigation (many species use the horizon and stars for orientation), alter competitive interactions and reproduction behavior, change the natural predator-prey relationship and affect animal physiology.

A number of nocturnal or crepuscular mammals such as bats, some primates, opossums as well as many rodents and marsupials suffer from what is now called “biological photopollution”. Migrations of pumas in Southern California for instance showed how these animals did not follow traditional and favored topography or vegetation patterns to move away from urban glow and navigate towards the darkest horizon.

Another good example are migratory birds. During their migrations, birds are attracted by lighthouses and light beams, off-shore oil and gas platforms, telecommunication and broadcasting towers as well as normal city lights. The collisions with the structure and guy wires of towers and lighted buildings or with other birds, circling around them, create thousands of victims daily across the world. This is a silent but devastating slaughter. The Fatal Awareness Programme in Toronto for instance, monitoring collision data for over 10 years, recorded about 160 species of birds as victims of collisions. According to Daniel Klem Jr., biologist at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, more than 100 million birds die as a result of hitting glass in the U.S., many of which are endangered species. Light pollution is undoubtedly a significant threat to migration.

UNEP/CMS is addressing all threats to the survival of migratory animals and to the migration process itself such as climate change, by-catch, wind turbines, ship strikes, power lines, habitat degradation and loss.

I am grateful this conference gave the opportunity to highlight another serious threat to migratory species that should be immediately addressed by the Convention: light pollution. The Secretariat will bring this issue to the attention of the Scientific Council, CMS is in a good position to provide information and advice to world governments on

the effects of this growing problem, and identify and develop with its Parties effective solutions, including recommendations for legal tools, codes of conduct, public awareness and conservation policies.

Darkness is indispensable for the healthy functioning of organisms and whole ecosystems, and new technical and legal tools and measures need to be developed to reduce light pollution and its impacts on biodiversity.