

52nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Online, 21 – 29 September 2021

UNEP/CMS/StC52/Doc.11

REVISION OF THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

Decision 13.14 instructs the Secretariat to develop a proposal to be submitted to the Standing Committee at its 52nd meeting for a revision of the format for the national reports to be submitted to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The present document provides a proposal for a revised format for national reports for the consideration of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is expected to review the proposal, amend as necessary and approve a revised format for CMS National Reports. The Standing Committee is also expected to consider a proposal for additional guidance for reporting on selected topics, and provide feedback to the Secretariat on this and on any further aspects of the national report process for COP14.

REVISION OF THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT

Background

1. Article VI, paragraph 3 of the Convention requires Parties that are Range States of migratory species listed in Appendices I and II to inform the Conference of the Parties, through the Secretariat, of the measures they are taking to implement the provisions of the Convention for those species. This obligation has been fulfilled through the submission of National Reports to each ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties since the entry into force of the Convention.
2. At the request of the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12, Manila, 2017), the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee (StC48, Bonn, 23-24 October 2018) adopted a revision of the format for the national reports to be submitted to COP13, aimed at
 - (i) Improving the ability of national reports to provide information on progress towards implementation of the Convention and to serve as one of the sources of information for the review mechanism established by CMS Resolution 12.9;
 - (ii) Improving the alignment of the national report format with the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023, and the ability of national reports to provide information on assessing progress towards the achievement of the targets contained in that Plan, without creating additional reporting burdens for Parties;
 - (iii) Taking account of the lessons learned and recommendations arising from the analyses of the national reports submitted to the 11th and 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
 - (iv) Resulting in an overall shortening and simplification of the format; and
 - (v) Achieving improved synergies with the reporting processes of instruments within the CMS Family and with those of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Details on the process of revision of the national report format can be found in documents [UNEP/CMS/StC48/Doc.12](#) and [UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.20](#).

3. An online version of the national report template, developed using the Online Reporting System, and accompanied by a guidance document and a technical user guide, was used as a basis for the National Reports submitted to COP13 (see [National Reports | CMS](#) for details). National Reports were successfully submitted by 94 Parties and posted as public documents for COP13 on the [CMS website](#). An analysis of the reports prepared by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre was also made available as part of the documentation for COP13 (document UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.20), and included lessons learned on the use of the new reporting format.
4. COP13 took note of the analysis, and gave instructions and guidance towards the further revision of the National Report Format through Decisions 13.14 and 13.15 – National Reports:

13.14 Decision directed to: Secretariat

The Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, shall undertake a revision of the National Report format and its guidance document to reflect lessons learnt during the reporting period and take into account the outcomes of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and, to the extent appropriate, further strengthen synergies within the CMS Family and with reporting processes of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and submit the revisions to the Standing Committee at its 52nd meeting.

13.15 Decision directed to: Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is requested to consider and, as appropriate, endorse the revision of the National Report format and the guidance document produced by the Secretariat further to Decision 13.14, so that it can be issued at least a year (preferably more) in advance of the deadline for submission of reports to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and make any appropriate recommendations to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties concerning the National Report format, including on its subsequent use.

5. In addition to Decisions 13.14 and 13.15, COP13 addressed the need to improve collection of information on Parties' action to fulfil commitments under the Convention through, *inter alia*, the National Report process in several other decisions. As an example, Decision 13.127 on *Climate Change and Migratory Species* instructs the Secretariat to "...b) develop further the guidance associated with the report for the relevant section of the template as a possible measure for eliciting more and better reports on the implementation of Resolution 12.21 *Climate Change and Migratory Species*; ..."

Other relevant decisions include

- Decisions 13.41 and 13.43 on *Flyways*
- Decision 13.66 on *Marine Wildlife Watching*
- Decisions 13.74 and 13.75 on *Live Capture of Cetaceans from the Wild for Commercial Purposes*
- Decision 13.113 on *Improving Ways of Addressing Connectivity in the Conservation of Migratory Species*
- Decision 13.133 on *Infrastructure Development and Migratory Species*
- Decision 13.137 on *Sustainable Development and Migratory Species*

Development of a proposal for the revision of the format for the national report to be submitted to COP14

6. Pursuant to Decision 13.14, the Secretariat has developed a proposal for the revision of the format for the national report and the guidance document. The proposal is submitted to the Standing Committee for its consideration in the annexes to this document.
7. Annex 1 includes a proposed revision of the format, showing tracked changes to the format adopted by StC48 [National Reports | CMS](#). The document also incorporates the guidance used for the national reports prepared for COP13, including any proposed revision. Annex 2 provides a clean version of the same proposal.
8. In developing the proposal, a few main guiding principles and rationales have been followed:
- Alterations to wording in existing questions and guidance are generally aimed at enhancing respondents' understanding of what information is being requested, taking into account feedback from Parties and lessons learnt, and COP13 Resolutions and/or Decisions, which requested information from Parties, without changing the general intent of the question. Other alterations to wording in questions and guidance are aimed at keeping word usage consistent.
 - Inclusion of new questions is generally aimed at fulfilling requests for information from COP13 Resolutions and/or Decisions.
 - Addition of new boxes in the guidance document is generally aimed at providing explanations for the information to be compiled on specific topics.

- Specific COP13 Resolutions and/or Decisions are noted as potentially relevant in some guidance boxes.
 - References to information sources from other MEAs or international processes are made throughout the revised document with the purpose of encouraging respondents to consult them to identify relevant information from these other sources and promote synergies and consistencies among different reporting and assessment processes.
 - Finally, some structural alterations are proposed with a view to better align the questionnaire structure with the capabilities of the Online Report System used by CMS, This includes changes to the format of question X.1 and the addition of 'short descriptions' for some questions.
9. As noted earlier, several COP13 decisions called for additional efforts to improve information from Parties on actions to fulfil particular areas of implementation of the Convention. With a view to address these specific needs without affecting the consistency and balance of the whole template, the Secretariat proposes to provide targeted guidance for these areas. The Secretariat has developed an example of such extra guidance in relation to the reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Work on Climate Change and Migratory Species, included in Annex 3 to this document. Should this concept of extra guidance be found useful, the approach could be expanded to other topics.

Recommended actions

10. The Standing Committee is recommended to:
- a) review, amend as necessary and approve the proposed revised format for CMS National Reports included in annexes 1 and 2 to this document;
 - b) consider the proposal for extra guidance for the reporting on selected topics included in annex 3 to this document and provide guidance to the Secretariat on the proposed approach;
 - c) give guidance to the Secretariat on any further aspects of the national report process to COP14.