

50th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gandhinagar, India, 16 February 2020

UNEP/CMS/StC50/Rev.1/Report

REPORT OF THE 50th MEETING OF THE CMS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Opening remarks and introductions

1. The Chair, Øystein Størkersen (Norway), welcomed participants and recorded his thanks to the Government of India, and the State Government of Gujarat, for their superb efforts in hosting COP13.
2. The Executive Secretary, Amy Fraenkel, extended her warm thanks to the hosts and participants and noted the very impressive organization of the meeting. She also gave special thanks to the Chair, for whom it was the last meeting, and to the entire membership of the Standing Committee for their efforts while she had been Acting Executive Secretary. She stressed that she would welcome input and advice from all during the COP as she embarked on her new role. She then summarized the key items for discussion during the 50th meeting of the Standing Committee. COP13 was an important moment for CMS, kicking off what could be seen as a 'super year' for international biodiversity policy, and following the IPBES report in 2019 that highlighted the risk of extinction for up to a million species. She greatly looked forward to meeting together over the coming days to secure a strong future for CMS.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and Meeting Schedule

2.1 Provisional Agenda and Documents

2.2 Provisional Annotated Agenda and Meeting Schedule

3. The Chair referred the meeting to documents UNEP/CMS/StC50/Doc.2.1 and UNEP/CMS/StC50/Doc.2.2, and invited comments or proposals for amendment from the floor. There being no such interventions, both documents were adopted without amendment.

5. Preparations for CMS COP13

4. The Executive Secretary remarked that COP13 had the highest number of registered participants of any COP to date and introduced Ms Melanie Virtue (CMS Secretariat) who outlined the processes under which the COP would work. As per past COP practice, following the opening plenary, the Committee of the Whole (COW) would be constituted, which would in turn establish Working Groups. The question remained as to whether an Institutional Working Group would be necessary or if institutional matters could be dealt with by the COW.
5. The number of Working Groups to be established could make it difficult for small delegations to participate fully. It was hoped that this challenge could be alleviated by Working Groups establishing their Agendas and programmes of work during their initial meetings on the evening of 17 February. This information would be posted on the conference website to assist delegations in deciding their participation.

6. Candidates for the Chair of the COP and the Chair of the COW had already been identified, but the position of Vice-Chair of the COW remained open.
7. Ms Virtue emphasized the importance of the Regional Coordination meetings in helping the smooth running of the COP and noted the Secretariat staff who would be available to support the meetings if needed.
8. The Bureau, comprising the Chair of the COP (who also acts as Chair of the Bureau), the Chair and Vice-Chair of the COW, the Chair of the Scientific Council, and the Chair of the Standing Committee, would meet each evening.
9. The representative of South Africa, representing the Africa region, asked for the number of parallel Working Groups to be kept to a minimum, to maximize the chances of participation. She considered it particularly important that there should not be more than two parallel sessions running simultaneously.
10. The representative of Germany agreed with South Africa, saying that the possibility of reducing the number of Working Groups would be very welcome. It was a particular problem if the Budget Working Group overlapped with the substantive Working Groups. In response to Ms Virtue's request for guidance about whether the COW should take up institutional issues, to avoid the establishment of an Institutional Working Group, he considered this a worthwhile approach which would help avoid parallel Working Groups by reducing their number. If institutional issues proved too much to include in discussions of the COW, it should still be possible establish a Working Group.
11. The Chair took note of these suggestions, and expressed his agreement, saying that they reflected the procedure at COP12.

4. Process for the appointment of representatives to subsidiary bodies

4.1 Election of Parties to the Standing Committee

12. Ms Virtue introduced document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.16 which provided guidance for Parties regarding the election of regional and alternate members of the Standing Committee, in accordance with Resolution 9.15. She stressed the importance of the regional groups nominating candidates before Wednesday, 19 February, and reminded delegates that according to Resolution 12.2, paragraph 9, any Parties more than three years in arrears in their contributions to the Convention were ineligible to serve on Convention bodies or to vote at the COP.

4.2 Standing Committee Finance and Budget Sub-Committee

13. Referring to UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.16, Ms Virtue stated that a Finance and Budget Sub-Committee would be established from among the members of the Standing Committee at its first meeting immediately after COP, as per Resolution 9.15 para 1 (e) and the draft budget resolution contained in CMS/COP13/Doc.13.2.

4.3 COP-appointed Councillor Subject Areas – Analysis, Review and Recommendations

14. Mr Marco Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) reminded delegates that there were two categories of membership of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, namely COP-appointed and Party-appointed Councillors. The Scientific Council had reviewed the areas of expertise of the COP-appointed Councillors, a process that had been led by Ms Narelle Montgomery (Australia), who took the floor.

15. Ms Montgomery introduced Document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.1 *COP-Appointed Councillor Subject Areas - Analysis, Review and Recommendations*, which reported on the activities of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council in their review, and submitted recommendations on the matter to COP13.
16. In order to better understand areas where expert advice would be valuable to the Convention, relevant outcomes of the last three COPs had been identified, and additional resources such as the National Reports, the CMS Strategic Plan, as well as, for example, the Aichi Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals had been used.
17. A second activity was the establishment of a continuing review process of these subject areas. This process was summarized in Annex 2 of document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.1.
18. The review resulted in the identification of the following subject areas for COP-appointed Councillors: Birds, Terrestrial Mammals, Aquatic Mammals, Marine Fish, Climate Change, Connectivity/Networks, Marine Pollution, Bycatch, and Invasive Species.
19. Four of the subject areas were retained (Birds, Climate Change, Aquatic Mammals and Bycatch) and Councillors for these were available to remain in their appointed positions following COP13.

4.4 Appointment of members of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council

4.4.1 COP-appointed Councillors

20. Mr Barbieri recalled that following a call for nominations from the Secretariat for candidate experts to fill the new positions of proposed COP-appointed Councillors, all nominations had been published in an Addendum to document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.1.
21. Single candidates had been nominated for each of the newly identified subject areas, with the exception of Invasive Species. Parties were working on nominations for this position, and it was hoped that a decision would be made before the end of COP13.
22. South Africa, representing the Africa region, asked whether the process of nomination of councillors in subject areas where single nominations had been made was closed, or whether further nomination of candidates was possible.
23. Mr Barbieri replied that he was not aware of additional nominations, but that the possibility to nominate further candidates still existed.

4.4.2 Party-appointed Councillors

24. Mr Barbieri recalled that it was the responsibility of the Regional Groups to identify candidates from among Party-appointed members of the Scientific Council. Document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.2/Rev.1 summarized the current situation with regard to existing members for the current triennium. COP13 would renew six or seven of the 15 Party-appointed membership, with members being appointed for a minimum of two triennia. It was also important for the Regional Groups to identify up to three alternate members for each region from among the current membership of the Scientific Council.
25. South Africa, representing the Africa region, emphasized that if a country was three or more years in arrears with its payments to the Trust Fund, it would not be eligible for selection for any subsidiary body of the Convention.

4.5 Credentials Committee

26. Ms Virtue reminded Parties of the importance of nominating five members from at least three regions to participate in the Credential Committee. Names were needed before the opening plenary session on 17 February, and it was suggested that a simple approach would be for each region to nominate one member.

3. Financial and Human resources

3.1 Execution of CMS Budget 2018-2020

27. Enkhtuya Sereenen (CMS Secretariat) introduced this item with a presentation summarizing document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.13.1 and updating some information to reflect the situation as of 14 February 2020. Contributions paid from January 2018 to 14 February 2020, totalled €4,458,800, whilst, €712,175 remained unpaid for the period 2018-2019. An additional voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund of €14,856 had been received from Norway in 2019.
28. Overall, 126 Parties were expected to pay € 2,559,888 for 2018, and € 2,611,087 for 2019, totaling € 5,170,975
29. By 14 February 2020, the Secretariat had collected €2,246,598 for 2018, and €2,212,202 for 2019.
30. €313,290 remained unpaid by 41 Parties in 2018, while €398,885 remained unpaid by 55 Parties in 2019. In addition, the CMS Trust still has unpaid contributions of €260,736 attributed to 25 Parties for the period before current triennium 2018-2020.
31. The overall budget implementation for 2018-19 showed an approved budget of €5,170,975 and redeployed budget of €115,329 from 2020, and expenditure of €4,307,006, resulting in an estimated balance of €979,298. Taking account of actual contributions received in December 2019, the Trust fund balance as at 31 December 2019 was adjusted to €952,000.
32. Ms Sereenen ended with a plea to all Parties in arrears with their payments to settle their contributions without delay, and noted that 20 Parties were now in a position of owing three or more years of contributions, meaning that they were ineligible for holding office in CMS bodies, and excluded from voting in the COP. The Standing Committee members were urged to encourage the relevant Parties to pay their outstanding contributions as soon as possible.

3.2 Budget 2021-2023

33. The Executive Secretary presented a summary of the budget for 2021-2023, and a Programme of Work for the intersessional period between COP13 and COP14, as contained in document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.13.2.
34. Ms Fraenkel said that there had been three principal considerations when drafting the budget:
1. the need to strengthen and rebalance the capacity of the Secretariat;
 2. The increased demand for CMS activities;
 3. The extraordinarily high level of arrears coming into 2020.
35. Four budget scenarios for 2021-2023 were proposed:
1. Zero nominal growth scenario – maintaining the current position and maintaining UN salaries including the statutory 2 per cent increase. This scenario would require cuts to programmes.

2. Zero real growth scenario – also keeping on a par with the 2018-2020 budget but including a consideration of inflation at 2 per cent on costs beyond salaries, with an additional €10,000 per year for staff training.
3. Strengthening the Secretariat scenario – addressing some staffing needs. Considerable restraint has recently been exercised in this area and this scenario would add one new P post and one GS post, while extending some part-time posts. This scenario would add 12.7 per cent to the cost of scenario 2.
4. Scenario 3 plus an additional programme of work. Three additional items central to the work of the Secretariat were envisaged:
 - Analysis of national reports with an estimated budget of €30,000;
 - Development of report on the State of the World's Migratory Species with an estimated €150,000 budget. A preliminary report had already been produced;
 - Additional outreach activities at an estimated cost of €60,000.

This scenario would add 2.82 per cent to the cost of scenario 3.

36. The Secretariat was also considering the possibility of increasing the minimum contribution of Parties to €1,000 or €2,000 per annum, as mandated by the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee in October 2018. This would raise additional funds and possibly encourage more finance ministries to contribute.
37. The Programme of Work between COPs 13 and 14 included all mandates provided by the COP in the light of guidance and advice from the Parties.
38. The Chair emphasized the scale of the cashflow difficulties currently being experienced by the Secretariat, and the continuing scaling down of the funds available in the Trust Fund caused by the reluctance of Parties to agree to higher levels of funding.
39. The Chair of the Scientific Council, Fernando Spina, said it was clear that the conservation status of migratory species was closely related to seasonality of ecological conditions. Migrants were totally dependent on this, which made them ideal indicators of climate change effects. No other instrument provided such indications of trends at global level. Reviewing the conservation status of migratory species as indicators was an essential activity and the report on the State of the World's Migratory Species should be considered a high priority. He very much hoped resources would be found for CMS to do this job.
40. Mongolia, representing the Asia region, stated that the Asia region supported an increase in the budget, and thanked Dr Spina for scientific justification of this.
41. The representative of South Africa, representing the Africa region, called for positive attitudes towards an increase in the budget, considering the IPBES report that a million species faced extinction, as highlighted by the Executive Secretary. There was a strong need to step up efforts to prevent species extinctions. She hoped Parties would bear this responsibility and obligation in mind during negotiations.

6. Hosting of CMS COP14

42. Ms Virtue reported that two Parties had approached the Secretariat with a view to hosting COP14, but she was not yet in a position to provide details. Any Party with an interest in hosting the next COP was asked to come forward with an offer.

7. Date and venue of future meetings of subsidiary bodies

43. Ms Virtue drew attention to the longer than usual anticipated intersessional period between COPs 13 and 14, caused by the early timetabling of COP13, and the assumption that COP14 would take place in the last quarter of 2023. This presented the possibility of additional intersessional meetings of the Standing Committee and the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, but this would depend on the available capacity and budget. She presented four options with various intervals between meetings, including a 'maximum schedule' which included two meetings more than the expected available budget, and a 'minimum schedule' that was within the expected budget.
44. The uncertainty of the timing of COP14 was a complicating factor and this issue would be decided by future deliberations of the Standing Committee and by the Budget Committee of COP13. If additional meetings were required, additional funding would need to be found. The implications for the meeting schedule would need to be understood in the event of a reduction in the budget.
45. France, representing the European region, suggested that if COP14 was held in the second quarter of 2023, it would shorten the intersessional period and allow more appropriate intervals between meetings.
46. The Chair agreed with this but pointed out that much would depend on the host of COP14.
47. South Africa, representing the African region, stressed the importance of releasing the dates of meetings as early as possible to maximize the chances of delegates being able to travel.

8. Any other business

48. There were no items of other business.
49. The Chair stated that since it was his last CMS Standing Committee Meeting after 10 years as a member including six as Chair, he wished to say a few words. He encouraged all Parties to continue to be provocative and bold in giving advice. While the Secretariat was small but many others in the CMS network, and they were all stronger together. He stressed the importance of taking care in the selection of issues to respond to, and the necessity of stepping up support and exchange of capacity between Parties and MEAs. Many Parties needed to improve national legislation. Reporting on compliance should be a major focus of all MEAs. Many Parties needed assistance with national legislation, and with enforcement and the judiciary. Maybe this was an under-developed area where CMS could make more of a difference. He noted that one major accomplishment, the first results of the Global Migration Atlas, would be presented here. An analysis of the status of migratory species would be important for identifying priorities, actions and outreach, but funds were lacking. The UN General Assembly was correct to suggest that a shift in global policies was needed. The Convention should ask itself whether it was focusing on the right topics and collaborating with the best organizations. He ended by thanking all the Executive Secretaries and Standing Committee members with whom he had worked over the years.
50. Ms Virtue, on behalf of the Executive Secretary, thanked Mr Størkersen for having been both the longest-serving member and Chair of the Standing Committee and for being the embodiment of synergies between MEAs in action – since he was also on the Standing Committees of CITES, the Bern Convention and AEWA. She concluded by saying that Mr Størkersen left very big shoes to fill.

9. Concluding remarks

51. The Chair closed the meeting at 12.15 and looked forward to fruitful deliberations during the COP itself.

STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

It was not possible to produce a full Participants List for this meeting. Being the day before COP13, it was attended by a large number of Parties and other observers.

The Members and Alternates of the Standing Committee in attendance were:

Africa	South Africa
	United Republic of Tanzania
Asia	Mongolia (Vice Chair)
	Kyrgyzstan
South & Central America & the Caribbean	Argentina
Europe	Norway (Chair)
	France
	Switzerland
Oceania*	Australia
	New Zealand
Host of COP12	Philippines
Host of COP13	India
Depository	Germany
Scientific Council	Chair

* Representing the region, as neither the member nor alternate from Oceania were able to attend.