



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ACTIVITY PLANNING MEETING

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Agenda Item 4.0

SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)

The Small Grants Programme (SGP), since its creation in 1994 by the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, has played a crucial role in promoting small-scale conservation and research projects for a variety of taxa. The SGP has proved successful at making the Convention a flexible instrument meeting species conservation needs (so far more than 50 projects have been supported under this programme) especially in developing countries where lack of resources would not allow otherwise the implementation of these projects. The programme has furthermore operated as a fundraising tool with the result of triggering more ambitious conservation initiatives.

Up until 2005 the SGP was regularly carried by withdrawals against the CMS Trust Fund's accumulated surplus. Since COP8, subsequent to exhaustion of the Convention reserves, the funding system had to rely exclusively on voluntary contributions from Parties, either donated generally or earmarked from specific projects.

This has led to a less than satisfactory situation because despite successful fundraising efforts made by the Secretariat even without a dedicated officer, donors showed more interest in other activities of the Convention's work plan rather than in the small projects identified under the Small Grants Programme.

On several occasions, the CMS Scientific Council has expressed its dissatisfaction regarding the change of this vital funding mechanism. It was particularly lamented that the choice of projects was based on the demand of donors rather than on conservation priorities and that funding through voluntary contributions alone was unreliable.

At both its 14th and 15th session, the Chair formalised the discontent of the Council through statements (Annex I) which were submitted to the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Rome December 2008). The Council presented two alternative solutions to resolve this situation - One that envisages the continuation of the system in place supported by a strengthened fundraising plan of the Convention and one aimed at restoring the previous funding mechanism.

COP9 took notice of the request made by the Council but did not endorse the option to alleviate the current short-comings of the programme through a return to budget funding.

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The Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties however approved the recruitment of a P-2 grade partnerships and fundraising officer, starting from 2010, with the intent to steady the flow of funding to the Convention.

Action requested:

Participants are invited to:

- a. take forward discussion on the future of the programme with a view to the provision made by the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Report of the 15th Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council – ANNEX II

Statement of the Chair of the CMS Scientific Council on the Small Grants Programme

The Scientific Council regards the Small Grants Programme as an essential, and possibly the most essential, tool for the implementation of the Convention. Created at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 1994, from 1994 to 2005 the Small Grants Programme was the main instrument through which the Convention was able to bring seed money to significant conservation projects. It changed the nature of the Convention from a somewhat formal administrative instrument to a dynamic and respected conservation tool. It was used to prepare the Action Plans that have been the basis of many of the agreements concluded under the Convention and to support activities in the field of conservation. It had an impact that went well beyond the funds mobilized by the Convention as it was a powerful catalyst to generate much larger funds coming from the Range States themselves or from international donors. Without it, many projects that made a substantial contribution to raising the profile of the CMS and resolving essential conservation issues would never have been possible, particularly in developing countries where funds would not otherwise have been available to initiate projects. Without this dependable, predictable resource that is allocated according to conservation needs, the nature of the Convention would be profoundly changed and its appeal as an effective conservation tool gravely damaged.

This essential mechanism functioned extremely well until 2005. During the past triennium, a change of policy left the funding to the vagaries of donor interest. Predictably, this approach has failed, as the most needed actions are, almost by definition, often the least susceptible to attracting the interest of donors. Indeed, this interest is strongly guided by media potential and will privilege fields that already enjoy widespread attention, rather than those in which the Convention is the best or only tool, and thus can truly make a difference.

The Scientific Council urges the Conference of the Parties to take all necessary measures to revive and sustain the Small Grants Programme in the form it had between 1994 and 2005, namely, that of a predictable, regulated source of funds for real world conservation, driven only by conservation needs and scientific quality, not by attractiveness to potential donors.

This very strong plea was expressed in interventions at plenary sessions of the Scientific Council by the Councillors for the European Community, the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Belgium, Germany, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Australia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, by six Conference-appointed Councillors and by the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, and was unanimously supported by the Council.

The chair also drew attention to the statement on financing of research and conservation projects recommended by the Scientific Council, which had been endorsed by its 14th meeting and is included in the report of that meeting. The statement is reproduced below.

“Having reviewed, in part through the analysis conducted by its taxonomic working groups, the achievements of the first half of the 2005-2008 triennium, the Scientific Council reiterates its opinion that the concrete conservation actions that it has identified

selected, prioritized and recommended for funding have been and are one of the principal assets, and a unique trademark of the Convention, as well as the main pathway through which the convention will contribute to the 2010 target. The Council thus expresses its deep concern at the difficulties of funding that have impeded during the first half of the triennium both the continuation of ongoing actions and the initiation of new ones, in sharp contrast with the situation of past periods. The Scientific Council regards the guarantee of secure funding for the actions it reviews and recommends a vital requirement if the quality of the implementation of the Convention and its relevance to effective conservation are to be maintained and if the credibility and the usefulness of the work of the Scientific Council are to be preserved. Such a secure and predictable level of funding existed in the past as a fixed budget allocated by each COP, taken from Convention reserves.

Two possible ways to recreate this situation appear to exist:

- Either the COP undertakes to again allocate a fixed budget, taken from its resources, and this without reducing the support given to other necessary Convention activities;*
- Or the secretariat expands its present fund-raising programme to generate sufficient resources allowing a fixed sum to be reserved for projects selected by the Council procedure.”*