

54th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 11 February 2024

UNEP/CMS/StC54/Report

MEETING REPORT

Opening remarks and introductions

1. The Chair of the Standing Committee (StC), Mr Jitendra Kumar, India and COP13 Presidency, welcomed participants to the 54th Meeting of the StC. He said several important decisions taken by the StC will be considered at COP14.
2. Ms Amy Fraenkel, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), thanked India as StC Chair for steering the Committee through the intersessional period. This was followed by a round of applause. She emphasized that the StC plays a key role during the COP, forms part of the bureau, and helps keep the meeting on course.
3. She shared that the first-ever *State of the World's Migratory Species* would be officially launched during a press conference on Monday, 12 February. She cited significant media interest in the report and that the Associated Press will stream the press conference live, and that the report will help raise the profile about the CMS and the work we are doing.
4. She said the agenda of COP14 is robust in recognition of what is needed to meet the challenges currently faced, and that CMS requires a budget that is fit for purpose. She added that implementing CMS will help implement the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and vice versa. She thanked the CMS team, which is small but passionate.

Adoption of the Agenda and Meeting Schedule

5. The Chair introduced the documents containing the Provisional Agenda and Documents ([UNEP/CMS/StC54/Doc.2.1](#)) and the Provisional Annotated Agenda and Meeting Schedule ([UNEP/CMS/StC54/Doc.2.2](#)). The Chair invited the StC to review them and to make any proposals for amendments, including on matters to be considered under Agenda item 8 (Any other business). As there were no comments from the floor, the agenda was adopted as presented.

Financial and Human Resources

Execution of the CMS budget 2021-2023

6. The Secretariat introduced this sub-agenda item and relevant document ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.13.1](#)), which outlines the status of contributions to the Trust Fund as of 31 October 2023. It provides an overview of the implementation of the CMS budget for 2021 and 2022 and for the period January to October 2023, with projected expenditures until the end of December 2023. Of total assessed contributions of €8,751,747 for 2021-2023, she said: €6,731,984 in contributions had been paid by 31 October 2023; €979,823 were paid after 31 October 2023; and €1,039,940 in

contributions are still owed. She noted that 60 Parties had paid their contributions, and 70 Parties still had contributions due.

7. On the status of prior year contributions in arrears, 33 Parties still owed a combined contribution of €355,557, bringing the total of unpaid contributions to €1,408,485, as of 31 December 2023. This includes the three new Parties.
8. She noted a request for approval to move funds was adopted at StC53, emphasizing that it does not change the bottom line. She said 90 per cent of the budget has been executed, but that the December 2023 estimated expenditure was included as the Books of Accounts had not been closed at the time the report was generated. She said the Trust Fund balance as of 31 December 2023 was €2,821,891.
9. She highlighted that the requested actions are to take note of the report on the execution of the budget for 2021-2023 and to urge Parties to pay their outstanding contributions in accordance with CMS Resolution 13.2.
10. Ms Fraenkel noted several discussions over the last two StCs on how to improve the situation with arrears and that regularly updating the status of countries with arrears has led to more countries making efforts to settle their arrears. She highlighted discussions with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to pilot a tool that makes it easier for CMS Parties to pay their contributions. She said countries that are three or more years in arrears cannot hold office in Convention bodies, such as the COP, StC and the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC).
11. As there were no comments, the StC took note of the document.

Budget 2024-2026 and Programme of Work for the Intersessional Period between COP14 and COP15

12. Ms Amy Fraenkel, CMS Executive Secretary, introduced this sub-agenda item and document ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.13.2/Rev.1](#)), which includes a proposed budget for 2024–2026, with three budget scenarios. Before introducing the three scenarios, she emphasized, among others: the unique role of CMS, including its leadership role on ecological connectivity; the contribution of CMS to the GBF and other multilateral environmental agreements; and recent reports on Climate Change and Migratory Species, Migratory Species and Health, and Insect Decline. She said a new Strategic Plan for Migratory Species for 2024 to 2032 will be discussed as the current one expires this year. She thanked the Governments of New Zealand and Georgia for leading on this process.
13. She then introduced the three budget scenarios. Under Scenario 1 (zero nominal growth), no increase is foreseen with respect to the approved budget for the triennium 2021–2023. This option provides funding for all regular Secretariat staff positions currently filled (or under recruitment), using the standard salary scale from COP13 with a 2 per cent increase per annum. The figures for the remaining budget items remain as adopted by COP13. To maintain the same budget level, no funds are allocated for meetings of the governing bodies, nor for staff travel to COP15. The Secretariat will need to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to organize meetings and for other areas where no funding is allocated. Under Scenario 1, the total budget to be shared by Parties is €8,751,749.
14. Scenario 2 (zero real growth) would see an 11.56 per cent increase from the 2021–2023 budget. It includes increased meeting costs for the StC and ScC and Umoja costs, plus 2 per cent inflation across all budget items from the COP13 budget. Additional Party-

appointed Councillors would also be added (one per region), as was discussed by the ScC. Under Scenario 2, the total budget would be €9,763,014.

15. Scenario 3 assumes moderate growth and includes the addition of funds for strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat by adding several new positions and increasing the amount of technical and information materials and services. This scenario includes funding to hire: a Deputy Executive Secretary (P5), which currently remains vacant as funds were previously not available to hire one; one Aquatic Team staff member (P2); one Documents Officer and Editor at the P2 level; and funding for 1.5 positions for general services, including conference services. It also includes some funding for a consultant for the InforMEA portal and for communications and outreach to ensure information and reports get disseminated to raise the profile of CMS. Scenario 3 foresees an increase of 17.09 per cent with respect to the zero real growth budget scenario (Scenario 2), with a total budget of €11,431,361.
16. A representative of New Zealand, speaking on behalf of the Oceania region, requested clarification of the budget in Scenario 2 if the Sessional Committee was not enlarged by an additional member of each region. She also asked for some context as to why a costed Programme of Work (PoW) for the COP is not presented for adoption at the COP, but its adoption is only envisaged at a later stage. A representative of Monaco, on behalf of the European region, supported New Zealand's comments and questions and also asked for precise salary costs, not only average costs.
17. In response, Ms Fraenkel noted that the increased cost for meetings of the ScC-Sessional Committee (SC) include adding more members and increased travel costs. She said due to lack of capacity, the PoW could not be developed in time. She expected that the COP will ask the Secretariat to prepare a costed PoW, which will be shared with the StC to consider and endorse intersessionally. She also said StC55 will discuss the Secretariat's proposal for intersessional meetings of the StC and ScC-SC. She suggested online meetings or written correspondence were possible.
18. The StC took note of the document.

Process for the appointment of representatives to subsidiary bodies

Election of Parties to the Standing Committee

19. The Secretariat introduced this item ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.16](#)), recalling that in accordance with Resolution 9.15, committee membership will be renewed at every ordinary meeting of the COP. She said StC members can serve for two terms and will be nominated and approved by the COP on Saturday, 17 February. Given that countries in arrears for more than three years cannot hold office in Convention bodies, she said one current position for the Africa group and two from the alternate members in the Asia group are likely to be open and will have to be replaced, unless their arrears are settled by Friday, 16 February. There will also be one open seat in the Europe group to replace Georgia, which had already served two terms, while the seat of Uzbekistan needed to be replaced in the Asia group due to their taking on the ex officio seat as host of COP14. She encouraged regional groups to discuss vacancies and nominations and to inform the Secretariat about their decisions.
20. The StC took note of the document.

StC Finance and Budget Sub-Committee

21. The Secretariat explained that the Finance and Budget Sub-Committee is comprised of five members, one from each of the CMS regions. The role of the Sub-Committee is to help oversee all financial matters and advise the Executive Secretary on the conduct of the Convention's budget. She asked regional groups to discuss nominations in their groups, which would need to be agreed by the 55th meeting of the StC after COP.
22. The StC took note of the report.

Scientific Council Membership

23. The Secretariat introduced the document for this sub-agenda item ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.15.2/Rev.1](#)), which provides information for Parties on the appointment of ScC-SC members. Annex 1 of the document provides a comparative analysis of candidates for the COP-appointed Councillors for the subject areas of Aquatic Mammals and Climate Change, while Annexes 2 and 3 provide the full details of the nominations for COP-appointed Councillors for Aquatic Mammals and Climate Change, respectively. She thanked the outgoing councillor for terrestrial mammals Mr Rodrigo A. Medellín for his work for the Scientific Council and said that candidates for replacement of this position were not sought by the Secretariat, as this position is currently held by two Councilors, and the mandate of the other one continues. There is, therefore, no need to seek appointment of a new Councillor for Terrestrial mammals. She encouraged Parties to consider the nominations for the COP-appointed Councillors for Aquatic Mammals and Climate Change in their regional meetings which will be finalized during the last plenary session on Saturday, 17 February.
24. Regarding Party-appointed Councillors, she said regions should consider whether members will extend their tenure or whether new ones will be appointed and communicate their nominations through their bureau members.
25. There were no comments and the StC took note of the document.

Overview of COP14

26. The Secretariat said that because of the packed agenda, much of the work will have to be undertaken in parallel. She said the COP would establish the Committee of the Whole (COW) and Credentials Committee. The COW, in turn, would establish Working Groups for avian, aquatic and terrestrial species, and for the budget. Other working groups, including on cross-cutting agenda items could be established as needed. She said the Working Groups would meet during lunch and in the evenings, and that the Bureau will meet each evening.
27. The representative of New Zealand, speaking on behalf of Oceania, asked if there would be a system in place for delegates to know when the various agenda items would be discussed in the Working Groups, given that they are meeting in parallel. She noted there was such a system for the recent ScC-SC meeting.
28. The Secretariat answered that the Chair of the COW will, if possible, announce when specific agenda items are being discussed. She said the species WGs will, during their first meetings, determine the order of agenda item discussion and when they will be discussed. The Secretariat agreed that it might be helpful to announce online when certain documents will be discussed but that, currently, there is no system in place, as was the case for the ScC-SC6. She said the COW will try to conclude discussion for cross-cutting issues, but will request the working group for crosscutting issues to

consider some agenda items if deemed necessary for drafting or more in-depth discussions.

29. With no further comments, the StC took note of the report.

Hosting of COP15

30. The Secretariat said they were still looking for possible hosts. She noted three countries had approached the Secretariat to inquire about requirements for hosting, but nothing has been confirmed.

31. The StC took note of the report.

Dates and venues of future meetings of subsidiary bodies

32. The Secretariat, noting that the meeting of COP15 is likely to take place in October or November 2026, and that under its Rules of Procedure the StC is expected to meet once a year, said StC56 is likely to meet in February or March 2025 and StC57 will meet in February or March 2026.

33. She said that the meeting dates of the ScC-SC7 have already been fixed for 17-20 September 2024 and ScC-SC8 will meet in June, July or August 2026, as required to review documents for COP15.

34. There were no comments from the floor and it was agreed that the meetings would take place as proposed.

Any other business

35. No additional agenda items were proposed, and no other issues were raised under this agenda item.

Concluding remarks

36. The Secretariat thanked participants for attending StC54 and thanked India for chairing the StC over the past three years.

37. In concluding remarks, the Chair summarized some of the StC's work over the past three years. He mentioned that StC52 was notable in that it was the first time that a meeting of the StC was held online. He thanked all StC members, Party observers, and IGO and NGO observers, for their contributions to the Committee. He also thanked the CMS Secretariat for all their work and closed the meeting just before 12:00.