

12th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, Germany, 18 May 2016



1. Attendance

This is listed in Annex 1 to the Record.

2. Opening remarks

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Jeroen Panis, welcomed the participants and opened the meeting by reminding them of the important anniversaries for EUROBATS in 2016: 25 years of the Agreement, 20 years of the permanent secretariat, and 20 years of International Bat Night (IBN). He thanked the German government and the Secretariat for co-hosting the meeting of the Standing Committee (StC) in Bonn and invited the representative of the host government to address the participants.

Mr. Oliver Schall from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMBU), welcomed the participants on behalf of the host government. He noted that the moment to hold the meeting of the EUROBATS Standing Committee in Germany was a good one, since every year one project related to species protection was selected as the official “United Nations Decade of Biodiversity” project, and this year it was an important bat project – selected just before the AC meeting. It was entitled “Berlin baut (auch) für Fledermäuse!” (“Berlin is constructing (also) for bats!”), and it foresaw restoration of 15 out of 43 underground roosts of bats in Berlin. Mr. Schall concluded by wishing the participants a productive and successful meeting.

The Chair then addressed the participants and reminded them of the StC tasks: To monitor the budget, to oversee the implementation of the policy by the Secretariat, and to provide guidance and advice, the last one being very important for this meeting of the Standing Committee. He especially drew attention to Resolution 7.1., Financial and Administrative Matters, adopted at the 7th Session of the Meeting of Parties (MoP7) in Brussels, which gave the Standing Committee the authority to review the availability of additional funds on regular basis, and to authorise the adaptation of the level of post

occupancy of secretariat staff for implementation purposes. He concluded by wishing the participants a fruitful meeting.

The Executive Secretary to UNEP/EUROBATS, Mr. Andreas Streit, also welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretariat, and expressed his pleasure that, after a number of years, he could greet the StC members again at the EUROBATS Headquarters in the UN Bonn Campus. He also explained that Ms. Sandra Ruecker, being the Administrative and Funds Management Officer for the CMS family, would join the meeting for the finance related agenda items. Mr. Streit was looking forward to the good advice from the members of the Standing Committee and concluded by wishing them a successful meeting.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted without any remarks or additions.

4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure were adopted unanimously.

5. Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee

Since the Chair of the Advisory Committee to UNEP/EUROBATS, Dr. Ferdia Marnell, could not attend StC12, he submitted a written report which was circulated before the meeting as Doc.EUROBATS.StC12.4, and which was presented at the meeting by the Executive Secretary. Mr. Streit confirmed that also from the Secretariat's perspective the previous Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was a very productive one, focusing mainly on the Intersessional Working Groups (IWG). He explained that the AC had launched its work programme the year before and was now entering the phase where it was implementing the decisions from MoP7. However, it was simultaneously preparing new guidelines on a variety of topics for the following MoP. A number of substantial resolutions could be expected to be ready for MoP8. Considering that there were 16 Working Groups with overlapping memberships, it was difficult to have them all meet with sufficient time, but that with the help of the EUROBATS Scientific Officer, Dr. Suren Gazaryan, who had organised and guided the IWGs during the AC meeting, all had functioned very well. The Executive Secretary announced that the AC Record would soon be finalised and published, documenting the outcomes of the meeting and the productive work of the Intersessional Working Groups.

Mr. Schall commented that he had already received the AC21 Record from Germany's scientific focal point for EUROBATS, Ms. Ruth Petermann, who had participated in the AC Meeting. He suggested that all the members of the Standing Committee should

receive the AC Record before they met, so that they could use it as a basis for their discussions. The Executive Secretary explained that only the draft of the record existed which was produced for the adoption at AC21. Germany further suggested to have a bigger distance between the AC and the StC Meetings. Thus, the Secretariat would have enough time to prepare all the documents, including the AC Record. The Executive Secretary thanked Germany for the valid remark and agreed that this should be done for the future meetings.

Dr. Michel Perret, the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, asked for the confirmation that the Advisory Committee was supposed to meet each year, and that in the year before the MoP it was supposed to meet jointly with the Standing Committee, since there had been discussions during the previous MoP to reduce the number of the AC meetings per quadrennium. The Executive Secretary confirmed that this had not been changed. The Vice-Chair also asked if it was possible to see the list of the IWGs, especially pointing out the new ones, so that the Parties and their representatives could make use of the information and the work that was being done by the IWGs. It was confirmed that the list of the IWGs, including the names of their Convenors and members, was to be added as an annex to the AC21 Record. The Vice-Chair once again emphasised the importance of making the Records of the AC meetings available to the StC members as well as to administrative focal points of all the Parties, even if the Party was represented at the AC meeting by its scientific focal point, as the administrative and the scientific focal points of a Party were usually not the same person. Commenting on this, Sweden encouraged the StC members to get in touch with their colleagues serving as scientific focal points to EUROBATS, as this would make discussions at StC meetings easier. The Chair concluded that the following year the Secretariat should try to have the AC Record ready before the StC meeting.

6. Secretariat report

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.EUROBATS.StC12.10, which was circulated before the meeting. He pointed out that, since the previous meeting, there had been no changes in the staff of the Secretariat. The Secretary, Ms. Kate Horn, was on extended maternity related leave – in 2016 it was special leave without pay – and she was expected to return to work in January 2017. Instead of employing a replacement, it was decided to reorganise the tasks within the remaining team of the Secretariat and to use the savings to increase the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer, who had taken over some of the tasks normally carried out by the administrative assistants.

Referring to the Agreement membership, the Executive Secretary regretted that he could not inform the participants of any increase in the number of the Parties. He pointed out that in the case of Serbia the final step of parliament decision was pending. The accession decision had been made at the government level and was supposed to be put forward to the parliament, however, due to new elections, this was delayed. Similarly, Bosnia and Herzegovina informed at AC21 that it was preparing its accession as well. Anticipating the question regarding the accession of Spain, the Executive Secretary informed the participants that, unfortunately, he had no news to report, but that since the country was slowly coming out of the economic crisis, he was optimistic in this regard.

Summarising the outreach activities of the Secretariat, the Executive Secretary mentioned that the EUROBATS Publication Series continued to be extremely popular and that reprints of some of the publications were due. Owing to the technical constraints related to the introduction of the new accounting system, not much in this regard could have been done during the previous period. However, as the situation with the accounting system seemed to be improving, the Executive Secretary expressed his hope that reprints, as well as new materials – including the special publication for the 25th anniversary of the Agreement by Mr. Peter Lina – could be published hopefully still during 2016.

Regarding the EUROBATS projects initiative (EPI), the Executive Secretary drew the participants' attention to the new type of document that was prepared for this meeting upon previous year's request of the Standing Committee. It was a summary report on the outcomes of the EPI projects conducted in the previous year, available as Inf. EUROBATS.StC12.4.

The Vice-Chair commented that the EUROBATS projects initiative was a very important one, which, being launched several years ago, already had a tradition. He emphasised the necessity to disseminate and valorise the results of the EPI projects among all the Parties. In particular, it was necessary to make these results more easily accessible and more visible on the EUROBATS website. As these projects were examples of good practice in different countries, it was advisable to have a list of all the projects, showing also which projects had been realised in which category. It would be good to present the projects on the website in such a way as to enable search by topics or category, at the same time showing which topics had already been covered so far. The Executive

Secretary thanked the Vice-Chair for the valuable proposal, and promised that the Secretariat would look into the ways to make this possible.

7. Administrative matters

a) Introduction of new accounting standards and accounting system in the United Nations and its impacts for EUROBATS

The Executive Secretary welcomed Ms. Sandra Ruecker, who joined the meeting at that moment. He continued by reminding the participants that already during the previous StC meeting he had informed them about the introduction of new accounting standards and a new accounting system as part of the general UN reform. He had also alerted the members about potential implications this might have on the work and functioning of EUROBATS in the transitional period. He further explained that the new system was expected to bring big improvements, but that the transition process was a painful one, taking longer than expected. The transition had not yet been completed, however, EUROBATS was slowly getting operational again. The Executive Secretary expressed his hope that the Secretariat could soon again focus on its activities and not on solving problems, such as paying invoices that had piled up and getting contracts established.

The Executive Secretary invited Ms. Ruecker to also give her comment on the subject. She stated that it was usual for the implementation of a new system to take some time. This was a huge new system, made for the whole of the United Nations with very diverse requirements and that it was a challenge to adapt the system for every part of the UN, a process that required some time.

Germany asked about the backlog in payments developed due to UMOJA, and if this period of backlogs was over or if it was foreseeable when it would be over. Ms. Ruecker stated that the backlog of payments, sometimes also resulting from the fact that no proper contracts existed in the system for a particular business partner, had been eliminated to a great extent.

b) Report on income and expenditure in the financial year 2015 as well as Trust Fund status as of 31 December 2014 and 2015

The Executive Secretary then introduced Doc.EUROBATS.StC12.5, Report on Income and Expenditure for 2015 and apologised that this document could not have been made available before the meeting. He explained that the closure of accounts and financial records for the previous year normally took place in March. Due to the challenges with the new accounting system, the final closure of accounts was this year postponed for about two months and that the Secretariat had received the first financial statement only

one week before the meeting. The Secretariat, together with the colleagues from the Administrative and Fund Management Unit had then done their best to prepare the report as accurately as possible. The Executive Secretary further explained that the report did not present an official UNEP financial statement, but that it was an overview prepared by the Secretariat. The official financial statement was prepared in US Dollar, however, since the EUROBATS budget was in Euro, each year the Secretariat prepared this kind of overview to give the StC members an idea on what the expenditure was in Euro according to the budget lines. For some of the expenditure it was possible to say with absolute accuracy what the sums were in Euro, as the exchange rate to be applied was known with certainty. For other expenditure the average exchange rate of the financial year had to be used. For this reason, some minor deviations in comparison to the official statements could be expected.

The Executive Secretary then proceeded by reporting on the income for 2015. At the end of 2014 there were significant arrears in contributions, amounting to approx. 20,000 EUR. The Executive Secretary was glad to report that almost all of the arrears were paid in 2015, with only two contributions still outstanding. In relation to the total budget these represented a very small amount and had no impact on EUROBATS operations.

Before proceeding to the report on the expenditure for 2015, the Executive Secretary pointed out two important elements that had to be considered when analysing the expenditure. The first element was the evolution of the US Dollar exchange rate versus the Euro, which had a quite significant impact on the EUROBATS budget. For a longer period of time the Euro had been strong and stable, from which effect EUROBATS largely benefitted since every year savings were generated. Starting by the end of 2014 and then even more throughout 2015 the weakness of the Euro had significantly changed the situation. This had to be born in mind when analysing the expenditure report.

A second impact had been caused by the fact that 2015 was the first year of the new budget cycle meaning that the savings from previous financial years could not be carried forward into the operational budget but were transferred into the Trust Fund reserve.

Referring to the expenditure table, the Executive Secretary explained that the biggest impact of the exchange rate shift was to be observed in the staff costs for the Professional staff (P-staff) because these were based on US Dollars. The staff costs for the locally recruited General Service staff (G-staff) were always in the currency of the duty station. Similarly, most of the other expenditure of EUROBATS were in Euro. It was important to

note that the staff costs for the P-staff had not increased, but that a bigger amount of Euro was needed to cover the relating Dollar amounts. The same applied to the programme support costs (PSC), however, their impact was not that heavy, since they presented only a small portion of the budget. The Executive Secretary summarised that the biggest shortfall in the individual budget lines was in the category for the P-staff, but that there was enough contingency in the overall budget lines for the staff costs thus not resulting in a negative impact on the other budget lines. In summary the year end remaining balance was not as high as usual. The members of the Standing Committee would receive the final report once the accounts had been closed and the corrections had been made by the UNEP Headquarters.

Mr. Streit then asked Ms. Ruecker for her final comments regarding the report. She emphasised that most of the figures from the financial statement of UNEP had been reconciled. However, some of the expenditure items were presented in the regular budget that actually relate to voluntary contributions. This was due to the fact that, when UMOJA was implemented, all the projects were lumped together. It took some time to reconcile the project structures and to put them into place. Since this was happening only in 2016, the corrections would enter into the books for 2016 as prior year adjustments.

The Chair then asked what the still open obligations from the old accounting system IMIS and the new system UMOJA were – this was a new item in the report. The Executive Secretary explained that whenever any expenditure was expected, it was necessary to create an obligation in the finance system, which meant that the anticipated amount of funds that would be required for the expenditure was blocked for this purpose. After an expenditure had been effected, the relating obligation could be closed. Due to the transition into the new system, not all obligations could be closed, and until this was done, these obligations were calculated as expenditure. Sweden asked if the Secretariat knew what these still open obligations were made for. The Executive Secretary explained that these were mainly AC related costs for the sponsored participants.

Ukraine asked whether the currency exchange rate would affect the Parties' contributions, and Mr. Streit explained that they would not be affected since they were fixed in Euro. The exchange rate would have the effect on the EUROBATS budget in the sense that the contributions would not have the same value. The Executive Secretary further expressed his hope that, since Euro started getting stronger, this trend would continue, so that the impact in 2016 would be smaller than in 2015.

The Vice-Chair then asked for explanation with regard to the salaries for the P-staff. He was of the opinion that those salaries were also paid in Euro. The Executive Secretary firstly explained that the figures did not present the staff salaries but the staff costs, i.e. what the staff cost the organisation. This included also pension fund contributions, medical insurance, dependency allowance, etc. As for the P-staff salaries, these were in US Dollar, and were processed in US Dollar. The Vice-Chair commented that since the Parties' contributions to the budget were paid in Euro, and the salaries were paid in Euro, he did not understand the need to have the P-staff salaries in US Dollar, since funds got lost through currency conversions. His second question was how it was possible that there was no impact of the exchange rate changes on the costs for the G-staff, but only on the costs for the P-staff. The Executive Secretary explained that, if the staff costs in 2014 and 2015 were compared, it could be seen that there was an impact on the G-staff costs as well, though not as significant as for the P-staff costs. He further clarified that the P-staff costs, i.e. the costs for the internationally recruited staff, were throughout the entire organisation in US Dollar, and the amount in US Dollar remained the same. If this amount was to be paid in a different currency though, the exchange rate had an impact. However, in case of P-staff the expenditure was in US Dollar from the outset and it was generated in US Dollar, whereas in case of G-staff the larger part of the costs were already in Euro from the outset (except for the pension fund and medical insurance) and did not need to be converted.

The Vice-Chair summed up the discussion by saying that whether there was going to be a positive or a negative balance in the budget at the end of a year very much depended on the exchange rate between Euro and US Dollar. When the Euro was strong, the EUROBATS budget and the reserve profited from it, and when the Euro was weak, the organisation profited from it. With that system it was very difficult to plan the budget, especially for the period of four years, and these variations due to the exchange rate between the budget and what the real expenditure was had to be kept in mind. In commenting on this, Mr. Streit reminded the members that for 11 years EUROBATS had benefitted from a positive exchange rate, and that the previous year it was the first time its budget suffered from the exchange rate. From the Secretariat's perspective there was still no reason to switch to US Dollar. With many European countries starting to recover, the Secretariat was optimistic that the Euro would recover as well. At the moment the reserve was still healthy, and it was certain that there would still be a reserve at the end of the quadrennium, though lower than at the beginning. Therefore, it would be advisable

for the following quadrennium not to rely on the withdrawals from the reserve, as it was the case in this cycle, but to plan in such a way as to have the budget fully financed by the regular contributions.

Reporting on the trust fund status the Executive Secretary reminded the members that already in the previous year the Secretariat had not been able to present the final and correct version of the trust fund status. In its search for the reasons why the trust fund status report was not correct, the Secretariat had found that significant contributions from Parties for 2014 had been paid already at the end of 2013 and erroneously not been recorded as income for the financial year 2014.

Ms. Ruecker explained that the financial statements for 2014 were issued very late, and, as already mentioned, necessary adjustments had not been carried out by UNEP. Since these statements were officially issued, they could no longer be corrected, and at the end of 2014 they were showing the trust fund balance of 253,000 US Dollar. From what her unit had analysed, it seemed that the corrections for 2014 were then done in 2015. The draft statements for 2015 were available, but there were still some adjustments that had to be made. From the Administrative and Fund Management Unit's perspective these draft statements seemed to be more or less accurate.

The Chair assumed that these final statements would be made available to the Standing Committee once they were ready. The Executive Secretary promised to circulate the correct statement as soon as the Secretariat received it and that the Secretariat would not rest until this happened. The Vice-Chair emphasised the importance of having a clear picture of the trust fund status, not so much for the current quadrennium, which was planned and budgeted cautiously, but for the planning of the budget for the following quadrennium, for which it was expected that EUROBATS would have a weaker reserve. The Chair then concluded that, particularly for this reason, it was even more important to have a debate on the future scale of contributions, so as to be able to rely on the contributions from Parties, and not on the reserve.

c) Projection of the financial situation in 2016 including voluntary contributions

Mr. Streit drew the members' attention to Document EUROBATS.StC12.6 and stated that it was impressive to see how much funds were received already in 2015 for activities to be carried out in 2016. Most of these funds were used to finance the projects within the European Projects Initiative, but some portion was also used for the organisation of the AC meeting, as well as for the production of publications. The Executive Secretary also

pointed out that, since there was for the first time a budget line in the regular budget dedicated to financing projects, the actual amount spent on projects was higher than the document stated.

The Vice-Chair asked if the Executive Secretary had the impression that the Parties were keener on making voluntary contribution than during the previous years. For him it would have been a signal that the Parties might accept an increase of regular contributions as well. The Executive Secretary stated that he had not observed any specific trend in this regard. Sweden commented that, in its case there was no possibility to make voluntary contributions, but that they were ready to pay regular contributions. It was not advisable to keep the regular contributions low, hoping that the Parties would make voluntary contribution. The Vice-Chair explained that this was not his suggestion, and that he was only asking for the trend in the voluntary contributions as an indication for the Parties' willingness to accept an increase in the mandatory contributions.

8. Secretariat Work Plan

The Chair reminded the participants of the background for this Agenda item, namely Resolution 7.1, which requested the Secretariat to prepare a plan of its activities based on the implementation priorities identified by the AC and which would allow the Committee to look at the level of post occupancy of the Secretariat's staff, based on the implementation purpose and the available budget. The work plan should add additional transparency. The Executive Secretary introduced the document and explained that it had been a time consuming exercise for the Secretariat, since nothing similar had been produced before. There had been some uncertainty whether the format and the level of detail would meet the StC members' expectations. It also required quantifying the Secretariat's activities. Quite a number of activities could have been quantified based on the staff members' experience. For other activities, especially new ones, the staff had to make the best possible guess to come to a reasonable estimate. The Executive Secretary further explained that the plan was divided into 2015 and the first half of 2016. The post of the Scientific Officer was calculated on a 50 percent basis for 2015. For the first half of 2016 the work plan was based on 80% post occupancy and above. If all the activities that were listed were to be conducted, plus the expected activities for the second half of 2016, more than an 80 percent post occupancy of the P2 post would be needed for the second half of 2016. This was deliberately left open so as to incorporate the priorities identified by the AC and the StC. In that sense the document needed to be finalised after the meeting, and in case the StC wished to receive such a document in the future, the

Secretariat would propose that it covered the period from June to May or July to June, so that the priorities identified by both committees and the Parties could be incorporated into it. In summary, the Executive Secretary also made one reservation with regard to the work plan, namely, it reflected an ideal situation in which the Secretariat could focus on its real work. However, much of the time in the previous period was spent on solving problems caused by the transition to the new accounting system, which had affected a lot of Secretariat's activities.

The question was asked as to which of the Parties had requested this document, and it was explained that it was a widely supported request from the time when the new post of the Scientific Officer was established. The document was intended to help the StC get a better idea of what the tasks of the Scientific Officer would be, how much time they would require, what the level of employment should be, as well as what the added value from this post for the implementation of the Agreement was. In order to get a better understanding of the capacity of the whole Secretariat, the request was then extended to all of its staff.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Secretariat for the document which gave a clear vision of its work and activities. He explained that the request for the work plan was not made in order to control the Secretariat, but in order to evaluate the balance between the Secretariat's staff in relation to the available funds. Additionally, the document was not so much intended for the StC, as it was intended as preparation for the following MoP – in order to have a clear vision of what was possible and what was needed in terms of staff capacity. He also raised the question if it was necessary to repeat this exercise in so much detail each year. It might be more advisable for the Secretariat to prepare only an update of the work plan, so as to avoid losing too much time on it. The Chair expressed his opinion that it would be good to have a yearly update of the document and that in the future a draft document should be ready before the StC meeting. He also suggested that, since this document represented a basis for discussions that would take place at the coming MoP, the Secretariat should produce a summary work plan for all the four years of the quadrennium to be presented as an information document at the next MoP. Germany did not see the need to produce the work plan each year. It might be better to prepare a document that would present what was planned for the new quadrennium and that would enable the member states to take influence on the planned activities. It might also be more advisable to cover only the strategically important activities and not the routine activities. The member states were more interested in providing guidance for the

strategically significant activities of the Secretariat. The Chair explained that the reason why the routine tasks were included in the plan was because they also took up much of the staff members' time, and only the time that remained could be spent on strategic activities. Sweden supported the Chair's argument – it would also like to see the document on a yearly basis, provided this did not take up too much of the Secretariat's time. The Executive Secretary confirmed that this exercise was also useful as it enabled the staff to see how much time went on which activities and would help for the organisation of the Secretariat's work. The Vice-Chair concluded that there were two aims of this exercise. Firstly, it should be used to strengthen the efficiency of the Secretariat. And secondly it should be a tool to be used at the following MoP for the possible scenarios in terms of the staff members post occupancy. The Chair concluded that the StC members were satisfied with the structure and the level of detail of the document. The routine part of the document should be circulated before the StC meetings and an addendum based on the priorities identified at the AC or the StC meetings could be provided thereafter. It was also agreed that the missing part for the second half of 2016 and the first part of 2017 would be provided by the end of June 2016, with the cycle stretching from June to May also in future years.

9. The future scale of contributions of Parties 2019 onwards

The Executive Secretary introduced Document EUROBATS.StC12.12 and explained that the Agreement text allowed the Parties to adopt whatever scale they deemed appropriate to be applied for the calculation of their annual contributions. The decision made in the past not to follow the UN scale was a side effect of the decision to freeze the EUROBATS contributions at a certain level. He pointed out one practical advantage in following the UN scale: Since it was adopted every three years by all governments in the General Assembly of the United Nations, it was practically undebatable. The other advantage of the scale was that it was based upon and reflecting the economic strength of the countries. Since the wish to return to the UN scale had emerged already before MoP7, the StC had been tasked, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to explore the possible way forward. Concluding the introduction of the document, the Executive Secretary explained that Annex 1 of the document illustrated what the situation would have been for the current quadrennium, had the UN scale been applied at MoP7. For the majority of the countries it would have implied changes to the contributions they were paying and although the changes in the total amounts were relatively moderate, they were significant in terms of percentages. Explaining Annex 2 of the document, the Executive Secretary

stated that it presented only one of the possible scenarios that could be applied for the transition to the UN scale over the period of four years. According to this scenario, all the contributions that would otherwise be lower would be kept the same, and the contributions that would need to increase would be increased in 25 percent steps.

Sweden asked whether the minimum contribution would be kept if the Parties decided to return to the UN scale, since minimum contributions were not part of the UN scale. Keeping the minimum contribution despite the reintroduction of the UN scale would require for the following MoP to put it in writing why it was necessary to have a minimum contribution. The Executive Secretary explained that it was advisable to keep it, because otherwise some countries would be paying absurdly small amounts. The Executive Secretary further suggested that there was also a possibility to discuss where the minimum should be set. It was mentioned that in case of, for example, AEWa the Parties were paying double the amount as minimum contributions than the one they were paying for EUROBATs. In that sense, there was a precedence that could be used to increase the minimum contribution.

The Chair further stated that if the minimum contribution was kept at the same level, there would not be any correction for the inflation during the previous period. He also informed the participants of the comments received from those members of the StC that could not participate at the meeting – from Italy and the United Kingdom. Italy was pleading for the transition to the UN scale in one go, and the United Kingdom was supportive of the Secretariat's proposal.

The Executive Secretary referred to the questions raised in the comments of Italy and the UK. The current UN scale would be valid until December 2018 and the General Assembly would adopt a new scale for the three years to follow not earlier than the last week of December 2018. Since it had been raised as a concern in both of the written statements, the Executive Secretary wanted to clarify that the jump in the contributions that was reflected in the documents was only due to the fact that for the period of 12 years, i.e. for four periods of the UN scale, the UN scale had not been applied and the Parties' contributions had not been adjusted to it. Once the UN scale was applied, the changes in the contributions that could be resulting from future UN scales would be much smaller. Additionally, since the new UN scale would be available by the end of 2018, it would have to be applied retroactively. The same system had been used before the freeze of the contributions and it had functioned well.

Sweden welcomed the reintroduction of the UN scale, but insisted that the rules regarding the minimum and the maximum contribution were kept and stated in written. This meant that the maximum contribution would not be allowed to exceed 20 percent of the entire budget. Germany also agreed to go back to the UN scale but added that the increase as described in scenario one was the maximum it could afford. The Executive Secretary commented that in terms of total amounts Germany would be most affected by the change, but in terms of percentage increases other countries would be much more affected. For the representatives of those countries it would not be easy to convince their governments to an increase in the contributions of over 50 percent from one year to the following. It had been the joint decision of the Parties to freeze the contributions for such a long period of time and they had all benefitted from this. It would also require joint efforts of the Parties to come back to the old system, and a certain level of solidarity could be expected, at least to agree not to pay less than in the past until EUROBATS was fully back to the UN scale.

The Vice-Chair summarised that it had been a wise decision to freeze the contribution in times when the economic situation was unfavourable. However, at the request of the MoP, the Secretariat needed to find a way to get back to the UN scale. In his opinion the scenario represented by the Secretariat was realistic and its proposals seemed wise in the given context. However, two things had to be kept in mind. Firstly, although the scenario was realistic, the total amount of funds as based on scenario one would not be sufficient. The EUROBATS capacity to make withdrawals from the reserve would also be affected by the exchange rate issues presented earlier. Thus it was necessary for EUROBATS to have a good and realistic budget for the following quadrennium. Secondly, the scenario had to be checked by the Parties that would be most affected by it. The StC could ask the Secretariat to send a document with the possible scenario to those Parties that would be most affected by it to see if they would accept it.

The Chair stated that, indeed, it was necessary to have a debate on raising the total of available funds in parallel to the debate on going back to the UN scale and he supported the proposal of the Vice-Chair regarding sending a document to the Parties. The Executive Secretary suggested that, since quite a number of the Parties' Focal Points had changed over the years, it was necessary to prepare a letter with extensive background explanations concerning the history and the context of the contributions issue and giving a good picture as to why it was advisable to go back to the UN scale and why this could not be achieved in one year. However, this letter should come from the Chair

of the StC on behalf of the entire Committee and it should clarify that the motion to return to the UN scale came from the Parties. The Chair agreed to it, as well as Sweden, which requested to include the information regarding the minimum contribution. It might be useful to discuss whether the minimum contribution should be raised and what possible benefits would come from it – for example, more scientific support, etc. The Vice Chair confirmed that it was a possibility to raise the minimum contribution, but that caution was desirable when linking this to more scientific support and capacity, since first the impact of the exchange rate on the EUROBATS budget and the reserve would have to be dealt with before the additional funds could be used for more scientific support. Sweden responded that more scientific support was just an example, but that the general idea was to explain that raising of the minimum contribution would provide benefits. Germany was in favour of addressing the issue of the minimum contribution in the letter and it suggested making reference to the minimum contribution for AEWA in order to give the Parties an indication as to what sums were being considered. The Chair stated that including the issue of the minimum contribution in the letter would mean that the letter would have to be sent to all the Parties and not only to those most affected by the transfer to the UN scale. Bulgaria commented that it was ready to discuss the minimum contribution, but that a 100 percent raise was too high to start with. The Executive Secretary reminded the members that even doubling the minimum contribution would generate only 13,000 EUR per year and that the effect of raising the minimum contribution should not be overestimated. Referring to the comment of Bulgaria, the Executive Secretary mentioned that when the minimum contribution had been first introduced, this had also been done in 25 percent steps. It might be advisable to use the 25 percent steps not only in the case of those countries whose contributions would have to be increased, but also in case of minimum contributions. Germany supported this proposal. Bulgaria was also in favour of sending a letter to all the Parties but requested individual letters for each country. Ukraine supported the sending of a letter and the step by step approach. The Vice-Chair once again urged on including realistic figures in the letter. In the following quadrennium it would be necessary to have a higher level of contributions since the possibility of making withdrawals from the reserve would be smaller. It was necessary to give the Parties the realistic figures for later discussion at MoP8. The Executive Secretary summarised the discussion by saying that the exercise should be conducted soon, that the purpose of it was to collect the views of the Parties and that the deadline for sending feedback should be before the next StC meeting. Depending on the responses received, it would also be

useful to encourage those Parties that had strong views on the topic to participate at StC13 for further discussion since this was the next step for the preparation of the MoP.

10. Analysis on possible synergies within the CMS Family

The Chair introduced the Agenda item by explaining that the Executive Secretary, the Chair of the Advisory Committee and himself had been interviewed during the previous summer regarding a study on synergies and common services within the CMS family. The study had been presented at the Standing Committee Meeting of CMS and at the AEWA MoP and was received with mixed feelings. Sweden asked for a summary of the study's results otherwise it would be difficult to follow and to discuss these issues. The Executive Secretary promised to send the members of the StC the link where the study could be read in full, as well as the reports of the meetings at which it had been discussed. He informed the StC members of the pilot project between the Secretariats of CMS and AEWA under which a joint information unit had been established. At the moment there were no requests to Eurobats to join similar exercises. The Executive Secretary further explained that any such proposal of organisational restructuring that would have an impact on EUROBATS, would first have to be presented to, discussed, and decided upon by its StC and the MoP. He concluded by informing the participants of a meeting with the Executive Director of UNEP that had taken place end of February 2016, during which the Executive Director encouraged the Secretariats within the CMS Family to also focus on building programmatic synergies and collaborations, combining the knowledge and capacity of the Agreements and the Convention in addressing conservation issues.

Germany suggested for the further discussion in the next StC that the Secretariat should include in the documents to be sent to the StC members AEWA Resolution 6.22, which was the relating Resolution of the AEWA MoP and which represented an example EUROBATS could make use of as to how the issue could be brought forward at the following MoP.

11. Upcoming international events and developments in Nature Conservation relevant for bats and the Agreement

The Executive Secretary informed the participants that this year there was a very important international event, the 17th International Bat Research Conference in Durban, South Africa, from 31 July until 6 August 2016, to which the Secretariat wished to send its Scientific Officer. The purpose of his participation would be to promote EUROBATS, but also to benefit from the latest research and findings, which could then be shared with the experts within the EUROBATS scientific community.

The Executive Secretary further informed the participants of another very important event that was scheduled for the following week, and where his participation was expected. It was UNEA, the United Nations Environment Assembly, taking place in Nairobi. It was the successor body of the UNEP Governing Council, but with now universal membership, as well as more political weight and importance. At UNEA two side events were scheduled where the participation of the Executive Secretary was expected. However, as a precautionary measure in view of the financial situation and to ensure that the scientific officer could take part in the international bat research symposium, he had in consultation with the Chair of the Standing Committee decided to cancel his participation at UNEA. Sweden expressed its approval of that decision.

12. EUROBATS anniversaries in 2016

The Executive Secretary informed the members of the Standing Committee that, although the first quarter of the year had already passed, the Secretariat still intended to do something special to mark the anniversaries of EUROBATS in 2016. For example a special book was under preparation. It had been compiled by one of the fathers of the Agreement, Mr. Peter Lina, with contributions from all scientific focal points of the Parties and Non-Party Range States, as well as other bat experts. In this book, for the first time, the names of the bat species covered by EUROBATS were presented in all the languages of the Agreement area. Many countries did not have the names for these bat species in their own languages, so that also quite a number of new names in various languages would be presented in the book, together with an overview of the species, with biographies of bat scientists who first described the species, etc. The Secretariat hoped to receive the final version of the book soon in order to be able to prepare its design and print, so that it could be released still this year as part of the anniversary celebrations. Additionally, it was planned to prepare special posters for International Bat Night (IBN), and subject to the availability of funds, also other material to be used by local organisers of IBN for the purpose of raising public awareness. Ms. Nedinge pointed out that the book indeed contributed a lot to bat science and that it had made all the Parties work together. The Chair of the Standing Committee asked whether there was anything else that could be done in terms of anniversary celebrations. Sweden suggested that this question should better be posed to the AC than to the StC. It might be a good idea if the Secretariat would ask the AC for further proposals. Germany suggested that IBN could be used to raise public awareness and improve media relations as well. The Chair suggested that a general press release could be made upon this occasion, which would then get adapted

for each country. Bulgaria proposed the creation of a Facebook page since this proved to be a powerful tool in raising public awareness. Additionally, a special photo album could be prepared to be shared on Facebook, showing the history of the Agreement. The Chair supported this idea and suggested that EUROBATS could dedicate some space on its website to the anniversary celebration, so that all the other pages created could link to the EUROBATS website, where, for instance, also a photo carousel could be positioned for this purpose. The Executive Secretary invited the participants to send the Secretariat any further proposals for marking the anniversaries also after the meeting.

13. Any other business

Not being able to participate at the meeting, Italy's representative to the Standing Committee sent a written reaction to Agenda item 9, and the Chair reminded the participants of one of the remarks from it, which referred to the existence of a deadline for the circulation of working documents. The Chair expressed his uncertainty whether there was a deadline, but pointed out that the documents should have been circulated earlier than it was the case for the current StC meeting. The Executive Secretary fully agreed with the expressed concerns. It had already been mentioned why the situation was exceptional for StC12. There was very little time between the two meetings, and, while normally the Executive Secretary had the possibility to work on the StC documents already well before the AC meeting, this year, due to the technical problems with the new accounting system, he was very much involved in the organisational issues to make sure that the AC could take place. Normally, the documents should be available one month in advance, and, subject to the availability of financial data, the Executive Secretary promised that the documents for the next StC meeting would meet that deadline.

Ms. Marie Nedinge was of the impression that there had been an issue with the availability of documents before every meeting. She would be glad if the Secretariat could keep the deadline mentioned by the Executive Secretary, as otherwise, it would be impossible for her to get feedback from her government as to how to react to the documents. This especially concerned the financial documents. In case a similar situation happened for the Meeting of the Parties, she would have to block the documents.

The Executive Secretary wished to clarify that there were two types of documents: The ones coming from the Secretariat, and the ones coming from other sides – e.g. from UNEP Headquarters, or, in case of most AC documents, from the Intersessional Working Groups. The Secretariat could guarantee the adherence to the deadline only for those documents that were prepared or produced by the Secretariat. He further reminded that

for the previous Session of the Meeting of the Parties all documents had been ready six months before the meeting. In other words, after the joint meeting of the AC and the StC no new documents emerged from the Secretariat, and for the following MoP it should be the same. That was also the reason why the Secretariat wanted to initiate the discussion about contributions already at this point, as it anticipated that this would be a difficult topic. It was summarised that the documents to be produced by the Secretariat should be made available one month before the StC meeting and six months before the MoP.

14. Date and venue of the 13th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Ms. Marie Nedinge informed the participants that in 2017 Sweden would like to invite the StC to Stockholm for its 13th meeting. This invitation was accepted with gratitude. Further, the timeframe for the meeting was discussed. Germany suggested organising the meeting in September 2017. The Executive Secretary reminded the StC members of its task to prioritise the work of the Secretariat. In case the StC meeting would take place in September, almost half a year would have passed after the AC meeting. It was advisable to have more distance between the StC and the AC meetings, but not as much. Sweden suggested May as the suitable month for the StC meeting, the AC meeting would then have to be scheduled a bit earlier than it was the case in 2016. The Executive Secretary agreed to it, however, he pointed out that Easter holidays would also have to be taken into consideration as well. The exact date would be communicated in a timely manner.

15. Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 17:03 h.

12th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, Germany, 18 April 2016

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