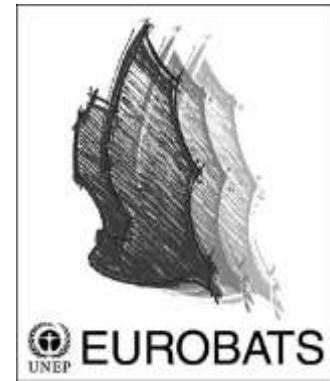


7th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Paris, France, 28 March 2012
Record



1. Attendance

This is listed as Annex 1 to this Record.

2. Opening Remarks

The Chair, Dr. Michel Perret, invited the Host Country, France, to take the floor.

a. The host Government

Ms. Odile Gauthier, the Director for Water and Biodiversity of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, thanked all participants for their presence and welcomed them to the *Grande Arche de la Défense*. After a brief introduction to the history and architecture of the building, Ms. Gauthier commented on the registration of *Myotis escaleraei*, the 35th bat species found in France. She concluded by once again thanking all present for their visit and wished the members a fruitful meeting.

b. The Chair of the Standing Committee

The Chair thanked all present and welcomed the members to the 7th Standing Committee Meeting to UNEP/EUROBATS, the first to take place outside of Bonn. Dr. Perret highlighted that EUROBATS has shown the benefits of enhanced cooperation and sharing experience in the field. The high demand for the EUROBATS Publication Series and the impact of the “Year of the Bat” campaign are examples of such success. However, the Chair emphasized that more action was needed and stressed a few duties of the StC’s mandate: to ensure the Agreement is financially and organisationally strong, to promote bat conservation on a global scale and the development of concrete implementation measures, as well as the accession of new Parties to the Agreement.

On this note, the Chair welcomed the imminent accession of Switzerland, represented by Dr. Olivier Biber, and said that unfortunately it had not been possible to conclude the accession during the meeting. Dr. Perret accentuated the quality of the Swiss scientific network, indicating that it would surely prove invaluable in bat conservation efforts.

Dr. Perret mentioned that the accession of other Parties, particularly in Northern Africa and Middle East, remains a challenge and that EUROBATS should work towards setting up a regional initiative. He mentioned the initiative ‘Bats in Africa’ and expressed his belief that the measures already in place should continue to be pursued.

Lastly, the Chair praised the excellent work of the Advisory Committee, and encouraged the AC Chair, Mr. Lina, and the team to continue their efforts in the interest of bats and biodiversity.

c. The Chair of the Advisory Committee

Mr Peter Lina, the Chair of the Advisory Committee, referred to the report of the last AC Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, and the fact that much progress is being made, particularly in the development of practical information related to bat conservation (i.e. Publication Series).

On the election for the posts of Chair and Vice-Chair of the AC, Mr. Lina reported that Dr. Luísa Rodrigues was no longer Vice-Chair of the Committee. He commended Dr. Rodrigues on her dedication, support and excellent work throughout all the years. The post of Vice-Chair is currently occupied by Dr. Ferdia Marnell, who Mr. Lina referred to as an excellent replacement. In addition, Mr. Lina informed the StC of his re-election for another term as Chair of the AC. He emphasized that at the end of the new term he will have completed 18 years on the post and that he will not stand for re-election.

Finally, the AC Chair shared the sad news of the death of dear friend and colleague Prof. Irina Rakhmatulina, who passed away at the age of 74. He expressed his sadness over the loss of a friend so active and dedicated to science, whose last contribution was a publication – a complete list of bat names in Azerbaijani. Mr. Lina also informed the members that a more thorough tribute to Prof. Rakhmatulina would take place during the AC17 in Dublin, Ireland.

d. The Secretariat

The Executive Secretary of EUROBATS expressed his gratitude to the host country for the invitation and hosting the 7th Meeting of the Standing Committee. Mr. Streit hoped this invitation would set a precedent and that other members should consider hosting the meeting in the future.

The first participation of Switzerland in the meeting was welcomed by the Executive Secretary, who praised the future Party's excellent conservation efforts and accomplishments towards bat conservation.

Mr. Streit welcomed all participants to the beautiful city of Paris and to the *Grande Arche*, a monument dedicated to human rights, and concluded with the request to discuss an issue where these same rights could be at stake.

On behalf of the StC, the Chair welcomed Switzerland and gave the floor to Dr. Biber

Dr. Biber thanked all present for the kind words and warm welcome into the EUROBATS circle. He regretted not being able present the instrument of accession to the Meeting, as the procedure had been slightly delayed. However, he voiced his belief that the Federal Council would soon resume the process and the accession would be completed. Dr. Biber said Switzerland's collaboration with EUROBATS was initially conducted through centres in both French and German speaking areas of the country but that this cooperation now extended to official channels. He concluded by informing that one of Switzerland's largest NGOs, Pronatura, declared the Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) as the animal of the year 2012.

The Chair also welcomed Dr. Francisco Rilla, representing the CMS Secretariat, who took over the coordination of the Year of the Bat campaign.

Dr. Rilla thanked the Standing Committee and the Secretariat for the invitation and expressed his desire to join forces and share the newest developments in the Year of the Bat campaign with all present.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair introduced the Provisional Agenda. Under Item 11, the Executive Secretary proposed to discuss the situation of Dr. Suren Gazaryan and how the Standing Committee could support the Russian colleague. In addition, Germany suggested discussing the preparations of the next Meeting of the Parties to EUROBATS so as to avoid an overlap with the Conference of the Parties to UNEP/CMS also under Agenda Item 11. The Agenda was thus adopted.

4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

The Chair introduced the Rules of Procedure. Suggestions by Germany and the clarification of other minor issues had already been incorporated and approved at the last StC meeting. Thus the Rules of Procedure remained the same and were unanimously adopted.

5. Secretariat Report

The Executive Secretary referred to the written report and commented orally on the following issues:

a) Agreement membership (recruitment new Parties)

Since the last StC meeting, Montenegro completed the accession to the Agreement and its delegate took a seat among the Parties at the AC Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia. In addition, Switzerland was expected to submit its instrument of accession to the Depositary soon. The Executive Secretary also highlighted that the Secretariat received promising signals from other countries. Despite the current crisis and government change, Spain expressed its wish to accede as soon as the economic situation improved. At the request of the Azerbaijani focal point, the Executive Secretary had sent a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister on the country's accession to the Agreement. At a meeting with the Minister of Environment, it was confirmed that Azerbaijan is expected to accede to EUROBATS still in 2012. Also the Ministry of Environment of Israel had expressed interest, indicating that national NGOs continuously lobby for the country's accession to the Agreement. Mr. Streit assured the Parties that he would continue to promote the accession of Range States to the Agreement.

b) EUROBATS Project Initiative (EPI)

Mr. Streit informed the members that the Secretariat was able to finance and co-ordinate four projects through EPI funding (Document StC7.8) and that the number of project applications continued to increase.

c) YoB and other Publicity

The Executive Secretary referred to the Secretariat report and the presentation by Dr. Rilla from CMS on the new developments in the Year of the Bat campaign.

6. Administrative matters

a) Report on income and expenditure in the FY 2012 as well as Trust Fund Status as of 31 December 2011

The Executive Secretary presented Doc StC7.4 and was pleased to report that the majority of Parties had paid their contributions in a timely manner. He informed that two small (plus one partial) contributions were still outstanding but were expected to be received soon. Mr. Streit referred to Annex 2 – expenditure report – and reminded the StC that the members had allowed the employment of an extra Assistant for the Year of the Bat campaign. Since the post was fully covered from savings from other budget lines in 2011, there was no need to withdraw funds from the reserve. In short, budget performance was in line with what was planned and there was a remaining balance of 9,828 EUR that is to be carried forward to the financial year 2012.

At the request of the Chair, the Executive Secretary clarified that throughout the year budget revisions were conducted in order to allocate remaining funds from previous financial years.

On the topic of the Year of the Bat campaign, Italy requested Mr. Streit to provide a breakdown of the funds withdrawn from the Trust Fund in accordance to the MoP decision. The Executive Secretary explained that from the 30,000 EUR released by the MoP for the Year of the Bat campaign, 10,624 EUR were spent in 2010 and 15,450 EUR were allocated in 2011, totalling 26,074 EUR. Mr. Streit also referred to the contributions of Belgium, Finland and Italy, which donated their credits from the retroactive application of the new UN scale to EPI Projects.

Germany requested a clarification on the source of funds for the new P-2 post due to be established in 2013. Mr. Streit said that in its current form (50% occupancy) the post would be covered partly through the annual contributions of the Parties and partly from the Trust Fund Reserve and that it was already included in the budget. He also referred to Document StC7.6, indicating that more funds from the Trust Fund Reserve were available to the Parties and could be used for purposes decided by them.

b) Projection of the financial situation in 2012 including voluntary contributions

The Executive Secretary reported that until the meeting the regular annual voluntary contributions from Germany and Luxembourg had been secured. He also informed the members the Secretariat would soon circulate a list of projects approved by the EPI-Sub-Committee of the AC, calling for voluntary contributions. Mr. Streit used the opportunity to invite the present members to consider contributing.

After a brief discussion on the contents of Document StC7.5, it was agreed the Secretariat should provide a more detailed report on the funding of EPI projects. This report should include a short description of the project, outline its outcomes with regard to bat

conservation and specifically indicate the project's total cost, donor(s) and percentage contribution.

c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat

The Executive Secretariat informed that Ms. Ana Ferreira da Silva was recruited on a provisional basis. Ms. Ferreira da Silva has a temporary appointment with no possibility of extension, meaning the post of Administrative Assistant, shared with Ms. Christine Meyer-Cords, would be advertised towards autumn.

At the MoP6 the StC was given the mandate to decide on the date of recruitment for the new P-2 post of Scientific and Project Officer; this decision would be based on the financial situation and availability of funds (see MoP6 Res.6.1).

In the budget for 2013-14, the MoP secured funds to cover a P-2 post at 50% occupancy and expected that new accessions would generate the remaining income to finance a full post.

The Executive Secretary expressed his view that the recruitment of an international bat expert for a P-2 post at 50% occupancy could prove difficult, expecting instead mostly local applicants. Mr. Streit remarked on the importance of diverse staff and asked the StC to consider an increase to 100% occupancy. He referred to the accessions expected to occur in the short term and to the savings from the household budget to guarantee the funds necessary for above-mentioned occupancy.

Discussion took place on the various options and a consensus was reached. The establishment and recruitment of the P-2 post on 50% occupancy was to be undertaken as soon as possible. Should a suitable candidate not be found by the next StC meeting, the members agreed to review the occupancy percentage. In the case that a suitable candidate was recruited, the MoP should decide at its next meeting on a possible increase of the post occupancy.

7. Year of the Bat 2012: Report of CMS on the planned activities

Dr. Rilla introduced himself as currently responsible for the Year of the Bat campaign, having taken it over from EUROBATS at the end of 2011. After a reminder on the goals of the campaign and emphasizing the high demand for the existing information material, Dr. Rilla focussed on the new developments. The YoB website now included a special event registration form, to be completed by organisers, and a Google Maps feature to show information and location of various registered events throughout the world. Other initiatives mentioned were the development of regional newsletters, the production of a YoB poster in four languages (English, German, French, and Spanish) thanks to a contribution of the German government and the preparation of a special publication covering the two year campaign. Dr. Rilla further referred to BatsLIVE! a distance outreach programme developed by the U.S. Forest Service in cooperation with other organisations; available in English and Spanish, it aims to raise awareness on bat conservation among teachers and forest managers. Plans for 2012 include continued collaboration with YoB founding and global partners, increased involvement with bat conservation groups all over the world,

and planning of an International Bat Weekend. Dr. Rilla indicated that Europe leads with a high level of regional participation, closely followed by Asia and the Americas.

The Chair inquired on any other Year of the Bat activities undertaken by the members. Mr. Lina informed he had recently printed a stock of “Year of the Bat” stamps through the Royal Dutch Postal Service. The StC Vice-Chair, Dr. Domashlinets, advanced that the Ukraine planned to produce Year of the Bat stamps and coins, subject to approval of the Ukrainian Post Service and the National Bank of Ukraine, respectively. Lastly, Germany shared a Year of the Bat article, which recently featured in the “Umwelt” magazine.

8. Joint CMS Family Internet Platform

Websites are the primary communication tool for Secretariats and it is important these are user-friendly, regularly updated and able to act as a communication platform for focal points. Technologically outdated, the current CMS and Agreements websites hamper easy access to information and impede a joint web presence. For this reason, in its Resolution 10.7, the CMS CoP instructed the CMS Secretariat to proceed with development of a website portal. According to Dr. Rilla, this would be a common CMS Family website, which would enable information-sharing between the CMS Family entities and other MEAs, enhance accessibility to information (in English, French and Spanish) and interactivity for the public and among focal points. Dr. Rilla further informed the members that currently the CMS Secretariat is working on identifying a server where the website and data repositories are to be hosted and setting up a common database structure upon which the website will be built. Lastly, it was stressed that an estimated 127,500 EUR in voluntary contributions would be needed for the initial design and development and that more financial support was necessary, as there were currently no funds in the budget to maintain the website.

The need for document translations was acknowledged by a member and Dr. Rilla informed that CMS would soon circulate a letter calling for funds for this purpose.

Lastly, the United Kingdom inquired as to the EUROBATs Secretariat’s plans to modernise its website. The Executive Secretary informed the members that work to renew the website had started and that results would be visible in the near future. Mr. Streit advanced that the website would be operationally compatible with the CMS portal and that its navigation would be based on a three-click philosophy.

9. Report on the preparations for the 17th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

The Chair of the Advisory Committee informed that there were currently 13 Intersessional Working Groups and thus, many meetings of these groups were expected to take place at the AC. A list on the IWGs had been circulated recently. Surveys on Forest Management and Man-made Bat Roosts were recently sent out and the deadline for the submission was March 30th 2012. Convenors are expected to report the outcomes of surveys and other results during the AC. Mr. Lina said the participation of the Agreement’s focal points is good and that he aims to have resolutions ready by 2014,

The Chair of the Standing Committee requested his best wishes to be passed on to the focal points and experts at the upcoming meeting.

10. Capacity Building on bats in Africa

Progress in international cooperation in Africa was emphasized during the CMS CoP11. The Chair raised the issue of how EUROBATS could encourage the accession of North African countries and how regional action could be contributed to.

The Executive Secretary reported that cooperation with FAO on capacity building started in previous years but it was not yet clear how this would continue. Although no workshops were scheduled yet, FAO had expressed interest to organise and take EUROBATS on-board. On a different note, a request for EPI funding was received for a project on capacity-building for bat species monitoring in countries of the enlarged Agreement area (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria). The project would be an excellent opportunity for transboundary capacity building and could be extended to other countries in the region; the funding for the project was already secured through a voluntary contribution from Germany. The Executive Secretary said the project will start this year and continue in 2013 depending on the availability of funds.

Mr. Streit added that the CMS Secretariat received a significant contribution of 200,000 EUR from the European Commission for capacity-building activities in Africa for the entire CMS Family. This means also EUROBATS would benefit from the contribution and be able to increase its involvement in the region. He also noted that many national agencies cooperate closely in Africa not only in capacity-building but also on environment related matters, and that a combined approach by these agencies could help increase the number of activities in African countries.

On the topic of African bats, Mr. Lina added that there is currently a website (<http://www.africanbats.org>) presenting records of bats in Sub-Saharan Africa – approximately 4,500 pages listing bat species, observations in the field, pictures, and data, which could be useful for bat workshops in the continent.

The Chair indicated the need to increase regional cooperation and requested the AC Chair to encourage AC participants from Northern Africa and Middle East to promote the accession of their countries to the Agreement.

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

The Executive Secretary referred to the upcoming Conference of the Contracting Parties to Ramsar, which will take place in Bucharest, Romania from 6 – 13 July 2012. Mr. Streit informed the members that he received indication of potential areas of common interest between EUROBATS and Ramsar and of his plans to attend the meeting in order to pursue future means of cooperation.

Additionally, the Executive Secretary mentioned CBD's 11th Conference of the Parties, which should take place in Hyderabad, India from 8 – 19 October 2012. Since this is expected to be a large event, the Executive Secretary said that there would be little margin to put EUROBATS issues on the agenda and that the attending UNEP/CMS would surely represent the EUROBATS interests

The Chair encouraged the Executive Secretary to attend the Ramsar CoP, pursue methods of cooperation and report back to the StC and AC.

12. AoB

The Executive Secretary referred to Germany's suggestion to discuss the case of Dr. Suren Gazaryan, the Russian focal point to EUROBATS. After briefing the members on the incident, he also invited the Chair and Vice-Chair of the StC to consider supporting Dr. Gazaryan without interfering in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation.

After an exchange on possible courses of action, it was agreed a support letter would be drafted by the Executive Secretary in English and Russian and sent on behalf of the Standing and Advisory Committees to the Russian General Prosecutor in charge of the case. A copy of this letter should be sent to all EUROBATS focal points, with a request to inform their local embassies in Russia of the incident and explore possible actions.

Germany informed the StC that action to ensure the respect for human rights had already been undertaken by the German Embassy in Moscow.

13. Date and venue of StC8

The Chair invited all members to consider hosting the next StC meeting and that proposals should be sent to the Executive Secretary. Should it not be possible for another member to host the event, the meeting would take place in Bonn.

14. Close of Meeting

The Chair summarized the work of the meeting and was pleased about the consensus decision on the recruitment of a P2 post for the Secretariat. He thanked all present for the attendance and said it was a pleasure to welcome and host the meeting in Paris. After encouraging the participants to continue their efforts in bat conservation, the Chair closed the meeting at 17:35.

7th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Paris, France, 28 March 2012

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