

8th Meeting of the Standing Committee

London, United Kingdom, 21 March 2013

Record



Attendance

This is listed in **Annex 1** to this Record. The Executive Secretary reported that the Ukraine and Czech Republic had apologised for not being able to attend but had informed in written that they had no comments or particular issues to be raised at the meeting.

1. Opening Remarks

- **The Host Government**

Mr. Robin Mortimer from DEFRA welcomed all participants to the meeting and wished them a good discussion. He reported on the increase in populations of 5 of the UK's bat species despite declines in the populations of some birds and butterflies. He spoke of the impacts of wind energy on the conservation of protective species and emphasised the need for a balance between development and conservation. Lastly he highlighted the importance of collaboration of governments across boundaries and said that the UK considers the international for a very important and invests a lot of energy in them.

- **The Chair of the Standing Committee**

The Chair explained that the Standing Committee (StC) had met outside Bonn for the first time last year when the StC7 took place in Paris. He was very pleased that this year the StC could meet in London the home of the EUROBATS depository.

The Chair highlighted that the main purpose of EUROBATS was to enforce inter-boundary collaboration and reported that the EUROBATS publications were very useful in many countries. He explained that the purpose of the StC was to manage the financial support of EUROBATS.

The Chair made the StC members aware that there were preparations and decisions to be made with respect to MoP7 which would be held in 2014.

The period between now and the MoP should be dedicated to defining the strategy necessary to obtain the desired results and to check whether the framework of EUROBATS is such that this can be achieved.

- **The Chair of the Advisory Committee**

The AC Chair commented that extending the geographical scope of EUROBATS had been very successful and reported that there was lots of good work being done in the new Range States. Delegates from many new Range States attended the last AC meeting and contributed to the work in the Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs).

The AC Chair highlighted the difficult situation of Dr. Suren Gazaryan from the Russian Federation who is currently in Estonia, but reported that he has regular contact with him. Mr. Lina also reported that he had put Dr. Lena Godlevska from the Ukraine forward for an award from the North American Society for Bat Research and that she had received it.

- **The Secretariat**

The Executive Secretary thanked DEFRA and the UK for hosting the meeting and thanked Mr. Mortimer for his opening address. He thanked Ms. Alison Elliott and Ms. Elif Skinner for greatly assisting the organisation of the meeting.

Mr. Andreas Streit passed on the best regards from the previous Executive Secretary of CMS, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema and her successor, Mr. Bradnee Chambers. He explained that Mr. Chambers had been unable to come to the meeting but reported that a good relationship had already been established between CMS's newly appointed Executive Secretary and the EUROBATS Secretariat.

2. & 3. Adoption of the Agenda and the Rules of Procedure

The agenda and the rules of procedure were adopted.

4. Secretariat Report

a) Agreement Membership (recruitment of new Parties)

The Executive Secretary stated that the new Range States need to be encouraged to become Parties and explained that this process needs to be properly supported and guided. He reported that the recruitment of new Parties is impaired by the strained financial situation in Europe at the moment.

Mr. Benoît Magnin introduced himself as the new Administrative Focal Point for Switzerland. He explained that the process of accession had been delayed due to the translation of the documents into the 4 national languages. Mr. Magnin informed that he

expected the deposit of the instrument of accession to take place shortly. He was quite confident that for the period from when Federal Council decided on the accession in 2012 until the date at which Switzerland formally became a Party, contributions would be paid in the form of voluntary contributions.

The Executive Secretary explained that an accession enters into force 30 days after the deposit of the instrument of accession.

The Chair commented that the financial contribution from Switzerland was important, but the most important aspect of Switzerland becoming a Party to the Agreement was the technical collaboration.

The Executive Secretary reported that Cyprus acceded last year, the process of accession having begun at AC14. He also reported that Bosnia and Herzegovina had started the accession procedure and that there was new movement in Armenia which would hopefully bear fruit. He informed that there had also been some new developments with regard to accession in Israel and Azerbaijan.

Mr. Streit reported that the accession process in Spain was on hold because of the difficult current financial situation. The Chair added that the Spanish colleagues he knew from the government were very supportive of Spain acceding to the Agreement but that the process would still take some time.

b) EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)

The Executive Secretary explained that EPI was supported by voluntary contributions and continued to grow despite the currently strained financial situation in Europe. He added that the purpose of Doc.EUROBATS.StC8.5.Rev.1 was to show to the Parties which amounts have been received or will be received for which projects. The Executive Secretary clarified that not all contributions had been received yet and that some EPI projects were conducted over several years.

c) EUROBATS Website and Online Workspace for the Advisory Committee

- **EUROBATS Website**

The Executive Secretary gave a presentation on the new EUROBATS website which aimed to be more attractive and user-friendly than the previous one. He remarked that the new quick links enabled important information and documents to be accessed very quickly. He noted that many online resources were available and publications could be ordered online. IBN events could be registered and IBN posters could be ordered online. A map with blue bat markers gave an overview of IBN events. Italy asked whether there was a

validation of IBN events by the Secretariat and the Executive Secretary confirmed this. The AC Chair and Italy suggested that when an IBN event is registered an automatic email should be sent to the Administrative and Scientific Focal Points (Admin and Sci FPs) to inform them.

The Executive Secretary agreed that this would be an important change to make and encouraged the StC to inform the Secretariat if they had any further suggestions or corrections to improve the new website.

Mr. Streit pointed out that the map of the Agreement Area and the respective Country Profiles were another new feature of the website. He noted that all bat species which were listed in the Annex to the Agreement were displayed on the new website with information about the individual species. Italy suggested to also make official translations of the Agreement text in other languages available online.

The Executive Secretary explained that there were 2 search functions in the new website: a topical search whereby all documents relating to a particular topic could be displayed and a normal keyword search. He also explained that website users could access the Underground Sites database, find information about the various EPI projects and the Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs) and find the link to the Advisory Committee (AC) online workspace.

- **AC Online Workspace**

The AC Online Workspace had been designed to facilitate collaboration between the members of the IWGs. All the Scientific Focal Points and additional experts had received their passwords in January 2013 and one IWG was already active online. A practical training session would be held during AC18 to encourage extensive and productive use of the workspace.

The Executive Secretary presented the functions of Online Workspace and informed that access was restricted to members. He explained how questionnaires could be written and sent via the Online Workspace and how their results could be analysed with the tools available. He also explained that if there was new content or activity in the workspace the relevant members received a notification via email.

Mr. Streit highlighted the AC discussion area where topics could be openly discussed and new publications (that have no copyright limitations) could be posted for others to use. He explained that the Online Workspace also had Wikis to access information.

Italy commented that it would be useful for the Administrative Focal Points to have access to the Online Workspace and to be therefore able to spread the information of what is being achieved in the IWGs. The Chair added that the Admin FPs would then be better able to implement any new scientific recommendations in their countries. It was agreed to grant membership also to all

5. Administrative matters

a) Report on income and expenditure in the financial year 2012 as well as Trust Fund status as of 31 December 2012 & b) Projection of the financial situation in 2013 including voluntary contributions

- **Financial Report**

The Executive Secretary reported that the contributions had been received in a very reliable manner. The Chair asked about the procedure if countries do not pay. The Executive Secretary explained that countries with unpaid dues received regular reminders from the UNEP headquarters. If the outstanding amount was relatively large the Executive Secretary would follow this up personally with the Focal Points of those countries. Mr. Streit explained that countries which have arrears of several years would be warned before the MoP that this might affect their voting rights.

- **Table of Expenditure**

The Executive Secretary explained that the table prepared showed a greater degree of transparency for the Parties on what the real costs were, e.g. for meetings. He encouraged the Parties to allocate more realistic figures for the different lines in the future (without unduly increasing the overall budget).

The Executive Secretary explained the importance of having the minimum contribution to cover the meeting expenses for one representative per Party. For eligible Non-Party Range States the Scientific Focal Points costs were covered by voluntary contributions, for example from Germany.

The Chair enquired about the costs of the AC meeting and the AC Chair asked how much was paid by the host. The Executive Secretary explained that it was not a condition that the host country covers the costs of all the logistics and that this varied depending on the abilities of a country. He reported that there are a lot of advantages of having the AC meeting in a different country every year. It enabled local NGOs to attend the AC meeting and it draws the attention of the government towards the work of EUROBATS. The

Executive Secretary added that EUROBATS continued to find host countries for meetings without difficulty.

Belgium asked whether the 13% to UNEP can be explained. The Executive Secretary explained that this partly pays for one administrative officer and 4 assistants. He said that he will request a report of these programme support costs from the UNEP headquarters. Upon request the Executive Secretary explained that the costs for the new P2 post (50% part-time) were 41 500 EUR for 2013 (which would not be used fully) and 42 000 EUR for 2014 (50% from the budget and 50% from savings of previous years).

The Chair asked about the 4 000 EUR saving in IT services. The Executive Secretary explained the payment of IT costs to UNV and the charges for data storage and mailbox size. By minimising the amount of data stored and managing the email accounts well, the Secretariat had been able to reduce the costs. The Executive Secretary also explained that the website and AC workspace work was funded from the Information Material budget line not the IT services line.

The Chair suggested a breakdown of the costs of a typical AC meeting to enable the Parties to see how much the various items cost. Germany asked about the possibility of dropping the AC and StC meetings in the year of the MoP (as AEWA does). The Executive Secretary explained that all draft resolutions would then have to be ready the year before and that this was not feasible. Germany suggested an option would be that the joint AC-StC meeting be held in the autumn with the MoP the following spring.

The Chair observed that the integration of the new Non-Party Range States in the AC meetings was quite expensive and the UK suggested having an AC meeting biannually instead of annually to reduce costs. The Executive Secretary highlighted the fact that 80% of the IWGs work is done at the AC meetings.

The AC Chair explained that the face-to-face interaction, exchange of experiences and the amendments to the draft resolutions would continue to be done during the AC meetings and that although Skype could be helpful to discuss certain issues, a IWG consisting of 25 people cannot skype all at the same time.

- **Joint Website Portal for the whole CMS Family**

The Executive Secretary reported on the Joint Website Portal for the whole CMS family. He explained that this project has so far been financed mainly by voluntary contributions from Germany. Mr. Streit explained that CMS will pay for most of the project but that the Agreements had also been asked to contribute. The Executive Secretary suggested the 2012 surplus of 9 338 EUR be rounded up to 10 000 EUR and be contributed to the

project. The Chair asked for the total costs of the project. The Executive Secretary explained that there are many different options and what is actually decided upon will depend on the availability of funds and what the Parties would like. Belgium said that it would be in agreement with paying such costs out of the Trust Fund.

The Executive Secretary explained that this Joint Website Portal would provide Focal Points and interested public easy access to all important information. He clarified that the existing websites of the Agreements would be strongly linked with this portal but not replaced by it. The UK asked what the next phase of the project would produce. The first phase involved managing the data for the system. The next phase was the design of the website and phase three would be the extra functions which still need to be decided upon. EUROBATS would not be involved to a high degree financially in this last phase.

Italy remarked that because EUROBATS was a very small part of the CMS Family the money might be better spent improving the EUROBATS website or funding EPI projects.

The Executive Secretary explained that the direct benefit for EUROBATS would be a higher degree of visibility within the CMS Family. Countries that are considering accession to CMS would then hopefully consider accession to EUROBATS as well. He pointed out that the contribution from EUROBATS would also give a signal to CMS of EUROBATS willing cooperation and support.

Germany stated that it had had similar concerns to Italy but saw that a joint portal would bring the Agreements together. It was also not an annual commitment but a one-off contribution. The Executive Secretary reassured those present that the funding of the EPI projects would not be in jeopardy.

The Chair commented that he thought the joint portal would give an impulse to the worldwide protection of bats, giving bats a wider audience than through the EUROBATS website alone. He asked the Secretariat to circulate a message with information about the next phase of the project and its costs.

- **Doc.EUROBATS.StC8.6 Trust Fund Status**

The Executive Secretary explained that this document was computed at the UNEP headquarters in US dollars and that the expenditure table is the actual expenditure in the EUROBATS Secretariat. The 2 figures differed a little due to exchange rate fluctuations. Mr. Streit reported that the reserve had built up even further to the value of one year's budget and he urged the members of the StC that this surplus should be taken into consideration when deciding the budget of the next quadrennium and when fixing the contributions at the next MoP.

c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat

The Executive Secretary reported that the two G5 posts had been successfully upgraded to G6 and the new G6 staff member would be appointed soon. He explained that this had only minimal financial implications for the Parties.

The Chair recalled from StC7 that the P2 post would be a 50% post until the next MoP. The Executive Secretary reported that the post would be advertised soon and the new P2 staff member would hopefully be on board in due course.

Germany asked the Executive Secretary how the accession of new Parties would affect the decision at the MoP regarding the P2 post and whether it could become a full post. The Executive Secretary explained that half the P2 post was covered by the normal budget and the other half from new contributions. Therefore even if Spain did not accede before the next MoP, if several medium-sized countries acceded, the post could be made a 100% post.

The UK asked whether it was clear what the person in the new P2 position should achieve for the Agreement. The Executive Secretary explained that he would circulate the job description of the P2 post to give the StC members a better idea of what was required from the person taking up the post.

Mr. Streit explained that the officer would be mainly responsible for assisting the IWGs (e.g. to send out and evaluate questionnaires, perform literature searches and analyse data). He or she would also be involved in the initial evaluation of the EPI project proposals and in assisting the EPI evaluation group with their work. Another task was to monitor the EPI projects in their implementation phase.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful if the Secretariat prepared a document which showed the aims of the Secretariat with benchmarks of what can be achieved in the medium term. This Action Plan would enable the members of the StC to judge whether the capacity of the Secretariat was sufficient to complete the necessary tasks.

The AC Chair said it would be very useful to have a scientific officer to assist the IWG members. The members have demanding jobs and little time to work between the AC meetings.

Germany asked about the contract length for the P2. The Executive Secretary explained that it will be a one-year contract initially and will be renewable every 2 years thereafter. This should not have any influence on the decisions at the MoP, since the post can be transformed into a full-time post at any time in the contract period. The Executive

Secretary explained that it is also possible to terminate the contract. The Chair commented that he would like to avoid dissolving the post since this would not send a good signal.

The Committee approved the reports and financial statements presented by the Secretariat.

6. Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and the Standing Committee to EUROBATS

The Executive Secretary reported that a recent audit of the UNEP administration recommended that for all MEAs administered by UNEP a Memorandum of Understanding should be concluded, to ensure more clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities for UNEP and the Parties (similar MoUs were already in place for CBD and CITES). The memoranda would make clearer to the Parties what their rights are, for example with respect to the staffing of the Secretariat and use of the 13% programme support costs would also be explained. The Executive Secretary further explained that the content of the memoranda would vary slightly according to the different Agreements. He promised that he would share the draft of the CMS memorandum with the EUROBATS StC members before the next CMS StC meeting. The Chair welcomed this and stated that it would be important to be able to comment on the CMS memorandum before it is finalised at the next CMS StC meeting.

Italy asked whether the StC is empowered to deal with this decision on the memorandum. The Chair confirmed this and the Executive Secretary elaborated by saying that in all other Conventions and Agreements the StC also was the responsible body to deal with it.

7. Report on the preparations for the 18th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

The Executive Secretary confirmed that the logistical arrangements were almost complete and that the agenda would be dominated by the work of the IWGs. Draft resolutions would be prepared for AC19 (joint with StC9), to be finalised before the next MoP. The AC Chair remarked that there should be more preparation by the Administrative Focal Points before StC9-AC19 than was the case before StC4-AC15.

The Chair agreed that last minute discussions in the final plenary sessions of the MoP must be avoided this time round. He highlighted that there was a difference between the purely scientific approach (AC approach) and the way of expressing these technical issues so that they are politically acceptable to all interested individuals and countries (StC approach).

It was decided that the StC9-AC19 invitation must come jointly from the Chairs of the StC and the AC. It will clearly state that the Administrative Focal Points should be present at the meeting if their views were to be incorporated into the financial discussions and the draft resolutions. The StC9-AC19 would be the chance for all Administrative and Scientific Focal Points to discuss their views on all draft resolutions before the MoP.

Germany and the Chair pointed out that the governmental position is communicated to them only just before the MoP and that the Administrative Focal Points would have to make a special effort to find out about their governmental position earlier in order to be suitably prepared for StC9-AC19.

Mr. Oliver Schall reported that technical matters would have priority for Germany because e.g. wind energy in woodlands was becoming a reality and Germany had an on-going research project on this. He stated that a revised version of the Guidelines in Publication Series No. 3 should be produced based on the studies from Germany, UK and other countries. The Chair added that France had a working group studying the impact of wind turbines on bird and bat populations and the product of this work would be a document signed by the minister interpreting the impact on the populations. Germany said it would be valuable to have an international research symposium to enable the countries to inform each other of research that has gone on in this area.

The Executive Secretary explained that the responsible AC IWG would first draft a resolution with revised guidelines and once adopted by the Parties, the Publication Series No. 3 would be reprinted. The Chair confirmed that the guidelines were a powerful persuasive tool in discussions with wind farm developers and it would therefore be very important to produce revised guidelines.

8. Date and venue of the 7th Session of the Meeting of Parties

MoP7 will be hosted by Belgium in the week starting 15 September 2014 in Brussels. Already in 2012 Belgium had made a voluntary contribution for the costs of the MoP. The Executive Secretary informed that he would travel to Brussels after AC18 to discuss arrangements for the MoP.

9. Date and venue of the 9th Meeting of the Standing Committee and the 19th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

The Executive Secretary informed there had been an invitation from the Natural History Museum of Crete for AC18 but because there had been a serious cave case in Bulgaria in 2011 an invitation to hold AC18 in Sofia had soon followed.

Mr. Streit explained that the Natural History Museum of Crete had agreed to postpone hosting the AC meeting until 2014 and had already made some logistical preparations. The Executive Secretary noted that the logistical costs for StC9-AC19 would need to be covered by the Secretariat or by voluntary contributions.

The Chair asked EUROBATS to make a formal request to the Greek Ministry of the Environment to clarify whether there is any objection to the meeting taking place. The Executive Secretary agreed to do this but expected that as Greece is a Party to CMS there would be no opposition from the Greek government. He further explained that the invitation for AC14 in Cyprus also came from an NGO.

Germany made the point that EUROBATS should be careful of political developments and make sure that no antipathy builds up in Crete to such a meeting. Germany also suggested that the Parties should be asked about hosting the joint StC-AC meeting at AC18.

At StC4-AC15 there were many parallel sessions which created a certain amount of tension. It was decided to organise the communication and collaboration between the StC and the AC better and that most of the discussions on the draft resolutions should take place jointly in the plenary in future.

The Chair explained that the StC had to see the financial and administrative matters on its own. He stated that the StC should be able to look at the technical recommendations during the plenary sessions because the resolutions have financial implications for the EUROBATS budget and implications within the countries which might not be so obvious for the Scientific Focal Points. The Chair commented that running the meeting in this way would ease the work of the Administrative Focal Points in the MoP and lead to a more productive outcome of the MoP.

Germany suggested a complete joint meeting but the Chair reminded the StC that this was the exact situation of EUROBATS before the formation of the StC. The Executive Secretary also remembered that the experts were pleased to have the budget discussions separately.

The Executive Secretary suggested that the StC meet after the joint sessions when all the political and financial implications of the draft resolutions would be known. During this day the IWGs could continue their work. This was decided to be a good solution provided that there was at least one full day for the StC discussions. A possible schedule would be that the StC meet to discuss financial issues for 2 hours each day on Tuesday and Wednesday after the joint meeting and then all day on Thursday.

10. CMS Family Strategic Plan for Migratory Species

The purpose of the document was to inform which resolutions from the last CMS COP also have implications for EUROBATS. This was the first time that the Agreements have been given a chance to comment and provide input for the draft CMS Strategy for the CMS COP in late 2014. The Executive Secretary commented that a discussion on this CMS Strategy could be on the agenda of StC9-AC19.

The Chair expressed the importance of preparing a document on the goals of the Secretariat for the next quadrennium stating what is expected from the Parties within the 4-year period. This would set the goals and objectives for the Agreement and could be approved by the MoP along with the Strategic Plan of CMS (with the resolutions that concern EUROBATS). Belgium described this as an operational strategy document. The Executive Secretary suggested that it could be described as a quadrennial work plan for the Secretariat and for the Parties: a practical tool to aid work towards clear benchmarks with a strong link to the budget, whereas the AC work plan concerns itself with the scientific developments and goals.

The AC Chair explained that the key resolution from the previous MoP concerned the development of the Conservation and Management Plan. He said that it was likely that IWGs would be established to take forward the tasks assigned to the AC by the MoP and that further details would appear in the StC9-AC19 documents.

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

The Executive Secretary explained that EUROBATS was not present at the RAMSAR COP but that he has discussed the future cooperation between RAMSAR and EUROBATS with the Secretary General of RAMSAR.

Mr. Streit reported that a multispecies action plan on bats was being developed by the EU Commission and that EUROBATS had been invited to co-operate in this project. He explained that this would be the first real cooperation between the European Commission and EUROBATS. It should lead to improved results for the Action Plan because there would be more pressure on member states to realise their obligations. Germany suggested that this would be a good time to encourage the European Commission to become a Party to EUROBATS. The Executive Secretary said that he will raise the question of accession on his visit to the DG Environment in Brussels.

12. Any other business

Germany asked the Parties to bring wind energy papers to the attention of the Secretariat so that such papers can be shared with all interested individuals. The Chair requested that the Secretariat ask all Scientific Focal Points for up-to-date papers on the topic but the AC Chair confirmed that this is already being done by the relevant IWG.

The AC Chair reported that the Ukraine had issued a silver coin with a bat image in 2012 and that the Republic of Togo had issued a set of stamps in 2011.

Germany asked about a wind energy complaint case in Bulgaria. The Executive Secretary said that AEWA had attended the Bern Convention Meeting and is informed about the case but that the case is not particularly relevant for bats.

13. Close of Meeting

The Chair summarised that the decisions at MoP7 will enhance the conservation of bats within the Agreement area.

After an expression of thanks to all those who had contributed to the successful organisation and execution of the meeting, the Chair closed the meeting at 17:18 hrs.

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London, United Kingdom, 21 March 2013

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