



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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Agenda Item 17

## ONLINE NATIONAL REPORTING, HARMONIZATION OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR MEAS

*(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)*

### I. Background information

1. National Reports continue to provide the best means available to assess the status of implementation of the Convention, and are essential in guiding decisions on current and future strategic priorities.
2. Article VI(3) of the CMS Convention requires Parties to inform the Conference of the Parties through the Secretariat, at least six months prior to each ordinary meeting of the Conference, about the measures that they are taking to implement the provisions of the Convention.
3. The National Reports for COP10 have another important purpose. They provide key sources of information for the analysis and assessment of the “Ecological Networks” which are indicators of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention.
4. Starting within the CMS Family, reporting via the on-line reporting tool will enable Parties to quickly and efficiently fulfil their reporting requirements to CMS. By incorporating distribution data, questionnaires can be tailored to Parties so that only relevant questions will appear; this will help save time and avoid confusion in the future. It will also allow Parties to review their previous reports more readily and update the information to make it relevant to the current reporting period. The on-line reporting tool should streamline the process, making it more efficient for Parties and more standardized for analysis. Ultimately, if CMS and its daughter agreements all adopt the on-line reporting tool Parties would be able to fulfil their reporting requirements for the various agreements without duplicating effort.
5. The updated Strategic Plan for the Convention for the period of 2012–2014, if adopted, would recognize new challenges ahead of Parties to the Convention, and consequently establish a new set of objectives and activities to implement during that period.
6. Consequently, the standard format of National Reports will need to be adapted to reflect those objectives and activities in the information requested from the Parties.

7. A further modification of the questionnaire is required in order to solicit focussed answers from Parties. It is recommended that Section X of the national reporting template, on the implementation of COP Resolutions and Recommendations, be modified to include closed questions with tick boxes, supplemented by boxes for the provision of additional information. This would aid standardization of responses and facilitate meaningful analysis. UNEP- WCMC will continue to advise more specifically on the type of tailored questions to be inserted.

## **II. Implementation of Resolution 9.4 and Harmonization of Online Reporting**

8. In Resolution 9.4, adopted at COP9 in Rome the Conference of the Parties instructed the Secretariat to advance harmonization of national reporting and the use of online reporting with other international biodiversity agreements through the development and use of common reporting modules and tools, via the framework of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and in consultation with UNEP-WCMC.

9. In order to use and build upon the experiences of AEWA with regards to the use of the Online Reporting Tool (ORT) developed by UNEP-WCMC within the framework of a UNEP-funded project on Knowledge Management across the biodiversity MEAs, CMS has postponed the implementation of its own system. AEWA is the first MEA to use the ORT for reporting (to be launched at AEWA MOP5 in May 2012) and the CMS Secretariat is closely monitoring the deployment of the ORT in the current AEWA reporting cycle.

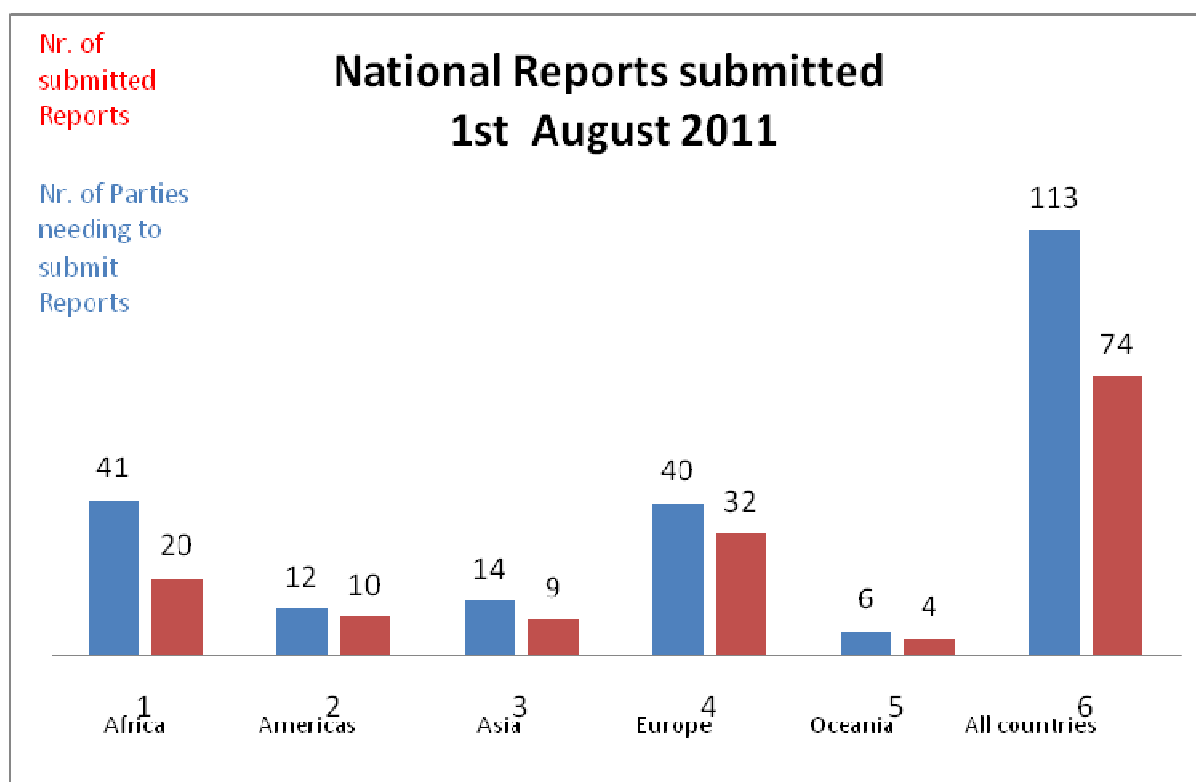
10. The current offline electronic National Reporting format employed for CMS COP10 is used as a basis for developing the online reporting template for CMS. This, in turn, could be applied for reporting to COP11 in combination with the ORT developed by UNEP-WCMC.

11. Since January 2009 the Secretariat of CMS and UNEP-WCMC have further optimized and re-designed the online templates in the three languages of the Convention. The pre-development process involved several consultations between UNEP-WCMC and the Secretariats of CMS and AEWA. In July 2011 staff from AEWA and CMS Secretariats took part in a training workshop organized by UNEP-WCMC on the use of the Online Reporting Tool. Recently further progress has been by UNEP- WCMC which enabled the CMS Secretariat to create a draft of the national report format which was further used as a basis for developing the online reporting facility.

12. The development of a tool to enable the analysis and extraction of information from across the national reports submitted through the ORT is planned for the future.

13. Further resources will be needed to develop the Analytical Tool, as it was not part of the UNEP-funded Knowledge Management project but necessary for the reporting purposes and assessing trends both by the Secretariat as well as the Parties.

14. By August 2011, 74 Parties had submitted National Reports for CMS COP10 representing 65 % of the 113 Parties to the Convention required to do so. (Fig 1)



**Figure 1: National Reports submitted to COP10, excluding: Armenia, Burundi and the EU (not required to submit reports)**

### III. The MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative

15. Many MEA stakeholders are from foreign affairs ministries who require a comprehensive overview of obligations under the many different conventions.

16. InforMEA, the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements ([www.informea.org](http://www.informea.org)) is the first project under the Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (MEA IKM) which brings together 13 MEA Secretariats representing 18 key global and regional Agreements including CMS and AEWAs. Launched in June 2011, InforMEA provides a search facility across MEA COP decisions, news, events, national focal points, and - soon to come - national reports and implementation plans.

17. The material can be retrieved through a combination of free text search and a search according to a set of 200 hierarchical terms jointly identified by MEAs.

18. The information is collected directly from participating MEA secretariats who remain the custodians of the data. CMS, AEWAs and a number of other participating MEAs such as CITES and Ramsar need to upgrade their information and communication technologies (ICTs) capacity urgently especially with regards to web-based technologies and databases so as to be able to fully participate and get benefits from the MEA IKM-type projects and allow for automatic harvesting of their data, by portals such as InforMEA.

19. Once in place, the underlying harmonization of information standards and the harvesting mechanism will facilitate the development of many other knowledge tools among conventions,

provided each participating MEA has the ICT infrastructure in place to allow the automatic collection mechanism to work effectively. For instance, CMS and CITES could quickly display the species listed on all of their appendices, or the Stockholm Convention could display decisions related to endangered migratory species threatened by persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Once such an application has been developed, the tool can be maintained at minimal cost.

20. The collaboration amongst MEAs and UNEP under the MEA IKM initiative is also working towards the development of an MEA College, which seeks to provide an overview of capacity building as well as academic training materials and on issues related to reporting. At its second Steering Committee Meeting, co-chaired by UNEP and CITES in June 2011, the Initiative agreed to include national reports as another searchable category of information available through InforMEA. In this context, the Initiative will compile an inventory of reporting obligations and explore the broader use of the ORT generator developed by UNEP-WCMC for AEWA. Furthermore, the Initiative recommended the development of a generic Analytical Tool for national reports generated on-line in 2013 so that it may be used by MEAs, as appropriate.

21. CMS currently lacks the information technology resources to technically participate in new projects such as InforMEA or to exploit new tools such as a generic report analyzer. However, it may be an opportune moment to promote strategic joint approaches among MEAs facing similar problems related to the use of new ICTs. The IKM initiative could offer the technical platform to implement such joint approaches while also eliminating duplication of efforts, enhancing capacity and ensuring that development is cost-effective and harmonized.

### **III. UNEP CMS Family Website**

22. The current CMS website developed in 2003 is technologically outdated and is not utilizing the full potential of currently available web technologies. The website, as it currently stands, has also grown organically (with little strategic direction and planning) and the Secretariat has been maintaining it over the years with limited staff and financial resources. However, the CMS Secretariat feels that it may be an opportune moment to embark on a carefully planned and more strategic approach to re-developing the CMS Website and to transforming it into a new platform for use by CMS and interested CMS Agreements and MoUs, which will:

- (a) make full use of the Web to communicate the essence of CMS / The CMS Family;
- (b) make greater use of new web technologies and include more multimedia content;
- (c) put the essential web-based infrastructure and web-databases in place which will allow the organization and automatic harvesting of CMS Family data into portals such as InforMea, the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool and others;
- (d) integrate the data submitted through the Online Reporting Tool and allow for instant web-based analysis of national reporting data across the CMS Family and other related MEAs; and last but not least
- (e) present the CMS Family as one, while preserving the identity of CMS and individual Agreements and MoUs.

23. The CMS Secretariat is ready to embark on this major re-development of the CMS Website in the direction of developing a future CMS Family Website, but is lacking both the clear mandate and the financial resources to do so. The Secretariat decided to create a "website team", or Working Group initially consisting of staff from CMS and all Bonn-based CMS Agreements (AEWA, ASCOBANS, EUROBATS), to develop a project proposal and concept for a future

CMS Family Website to be presented to CMS Parties at COP10 and to support fundraising efforts. The CMS Family Website concept/project proposal is being made available as Information Document UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.25 to COP10 and will also be presented at future MOPs of other CMS Agreements.

**Action Requested:**

The Secretariat requests the Parties to:

- a. Provide financial support to enhance technical capacity at CMS in a synergetic approach with CITES, Ramsar and AEWA to facilitate the development of joint information tools such as the generic online report analyzer and InforMEA;
- b. provide financial resources to enable the Secretariat to continue working in collaboration with UNEP-WCMC to implement activities intended to strengthen the online format for national reporting and to improve and modernize the CMS Website/CMS Family Website;
- c. utilize the online national reporting facility and to regularly report to each COP as well as to provide feedback on the lessons learned as a result of the use of the online reporting;
- d. review this final draft of the CMS National Report Format for online reporting;
- e. adopt and approve the use of the online national report format as annexed in this document for reporting by the Parties to future COPs; and

Mandate the Secretariat to:

- f. work closely with the Secretariat of AEWA and as appropriate other CMS Family Secretariats to further advance harmonization of the National Report formats template of CMS and AEWA, where possible;
- g. in addition to online reporting tool, make the new format available in an offline version of the national reporting facility for the use of Parties, which do not have readily available internet services; and
- h. request UNEP to continue with the implementation of the recommendations of the “*MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative*” with additional initiatives, to assist in the development of analytical tools to better analyze and disseminate information obtained from national reports.