

4th Meeting of the Standing Committee
15th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Bonn, Germany, 3 – 6 May 2010

Record of the Standing Committee Meeting



1. Attendance

This is listed at **Annex 1** to this Record.

2. Opening

The 4th Meeting of the Standing Committee had a joint opening session with the 15th Meeting of the Advisory Committee. The deliberations on agenda items 1. – 6. are reflected in the Record of AC15 (EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.Record-AC).

The Chair welcomed the members of the Standing Committee as well as the observers. Sweden and Norway proposed to extend the discussions on the technical resolutions. The Chair suggested prolonging the Standing Committee meeting to examine the technical resolutions coming from the Advisory Committee to facilitate the discussions at the upcoming MoP6. It was then agreed to deal with the budget and other financial matters on the first two days while all members of the Standing Committee were present and to look at the other draft resolutions during the added third day.

The Chair also suggested making a proposal to the members of the Advisory Committee on drafting a resolution on capacity building. Such a resolution could encourage Parties to pursue efforts towards capacity building and information exchange. The Chair therefore proposed that this item should be introduced for a short discussion in the joint plenary session with the Advisory Committee the next day. Norway agreed and further suggested that it would be a good idea to list the kinds of activity to be included to make it more concrete. The Chair reiterated that it was also important to remember the crucial role played by the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI), where certain capacity building projects had already been conducted and which could be replicated in other countries. This would create a linkage between EPI and capacity building. The main goal would be to encourage Parties to incorporate capacity building in their implementation activities and it was suggested to ask the Advisory Committee to draft a proposal for the same.

Germany felt that there was a need to look into possible budget implications and that additional funds might be required.

The Chair clarified that at this stage there was no need for additional budgeting. The resolution would be aiming to help Parties. The funds could be raised through EPI. However, at the stage of drafting a resolution, there would be no budgetary implications that needed to be considered.

The Secretariat highlighted that various capacity building activities (such as training workshops) enabled NGOs and young experts to perform the necessary monitoring in their countries through further EPI projects. But this was dependent on voluntary contributions. No funds for such activities were foreseen in the forthcoming regular budget.

The Committee agreed that the Advisory Committee would be informed of the decision and a small working group could be created to work on it. After broad discussion it was agreed that the CMS Capacity Building Strategy could be used as a basis for capacity building within EUROBATS.

The Chair concluded that the exchange of information and examples of best practices within the area of the Agreement was important to facilitate capacity building. The Parties should be encouraged to inform the Secretariat of all initiatives from which other countries could also benefit.

7. Secretariat Report – Part II: Administrative matters:

a) Report on income and expenditure as well as Trust Fund status

The Secretariat gave a brief overview on the overall income and expenditure statement presented in Doc.EUROBATS.Stc4-AC15.5. On the income side, the Secretariat informed the members that all contributions had been received for the financial year 2009 with the exception of one, which was expected to arrive soon. The Executive Secretary also informed that most Parties had already paid their contributions for the year 2010. Doc.EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.6 listed the voluntary contributions received. A new call for voluntary contributions had been circulated, but while there had been expressions of interest from some Parties, the Secretariat had so far only received the annual voluntary contribution from Germany.

On the expenditure side, the Executive Secretary drew attention to the balance of EUR 97,000, mainly resulting from savings in previous years. The overall budget performance had been fully on target.

Some clarifications on the savings were sought from the Chair and other Parties. The Executive Secretary provided further explanations to the full satisfaction of the Parties present. With reference to Doc.EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.7 he also informed that a withdrawal from the trust fund reserve to reduce contributions from Parties was possible and would be suggested for the forthcoming budget. The suggested withdrawal of EUR 50,000 euro per year was reasonable and would not put a risk to the trust fund.

Italy sought a point of clarification from the Secretariat regarding the sum of unspent funds under heading 5201, which was for information material.

The Secretariat explained that due to financial constraints at the last MoP, the budget line for information material (publications, posters, leaflets) had been set to zero and made dependent on voluntary contributions. For the year 2009, the EUROBATS publication series was produced with the support from voluntary contributions. However, a minimum amount had been allocated from savings in the previous year for planning security. These funds were in the end not needed because sufficient voluntary contributions were received.

UK was pleased with the thorough financial management of the Secretariat and stated that it would be a good idea to use the savings in the following years to also reduce the burden on contributions from Parties.

b) Projection of the financial situation in 2010 including voluntary contributions and progress on the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)

The Secretariat presented Doc.EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.8 with the recalculation of the 2010 contributions of Parties based on the new UN scales that had become effective in January and explained that these scales were decided every 3 years by all governments at the General Assembly of the UN. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee that while the budget adopted at the last MoP could not be changed, it would be possible for the Parties to repeal the provision in the resolution in which a retroactive application of new UN scales was requested. This would at least in 2011 reduce the burden for those Parties that were most affected by a significant increase of their UN scale.

Germany commented that Poland and Estonia appeared to be most heavily affected by this and expressed sympathy for the proposal made by the Secretariat.

Doc.EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.9 reflecting the projected income for 2010 was then discussed. The Executive Secretary informed that a new call for voluntary contributions for EPI projects would be circulated. In case voluntary contributions would not be

received at the required level, some funds from the reserve of the trust fund for voluntary contributions could be used to secure completion of projects that already were ongoing. However, additional voluntary contributions were still needed to fund new projects.

The Chair emphasised that it was essential for the EUROBATS Secretariat to have the confirmation of voluntary contributions as soon as possible for planning security with regard to new EPI projects.

Germany informed that it was planning for an additional contribution of EUR 30,000 for the Year of the Bat

c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat

The imminent departure of Christine Boye, one of the two part time Administrative Assistants had already been reported in the joint opening plenary. The Executive Secretary informed that he would further elaborate on the need for one additional staff member during the discussion on the draft budget resolution.

8. EUROBATS' budget 2011 onwards: Level of the ceiling for maximum contributions and possible introduction of a minimum contribution

The Secretariat introduced Doc.EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.10 prepared by the Standing Committee since its last meeting, aiming to address the situation that four Parties out of 32 had to cover 74% of the budget. The Executive Secretary explained that there were mainly two possible ways to achieve a more equitable burden sharing while maintaining the application of the UN scale of assessments: a) to reduce the ceiling for maximum contributions (20% at present) and b) the introduction of a minimum contribution, e.g. EUR 1,000 and drew attention to the fact that the outcome of this discussion would also have significant impact on the discussion of the draft budget.

The Chair stated that the principle of fixing a minimum contribution was a good beginning and asked for the opinions of the other Parties present.

UK agreed that the imbalance in contributions should be addressed but hoped that this could be done without overly increasing the burden for other Parties.

Portugal stated its preference for Option 3 presented in the document, but also mentioned that if there was a consensus on one of the other options, it would be ready to revise its stance.

Sweden also expressed a preference for Option 3, with Option 1 as its second choice and stated that it would be accepting a rise of up to 10% for three years but that

anything beyond would be difficult. Also Option 2 would be difficult for Sweden.

UK stated that Option 3 would be the least favoured but would prefer looking at other options based on Option 2 that could incorporate the possibility of increasing the minimum contribution in a more gradual and stepped way, and in a way that the contributions of the major contributors did not increase at all, but possibly be decreased in gradual steps.

The Executive Secretary agreed to present this new option suggested by UK for discussion on the following day. He also recalled that this proposal had been previously examined by the Standing Committee. But meeting strong opposition from one of the major contributors, it had not been carried forward.

After having examined this new Option 4, the Committee decided to discard it.

Italy stated its preference for Option 3 and suggested looking at a possible combination of a ceiling at 15% in Option 2 while merging the contributions of the higher contributing Parties with Option 1.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia commented that it was not sure if the government would agree to the minimum contribution and therefore was not in a position to respond.

Germany also agreed with the minimum contribution of EUR 1,000 and stated its preference for option 3.

After further extensive discussions and examination of possible scenarios by the Committee, the Chair concluded that the three original options incorporating the proposed new budget figures and the new UN scales should be put forward to the MoP for further discussion and decision. This was agreed by the Committee. The Chair also reminded the Committee that the principle of a minimum contribution was good for the further development of the Agreement and that in particular smaller countries would benefit from a strengthened Secretariat that with the suggested new post could provide also scientific assistance for capacity building activities.

The Executive Secretary informed the Committee that when the discussion paper was circulated among all focal points for consultation, none of the Parties concerned had responded negatively to the idea of a minimum contribution.

9. Draft Resolution 6.1: Financial and Administrative Matters – Budget 2011 - 2014

The Secretariat presented the draft budget to the Standing Committee summarising that most budget lines had not changed with the exception of the proposal for a new post and a new budget line for Information Technology (IT) services.

The Chair requested a justification for the new post of a scientific and project officer.

The Executive Secretary explained that the new post was mainly needed for three large areas of work that had emerged and significantly grown in the past years. These were a) the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI), b) the EUROBATS Publication Series and c) the now 18 Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs) of the Advisory Committee. Whereas EPI and the Publication Series had substantially increased the workload of the Secretariat, in particular the work of the IWGs could be significantly facilitated if they received scientific support from the Secretariat on a continuous basis.

UK stated that that it would be important to reconsider a commitment for 4 years and instead suggested that the post could be reviewed after a year, and in the meanwhile the post could be taken on as a consultancy.

Belgium and Finland supported the employment of a full time scientific and project officer.

Germany suggested that if financial constraints did not allow for the establishment of a full time post immediately, it could start on a part time basis until additional contributions of new Parties would make a full time post possible.

Italy suggested abolishing one of the part time Administrative Assistant posts and that the new post be made full time. The Executive Secretary expressed his concern in view of abolishing one of the existing posts as the incumbents already now had to regularly work overtime to manage the workload.

Following a proposal of the Vice-Chair, the Executive Secretary agreed to prepare a draft job description for the new post open for review by the Parties.

The Czech Republic stated its concern about the additional costs for IT services.

The Secretariat explained that these were shared services provided by the common UNBONN infrastructure, which since 2008 could no longer be provided free of charge. The Secretariat also confirmed that it was not advisable to outsource the services for security and other reasons, and that therefore the whole CMS Family had decided to continue with the services provided by the UNBONN. For EUROBATS the new costs

could be largely covered in the past from the budget line “Contingency”. Therefore the new budget line “IT Services” caused only a very minor increase of the budget.

The Standing Committee unanimously decided to put forward Draft Resolution 6.1 as presented by the Secretariat to the MoP for further discussion and adoption, while taking into account whether or not new Parties will contribute to the new budget.

10. Draft Resolution 6.3: Geographical Scope of the Agreement

The Executive Secretary presented the draft resolution highlighting its political importance for the further development and strengthening of the Agreement and bringing it in line with the bio geographical realities. Also the non-European bat species occurring in the extended Agreement area would benefit.

The Czech Republic enquired whether this constituted a change in the Agreement. The Executive Secretary reaffirmed that the draft resolution only corrected older resolutions and was not a new amendment of the Agreement.

Norway asked about the possible implications of this on the budget. The Chair explained that it would mean a small cost for the Agreement but the accession of such countries would not lead to the need for more staff members or an increased budget over and above the one already discussed. It was expected that the Agreement would experience a slow increase in the number of Parties over the following years rather than a sudden surge.

The Committee agreed with the draft resolution and requested the Secretariat to provide the MoP with a map including all states concerned by the extension of the Agreement area. The draft resolution was then finalised in the joint plenary session of both Committees (see EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.Record-AC).

11. Draft Resolution 6.4: Framework for the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)

The Chair stated that there was a need to have a clear procedure for EPI and invited the Committee to examine the draft resolution prepared by the Advisory Committee. He also suggested that the involvement of the national authorities should be taken into account and to define the precise criteria which would ensure that EPI project proposals/applications would fit into the objectives of the programme.

All members of the Committee felt that the national focal points of the countries for which project proposals were under evaluation should be involved in the procedure.

Also a number of other elements for potential amendments were identified and shared with the Advisory Committee in a revised draft. The final draft for submission to the MoP

was the discussed and prepared by both Committees in a joint plenary session (see EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.Record-AC).

12. Other Draft Resolutions emerging from the Advisory Committee

The Committee also examined all other draft resolutions prepared by the Advisory Committee and identified the need for amendments in some of them. These were then further discussed and agreed in the joint plenary session of both Committees (see EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.Record-AC).

13. Any other business

The Committee discussed whether another meeting would be required before the upcoming 6th Session of the Meeting of Parties but concluded that this was not the case.

There was also substantial discussion on how the roles and responsibilities of both the Standing and Advisory Committees could be better interlinked at the next joint meeting in four years time. It was agreed to further look into this matter well in advance in order to achieve maximum synergies and common understanding.

14. Date and venue of the 5th Meeting of the Standing Committee

It was agreed that the Standing Committee would meet on the last day of MoP6 after election of its new members in order to elect its Chair and Vice Chair for the next term.

The Chair commented that Bonn was fitting very well as the standard venue and expressed his view that the annual meeting of the Standing Committee had improved the work of the Agreement. This view was strongly supported by the Executive Secretary. The establishment of the Standing Committee at the previous session of the Meeting of Parties had clearly proved to be both work and cost efficient. It had also allowed the Advisory Committee to fully concentrate on the substantial topics for the further implementation of the Agreement.

15. Joint plenary session with the AC to mutually report on results and progress achieved

This is reported in EUROBATS.StC4-AC15.Record-AC.

16. Close of the Meeting of the Standing Committee

The Executive Secretary sincerely thanked the members of the Standing Committee for their constructive contributions and commitment over the past 4 years.

The Chair expressed his gratitude to the Vice Chair and the other members of the Committee for their participation and all achievements made during this first term since

the Committee had been established and was pleased to see that the work done by the Committee had been useful for the progress of the Agreement. There being no further business the meeting was closed at 18:07 hrs on 5 May 2010.

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