



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties: Part I, Annex VII

REPORT TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

Professor C.A. Galbraith – Chair of the Scientific Council

1. The Council has met twice in the past triennium, once in Edinburgh in May 2001 and once in Bonn immediately prior this Conference of the Parties. Overall it has been encouraging to note the increase in the numbers of Scientific Councillors attending these meetings and to note their enthusiastic engagement and active participation in the work of the Council. Notwithstanding the good work of the Council, we have to report here that the situation relating to many migratory species remains precarious and that many species are in need of active assistance through the activities of CMS.
2. The work of the Council over the triennium has been wide-ranging and has contributed to the overall activity of the Convention. The following notes some key developments and highlights some important issues for consideration by the COP which are not reported by other means. A record of the most recent meeting of the Scientific Council (14-17 September 2002) will be circulated separately.

1. Membership of the Council

3. Doctor Ichida joined as Councillor for Asiatic Fauna and Doctor Moser retired as Councillor for Birds after many years productive input in this role. Dr. Moser was replaced by Mr. O'Sullivan as Councillor for birds. Professor Galbraith was re-elected as Chair of the Scientific Council and Doctor Mshelbwala was re-elected Deputy Chair.

2. Proposals for listings on Appendix I or II of CMS

4. The Scientific Council considered a range of proposals for listing species on Appendices I or II. These proposals concerned a range of taxa and emanated from a number of regions of the world.
5. There have been a number of taxonomic changes occurring to species which will be reflected in the presentation of listings on the Appendices. These are not changes of substance.
6. The results of the deliberation of the Scientific Council in relation to proposed listings will be presented separately. In taking forward the assessment of these proposals, the Council has adhered strictly to scientific principles and has utilized the best available knowledge to help inform its decisions.
7. These proposals were mainly non-contentious and were well-formed, based on effective data and information. It was therefore relatively straightforward for the Scientific Council to reach a clear view on each. In relation to a few proposals, notably those relating to some of the whale species, the proposals appeared to contain some key data and information gaps as well as a number of technical inaccuracies. The Council formed a working group to consider these proposals, chaired by the Appointed Councillor for Cetaceans. This working group was, however, unable to reach a consensus view on how to proceed. The Council was therefore guided in particular by the appointed Councillor and by the Chairman of the Council,

who considered that where there were clear information gaps and technical inaccuracies that the Council could not advise the expanded Conference of the Parties to support these particular proposals at this time. It should be noted that this was a majority view of the Scientific Council. The Council is, however, aware of the conservation needs of the species concerned and is keen that their view on this matter is not seen by the Conference of the Parties or indeed by others as downplaying in any sense the conservation needs of the species concerned. It should be noted that the species remain proposed for listing on Appendix II, which leaves the way open for regional cooperative action. In addition, the Council has supported listing on appendix I and on appendix II for a number of whale species and remains receptive to receiving further, scientifically accurate, proposals for the species concerned in future, if deemed appropriate by any Party to the Convention. The Council would encourage further information-gathering and collaboration to allow any further action on this issue.

3. Criteria for concerted action for Appendix I species/ cooperative actions for Appendix II

8. The Council reviewed the criteria for concerted action in relation to Appendix I species and considered cooperative action overall. In relation to the matter, we noted that in some cases action had been limited. Equally, in other situations action had been dynamic and had led to significant conservation actions to help species. The Council noted the need to be clear on priorities for action overall as resources for such activity will always be limited.

9. The Council made significant input to the development of new Agreements over the course of the triennium.

4. Project submissions

10. The Council agreed a revised format and submission procedure for projects seeking funding from CMS. A number of projects were reviewed and Council recommendations in relation to funding can be found in a separate paper. The Council was concerned, however, about the apparent ad hoc nature of project submissions and suggested that the Scientific Council develop a proactive approach, indicating clearly priority areas for future project funding which, in its opinion, target key issues for the conservation of species under the Convention.

5. Links to other bodies

11. The Council approved a paper coordinating the criteria for listing species on the appendices of CMS with the IUCN system of species status assessment. Throughout the meeting it was stressed that working with other bodies has to be a key issue for the Scientific Council. The Council noted especially the relevance of working with, *inter alia*, the Ramsar Convention, CITES, CBD and IWC.

12. Input was made to the CMS presence at the World Summit on sustainable Development.

6. Issues of concern affecting migratory species

13. The Council considered issues of concern, where interactions with migratory species may be damaging. The issue of by-catch was agreed by the Council to be of key concern. This has led to the production of a draft recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

14. The important issue of barriers to migration was discussed in relation to electrocution, oil pollution and to issues relating to wind farms. Consideration was given to the relationship between climate change and

migratory species. This resulted in a request from the Scientific Council that a review be undertaken of this issue, for presentation and discussion at the next meeting of the Council.

7. Modus operandi

15. With the continued healthy growth in the number of parties joining the Convention, and with the increasing number and complexity of issues being considered, it is necessary and important that the Council consider its modus operandi. The need to clarify procedures and to develop better working practice has led to the development of draft indicators, to help measure the effectiveness of the Scientific Council. This need related also to Council's consideration of project submissions, where clear guidelines were agreed and to concerted actions (Appendix I) and coordinated actions (Appendix II) where criteria were agreed for consideration of species in these categories.

16. There was considerable discussion of the fundamental workings of the Scientific Council, where it is necessary to consider issues from a taxonomic view, a regional view and from a perspective to consider threats and other issues affecting migratory species. This discussion and enthusiasm for change, to create a more dynamic, proactive working style is hugely encouraging for the Convention. In particular, the Council agreed the need to improve the overall efficiency of Council meetings and to increase the effort and momentum of the Council intersessionally. This will be actioned by several means, including regional preparatory meetings (already costed in core budget proposals), regular contact by teleconference between the Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretariat and the Appointed specialist Councillors, in coordination with regional representatives. In addition, it was agreed, as necessary, that the above teleconference grouping may need to meet before the next meeting of the Scientific Council to develop a strategy document, identifying clear priority actions for each species group under the work of the Convention. It was agreed that the various papers dealing with the modus operandi of the Council and with the related processes be combined to produce a pack of information presenting, simply, the work of the Council and how it functions. This should be available, along with a draft scientific strategy document, for the next meeting of the Scientific Council.

17. The Council is acutely aware of the potential costs of these changes, but urges that change is essential and that greater efficiencies will result in due course. If the costs of these changes cannot be accommodated within the core budget for CMS for the coming triennium, then voluntary contributions to help the change process should be urgently sought. In particular, funds will be required to facilitate the process involving increased levels of expense to support Councillors, appointed Councillors and the office bearers of the Council.

8. Presentations

18. The Scientific Council meeting from 14 to 17 September 2002 received a number of short presentations, including on: GROMS; WCMC information systems; possible Agreements on bats; Lesser white-fronted geese; and on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment System.

* * *