



**Convention on the
Conservation of Migratory
Species of Wild Animals**

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THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL OF CMS: FUTURE WORKING PRACTICE
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1 The Current Situation

The Convention on Migratory Species is growing rapidly in terms of membership with currently around 80 Parties being signatories to the Convention. This is supplemented and aided by a number of other countries being Parties to the daughter Agreements to the Convention. The Convention is therefore a major instrument for action in the conservation of migratory species and makes a significant contribution to the conservation of biodiversity overall. The work of the Convention is underpinned by the work of the Scientific Council whose primary role is to consider matters relating to the science of species ecology and conservation. Primarily, this involves giving advice to the triennial Conference of the Parties to help develop a coherent approach to the work of the Convention.

Given the increase in size and relevance of the Convention, it is timely and necessary to review the working practices of the Scientific Council. The following short paper focuses on key issues and outlines one possible way forward to ensure that the work of the Scientific Council maintains its relevance, by focusing on key issues for the Convention, whilst developing the input from individual Scientific Councillors. The paper suggests also an initial clarification in the respective role of participants in the work of the Scientific Council.

2 Options to be Considered

The following section considers whether it is necessary to change the overall structure of the Scientific Council in order to ensure increased efficiency, or whether a change in working practice, maintaining current structures would be a more appropriate mechanism with which to ensure enhanced effectiveness.

2.1 Structural Changes – There appear to be two options:

Option 1

The work of the Council is currently related to two main themes: the first being a range of issues concerning particular Regions of the world; the second relating to a range of species specific problems and thematic issues. Theoretically the Council

could be re-structured such that, a series of regional sub-groupings are developed that would then report back to the main Scientific Council. This would have the benefit of increasing dialogue at regional level and perhaps increasing the focus on particular regional problems. The proposal to regionalise does, however, have several difficulties, many of them relating to the practicalities of such an approach. In particular, the question of who would maintain and support the work of such regional groupings? Who would lead discussion in each group and how would a degree of conformity be ensured between groups? Such a sub-division of the Council would, in addition unavoidably lead to a fragmentation of the Council hence the effectiveness of the whole Council could be reduced as a consequence.

Option 2

A thematic structure focusing on each group of species could be developed. A major difficulty here is that Parties may be required to input to parallel meetings at any one time. It would not therefore be practical to restructure the Council along these lines albeit that it is theoretically possible.

2.2 Changes to the Way of Working

Option 3

This option suggests that the structure of the Scientific Council is maintained as at present with plenary meetings taking place inter-sessionally and again immediately in advance of the main CoP. It assumes also that the norm becomes a three-day meeting, or at least a Scientific Council meeting divided into three main sections. It is assumed that the middle day in each three-day meeting could be devoted in part to regional meetings in the morning with a later session dealing with thematic issues and approaches. This would then allow a mix of regional consideration and consolidation as well as allowing discussion of particular thematic issues. This still retains the difficulty, at least in the thematic session, whereby Councillors would not be able to attend more than one meeting at any one time. However careful scheduling of short meetings and clear prioritising on the part of Scientific Councillors could achieve a reasonable balance here. Transparent and comprehensive reporting back from each group to plenary sessions of the Council on day three would allow any additional discussions to take place, especially from those Councillors who were not able to attend a particular thematic meeting.

2.2.1 Meeting to Consider Regional Issues

In the regional meetings it would be expected that consideration would be given to scientific issues relevant to that region in particular. It would be appropriate also to consider issues such as capacity building, developing support and developing the profile of the Convention through particular scientific projects in each region, as well as allowing time for any detailed investigation of scientific matters.

2.2.2 Meetings to Consider Thematic Issues

These meetings would be focussed on issues relating to particular groups of species. Meetings could be led by the specialist councillor responsible for each theme. There are further issues to consider here in particular to evaluate how scientific matters from daughter agreements might be helpfully discussed in such meetings.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section of the paper suggests the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the work of the Scientific Council. These suggestions are designed to promote discussion in the forthcoming meeting of the Council.

3 Chair of the Scientific Council

General

The Chair will be an ambassador for the scientific work of the Convention and will ensure impartiality, objectivity, and scientific rigour in the work of the Council and in the development of advice to the Convention.

The Chairman will work to enhance the scientific credibility of the Council and ensure the scientific validity of any associated Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding and other documentation. The Chairman will work to ensure the relevance and applicability of the listings on the Appendices of the Convention.

At Meetings

The Chairman will ensure the good conduct of meetings of the Scientific Council, acting impartially on all issues and ensuring effective input to discussion from all Parties. The Chairman will ensure that clear actions are derived from each meeting and will ensure their implementation inter-sessionally. The Chairman will ensure that the Secretariat for the meeting is efficient and effective.

Inter-Sessional Activities

The Chair will ensure the effective implementation of action from each meeting and will ensure that realistic outputs are achieved from projects. This will include the development, and implementation of, effective quality control mechanisms on projects contracted by the Convention.

The Chairman will act as an ambassador for the Council and will act to ensure effective liaison with other Conventions and other bodies, raising the profile of the work of the Scientific Council and of the Convention.

Importantly, the Chairman will ensure the scientific validity of any new Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding which may be developed. This will involve close working with the Secretariat and with any government taking forward the development of such an initiative.

4 The Work of the Deputy Chairman

The Deputy Chairman will substitute for the Chairman. The Deputy Chairman should, in addition, chair particular working groups and/or particular sessions of the Scientific Council as requested by the Chairman or the Scientific Council.

The Deputy Chairman should contribute their expertise as per the Chairman, ensuring impartiality and objectivity in all matters.

5 Councillors

General

Councillors should act as contact points for the work of the CMS. They should ensure that the scientific principles, objectivity and clarity in analysis are pursued in relation to the work of CMS.

The primary role and responsibility of each Scientific Councillor is to be the key scientific focal point for CMS in their home country. The Councillor should act as a conduit for information and data of a scientific nature to and from the CMS Secretariat and Scientific Council.

Councillors should review project proposals relevant to their country which might be considered for funding by the meetings of the Scientific Council, before transmission to the Secretariat.

Councillors should contribute to the dissemination of results from projects, and help ensure effective follow-up of projects funded by CMS relevant to their country.

Each Scientific Councillor should promote the relevance and value of CMS within the home country and should be an advocate and authority on issues relating to CMS.

During Meetings of the Scientific Council

The Councillors should report on scientific issues emanating from their home country. They should contribute specialist knowledge to discussions in each meeting on regional issues, particular species or thematic issues, ecological principles and, importantly, they should contribute actively to the solution of scientific problems.

In taking forward their work they should, at all times, ensure that their comments are based on the principles of scientific objectivity and that they help enhance the overall scientific credibility of the Council .

Inter-Sessionally

Each Councillors should contribute to the work of CMS through working groups dealing with particular issues and problems where requested by the Council.

In relation to projects commissioned by CMS, the Councillors should comment on proposals and contribute to quality assurance of the particular projects when requested by the Council so to do.

Where specifically requested and empowered by the Scientific Council, the Councillors should undertake a representational role for CMS. This may include liaison with scientific institutions and liaison with other Conventions.

6 The Role of Specialist Advisor Councillors

General

The role of specialist Advisor Councillors to the overall work of the Convention is of considerable importance. Individual Councillors should maintain their specialist knowledge and maintain their breadth of view ranging across the full span of their remit.

They should ensure objectivity in the advice given to the Scientific Council.

They should ensure that key conservation issues and priorities are raised with the Chair and Secretariat before each meeting of the Scientific Council and inter-sessionally as required.

They should help ensure that the Appendices of the Convention effectively reflect population status.

They should ensure that any project commissioned by CMS in their particular specialist area relates to key priorities and should help ensure that such projects are carried out in a scientific, objective and diligent manner.

During Meetings of the Scientific Council

They should advise Council using their specialist knowledge in an objective and clear way to ensure that Council reaches informed decisions relating to their work area.

Where appropriate, they should lead discussions on their particular specialism in relation to the work of the Convention.

They should ensure effective knowledge transfer to the work of the Convention overall, ensuring that the Conferences of the Parties and others are fully informed of the key conservation issues.

Inter-Sessionally

They should advise the Chair and Secretariat on scientific issues in their area of expertise. Councillors should assist the Secretariat in reviewing project proposals relevant to their area of expertise which have been submitted intersessionally.

7 Observer

Each meeting of the Scientific Council is attended by a number of observer organisations and individuals. In each case an observer should contribute relevant expertise and should be enabled to participate fully in the discussions within that meeting.

8 The Overall Working Practice of the Council

It is suggested that an exercise is undertaken to define and clarify further the collective expertise on the Council. For each Councillor it would be valuable to know whether this expertise relates to a specialist area eg a particular group of migratory species, a particular skill in project management or perhaps a particular geographic knowledge and ability eg a considerable expertise in dealing with species in a certain part of the world. By building up a picture of expertise available on the Council, it should be possible to draw more fully on this knowledge in meetings and especially inter-sessionally.