



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



16TH MEETING OF THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

Bonn, Germany, 28-30 June 2010

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Agenda Item 11.0

SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat in consultation with councillors who attended the Activity Planning Meeting, 13 June 2009)

1. The Small Grants Programme (SGP), since its creation in 1994 by the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, has played a crucial role in promoting small-scale conservation and research projects for a variety of taxa. The SGP has proved successful at making the Convention a flexible instrument meeting species' conservation needs (so far more than 50 projects have been supported). This has been especially true in developing countries where lack of resources would not otherwise allow these projects to be implemented. The programme has furthermore operated as a fundraising tool with the result of triggering more ambitious conservation initiatives.
2. Up until 2005 the SGP was regularly funded by withdrawals from the CMS Trust Fund's accumulated surplus. Since COP8, subsequent to exhaustion of the Convention's reserves, the funding system has had to rely exclusively on voluntary contributions from Parties, either donated generally or earmarked for specific projects.
3. This has led to a less than satisfactory state of affairs because, despite successful fundraising efforts on the part of the Secretariat (even without a dedicated officer), donors have shown more interest in other activities of the Convention's work plan rather than in the projects identified under the Small Grants Programme.
4. On several occasions, the CMS Scientific Council has expressed its dissatisfaction regarding the change of this vital funding mechanism. It was particularly lamented that the choice of projects was based on the demand of donors rather than on conservation priorities and that funding through voluntary contributions alone was unreliable.
5. At both its 14th and 15th session, the Chair formalised the discontent of the Council through statements (Annex I) which were submitted to the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Rome, December 2008). The Council presented two alternative solutions to resolve this problem - one that envisages the continuation of the system in place supported by a strengthened fundraising plan and another aimed at restoring the previous funding mechanism.
6. COP9 took note of the request made by the Council but did not endorse the option to alleviate the current short-comings of the programme through a return to budget funding.

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7. The Scientific Council Activity Planning Meeting, which took place on 13 June 2009 in Bonn, reviewed and made some considerations on the proposals presented by the previous meeting of the Council (15th session, November 2008, Rome) and provided some further suggestions on the future of the programme. The meeting also decided to prepare a paper for the next Scientific Council meeting in liaison with the Secretariat. The present document has been drafted by the Secretariat and circulated among the participants of the meeting.

8. Among several issues raised, the meeting discussed the decision of COP9 (Resolution 9.14) to invite the UNEP Executive Director to consider reallocating part of the 13% Programme Support Costs (PSC) charged on voluntary contributions to CMS activities including projects under the SGP. Participants agreed that the Chair of the Scientific Council should follow up to the communications sent by the former CMS Executive Secretary in 2009 to request assigning a considerable portion of the total PSC income for the period 2006-2011 to the SGP.

9. However, it has to be mentioned that UNEP already ploughs back the PSC into CMS in the form of personnel. In fact the CMS Administration and Fund Management Unit, which is composed by 5 staff positions (1 position at a professional level and 4 positions at a general level), is paid through the 13% PSC. Recent correspondence with UNEP HQ on this issue has clarified that the value of the overhead charge which returns to CMS to cover costs of 5 permanent posts is higher than the actual sum deducted by UNEP on assessed and voluntary contributions received by CMS.

10. The meeting in June also suggested creating a parallel fund for voluntary contributions run by an independent organization in order to avoid the 13% contribution to UNEP. This solution would however imply the establishment of a new structure and would not solve the recurrent problem of lack of funds. In addition there would be no formal link with the Convention's bodies which would not guarantee that funds are used for the benefit of CMS species. In the event this option will be the favoured one by Parties, it should be understood that the Secretariat will not be able to be involved in any such activities as it will be against the UN rules and regulations.

11. This shows that both the reallocation of the 13% PSC and the creation of a separate account are neither viable nor conclusive solutions.

12. Reverting to the original funding system was also thought unlikely to take place considering the difficulty of generating surpluses that the Convention has been experiencing in recent years and which is intensified by the current financial crisis.

13. The current situation suggests the opportuneness of considering alternative and/or additional sources of funding to sustain the programme and to give a boost to its operation.

14. Although COP has neither specifically channelled nor earmarked resources for the SGP, the Secretariat is in a position to allocate a fixed budget taken from the Convention Trust Fund to the SGP. Each COP agrees an amount in the core budget for conservation work and COP9 allocated €170,000 for the triennium 2009-2011. While these funds are needed for a number of purposes, some resources could be made available for the SGP for each year of the triennium. This contribution would be sufficient to help keep the SGP alive and would act as seed money.

15. This solution might in fact be complemented by a tailored and enhanced fund-raising programme to address both the private and public sector. Secretariat is now able to strengthen his

fund-raising efforts as COP9 approved a new position (P-2 grade) on partnerships and fundraising, starting from 2010, with the intention of achieving a steady flow of funding to the Convention. This position has been recently filled.

16. This combined solution would avoid the programme having to rely entirely on voluntary contributions and would at the same time allow for its further expansion. The Secretariat will therefore aim to raise voluntary contributions, either in cash or in kind, for projects under the SGP to match the funds available in the core budget. While the Scientific Council will maintain its function to identify priority conservation efforts by submitting and selecting project proposals, the Secretariat will supervise allocation of funds and implementation of projects in consultation with the relevant Scientific Councillor.

17. In order to maintain the continuity of the SGP, while a final decision is to be taken as to its future system of funding, and to benefit from the important role played by the Scientific Council in identifying and supporting the implementation of conservation projects, the Secretariat is inclined to continue calling for project proposals prior to each Scientific Council meeting. The projects that are most relevant for the conservation of the species listed in the Convention's appendices will be selected to be implemented depending on availability of current funding. Projects' eligibility for financial support should however be determined under stricter selection criteria, and the Scientific Council may define these criteria for each specific call for projects. In addition, project proposals should present at least some elements of co-funding as well.

Action requested:

- Scientific Council members are invited to consider and give their views on the proposal for the future of the programme.

Report of the 15th Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council – ANNEX II

Statement of the Chair of the CMS Scientific Council on the Small Grants Programme

The Scientific Council regards the Small Grants Programme as an essential, and possibly the most essential, tool for the implementation of the Convention. Created at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 1994, from 1994 to 2005 the Small Grants Programme was the main instrument through which the Convention was able to bring seed money to significant conservation projects. It changed the nature of the Convention from a somewhat formal administrative instrument to a dynamic and respected conservation tool. It was used to prepare the Action Plans that have been the basis of many of the agreements concluded under the Convention and to support activities in the field of conservation. It had an impact that went well beyond the funds mobilized by the Convention as it was a powerful catalyst to generate much larger funds coming from the Range States themselves or from international donors. Without it, many projects that made a substantial contribution to raising the profile of the CMS and resolving essential conservation issues would never have been possible, particularly in developing countries where funds would not otherwise have been available to initiate projects. Without this dependable, predictable resource that is allocated according to conservation needs, the nature of the Convention would be profoundly changed and its appeal as an effective conservation tool gravely damaged.

This essential mechanism functioned extremely well until 2005. During the past triennium, a change of policy left the funding to the vagaries of donor interest. Predictably, this approach has failed, as the most needed actions are, almost by definition, often the least susceptible to attracting the interest of donors. Indeed, this interest is strongly guided by media potential and will privilege fields that already enjoy widespread attention, rather than those in which the Convention is the best or only tool, and thus can truly make a difference.

The Scientific Council urges the Conference of the Parties to take all necessary measures to revive and sustain the Small Grants Programme in the form it had between 1994 and 2005, namely, that of a predictable, regulated source of funds for real world conservation, driven only by conservation needs and scientific quality, not by attractiveness to potential donors.

This very strong plea was expressed in interventions at plenary sessions of the Scientific Council by the Councillors for the European Community, the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Belgium, Germany, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Australia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, by six Conference-appointed Councillors and by the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, and was unanimously supported by the Council.

The chair also drew attention to the statement on financing of research and conservation projects recommended by the Scientific Council, which had been endorsed by its 14th meeting and is included in the report of that meeting. The statement is reproduced below.

“Having reviewed, in part through the analysis conducted by its taxonomic working groups, the achievements of the first half of the 2005-2008 triennium, the Scientific Council reiterates its opinion that the concrete conservation actions that it has identified

selected, prioritized and recommended for funding have been and are one of the principal assets, and a unique trademark of the Convention, as well as the main pathway through which the convention will contribute to the 2010 target. The Council thus expresses its deep concern at the difficulties of funding that have impeded during the first half of the triennium both the continuation of ongoing actions and the initiation of new ones, in sharp contrast with the situation of past periods. The Scientific Council regards the guarantee of secure funding for the actions it reviews and recommends a vital requirement if the quality of the implementation of the Convention and its relevance to effective conservation are to be maintained and if the credibility and the usefulness of the work of the Scientific Council are to be preserved. Such a secure and predictable level of funding existed in the past as a fixed budget allocated by each COP, taken from Convention reserves.

Two possible ways to recreate this situation appear to exist:

- Either the COP undertakes to again allocate a fixed budget, taken from its resources, and this without reducing the support given to other necessary Convention activities;*
- Or the secretariat expands its present fund-raising programme to generate sufficient resources allowing a fixed sum to be reserved for projects selected by the Council procedure.”*