

18th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Videoconference 16 September 2021

Secretariat Report



Staff

As of 1 April 2020, Kate Horn has left the Secretariat for taking up another post. The Secretariat has reorganised the tasks and this post will be left vacant to allow increasing the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer Suren Gazaryan to 80%.

Agreement Membership

Since StC17 Bosnia & Herzegovina has joined the Agreement (effective 21 August 2021). Spain has informed about new efforts for accession.

Outreach

The various volumes of the EUROBATS Publication Series and Leaflets continue to be in high demand.

In the second half of 2019 Publication Series No. 8 “Guidelines for consideration of bats in lighting projects” was translated into German and 2,000 copies were printed. The Secretariat is now aiming to produce a French version as well.

In 2020, the Secretariat funded a portion of the print and took over most of the dissemination of the German version of the comic “Bono’s adventures”, a story about the migration of bats, written and designed by the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin (IZW). In close collaboration with the IZW, the Secretariat translated the comic into English and the printed version was produced in 2021

In the beginning of 2021 posters, postcards, and stickers upon the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Agreement and the 25th International Bat Night were widely distributed, financed by a voluntary contribution of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety.

Special Projects in 2019 and 2020

In 2019, following projects were selected and funded within the framework of the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI):

- Exploring and mitigating the threat of Lloviu virus re-emergence in Central European *Miniopterus schreibersii* populations / Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, conducted by Nature Conservation Foundation of Tolna County (TMTA), Hungary.
- Bats and vaults: search and inventory of underground bat shelters in Belarus, conducted by the State Scientific and Production Amalgamation, «Scientific and Practical Center for Bioresources» of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in collaboration with the Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology, NAS of Ukraine.

In 2020, the following projects were selected and funded within the framework of the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI):

- Advancing transboundary bat conservation in Romania and Moldova, conducted by the Centre for Bat Research and Conservation in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- Survey and Monitoring of Bats in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020-2021, conducted by the Center for Karst and Speleology in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Several new proposals were selected by the EPI evaluation group, but their funding entirely depends on prospective voluntary contributions. Therefore, a definite list of projects to be funded in 2021 will be published at a later stage.

Unexpected increase of Corporate Initiative Costs (Umoja costs) for the CMS Family Secretariats

The costs associated with the deployment of Umoja were initially absorbed by UN Headquarters. Starting in 2017, Umoja and Global Service Delivery costs were passed on to user entities. Due to the fact that no Programme Support Cost (PSC) allocation had been provided to the CMS Family Secretariats to cover the Corporate Initiative Costs in the year 2017, the cost attributable to the CMS Family Secretariats (as well as for all other MEA Secretariats administered by UNEP) was absorbed by UNEP.

The methodology for apportionment of Umoja costs by the UNHQ Office of the Controller has changed over the years. In 2018 and 2019, the apportionment of corporate costs across entities was based on expenditure levels, while in 2020 it was based on programme support revenue. The Umoja costs for 2018 – 2020 were taken from the PSC allocated back to the CMS Family Secretariats, and were relatively low (that is \$ 28,821, \$ 23,224 and \$ 32,110 for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively).

In 2021 however, UN Headquarters adopted a new methodology of apportioning UMOJA costs, that is, from a programme support revenue basis to a head-count basis. In May 2021, UNEP provided estimates for the total Corporate Initiative Costs for the CMS Family Secretariats for the year 2021 of \$ 89,000, equivalent to \$ 2,064 per CMS Family staff member. The cost directly attributable to the EUROBATS Secretariat is \$ 8,256 per annum.

In accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 35/217 of 17 December 1980, UNEP charges a 13 per cent fee on Trust Fund expenditure for administering the CMS Family Secretariats. The General Assembly resolution is intended to ensure that the core resources provided to UN organizations are not diverted away from the core mandates approved by their legislative organs towards administering or implementing extra-budgetary activities. In the case of UNEP, the Executive Director has, in accordance with the established PSC policy, decided to return a portion of the 13 per cent PSC charged on the expenditure of the CMS Family Secretariats (Secretariats for CMS, AEWA, EUROBATS, ASCOBANS and additional agreements and Memoranda of Understanding supported by the CMS Secretariat) to finance the costs of the Administrative and Fund Management Unit (AFMU) that provides administrative support services to the CMS Family Secretariats. The AFMU team consists of one professional staff member and five General Service staff (four located in Bonn, Germany and one located in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates), who provide the services needed for the operation and administration of all of the CMS Family Secretariats.

Due to the fluctuation of expenditure rates, the amount of PSC allocated back to the CMS Family Secretariats has varied. The PSC allocated back to the CMS Family Secretariats has routinely not been sufficient to cover AFMU staff costs, and UNEP has in the past absorbed the difference needed to cover the costs of the AFMU team.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/262, the guiding principle indicates that Umoja costs be charged to revenue from Programme Support funds.

To address the unplanned UMOJA costs of \$ 8,256 per annum in the remaining intersessional period, the following options are available:

- Absorb the costs using the EUROBATS Secretariat’s Trust Fund 40BTL. If this option is chosen, an authorization to withdraw \$ 8,256 (excl. 13% PSC) from the EUROBATS Trust Fund in the years 2021 and 2022 shall have to be issued by the StC Chair;

- Cover the costs using the savings under other budget lines that can be expected by the end of the year 2021, noting that this would not address 2022; or
- Continue to charge the costs to the PSC generated by the EUROBATS Secretariat. However, to maintain the same level of services provided by the AFMU, this option would require an increase in the amount of PSC allocated back to the EUROBATS Secretariat, absorption of some costs by UNEP, or some other source of funding found.

For future quadrenniums, these costs could either be included in the EUROBATS budget adopted by MoP9 as a core cost, or continue to be taken out of PSC, which would have similar implications as for the intersessional period.

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this document and to provide the Secretariat with comments and guidance as appropriate.