





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

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PROPOSED FORMAT FOR NATIONAL REPORTS

Background

The development of an Information Management Plan for CMS figured prominently in the deliberations of the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Cape Town, 1999). Resolution 6.5, in particular, recognized the importance of Parties completing in a timely manner their national reports on implementation of the Convention, as well as the opportunities that exist to make better use of the information provided. At the same time, Resolution 6.5 acknowledged the difficulties experienced by some Parties in compiling the information required for the preparation of such reports, and sought ways of addressing this deficiency.

Among other things, Resolution 6.5 recommended that the format of national reports should be revised to simplify the submission of information and that the content should be amended to encourage provision of information directly related to implementation of the CMS Strategic Plan. Parties were to be encouraged to use the new format voluntarily for reporting to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Rationale

The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) was commissioned in 2001 to prepare a synthesis of all national reports submitted until that time. In the process of conducting that work, the WCMC study arrived at the following conclusions:

- (1) Submission of Party reports remains poor – with a compliance rate through to COP6 in the order of 50%. The content varies markedly, with some reports containing little useful detail.
- (2) There is a significant discrepancy between the official CMS Range State list and the information supplied by Parties as to whether or not a species occurs in a particular State. That is, the CMS Range State list includes Appendix I and II species for which some Parties do not acknowledge themselves, in their reports, to be a Range State; conversely, some Party reports contain information ascribing a species to a particular State, but the information has not found its way into the Range State list.
- (3) There is redundancy between reports submitted from one reporting period to the next, and overlap between national reports submitted to CMS and to its related Agreements.

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Action taken

In the latter part of 2001, the Secretariat worked with UNEP-WCMC to develop a new reporting template, which was reviewed by the Standing Committee at its 23rd meeting (Bonn, December 2001) and amended in the light of comments received. The new format was modeled partly on the old requirements prescribed in Resolution 4.1, but tailored also to take into account the key elements of the Strategic Plan for the Convention on Migratory Species (2000-2005).

The noteworthy features of the new format (specimen at Annex 1) are as follows:

- each Party is provided with a standard report template for completion, by answering specific questions in the space provided (often making use of “tick boxes”) and/or by annexing more detailed information;
- some parts of the report are provided to the Party already filled in (for example, general information, details of species thought to occur in the country), so that the recipient need only correct or update the information provided;
- species-related questions are assigned to five main taxonomic groups: birds, marine mammals, marine turtles, terrestrial mammals (other than bats), bats, and other species;
- explicit information is requested on measures taken to protect Appendix I species, which are among the few binding obligations of CMS;
- Parties are invited to append reports submitted in the framework of each CMS Agreement to which they are member (ideally, these reports would be prepared in a similar modular format);
- Parties are invited to provide information as to how they are implementing certain elements of the Strategic Plan, as well as current resolutions and recommendations of the Conference of the Parties.

The Secretariat circulated the new generic template to all Parties at the beginning of February 2002, in order to familiarize CMS Focal Points with the revised reporting format. This was followed in early March by the provision of templates that had been individualised for each Party (including, for example, information on the CMS-listed species thought to occur in each country). Parties were given the option of submitting reports according to the existing format or to use the new template on a voluntary basis, with the deadline for submission of the latter extended until 30 April 2002.

Expected benefits

The Secretariat considers the new format to have several advantages over the old reporting guidelines, among them:

- more detailed information is expected to be provided on actions undertaken in relation to endangered Appendix I species, thus facilitating regular reviews of conservation status for decision-making purposes;
- information will be submitted in a more standardized format, which will facilitate synthesis and comparative analysis over time, across species and among Range States sharing a given species;
- Parties will have an incentive to submit more comprehensive reports, knowing that the information they provide will be integrated into a broader synthesis and made available more widely for constructive purposes;
- the information gathered will be more readily exchanged among interested parties, for instance by making it available on a controlled-access web site;

- review of implementation of the Strategic Plan and of the Convention itself will be greatly enhanced, thanks to the provision of information in a more structured, targeted manner – without unnecessary duplication;
- information supplied in accordance with the revised reporting format will serve as an important contribution to broader efforts to harmonize reporting requirements among multilateral environmental agreements.

Results to date

A cursory examination of the reports submitted to date using the new format, indicates no particular problems in the way they were completed. Indeed, as was expected, the new format has stimulated Parties to furnish information hitherto not provided in their national reports. A more thorough analysis of the reporting exercise will be provided to the Conference of the Parties in September.

Action requested

Parties are invited to forward to the Secretariat any comments they might have -- both positive and negative -- on their experiences in compiling their national reports using the new format, together with any specific recommendations for amendment of the format.

The Conference of the Parties will be invited to consider all comments received, to agree on any necessary improvements to the format – perhaps after more detailed consideration in a working group established for this purpose – and to formally adopt the revised format as the basis for preparation of reports for the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.