



CMS Strategic Plan review 2012

Comments on the Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports

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1. Introduction

The CMS Strategic Plan review, mandated by COP Resolution 10.5, has begun with the formation in 2012 of a Working Group of Parties and production for the Group of two draft consultant reports:

- “Stage 1” report: Review of the CMS Strategic Plan 2006-2014
- “Stage 2” report: Proposals for the CMS Strategic Plan 2015-2023.

Drafts of these two reports were circulated on 1 October 2012 to the Working Group, CMS national focal points in Contracting Parties, staff of the CMS Secretariat and daughter instruments, and a range of other partners and contacts. Party focal points were requested to provide comments to the member for their region on the Strategic Plan Working Group. Working Group members and others were then requested to transmit all comments to the consultant by 25 October.

The present document provides a synthesis of all comments received up to and including 29 October. It is provided as a supporting paper for the first meeting of the Strategic Plan Working Group on 5-6 November 2012.

Responses were received from:

- Parties in the Oceania region, collated by New Zealand
- BirdLife International
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)
- Two individual CMS Secretariat members, giving personal comments
- The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)

Given the relatively limited volume of responses received, it has been possible to reproduce them here almost verbatim (though rearranged by topic and syntactically edited for context etc. where necessary).

2. General support for the approach being taken

All the comments of a general nature have expressed support for the overall approach taken in drafting the two reports. By implication there appears also to be support for the process (as defined so far) for developing the Strategic Plan itself, and no different suggestions on this have been put forward.

Great work; extremely useful and with excellent analysis of the current CMS Strategic Plan. We agree with most of your observations and with many of the recommendations, and feel they will form a great basis for discussions in Bonn. [Oceania Parties].

[These are] two extremely impressive, useful and comprehensive reports that provide a superb basis for moving forward on the new CMS strategic plan. If CMS adopts the recommendations in these two reports, the next Strategic Plan could be much more useful than the last (BirdLife International).

Stage 1 is an excellent, comprehensive analysis of the strengths and especially weaknesses of the present CMS Strategic Plan, and the review Stage 2, based on the analysis, is a logical and feasible proposal for the next Strategic Plan. (CIC)

We welcome the drive of the report in seeking to define a way forward for CMS and the Strategic Plan and support the process. The report makes many excellent and sensible suggestions for developing the future Plan. (WDC).

An impressive and very helpful piece of work. You have done some very interesting new analyses, not done before. [The Stage 1 report is] very helpful, as I don't think Secretariat staff have been able to stop and think this strategically. [The] Stage 2 report's "Context" section is a really useful look "outside" for us. I don't disagree with any of your recommendations. (Individual CMS Secretariat members, personal comment).

3. Definitions

The Stage 1 report in paragraph 3D.6 raised a question about the definition of "migratory range approach", and the Stage 2 report in paragraph 3.2 commented on the understanding of the concept of "strategic". The Stage 2 report also highlighted the variety of terms typically used in MEA strategic plans for different kinds of aim-statements, including "vision", "mission", "goals", "outcomes sought", "expected accomplishments", "expected impacts", "strategies", "strategic objectives", "objectives", "key result areas" and "targets". Paragraph 8.5 advised that "the choice of hierarchical levels and the meaning/reason for each of them should be clearly thought-through, and the terms used should be defined, to avoid confusion". Annex 4 then suggested that definitions and a key to abbreviations could form annexes to the future Plan. Respondents made comments supporting this.

Some concepts may need explaining, such as "causal pathways". (CMS Secretariat member).

What could be truly worth of commenting is the array of important concepts such as "purpose", "goal", "objective", "target", "result", "end objective", "means" etc., because using at least some of them interchangeably is confusing. My suggestion is that there should be a simple rationale of the concepts used in the plan, for instance in a graph. Thinking further, could it be possible that MEAs would define common terms of reference for strategic plans? (CIC).

The recommendations [on] providing definitions of regularly used concepts would give clarity e.g. [Stage 1 report para] 3D.6, referring to the failure to define 'migratory range approach'. (WDC).

4. Addressing the Convention's mission

This is discussed in the Stage 2 report - see for example paragraphs 5.4 and 6A.8-9. Responses urge keeping the core niche strength of CMS in view, and caution against any dilution of this as an unintended consequence of asserting the Convention's relevance to various other agendas.

It will be essential to keep an eye out for "mandate creep" with drafting of the new Strategic Plan. While we do think that the current one is perhaps a bit narrow, the next iteration should reflect the focus of the Convention (as per the articles). While some of the issues mentioned (green economy, international environmental governance, etc.) are relevant to the overall context and CMS certainly has a contribution to make in some

capacity, our feeling is that we need to ensure that CMS sticks to core business and [does] not overstretch itself. (Oceania Parties).

We feel it is important for the new Strategic Plan to be formulated so as to focus the activities of CMS [where] it is in a unique position to deliver and add value, [and] increase the political profile of species conservation and buy in to the Convention, not least through emphasising its role as an implementing arm of CBD and as the only global species Convention, alongside CITES. (BirdLife International).

Proposals on forward-looking ambition, i.e. being proactive rather than reactive, are fine. [CIC].

The Secretariat will be forced to spend time on [issues such as green economy, and international environmental governance], because our Parties have agreed in other fora [that they] are very high priorities for all the MEAs. [The suggestions, including from Oceania, for] deeper analysis of cross-linkages with other strategies etc. [see below] will [also] entail going into these issues. (Individual CMS Secretariat member, personal comment).

WDC would urge caution in CMS abandoning a vision that holds the conservation of migratory species as its primary function. The other MEAs, CBD and CITES seek to define how species can be exploited, whilst CMS has been able to stand aside from these issues to a greater or lesser extent. CMS should not seek to deliver the lowest acceptable level of conservation, but to present the highest we can aspire to whilst being realistic in terms of methods of delivery.

WDC would support the development of 'lead partner' status of CMS for the other MEAs. However, whilst CMS can mirror many of the objectives of the other MEAs, it should not become a lowest common denominator for what can be agreed between the various MEAs. It should not be scared to maintain its high standards of precaution and should not put the sustainable use of animals as its primary function. Other MEAs can, and do this, whilst CMS must sometimes act as a moderating influence on human desires to exploit all wildlife.

Moral authority does not come just from 'looking the same' as the others, but by leadership. WDC would support the primacy of conserving species and avoiding endangerment VIA the maintenance and enhancement of animal migration. This positions the Convention to develop the concept of critical habitat protection as a cross cutting mechanism that ensures migration is possible and so conserves species. (WDC).

5. Framing the new Plan as a “plan for migratory species conservation”

Recommendation 3 of the Stage 1 report was that the future plan should be re-cast “as a plan for migratory species conservation, not just for the CMS; thus designing it to be relevant to all stakeholders in the issue, including CMS daughter instruments”; and this is then discussed in the Stage 2 report, principally in section 6C. Support has been expressed for this.

Framing the new CMS strategic plan as a plan for all migratory species makes a lot of sense. (BirdLife International).

[We] strongly support recasting the Plan as a plan for migratory species conservation. We strongly support the theme of the report that CMS should be the leading partner for the other MEAs and indeed, with

RFMOs, with respect to Migratory Species Conservation. We support the call for CMS to enhance the contribution it makes to the effectiveness of these other MEAs and that CMS should actively develop its lead partner status with such MEAs. We strongly support the concept of the CMS Plan being the 'Plan for Migratory Species Conservation'. [CMS should] Define its potential leadership relationship with other conventions as the primary authority on migratory species conservation, including how it can assist other MEAs and RFMOs in addressing issues of migratory species conservation. (WDC).

6. Attention to ecological outcomes

The Stage 1 review found that the existing Plan has generally not been good at expressing clear and measurable intended results in terms of ecological outcomes, as opposed to activities. The Stage 2 report suggests that one core purpose of a strategic plan should be to define expected long-term/high-level outcomes in a way that provides a framework for assessing progress and results. The issue is discussed primarily in the sections on monitoring & evaluation and on plan structure, and also in paragraphs 6A.11-12. This drew several supportive comments.

We are supportive of the emphasis on ecological outcomes, and feel these should be at the back of our minds during discussions and in development of the next Strategic Plan. (Oceania Parties).

The proposals on putting more emphasis on ecological outcomes are fine. (CIC).

[We] support defining objectives and targets in terms of contribution to short, medium and long-term migratory species conservation resilience, health and outcomes. WDC supports the concept of developing accountable, proactive, time-bound and measurable impact goals and outcomes. WDC generally supports this approach especially the recommendation of linking causal pathways between activities and expected outcomes. (WDC).

7. Relationship to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, Aichi targets and NBSAPs

The Stage 2 Report, in paragraphs 6C.3-8 in particular, discusses the relationship of the CMS Plan to other biodiversity planning processes. It suggests that the CMS "lead partner" role for CBD could achieve greater purchase, including through the re-casting of the Strategic Plan as a plan for migratory species conservation rather than just for the CMS (see section 5 above); through indicating more specifically where the CMS contribution fits in to the global biodiversity agenda and the 2020 targets; and perhaps by embracing the mission statement that has already been agreed in the Biodiversity Plan. Reference is also made to the key opportunity that exists at national level to strengthen congruent and mutually-reinforcing delivery (and monitoring) of both CMS and biodiversity Plans through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). BirdLife International has commented in support of these points, and suggests they should "go further" (mainly, it seems, by enhancing the analysis of target cross-links - see section 8 below).

Although the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (approved by CBD COP10) is highlighted and cross-linkages analysed, we feel this could go further. The Strategic Plan has been adopted by CMS along with the

other biodiversity-related MEAs – not just by CBD. So arguably a CMS Strategic Plan to 2020 already exists. CMS’s own plan should thus be viewed perhaps as an elaboration of what CMS will do to fulfil the ‘bigger’ Strategic Plan. Even if deemed inappropriate to use fully the 20 targets to structure the CMS plan, we suggest that we need at least something halfway to that – where the contribution of each objective to achieving particular Aichi targets is clear.

We believe it to be really essential that CMS-related activities can be integrated with the revised NBSAPs at national level, rather than being seen as on a separate track. As these NBSAPs will be framed around national versions of the Aichi targets, the clearer CMS can make its contribution to achieving those the easier this integration will be. This is undoubtedly a challenge, but it is important to try and make it work.

(BirdLife International).

8. Cross-mapping to other strategies and targets

In line with the observations in section 6 above, there is support from others for cross-mapping of strategies and targets, including but not limited to those for biodiversity. There is also a call for “additional work” on this and “deeper analysis” of “how the CMS Strategic Plan could interface with these other documents”. One response cautions again that coherence may often involve complementarity rather than implying homogenisation.

In reviewing comments, the consultant has noticed that the table in Annex 2 of the Stage 2 report has an error, where one cross-connection was omitted, making the “connections identified by IMG” and the “connections identified by both IMG and IUCN” out by a figure of 1. This does not affect the percentage overlap between the two analyses given in the body of the report. The slightly different font sizes of some of the “x” symbols is also an accident and does not signify anything. The colour-coding in the table simply matches the symbols, to double-distinguish them (yellow is x, blue is +, and green is x+), but this was not explained in the legend. Appropriate minor editing changes to pick up these points can be made in a revised version.

We think there could be additional work done on how the CMS core business relates to the objectives of other strategies/targets (UNEP MTS, Aichi Targets, Rio+20 outcome). The initial cross-mapping that has been conducted provides a glimpse of this, but we think that deeper analysis would provide more guidance as to how the CMS Strategic Plan could interface with these other documents. (Oceania Parties).

[Re Stage 2 report para 6A.14] WDC recognises the benefit of reflecting other MEA goals, however the Plan should not be beholden to any such other goals, but recognise where it can complement and help in delivery. (WDC).

Stage 2 report annex 2 - I’m not surprised the CSAB and IMG exercises gave different results. I think anyone who undertook the exercise would do it differently. (Individual CMS Secretariat member, personal comment).

In Report 2, Annex 2 I didn’t understand the colour coding. (BirdLife International).

9. Other synergy and cooperation issues

While not the point being made at the time, one comment (included under section 5 above) acted as a useful reminder that Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) should probably be mentioned more often in sections which refer to MEAs as a category of partners.

10. CMS Family coherence

Section 6B of the Stage 2 report discusses “CMS Family coherence” in the context of the Strategic Plan. One respondent has emphasised that despite the common shorthand references to “daughter instruments” and the “parent Convention”, the relationship should not be a “paternalistic” one, and the instruments may offer much in the way of “bottom-up” scientific capabilities and various kinds of good practice from which the Convention should benefit. Further discussion on future development of the Family relationships is encouraged.

[We] support planning for cohesion between CMS Plan and that of Daughter Agreements and MoUs. It should be noted that this should not merely be a top-down process but should address methods of taking best practice upwards from the Agreements and MOUs. WDC would urge further discussion on how the ‘family’ relationships are developed and should grow in years to come. The strength of the Agreements and MOUs in allowing non-CMS signatories to participate in regional mechanisms remains one of CMS’s strengths. The non-signatories could deliver a coherent understanding of the wider value of CMS if they were given an understanding of the interaction of the central CMS mechanisms. The fact that daughter agreements can also adopt stricter provisions than the CMS parent means that test-bed initiatives at a more regional level can be undertaken and leveraged up and out to the wider CMS family. Implementation at a regional level can sometimes be more successful and result in better accountability. The CMS Parent should at all times agree to a level of protection that addresses the precautionary principle and all Parties, Daughters and MOUs must at a minimum endorse said level. WDC would strongly advocate that the scientific capabilities that rest in single Daughter instruments and MOUs should be used more effectively and collectively. A failure to share scientific knowledge and best practice would be regrettable, and the CMS core could seek to leverage these ‘centre of gravity’ aspects. CMS must be an added value to the Daughters and MOU’s and not a domineering parent. (WDC).

11. Mechanisms for delivery

While there is natural enthusiasm to look for tangible advances in on-ground implementation, some of the measures and ideas that will enhance this will lie at levels well beyond the Strategic Plan itself. Respondents have however highlighted some of the things mentioned in the reports where the Plan may help, such as a more systematic criteria-led approach to initiating new daughter instruments (as in Resolution 10.16), and increased efforts to raise awareness on strategic issues.

We feel it is important for the new Strategic Plan to be formulated so as to ensure mechanisms are developed to catalyse a step change increase in rates of on the ground implementation of CMS in conjunction with other MEAs. (BirdLife International).

WDC recognises that the Plan means monies must be spent by stakeholders in the short and medium term. However, we would note securing and enhancing biodiversity is no longer a luxury, but an absolute necessity for the survival of the human race in the long term. We cannot cheat our fellow creatures or our own coming generations. (WDC).

[We have] some questions as to the "what" vs. "how" of how CMS moves forward in the future. For example, while part of the future vision might be well-functioning and effective instruments, it is important to understand how this might occur. To us there are a lot of places where criteria would be useful (e.g. for new instruments, etc.). (Oceania Parties).

WDC would support the recognition that aspirational desires to create agreements and MOUs should be complemented with an implementation plan for funding and delivery. Giving birth to such daughters does not mean a Spartan abandonment and hope of survival. (WDC).

It is disturbing that we [the Secretariat] seem to be strengthening science/information and conservation measures activities, whilst weakening in areas where I think we should actually be targeting more efforts, namely raising awareness about CMS and migratory species issues, which are areas where we can have an impact on the whole world for the benefit of migratory species. (Individual Secretariat member, personal comment).

The idea (which Parties have already embraced) of the Plan being reflected in plans for other instruments in the CMS Family, is taken further by one respondent, in a suggestion that the goals and performance measures of the Plan might be integrated into other delivery mechanisms such as national legislation and the strategic plans of relevant NGOs and other CMS partners.

[We would] encourage Parties, NGOs and partners involved in developing [relevant performance measures] to adopt them within their own strategic plans for addressing migratory species conservation planning. (WDC).

WDC has noted before the value that CMS can bring to enhancing domestic and regional conservation planning. WDC has previously argued that bodies such as the European Union could and should look to the CMS and daughter bodies as additional mechanisms for delivering their legal responsibilities arising through regulations such as the Habitats and Species Directives. WDC would support the integration and recognition of the CMS Plan in domestic legislation and mechanisms for delivery. Not only does this mean the shared goals are more likely to be achieved but also they are also more likely to be measured and reported. (WDC).

12. Prioritisation

Approaches to prioritisation are discussed in section 6E of the Stage 2 report. There is support for attention to this, and a plea for more responsive feedback through active monitoring and reporting on the implementation of short-term priorities.

Prioritisation is an important factor for us, on a number of fronts. Both the CMS Secretariat and CMS Parties have resource constraints (and will have for the foreseeable future), and so in coming up with the next Strategic Plan, we believe that this needs to be taken into consideration. (Oceania Parties).

[We] support defining [a] process to establish priorities. We would advocate that the Plan, whilst setting goals for up to eight years, must also develop a robust review and active feedback planning mechanism. Goals that lay a long way in the future can discourage Party commitment, especially when current political leadership may feel that they may not be around to deliver on promises made. Shorter accountability targets as discussed in the paper, would seek to hold Parties accountable in the short, medium and long term, as well as continuing to stretch the vision for what could be achieved with a rolling development of longer term goals. (WDC).

13. The role of civil society

The future approach to links with the non-government sector is discussed in paragraphs 6C.10-12, and paragraph 10.5 refers to engagement in the process of developing the new Strategic Plan. NGOs are offering a strong commitment to supporting this process and the Convention in general, and have previously argued that this input needs to be better provided for and better recognised. A comment has been received from Parties to the effect that a clear indication of possible contributions from different stakeholders might be useful.

A separate independently-produced document entitled “The Natural Affiliation: developing the role of the NGOs in the CMS family” has now been provided to the Strategic Plan Working Group and to the Standing Committee by the Migratory Wildlife Network, elaborating on this point. The document addresses the workings of the CMS as a whole and makes no specific comments on the Strategic Plan review reports or recommendations for the future Plan (although its recommendation for a “strategic appraisal of where CMS can make the most difference ... to identify and highlight priority work areas” might qualify); but its wider perspectives have been offered as a contribution to the Working Group’s work.

[While we] want to underline the role that Parties have in implementation of the Convention[, w]e do see the immense value-added provided by civil society, and perhaps having a Strategic Plan that has clear indications of possible contributions from different stakeholders might be useful. (Oceania Parties).

WDC of course would encourage a deeper and more integrated relationship with civil society and would refer you to the recommendations of the report ‘The Natural Affiliation: developing the role of the NGOs in the CMS family’. WDC would support the call for NGOs to be involved in an early stage in developing the next Plan. (WDC).

14. Monitoring and evaluation

The Stage 1 review found that the monitoring and evaluation regime associated with the existing Plan was seen by some as its weakest aspect, and in Recommendation 15 it suggested that this regime should be re-designed. The issues and options are discussed further in section 7 of the Stage 2 report. One respondent has addressed

this and has expressed support for the reasoning put forward, including the likely need for amendments to the format for national reports. The same respondent also suggests providing for a reporting and assessment process to take place more frequently than the intervals of COP meetings, advocating an 18-month “interim report”, on which would then be based amendments to update the Plan at similar intervals.

[We] support defining monitoring and evaluation criteria. In addition we would support strengthening monitoring and evaluation.

[We] also Support re-designing of the Plan’s monitoring and evaluation regime, as simply reporting ‘activity’ rather than genuine sustainable outcomes and impact for migratory species conservation should not be acceptable. This speaks directly to the National Reports as well and they too should be redesigned to ensure accountability, monitoring and evaluation of activities.

Assessing progress should not just take place at the COPs. We would advocate mechanisms to address progress through a more dynamic reporting system so Parties and stakeholders can see progress in ‘real time’. This could act as an incentive for some to address outstanding issues for which they have responsibility. We would recommend a mandatory interim report every 18months with voluntary updates/reporting at any time. These reports should be shared with all Parties and Partners by being easily accessible on the website etc.

[We suggest that the Plan should be] updated at regular intervals between COPs, for example at a minimum of 18 month intervals.

Where a Government accepts responsibility for a specific activity, it would be reasonable to allow the Government concerned to then delegate to a specific management authority or implementer, but this information should be fed back to the Plan within a defined period to ensure transparency and accountability. [WDC]

WDC strongly supports a review of the mechanism and format of the National Reports. The current format of these reports is poorly linked to the Plan and leaves no scope for the initiation of reviews etc. The monitoring and evaluation of CMS Parties is considered to be weak and there is little room for accountability. These new format reports should address not only the Plan but CMS Resolutions and Recommendations as well. As with the Plan, we believe that these National Reports should be updated at regular intervals and not only weeks/months before a COP. (WDC).

15. Support expressed for other specific items

Several other items in the reports are the subject of supportive comments, without particular recommendations made being made, or at least nothing in addition to the points already noted above. These are therefore reproduced here simply for completeness.

[We] support defining vision, mission, and purpose. (WDC).

WDC would strongly support the concept of the precautionary approach being adopted into the values of CMS. (WDC).

[We] support the cascading of objectives and goals (but note that there is a need also for bottom-up transmission of best practice). (WDC).

[We] support capturing decisions of the COPs in the Plan. (WDC).

[We] support defining performance measures and engagement with partners and stakeholders in sharing these performance criteria, both in the setting of such measures and in the delivery against these. (WDC).

[We] strongly support the defining of responsibilities for delivery. This will help with accountability across the board and the ability of civil society to hold Parties to account both domestically and internationally. WDC supports the concept of allocating responsibilities for all aspects of the Plan to individual recognisable actors, and no goal should be agreed without such a 'parent' to chaperone it through. (WDC).

[We] support defining the audience and using the Plan to attract an audience that may not have been previously aware of the value of CMS to them. (WDC).

[We] support the better publicising of the Plan and CMS as a whole to engage new audiences and help make visible the achievements of the CMS family. (WDC).

The findings and proposals dealing with improving external synergies and partnerships are welcome. (CIC).