

13th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Stockholm, Sweden, 27 April 2017

Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee



The 22nd meeting of the Advisory Committee was held in Belgrade, Serbia, from 27 – 29 March 2017. Approximately 70 delegates, representing 37 countries, the IUCN and a range of NGOs, participated in the meeting.

Although we have gained no new Parties since the last AC, the national reports from all Parties and non-Parties provided encouraging news of ongoing progress in the implementation of the Agreement right across the Agreement area.

The bulk of the AC meeting was devoted to Working Groups. The Advisory Committee currently has 16 working groups:

1. Bat conservation and sustainable forest management
2. Monitoring and indicators
3. Impact of roads and other traffic infrastructure
4. Communication, bat conservation and public health
5. Monitoring of daily and seasonal movements of bats
6. Purpose-built man-made roosts
7. Wind turbines and bats
8. Bats and light pollution
9. Quality of assessments and experience and skills of experts
10. Conservation and management of critical feeding areas
11. Bat rescue and rehabilitation
12. Bats, insulation and lining materials
13. Education
14. Overground roosts
15. Annex to the Agreement
16. Autoecological studies

12 of these met, in 6 parallel sessions, during the AC. With regard to the other four IWGs: The convenor of the IWG on “Autoecological studies” provided a brief update to

the Plenary and made a request for delegates to send him relevant literature on the listed species. He will convene the group again at the next AC, in advance of the MoP. The convenors of the IWG on “Quality of assessments and experience and skills of experts” were unable to attend the meeting but provided a short written report. The convenor of the IWG on “Sustainable forest management” was unable to attend, but provided a discussion document for the meeting. The IWG on “Conservation and management of critical feeding areas” is finished collating information and has prepared a draft final report. A small group convened during the AC to discuss and advance this final report.

The Plenary also heard a proposal for the establishment of a new IWG on “Climate Change and Bats”. It was agreed that this was an important and topical issue for bat conservation across the Agreement area. The group met as an ad-hoc working group during the AC and will meet again at the next AC with a view to developing terms of reference and a Resolution for the next MoP to underpin and define their work going forward.

Most of the IWGs are making good progress on their work plans and I am hopeful that the tasks allocated to them will be completed in time for reporting to the next MoP. Three IWGs (e.g. Bat and Roads; Critical feeding areas, Light pollution) have almost completed their work and are in the final stages of producing guidance documents. I am confident that these three reports will be suitable for publication in the EUROBATS Publication Series. The convenors of these groups will work to finalise their documents and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the AC are available to provide any support required. However, significant support and assistance will be required from the Secretariat to bring these documents to final publication. The role that the Scientific Officer will need to play in this process is particularly important.

The EUROBATS publications are the ultimate outputs from the EUROBATS Agreement. I draw the StC’s attention to their value and merit in both underpinning the importance of the Agreement as well as providing international best practise guidance which is already heavily referenced and drawn on right across Europe and indeed further afield. The publication over the coming 12-18 months of three further volumes, on topical and current matters of genuine importance, will be a major achievement for EUROBATS, justifying the resources expended. It will underline the importance and relevance of the Agreement in modern-day Europe.

A number of IWGs are addressing ongoing issues (e.g. wind-farms, public health, education) or have taken on large bodies of work (e.g. monitoring and indicators, rescue and rehabilitation) which may take several years to fully address; it can be anticipated that these IWGs may need to work beyond the next MoP. Nonetheless, they continue to be encouraged and supported in the production of timelines and targets for interim actions. It is hoped in this way that these IWGs will continue to make steady headway and be in a position to report back significant progress at the next MoP.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the contribution of all the IWG conveners. The implementation of the EUROBATS work programme is reliant on the effective running of the IWGs and the voluntary role played by the conveners in this regard is essential and commendable.

There are a number of additional items of note:

1. The Conveners of the IWG on Light Pollution and Bats held a workshop in early 2017 in Berlin to highlight the issues regarding the impact of artificial light on bats. The workshop also provided an opportunity for members of the IWG to gather and develop a first draft of their guideline document. Significant progress was made and this IWG is already near to completing its tasks with a final guidance document and associated resolution already drafted for next year's MoP. The support of the Secretariat in organising the Berlin meeting was acknowledged and the value of organising meetings between ACs to help progress the work of IWG was highlighted.

2. I would like to take this opportunity again to pay tribute to the support and advice provided to the AC by the "Senior Advisors". The active role that these highly regarded international experts play in our meetings, and in particular their constructive and leading involvement in numerous working groups is of great benefit to the effective running of the AC and to the completion of our Work Programme.

3. I also wish to highlight the work of the Scientific Officer. Suren has grown into his role in the Secretariat and it is already difficult to remember how we worked before he was appointed! He takes responsibility for the smooth running of the IWGs during the AC and is also available to provide support to them on all matter of issues before, during and after the AC meeting itself e.g. drafting and circulating questionnaires, collating responses, management of the online workspace. There will be a significant workload for him over the coming 12-18 months in helping to finalise the three guidance documents now nearing completion.

Suren's role in overseeing the Online Reporting System also needs to be recognised. The MoP in 2018 will be the first time for Parties and Non-Parties to use this system for their National Implementation Reports and we can anticipate a considerable additional workload for Suren in responding to requests for help and fixing any technical issues that might still arise with this new system. Given that these extra duties will come on top of the normal work required of him in the run up to the joint AC/StC meeting and the MoP in 2018, the fact that Suren is only working at 50% is of serious concern. I ask the StC to urgently examine how his time allocation can be increased towards 100% to ensure that the AC can successfully complete its work programme in time for MoP8 and to ensure that preparations and national reporting towards the MoP next year run smoothly.

4. Finally, I'd like to commend the ongoing support of the Secretariat. The smooth planning, organisation and running of the Advisory Committee meetings is itself a testament to their excellent work. Their particular support to me during this most recent AC in the unavoidable absence of the Vice-Chair was particularly welcome. Andreas, and each member of his team, demonstrate great competence in all aspects of their work and I look forward to continuing our successful working relations over the coming year and in the busy run up to MoP8.

Ferdia Marnell
Chair of the Advisory Committee
7 April 2017