



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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NINTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Rome, 1-5 December 2008
Agenda Item 9.0

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORT

1. As required by Paragraph 1(f) of Resolution 6.6 and Rule 31 of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee, the Committee is reporting through the Chairmen who have served in the course of the triennium on its activities since the Eighth Conference of the Parties (COP) in Nairobi in 2005.

30th Meeting (25 November 2005)

2. At the meeting of the newly elected Standing Committee at the end of COP8, the United Kingdom was re-elected as Chair and Australia as Vice-Chair. The other regional representatives elected at COP8 were Chad, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine and the United Republic of Tanzania. Germany continued to serve on the Committee in its capacity of Depository. Alternate regional representatives elected at COP8 were: Bolivia, Ghana, Hungary, Monaco, New Zealand, Pakistan and Senegal.

3. The Committee set a provisional date for its next meeting aiming at the beginning of 2007.

4. The Committee also considered the issue of new appointments to the Scientific Council and agreed to expedite the process through the use of postal nominations.

31st Meeting (28-29 September 2006)

5. The 31st Meeting of the Standing Committee, which was chaired by Eric Blencowe of the United Kingdom, was the first to be held in the newly renovated "Langer Eugen", which had originally housed the offices of German parliamentarians and now served as the new UN Campus in Bonn. The main challenges facing the Secretariat since the COP had been: increasing membership of the Convention and servicing an increasingly global organisation through regional workshops; increasing liaison with other MEAs and developing partnership agreements with other bodies.

Membership

6. The meeting noted the growth in membership and efforts to recruit key countries. Membership had risen from 93 at the time of COP8 to 98 with a number of other non-Parties

reporting progress in their accession procedures. The Depositary (Germany) was one of several countries using bilateral contacts to promote CMS membership among non-Parties. Parties to have acceded since the COP were: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Kazakhstan and the Cook Islands.

Finance and Administration

7. On financial and administrative issues the Committee received a report on the implementation of audit recommendations and discussed the issue of the 13% Programme Support Costs levied by UNEP and the possibility of having more CMS expenditure exempted from it. The previous COP had called upon UNEP to consider exempting part of the CMS expenditure from the overheads charge on a case-by-case basis. It was also noted that CMS benefited from the PSC fund in the form of financial contributions and staff.

8. As well as implementing the recommendations made in the CMS audit, preparations had been made for the audits of Eurobats and ASCOBANS and the budgets had been drafted for the MOPs of these Agreements.

9. The Committee was informed that the Convention's budget was fully committed with little room for manoeuvre, although the situation had been alleviated because of the payment of Argentina's accrued arrears. In a closed session the Committee considered the question of Secretariat manpower. Increasing the permanent staff complement was a decision for the Parties at the COP but the Committee agreed to recommend that the position of Administrative and Fund Management Officer should be upgraded from P3 to P4 as this was a post funded by UNEP. Changes to the administration of the Secretariat's IT and the CMS website would also have some implications for staff time. The Secretariat reported on progress made with the internship programme.

10. It was noted with gratitude that Australia had promised to make a grant of Aus\$50,000 per annum over three years to support the work of the Scientific Councilor for bycatch. Germany continued to provide a regular voluntary contribution and other countries too provided funding for specific, earmarked projects. Voluntary contributions however by their nature tended to be irregular. It was suggested that the list of priority actions and projects should be incorporated into the Work Plan to assist donors identify initiatives to support. Donors also should receive reports on how the projects they had funded were progressing.

11. The day before the Standing Committee met, the Secretariat gave an extended presentation on its outreach and project work to encourage Parties to help finance activities not covered in the Convention's core budget. The Convention's Small Grants Programme, which had previously been financed using surplus on the Trust Fund, would no longer be able to rely on this source in future.

Reports from Regional Representatives, Agreements and Observers

12. Reports were taken from all regional representatives present (Asia was not represented at the meeting). For Oceania, it was reported that the Pacific Islands Cetaceans MoU had come into force. The South American representative reported on progress made between Argentina and Chile on an instrument for the Ruddy-headed goose, among Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay on grassland birds, the Andean states on flamingos and the innovative approach by Chile of establishing a national committee to overview implementation of the Convention.

13. AEWA reported continuing growth in membership and the success of World Migratory Bird Day. Eurobats had marked its 15th anniversary but faced budgetary problems arising from the fact that the four largest of the 31 Parties were paying over 80% of the Agreement's costs. Written reports were received from ASCOBANS and the Wadden Sea Seal Agreement. Oral reports were received from ACAP and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCCS), and the representative of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums made a power point presentation.

Follow up from COP 8 and Resolutions

14. As Agreement servicing was not specifically mentioned in the Strategic Plan or the budget, the financial cost of administering MoUs was not readily identifiable. The question of how MoUs were resourced should be referred to the next meeting of the COP and the Committee decided that a paper should be prepared for consideration at its next meeting.

15. In pursuance of Resolution 8.9, GROMS was to be transferred to the CMS server to facilitate its integration with IMS. In discussing Resolution 8.5 on the implementation of existing agreements and the development of future ones, it was noted that there was a total of 13 agreement initiatives underway since COP. The Secretariat was requested to continue to liaise with other Conventions to advance its work on the achievement of the 2010 target, and if resources allowed to pursue the harmonisation of national reporting, in keeping with Resolution 8.11 (Co-operation with other Conventions). The appointment of further Scientific Councillors chosen by the Conference was discussed in closed session; the Standing Committee approved the appointment of three Scientific Councillors: Dr. Zeb Hogan (Fish), Professor Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (African fauna) and Barry Baker (Bycatch). A draft programme of work was being elaborated to implement Resolution 8.22 on adverse human impacts on cetaceans and this would be presented to the next COP. With regard to resolution 8.27 (Migratory Species and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza), the United Kingdom promised to provide funding to facilitate a meeting of practitioners dealing with Avian Influenza. The Committee was invited to encourage further doors to come forward to help develop the Avian Influenza website (AIWEb). The Secretariat reported on the development of ideas concerning online national reporting and provisional arrangements for the analysis of national reports submitted to COP9.

16. The results of the participants' questionnaire circulated at COP were reported. The feedback was generally very positive with participants expressing high levels of satisfaction with the organisation and outcomes.

Outreach

17. The Secretariat informed the meeting of new initiatives on outreach including the Year of the Dolphin campaign which involved a partnership with the German travel firm TUI and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society among others. Collaboration with a number of other bodies, primarily NGOs such as the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, had been formalised through Memoranda of Understanding. CMS was part of the Biodiversity Liaison Group, whose other members were the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and the Ramsar Convention.

18. A number of leading environmentalists with a background in conservation who were willing to support CMS aims had been appointed CMS “Ambassadors”. Conservationist and author, Kuki Gallmann and Peter Schei, “a founding father” of the Biodiversity Convention, were the first, with the journalist, politician and former European Commission official, Stanley Johnson and former CMS Executive Secretary, Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht following later.

19. CMS had added to its Technical Series with publications on the “Review of Migratory Chondrichthyan Fishes” and a fourth edition on activities concerning the Siberian Crane. A leaflet had been produced in several languages on avian influenza and migratory birds in response to the unjustified calls for wild birds to be culled even though they were not significant vectors of the disease. Work had begun on writing an encyclopaedia of the Convention – the CMS Family Guide – with a target publication date in the first half of 2007. A poster aimed at children and a leaflet aimed at the private sector were also being planned.

Agreements and Conservation Activities

20. A number of new Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were being negotiated. Consideration was being given to how to fund MoU in future, as the past model under which the costs of administering this type of instrument were met from the CMS core budget was no longer sustainable.

21. Australia announced that it would provide Aus\$25,000 to facilitate the first meeting of signatories of the Pacific Island Cetacean MoU. The Secretariat was working with BirdLife International on grassland birds of southern South America and progress was also being made on an instrument for Andean flamingos.

22. The *Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique* (IRSNB) was lead partner in developing the proposed Gorilla Agreement, involving all ten range states of Central and West Africa.

23. The proposed partnership arrangement for the East Asian Australasian Flyway partnership was a unique approach for CMS. The statement by CMS for the forthcoming EAA Flyway Partnership meeting was agreed by the Committee for distribution to all range states, not just CMS Parties. A short strategic paper on flyways would be prepared for consideration at the next Standing Committee meeting.

24. In closed session, the Committee also considered and set the parameters for the possible merger of the ASCOBANS Secretariat into the parent Convention Secretariat following the inconclusive administrative discussions at the first session of the ASCOBANS MOP5 in Egmond aan Zee. The MOP would reconvene in The Hague in December.

25. A number of projects were underway with the support of the CMS Small Grants Programme, including work to conserve marine turtles along the Peruvian coast; a study on the migration of the Atlantic leatherback turtle, action plans for Asiatic birds - the black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*); the spoon-billed sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*) and the Chinese crested tern (*Sterna bernsteini*).

26. The meeting noted the Secretariat’s report on CMS and the 2010 Biodiversity targets and the Secretariat’s contribution towards the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership.

27. The Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds had been enlarged and now had 13 members. CMS had provided financial support to Wetlands International to develop an Early Warning System.

Scientific Council

28. The appointment of three new specialist Councillors was confirmed (see above under “Follow up from COP8 and Resolutions”). The Council was next to meet in March 2007 in Bonn. Indications showed that the budget allocated to support travel was €40,000 short of the €86,000 needed. The question of the Council’s modus operandi and frequency of meetings had to be addressed.

Next meeting

29. The provisional date for the 32nd meeting of the Committee was set for the autumn of 2007.

32nd Meeting (8-9 November 2007)

30. Hilary Thompson announced that the UK had decided to stand down from the Chair of the Committee but would remain a member. Australia was elected in the UK’s place, and Andrew McNee presided over the rest of the meeting. Ukraine was elected Vice-Chair.

Finance

31. The report on the two CMS Trust Funds showed both with healthy balances. Australia was in the midst of an election campaign and therefore was unable to make long-term commitments until the election was over. The Italian government had however promised considerable levels of funding to ensure that the COP was a success. Voluntary contributions were running at record levels (€1.5 million) and €500,000 had been received from TUI, the commercial partner in Year of the Dolphin. Further contributions would be needed however to implement fully the Strategic Plan (AEWA reinforcing this point reported that it had received just 10% of the €5million it needed for full implementation of its plan). Germany had made a donation of €1 million to the “Wings over Wetlands” project. The total budget for the project was US\$12 million with half coming from GEF. The UK had made donations towards developing online reporting and for the shark initiative.

COP8 Resolutions

32. The UK announced that it was funding a project to establish indicator species for climate change in response to Resolution 8.13.

33. The Resolution adopting the CMS Strategic Plan called for collaboration between CMS and its agreements and the Agreements had been asked to discuss possible synergies with their advisory bodies. The Secretariat reported on developments regarding Avian Influenza and the Scientific Task Force, which had a new member in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. With support from the Netherlands, a leaflet had been produced in various languages. Work was being carried out to better understand the role of “bridge species” in transmitting the disease.

COP9

34. This was probably the last scheduled meeting of the Standing Committee before COP9 in Rome in December 2008. The most significant policy document examined by the Committee was the Secretariat's discussion paper on the future shape of CMS, which considered *inter alia* the streamlining of central service functions for the CMS Family on capacity building, fundraising and information and advocated the creation of three further regional nodes in Africa, Central/South America and Oceania, closer to the Convention's "hot spots". A range of views was expressed on the advisability of this proposal and its timing. A Working Group was established to elaborate the paper for consideration at the COP.

35. A report reviewing the conservation status of all Appendix I species was due to be presented to the COP.

36. A series of other associated meetings was also being scheduled immediately before and after the COP, including the Standing Committee, the Scientific Council, MoU and Agreement meetings and negotiation meetings for further instruments.

Membership

37. The Secretariat reported that membership of the Convention had reached 104 with two more in the pipeline (Cuba and the Islamic Republic of Iran). The accession of Yemen had brought the total to 100 and this milestone had been celebrated with a reception jointly organised with the German government.

Agreements

38. The Agreement on Gorillas had been negotiated and would enter into force as soon as three of the ten range states had ratified it. The negotiations had benefited from generous support from France. The Secretariat was mandated to explore with GRASP the options for administering and advising the Agreement and preparing for the first MOP. 2009 would be declared "Year of the Gorilla".

39. MoUs had been signed for the Dugong, Monk Seal and Southern South American grassland birds. Progress had been achieved in negotiating instruments for cetaceans in the eastern Atlantic and raptors, while a meeting was scheduled to take place in the Seychelles in December 2007 to plan the way ahead for the protection of sharks. The Secretariat reported on the progress of the new arrangements for the administration of ASCOBANS since the merger and further consideration was given to the best means of progressing activities in the Central Asian Flyway.

40. The MoU for the Ruddy-headed Goose had been signed by the two range states, Argentina and Chile. The Dugong negotiation meeting in Abu Dhabi had been successful with seven states signing the MoU. A further meeting on raptors was envisaged and an offer had been received from the United Arab Emirates to host it but funds needed to be found.

Year of the Dolphin

41. The Secretariat gave a presentation on the achievements made under the Year of the Dolphin, which had been extended for a further year. The emphasis had however shifted from public awareness to promoting conservation projects. As part of YOD Germany had

hosted a symposium on marine protected areas and two NGOs based in Belgium and the Netherlands had established “the Dolphin Fund” which was making donations to YOD activities.

42. The programme of activities for the “Year of the Gorilla” in 2009 would be presented at the next COP.

Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes

43. A report was received on progress with the project for Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes, for which initial funding had been received from the *Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial* (French World Fund for the Environment) and this had been followed by a grant of €1.9 million from DG Development in the European Commission. A further €175,000 still had to be raised. A mission had been undertaken to investigate reports of hunting parties being licensed to operate in Niger.

Secretariat Staffing

44. The Secretariat’s strategy of utilising consultants and interns flexibly was generally endorsed. This had helped to alleviate the problems caused in July-September 2007 when three professional officers had left the Secretariat in a short period: the Administrative and Fund Management Officer, the Agreements Officer and the Inter-Agency Liaison Officer. Measures were already in hand to advertise the first two posts.

Outreach

45. A number of regional outreach workshops (e.g. in Washington DC and, in conjunction with Ramsar, in Panama City) and visits had taken place (e.g. to Brazil) to promote the Convention and encourage accession by non-Parties. The Secretariat was continuing to undertake fund-raising initiatives to support conservation and information projects, and was continuing to liaise with the German association, the Friends of CMS (*Freunde der Bonner Konvention e.V.*). The Friends were making made funds available to gorilla project work in the Congo basin.

46. At a lunchtime ceremony, the “CMS Family Guide” was officially launched. The 100-page encyclopaedia covered all aspects of the Convention’s history, structure and activities and had been realised with the support of UNEP DELC.

47. As the CBD COP9 was taking place in Bonn in May 2008, CMS had the opportunity of promoting its activities and particularly those activities linked directly to CBD objectives to a wider audience. CMS would be present in the “plaza of biodiversity” adjacent to the CBD COP venue and would hold a reception highlighting key CMS activities.

33rd Meeting (22 September 2008)

48. For the first time, the meeting was conducted partly in Bonn at the UN Campus and partly as a teleconference, with Committee members participating from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Cameroon and Peru. Andrew McNee (Australia) chaired the meeting from Bonn.

Finance and Administration

49. Secretariat staffing had presented some challenges with a number of vacancies in key posts over the past 18 months but consultancies had helped ensure that the work was done. The new Administration and Fund Management Officer, Sergey Kurdjukov, would be taking up his post the following week. An office had been established in Washington DC with the assistance of the US Fisheries and Wildlife Service. The main task of this office was to raise the profile of the Convention in North America.

50. The Executive Secretary presented the budget proposals for 2009-11, which had two options. The first provided for a very modest growth of the budget to cover inflation, recognise the Convention's growth and established three posts to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity and the second allowed for a further four posts to strengthen the Convention's operations across the board and the adoption of the SONAR reporting system and greater capacity building. Both options were based on the Convention's medium term plan (MTP), the first being 4% below the MTP and the second 6% above. The CMS Trust Fund would probably have a modest surplus at the end of the 2005-8 triennium.

Agreements

51. A meeting of the IOSEA turtles MoU had been held in August 2008 in Bali. The MoU now counted 27 signatories. The Dugong MoU had also grown to 11 signatories. Abu Dhabi had offered a considerable sum of money to finance a Coordination Unit for the Dugong MoU, the western region of IOSEA and the possible raptor instrument. The West African Turtle MoU signatories had adopted an amendment establishing an advisory committee to help progress activities.

Merger of UNEP/ASCOBANS Secretariat with UNEP/CMS Secretariat

52. An independent review was taking place and the findings would be reported to CMS COP9 and ASCOBANS MOP6. The Netherlands had provided the necessary funds.

Standing Committee

53. The composition of the Standing had last been reviewed at COP6 in 1999 when the Convention had only 65 members. The Secretariat presented a paper setting out the options for expanding the membership of the Committee. Considerations included whether Asia should be a single region with two representatives or be split into two single member regions, and whether Europe and Africa's representation should be raised to three or remain at two.

CMS Thesis Award 2008

54. Dr. Samantha Petersen had won the second CMS Thesis Award with her study of 'Understanding and Mitigating Vulnerable Bycatch in southern African Trawl and Longline Fisheries'. The prize would be awarded during the COP in Rome.

Resolution: Development of CMS

55. France, on behalf of the EU, presented a draft resolution, which was being discussed in European circles. The resolution dealt with the future organisation of the Convention. Comments were invited from the Committee. The final draft would be submitted to the Secretariat by the 1 October deadline.

COP9 Preparations

56. The Secretariat reported that 65 Parties, 13 non-Parties and 35 NGOs had already registered for the COP. The Committee considered the agenda and schedule and some minor adjustments were proposed. Documents were being posted on the CMS website as and when they became available.

Next Meeting

57. The next meeting of the Standing Committee would take place immediately before the COP on 30 November.

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