

The 36th CMS Standing Committee Sets the Course for 2010



Members of the Standing Committee © Francisco Rilla

Bonn, 4 December 2009 -The 36th Standing Committee started with opening statements given by the Chair, Mr. Mohammed Saud Sulayem of Saudi Arabia, the Host Government and depositary (Germany), Bakary Kante the Director of UNEP's Environmental Law and Conventions and the newly appointed Executive Secretary of CMS. Dr. Kante (DELIC) stated that the International Year of Biodiversity would have a great impact on the CMS Family. He assured the CMS Secretariat of UNEP's support and promised US\$50,000 for the forthcoming meeting on the conservation of sharks in February 2010. Mr. Kante explained how the recruitment of the new Executive Secretary had been conducted resulting in the appointment of Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema

The selection of Ms. Maruma Mrema by UNEP Executive Director, Mr Achim Steiner, was officially announced to the delegates. She entered on duty 1st December. In her opening statement, Ms. Mrema emphasized climate change as the first priority of the Convention's future work. Promoting cooperation among biodiversity related international treaties to ensure that they were implemented better was also one of the key challenges, she said.



Committee Chair, Mohammed Saud Sulayem and Bakary Kante of UNEP © Francisco Rilla

In the report of the Depositary, Dr. Elsa Nickel detailed efforts to recruit new Parties undertaken by the German Foreign Office. Highlights of the Secretariat's report on activities included the 30th Anniversary of the Convention, a new publication on flyways, Russia's signature to the Saiga

MoU, the first and second meetings of signatories of the Western African Elephants and the Pacific Cetaceans MoU respectively.

In its presentation of the Year of the Gorilla (YoG), the Secretariat informed the delegates about the objectives of the campaign and how they were being achieved. Education and awareness-raising by means of official YoG publications, films and the YoG website as the key information platform spread the message of the need to conserve gorillas international level. Major highlights were the Frankfurt Symposium and the State of the Gorilla Journey across the gorilla range states. This journey had been undertaken by YoG Ambassador, Ian Redmond, during which he met various stakeholders in gorilla conservation ranging from high-ranking politicians to former poachers.

The Standing Committee endorsed the Secretariat's concept of appointing Ambassadors both for the Convention in general and for specific campaigns. The Secretariat reported on the various achievements of the current Ambassadors and highlighted the commitment and efficiency of YoG Ambassador, Mr Ian Redmond. Delegates were assured that ambassadorial duties did not entail a drain on the Convention's financial resources.

Mr Olivier Biber, the Chair of the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Future Shape, delivered a first report and called for feedback by the Standing Committee members by mid-January. A presentation on the institutional structure of CMS with its Agreements and related projects on taxonomic groups was given to the delegates.

The meeting discussed how to proceed with the roll-forward of the Convention's Strategic Plan in view of the uncertainties before the conclusions of the Future Shape process.. AEWA, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, EUROBATS and the Gorilla Agreements then had an opportunity to report on their activities including recruitment of new Parties, Meeting of the Parties, adoption of action plans, measures to remove obstacles to migration, and resources for implementation. Mr. Martin Lok, the delegate of the Netherlands, representing the ASCOBANS Parties, reported on the merger of the CMS Secretariat and ASCOBANS, which had been accepted by the delegates.

The new CMS office in Abu Dhabi, which opened in October this year, will focus on implementing the Memoranda of Understanding on birds of prey, dugongs and marine turtles. On the occasion of her visit to the Secretariat, the Executive Secretary of the Convention signed a donor agreement on US\$3.6 million for the establishment of the office. All staff has been recruited and the Host Government Agreement will be signed soon.

As far as the venue of COP 10 is concerned, the Secretariat has received offers from Georgia, Mongolia and Norway. Taking into consideration the experience of COP9, the Secretariat will look into the best date and format for the meeting. The Executive Secretary suggested late 2010 as time frame for the next Standing Committee and was confident of having another progress report on Future Shape to review.

Mr. Kante expressed his hope that CMS will become soon a universal convention by recruiting 15 new Parties next year. This could be achieved with the support of UNEP's regional offices. It was especially important for CMS to convince the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Japan to adhere to the Convention.

The 36th CMS Standing Committee Report will be available soon on the Web.