



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
CONCERNING CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR
THE AQUATIC WARBLER (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)
Criewen, Germany, 25-27 June 2006
Agenda Item 8.2

FUTURE MOU COORDINATION

(Note prepared by the Secretariat)

1. It is generally accepted that the CMS Secretariat acts as the secretariat to MoUs developed under CMS auspices at no cost to the MoU signatories, the exception being the Indian Ocean-South-east Asia Marine Turtles MoU. The CMS Secretariat acts as Secretariat for the Aquatic Warbler MoU pursuant to MoU paragraph 14.
2. As the number of MoUs has grown, the CMS Secretariat has increasingly sought to partner with collaborating organisations to support it in organising Range State meetings and provide technically-oriented documentation and advice. In contrast to today, in previous times this had been typically funded from the appropriate dedicated meeting budget line under past CMS regular budgets.
3. Furthermore, in order to better ensure that the MoUs and their accompanying action plans are effectively implemented, the CMS Secretariat has been developing the theory and practice of outsourced “MoU coordinators” with many of the same collaborating partner organisations. This is in line with CMS Conference of the Parties Resolutions 7.7 and 8.5 which encouraged the Secretariat to continue exploring partnerships with interested organisations specialised in the conservation and management of migratory species for the provision of coordination services for selected MoUs. Coordinators, at least in part, are foreseen to catalyze project development and funding under an MoU’s action plan, support the preparation of regular meetings of the Range States, and undertake range-wide communication efforts to raise awareness and share information.
4. There are some attributes that would make a potential collaborating organisation attractive for being invited to act as MoU coordinator. Some of the attributes considered by the CMS Secretariat have included *inter alia*: (1) a long term interest in the particular species; (2) demonstrated commitment towards the MoU; (3) a regional presence, including good relations with Range States and national level NGOs in the agreement area; (4) a demonstrated ability to fundraise and successfully implement projects; and (5) the ability to make financial or in-kind contributions towards the coordinator’s position. The organisation could be governmental or non-governmental.

5. At its own initiative BirdLife International raised funds for and established a position to support the MoU's implementation as described in document CMS/AW-1/7/Add.1. The undertaking was closely coordinated with and supported by the CMS Secretariat as a possible vehicle to support the MoU's coordination.

6. The Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer (AWCO), who started work in April 2004, has undertaken a wide range of activities in support of the MoU's implementation. Among other things, he has (a) supported conservation work within a number of Range States, (b) assisted Range States in securing funds for conservation activities, (c) provided technical advice to the CMS Secretariat, including the development of a draft Range State reporting template and the Secretariat's Overview Report, and (d) provided other supporting documentation to the MoU meeting. The AWCO will assist in producing the meeting report. However, at the end of 2006, the existing 3 year project will come to a close despite the successes to date.

7. In discussions with the Secretariat pursuant to the existing Memorandum of Cooperation between BirdLife International and the CMS Secretariat (2004), RSPB, on behalf of BirdLife International, has generously offered to ensure the employment of a full-time staff member within the structure of APB-BirdLife to coordinate and service the MoU's implementation. The job title would be "BirdLife/CMS International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer".

8. The day-to-day management of the BirdLife/CMS AWCO would be provided by APB-BirdLife and a dedicated staff member within the RSPB European Programmes and Training Department. The AWCO's overall work programme would be agreed and reviewed annually by a steering group consisting of one representative each from RSPB, APB, the CMS Secretariat and the BirdLife International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team.

9. The AWCO would operate in a purely technical capacity. The CMS Secretariat would maintain official contact with the Range States, the relevant CMS institutions and would remain ultimately responsible for the MoU's implementation. The AWCO would be tasked to work in a balanced way across the Aquatic Warbler's migratory range to the extent possible and within the confines of available financial resources. BirdLife and CMS would agree to undertake joint fundraising activities for selected projects and activities.

10. CMS and RSPB held a first joint review of the AWCO's work to date earlier this year in conjunction with a scoping exercise for the MoU meeting's preparation. In general, the CMS Secretariat found that there has been compelling value in having a dedicated person working from Belarus in support of the MoU. It presently finds the BirdLife/RSPB offer very appealing considering the successes of the past 2 years and the very modest costs to keep the person engaged. Funding, however, is an important issue considering the Convention's budgetary situation since the last CMS Conference of the Parties (COP) in November 2005.

11. The existing services to the Aquatic Warbler MoU have been provided at no cost to the Convention. RSPB has offered to find funding for 50 percent of the on-going employment and overhead costs, based on annual costs of US\$ 17,000, if CMS would endeavour to find funding for the other 50 percent of the costs. In other words, CMS would be asked to provide US\$ 8,500 per year. The initial CMS commitment would be for two years or US\$ 17,000.

12. CMS COP resolution 8.5 encouraged Parties, non-Parties and organisations to work closely with the CMS Secretariat in the coming triennium and to generously contribute financially and in-kind resources beyond whatever funds may be provided in the core CMS budget to support coordination mechanism for instruments such as the Aquatic Warbler MoU. The CMS budget for the triennium 2006-2008 was adopted by the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties with a very modest amount dedicated to Agreement development and servicing under budget line 2260. This is in contrast to past CMS budgets.

13. The present triennium's budget was agreed on the understanding that voluntary contributions would be provided to help support the implementation of the Convention in lieu of larger assessed contributions on the Parties. In consideration of this, if the BirdLife/RSPB offer is endorsed by the Signatories, it would be appropriate to appeal to Range States of the Aquatic Warbler, other countries, interested organisations and others to consider providing the full amount of the proposed CMS contribution.

Action requested:

The Signatories are invited to:

- Extend their gratitude to BirdLife International, its partners and the Michael Otto Foundation for taking the initiative and helping to support the MoU's implementation by funding and creating an Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer position.
- Consider the MoU coordination issue generally and determine whether the proposal for a BirdLife/CMS International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer is a desirable option that the Secretariat should pursue.
- Consider the financial aspects of the coordination issue and provide any guidance on possible options for financing, including appealing for additional voluntary in-kind and financial contributions.