TENTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Bergen, 20-25 November 2011
Agenda Item 18

CMS FAMILY WEBSITE PROPOSAL

(Prepared by the Secretariats of CMS, AEWA, ASCOBANS, EUROBATS and the Gorillas Agreement)

The proposal presented in this document is a result of internal discussions at the CMS Secretariat as well as the co-located Agreement Secretariats. As part of the overall approach of the CMS Management to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the CMS Family as a whole and to improve its visibility, also stimulated by the Future Shape process, the idea was launched to develop a common CMS Family Website. This idea was further elaborated during the CMS Family retreat in March 2011. It was agreed there to establish a Working Group of members of the Bonn-based Secretariats with the aim to better harmonize the Convention and Agreements websites. One of the initial outcomes of this process was the recognition of the need to develop a joint web-based platform to communicate better about the activities of the different Agreements and the Convention and to clearly showcase their relationship to one another. The latest exercise by the Working Group was a group brainstorming exercise to collect feedback on what such a website could encompass. All CMS and co-located Agreements staff present on that day participated in that exercise.

Introduction

1.   From the above-listed Secretariats' perspective, the current CMS website fails satisfactorily and adequately to fulfil its mandate to service the information requirements of the Parties and other stakeholders. The CMS website together with the existing Agreements and MOU websites also fail to project the institutional "Family" structure of CMS and its Agreements and MOUs.

2.   The existing CMS website is a static, basic HTML website which was developed eight years ago and thus does not adhere to current web standards. The above-mentioned need for a technological upgrade also applies to the AEWA, ASCOBANS and EUROBATS websites.

3.   The current technical set-up of all CMS and Agreement websites does not allow web content to be automatically shared between the CMS Family entities nor can it be linked with external databases or portals. CMS Family documents and data cannot automatically feed into the InforMEA system or other data repositories run by UNEP, for example. To resolve this shortcoming, a clearly defined backend database system is urgently needed.

4.   Other major drawbacks include the unavailability of content in the three working languages of CMS, the static and unstructured presentation of data, and the resulting challenges in navigating through the sites. The mission and the work of the CMS Family could be more adequately presented through the design and structure and a more intuitive and user-friendly navigation system.

5.   In order to improve their services to the Parties and their collaboration with other MEAs, the Secretariats aim at modernizing and improving the online presentation of CMS and its co-located Agreements. This would allow the CMS Family to:

1. **Enable information-sharing** between the CMS Family entities and with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) through InforMEA and other external data repositories; ensure greater compatibility and integration of data across the CMS Family;
2. **Enhance accessibility** by making more content available in all CMS official languages and using more effective search tools; and
3. Make better use of up-to-date web technologies to **increase interactivity** on the website and to include more audio-visual/multimedia content.

The vision for a new CMS Family Website:

1.   Information sharing through improved data access and integration

6.   Ensuring accessibility and integration of data is key to improving the service to the Parties and other stakeholders and will be essential to enable the interoperability of CMS Family data with online services such as InforMEA, and the CMS Family Online Reporting System (ORS). Setting up a new CMS Family website which is built on a carefully planned web-based data repository and a Content Management System is a prerequisite to technically enable interoperability and better management of CMS Family information.

7.   Through the development of a carefully planned back end database structure for the CMS Family, all existing and future web content would be stored in a web-enabled data repository. This would allow for better access to and sharing of CMS Family data, ranging from focal point and experts contact data to information submitted via national reports, country profiles, species information, a common calendar of events, and all CMS Family COP and MoP decisions tagged by keywords.

2.   Enhancing accessibility through improved presentation and information retrieval

8.   The goal is to increase the content available in all three official languages of the Convention and to offer a new, more visual and dynamic CMS Family website. The database structure described in (1.) would significantly improve the search for information on the website. It would allow for the development of different search tools, including for example interactive maps for searching country data and experts contacts. Browsing for information on species, migration routes, range states, Agreements and MoUs per country or region would become easier and more intuitive.

3.   Increasing interactivity through design and multimedia

9.   The vision for a new CMS Family website is to use state-of-the-art web technology to reflect adequately the mission and structure of CMS and the CMS Family. CMS and its associated Agreements and MoUs will thus be showcased as a coherent group with differing

individual identities. Such differences will be realized through design, content and maintenance.

10. The new website would also put the species and the conservation activities of the CMS Family in the forefront through increased use of inspirational and educational material. Interactive maps, photographic and video material would strengthen the message on the work of CMS, the Agreements and MoUs and support overall outreach and awareness-raising efforts. They would encourage any visitor of the website to discover the many aspects of the work of the CMS Family.

11. Last but not least, a CMS Family website would lead to increased efficiency by streamlining the information on all the documents and activities. A Content Management System would allow for an easier maintenance of the website, and duplication of content and efforts could be better avoided.

12. Although this initiative started amongst CMS and the Bonn-based Agreements, it is open to include any other CMS Agreement or MoU not represented in this proposal and interested in participating in it at a later date. This can be in the development phase as well as after the implementation.

Budget Implications

13. Implementing what is described above requires different expertise over an extended period of time. It implies several work packages: 1) developing a concept of the website and its structure, specifying clearly what is needed; 2) identifying a server where the website and data repositories are to be hosted; 3) setting up the structure of the data repositories and the interface with external systems (e.g. InforMEA, Online National Reporting System, UNEP databases); 4) designing the layout of the website; 5) developing the website based on a Content Management System that is to be selected.

14. The overall costs for this project amount to an estimated €127,500
(UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.18b, Budget 2012-2014)

15. The translation costs of the current content are estimated at €40,000 plus an additional €12,000 for future pages in 2012-2014 (according to Future Shape calculations).

Background

16. One of the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 is "To ensure that the conservation and management of migratory species is based on the best available information" (Objective 1). The Plan highlights the importance of the availability of good scientific information and traditional knowledge, and the role of the Convention's Scientific Council to initiate, support, and promote relevant research and to collect data on the status of species, threats, and responses to these threats. Making such data available and easily accessible is key to fulfilling this objective.

17. As has been outlined in the Outreach and Communication Plan 2012-2014 (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 10.7 "Outreach and Communication issues"), creating a new website or portal is a priority for enhancing the information capacity of CMS and the CMS Family. Such a new website, built on a Content Management System, would also facilitate the implementation of further priorities of the Plan, namely the integration with InforMEA and the Online Reporting System (ORS) and other information services. The Outreach and Communication Plan also highlights the potential synergies of a new website or portal.