



Statement on behalf of

**Robert Hepworth
Executive Secretary**

**of the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild
Animals (CMS)
to the**

**5th Meeting of the Parties of the Agreement on the
Conservation on Populations of European Bats
(EUROBATS)**

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 4-6 September 2006

Excellencies, Director General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address this key meeting in the life of EUROBATS, as it marks fifteen years after the signing of the Agreement and it is going to deliberate on a number of issues that would further reinforce its effectiveness and impact in the conservation and biodiversity world.

The continuing success of this Agreement can be measured in terms of number of Parties, conservation actions, projects and plans, outreach events, media and press coverage, all still growing and increasing steadily. Parties grew from 6 signatories to 31 member States. A wide range of guidelines was adopted and operationalized at the country level, showing that the Agreement has a direct impact and a coordination role on bat conservation at the national level. National implementation reports witness that the Agreement and its resolutions are being implemented at the national level, and results are also accounted for. The Secretariat is increasing the number of projects managed. EUROBATS-related events like Bat Nights are becoming more and more popular and the press is certainly well aware of the existence of this small, but very dynamic Agreement.

The assessment of EUROBATS' performance is indeed an ongoing process undertaken by its Secretariat, its Parties, the mother Convention and UNEP – the mother organization - and civil society involved in bats' work.

I therefore take this opportunity to report on another independent assessment, undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, as the outcome of the audit of budget arrangements for EUROBATS is of extreme relevance for the credibility, past and future work of the Agreement and its management. The result of the OIOS audit should support your decisions and deliberations in the coming days, when you will be called upon to decide on future work of this Agreement.

The main purpose of the exercise was to “ provide UNEP, the Executive Director and the Meeting of the Parties to EUROBATS with an independent assessment of the adequacy of the process for the creation of the 2004-2006 and 2007-2009 budgets, and to assess whether there was a sound basis for figures shown” and presented to Parties.

To paraphrase the conclusions of the auditors, they acknowledged that EUROBATS had applied an acceptable methodology when calculating the budgets, with effective consultations with UNON and UNEP throughout the budget preparation period. The estimates made for 2004-2006 turned out to be reasonably accurate and in line with the budget methodology requested by the Parties. OIOS was satisfied that Parties can place reliance on the budget figures for 2007-2010, but with an important proviso: that they should better reflect the contingency factor, to cover unforeseen events.

The EUROBATS Secretariat, with my support, have submitted a budget for 2007-10 which seeks an average annual sum of about 360,000 to run this enterprising and valued conservation agreement.

A key point to bear in mind in the budget discussions is that the number of EUROBATS Parties –which is a key determinant of the actual official workload - has doubled in the last 8 years, whilst the number of Secretariat staff has increased from 2.0 to 2.5 –i.e. 25% more staff have to deal with a 100% increase in Parties. The efficiency of the Secretariat, which I hope Parties will feel has again been demonstrated by the arrangements in Ljubljana this week, has allowed these increases to be absorbed. But there are limits. I hope you will see the need for just a further half member of staff, to make 3 in all, in this context.

In the UNEP/CMS Secretariat we know from our experience at our last COP how difficult the financial climate is for most member governments. Some of the solutions we found in Nairobi last November may be relevant in Ljubljana this week. However, there needs to be an open and credible partnership between donor governments and the Secretariat: in other words, the Secretariat has to feel reasonably confident that any key commitments which cannot be funded out of subscriptions will attract donor funding. NGOs and the private sector have a key role to play here, and I hope too that UNEP has a whole will be able to make further contributions, particularly to information activities and capacity building in Eastern Europe. UNEP, for instance, have already agreed to fund a new “CMS Family

Guide” which will include EUROBATS. We are also grateful to UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions for funding the whole publication of the 1991-2006 EUROBATS anniversary book.

CMS as the ‘parent’ Secretariat will also continue to play its part. We have embarked on a new policy based on annual campaigns to raise awareness and deliver projects and to attract private sector support. Next year (2007) will be the Year of the Dolphin and we have already attracted major commercial sponsorship. We have already internally agreed that 2008 should be the “Year of the Bat”. We would look to MOP to endorse that proposal and for the EUROBATS Secretariat and Parties to join us in putting bats even more firmly on the map in Europe, and globally. This will be a chance for the bat conservationists in Europe and right round the world to unite in making sure the voice of bats is firmly on the radar screen as we approach the ‘bell’ for the 2010 WSSD/CBD biodiversity target.

As I requested successfully at the CMS COP last year, I seek your support and confidence in order to get this Agreement to continue its development and delivery. I wish you a successful meeting and deliberation and count on your demonstrated spirit of cooperation and compromise.

I will remain at your disposal throughout the week to assist as you deem it appropriate with the deliberations and to provide CMS’ input to the process.

Thank you.