



**Statement on behalf of
Mr. Bakary Kante
Director
Division of Environmental Conventions
United Nations Environment Programme**

To the

**5th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the
Conservation on Populations of European Bats**

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 4 - 6 September 2006

Delivered by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema
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Your Excellency, Mr. Radovan Tavzes, Director General for Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning
Excellencies
Mr. Chairman of the Advisory Committee
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour to address you today on behalf of Mr. Bakary Kante, Director of the Division of Environmental Conventions.

Mr. Kante sends his best wishes for a successful outcome of the fifth Meeting of Parties to the EUROBATS Agreement and he wishes it much success. Due to other commitments, Mr. Kante regrets that he is unable to join us here in this beautiful city, Ljubljana. He has asked me to deliver his statement and to stress to you all that UNEP's commitment to the effective implementation of EUROBATS Agreement is stronger than ever before.

I would, therefore, like to deliver the following statement, on his behalf:

Your Excellencies
Mr. Chairman of the Advisory Committee
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Slovenia for the kind invitation to host the fifth session of the Meeting of Parties to the EUROBATS Agreement. The Slovenian hospitality and generosity clearly demonstrates your commitment and dedication to the Agreement and to the conservation of bats in general.

Mr. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director has asked me to convey his personal gratitude to you, Mr. Director-General, and all your colleagues who have contributed immensely to making this meeting possible. Your tireless efforts and the anticipated success of this meeting is a true testimony of the importance you attach to environmental conservation.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to warmly thank Slovenia for the work undertaken in the protection of bats. In particular, I would like to congratulate you for addressing bat conservation as part of Slovenia's larger national nature conservation efforts and in the context of biodiversity protection. Only through a holistic approach to the protection of our ecosystems we will be able to reach our targets as set out in EUROBATS Agreement as well as in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

On behalf of UNEP, I would like to thank you for your personal involvement and guidance towards the implementation of the EUROBATS Agreement in Slovenia.

**Your Excellency
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements continues to be on the top of UNEP's agenda under the leadership of Mr. Steiner who only joined UNEP as Executive Director a few months ago. In the past month, he has set up, among others, two Task Teams both of which have worked full time to fulfill different terms of reference entrusted to each one of them. One Team is focusing on re-defining UNEP's work at the national level especially in the area of capacity building and technology support. The other Team concentrates on measures to improve administrative processes, managerial efficiency and organizational effect which include financial management issues affecting, inter alia, relations between UNEP, UNON as well as UNEP administered convention secretariats.

The preliminary results of the first Team are promising and relates to MEAs implementation at the national and regional level. These proposals are contained in our programme of work for the biennium 2008 – 2009 which will be presented for adoption at the 24th session of the UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum to be held in Nairobi in February 2007. The second Team is about to conclude its work hence its preliminary results are not yet known.

**Your Excellency
Distinguished delegates**

I would like to commend the EUROBATS Agreement in its efforts to address threats to 45 bat species in Europe arising from habitat degradation,

disturbance of roosting sites and harmful pesticides. Accordingly, this is an ambitious period in time for all of us committed to coordinated action on the conservation and sustainable management of the European bat species.

Bats are not only the best insect-repellant, but they are also one of the best natural indicators of the health of the environment around us. It is disheartening to note that while the international community has pledged to achieve by the year 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level, studies show new indications that biodiversity loss is increasing.

Today and over the coming days you will take stock of how well we have lived up to the expectations raised when Parties to this Agreement first met in Bristol, United Kingdom in 1995, and help to define where we should be heading in the coming years.

For UNEP, the year 2006 is the time and opportunity to look back at our achievements, and to find ways to strengthen UNEP's ability to help countries to build their capacities in environment assessment and management, to improve opportunities for conservation sustainable development and to ensure improved coordination of environmental conventions/agreements. For over a quarter of a century, UNEP has played a central role in the international community's efforts to save the earth's diversity of life, and it will continue to do so.

**Your Excellency
Distinguished delegates**

I am fully aware and so is the UNEP Executive and Deputy Executive Director that the administrative support services to the UNEP administered conventions continue not to live up to the expectations of the Secretariats and the Parties. The first step to improving the services is the recognition of this fact. The next step is to identify the solutions to the problem followed by implementation.

We have already moved from step 1 to step 2 and the Division of Environmental Conventions has recently developed an Action Plan for Improving the Administrative Support Services to the UNEP Administered Conventions. The Action Plan presents clear solutions on how UNEP can better provide efficient, effective and timely administrative services to UNEP administered conventions

based on convention specific administrative arrangements with UNEP and clearly defined delegated authority to MEA Executive Secretaries.

In this context I would like to thank you for the decision taken at the 11th Meeting of the EUROBATS Advisory Committee to conduct an audit of the EUROBATS Agreement. The report as prepared by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was presented to us in late August and I assure you that UNEP just the Parties have studied it carefully.

The report clearly outlines a number of recommendations which have to be addressed in order to improve the administrative support services to the Convention on Migratory Species and the co-located agreements, including EUROBATS. I can personally assure you that this report and its recommendations are under serious consideration of the earlier referred to Task Team established to deal with, among others, these very issues. For us, in UNEP, we consider this report will form the foundation for our commitment to fully service the UNEP administered conventions in line with your expectations.

I am particularly happy to note that the report confirms that the EUROBATS budgets both for this biennium and for the coming four years have been developed through appropriate consultations and in line with UN rules and regulations.

However, OIOS does note that the budget is calculated in such a way that there is no room for unforeseen events. In your budget discussions, I would like to strongly encourage you to allow the Secretariat to have a small financial margin to allow for unforeseen events both as it relates to personnel as well as meetings and other substantive activities. At the same time, I would like to encourage the Secretariat to continue its professional and highly responsible handling of the limited resources available for the effective implementation of the Agreement and its approved activities.

I strongly appeal to all Parties to look favorably at the budget proposal and take into consideration that adequate financial and human resources are prerequisite for the effective implementation of the Agreement and therefore, required allow the Agreement to move forward and live up to your expectations. I hope you will consider favorably the requested budget to permit the Secretariat to effectively fulfill the obligations and mandates you are going to demand it to do and report to you.

I also thank you in advance for your constructive proposals focusing on what you – the Parties – wish the Agreement to achieve. The budget discussions should be based on the recommendations of our experts and we should all make every possible effort to achieve a level of funding which will allow your Agreement to move forward.

I can assure you that UNEP will continue, whenever possible and within its meager resources, to provide support – on an ad-hoc basis and upon request – to the EUROBATS Agreement. As some of you know, UNEP, through the Division of Environmental Conventions, has supported the development of the EUROBATS Anniversary publication with Euro 15,000.

Your Excellency
Distinguished delegates,

This Meeting of Parties is a good moment, not only, to look back on what has been achieved during the last 15 years under the Agreement, but also to step forward and find new opportunities towards successful bat conservation. I would like to urge non-Party Range States to consider joining this worthy cause alongside the current 31 Contracting Parties.

I would also like to reiterate that the Secretariat and its Executive Secretary have the full trust and support of UNEP. I am sure that you will agree with me that the outstanding work done so far and a wish to strengthen the cooperation is a clear testimony of UNEP's commitment.

I wish this meeting the best in its deliberations of the important issues concerning effective bat conservation.

Thank you so much
