

11th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Rome, Italy, 28 April 20151

Record of the Meeting



1. Attendance

This is listed in Annex1 to the Record.

2. Opening Remarks

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Jeroen Panis, welcomed the participants and thanked the Italian government, i.e. the Directorate General for Nature and Sea Protection of the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, for hosting the meeting. He invited the representative of the Directorate General, Mr. Felice Cappelluti, in the absence of Ms. Maria Carmela Giarratano, Director General for Nature and Sea Protection, to address the participants.

Mr. Cappelluti greeted those present and apologised on behalf of Ms. Giarratano for her not being able to attend the meeting. Her presence was requested at the opening of a universal exhibition that the city of Milan was hosting from May 1 to October 31 – EXPO 2015. It was a platform for the exchange of ideas and shared solutions on the theme of food, and a chance to expose the connection between food and biodiversity, as well as the important role biodiversity played in the production of food for sustainability.

Ms. Giarratano, however, left a written statement to the meeting participants in which she gave a picture of the commitment of Italy to nature protection within the larger picture of sustainability. In her statement she drew attention to some success stories and positive developments in Italy in terms of nature protection. However, she also pointed out the necessity to interlink active conservation policies with policies on social dimension, in order to raise public awareness of the threats and encourage social acceptance of conservation efforts.

Mr. Cappelluti concluded by wishing the participants a fruitful meeting.

The Chair of the Standing Committee then drew attention to the tasks of the Committee, in particular those arising from Resolution 7.1: To review the availability of additional funds and how these should be distributed. He recapped that the resolution mandated the StC to authorise, subject to the availability of funds, the adaptation of the level of the

P2 post occupancy. The resolution further urged the Parties to make voluntary contributions, and it encouraged the enhanced use of electronic publications.

The Chair of the Advisory Committee, Dr. Ferdia Marnell, also addressed the participants and thanked them for inviting him to the meeting. He emphasised his role of an observer. He would be glad to provide any help, especially with regard to the issues discussed at AC20 in Budva as well as with the discussion concerning the workload of the Secretariat.

The Executive Secretary, Mr. Andreas Streit, thanked the host government and also welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretariat.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Germany reminded that the year of 2016 would mark three anniversary events for EUROBATS: 25 years of the Agreement, 20 years of the Secretariat, and 20 years of the International Bat Night. Germany suggested that it should be discussed how these anniversaries would be celebrated. This suggestion was accepted and the point was added to the agenda as agenda item 10, after which the agenda was adopted as revised.

4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure were adopted unanimously.

5. Adoption of the Record of the 10th Meeting of the Standing Committee (Brussels, Belgium, 17 September 2014)

The record was also adopted unanimously.

6. Secretariat Report

The Executive Secretary drew attention to the written report and highlighted the most important points from it.

a) Agreement membership (recruitment of new Parties)

In January 2015 Israel became the 36th Party to the Agreement being the first from the extended Agreement area. This could encourage other countries from the region to join.

b) Eurobats Projects Initiative (EPI)

Details on the projects funded within the Eurobats Projects Initiative (EPI) are available in the written report. The Executive Secretary thanked Germany; Luxembourg, and Switzerland for their voluntary contributions and making the realisation of the projects possible.

c) Outreach and Publications

The Executive Secretary explained that in the previous period the Secretariat was very busy with the organisation of the meetings, but it also managed to bring out EUROBATS Publication Series No. 6 and organise a reprint of other existing publications. The Executive Secretary reported that there was a very big demand for No. 6, and that a translation of it into German and French would be coming soon.

d) Joint EU-EUROBATS Species Action Plan on Bats

Since AC20 there were no news to report with regard to the EU action plan.

e) CMS Family Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023

The Strategic Plan was adopted at the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS in November 2014 and it included the species covered by the daughter agreements as well. It was good to see that all species covered under the auspices of CMS were recognised.

With regard to the Secretariat's report, in particular to the Agreement membership, the Chair of the Advisory Committee shared his impression that some countries were very fast in acceding, whereas others took much longer. He asked the Executive Secretary to explain if there was a particular strategy in place with regard to the recruitment of new Parties and if in Executive Secretary's opinion this strategy was well functioning. The Executive Secretary answered that the strategy was to contact focal points in the responsible ministries and to continue to encourage them to work towards joining the Agreement.

Several participants emphasised the importance of Spain joining the Agreement and Germany suggested that it might be helpful for Spain's accession if an AC meeting would be organised there. Another proposal was to have a representative of the Spanish administration take part in an AC meeting to show them the good work done at the meetings and how they could benefit from it. The Executive Secretary explained that with regard to the host for the next meeting of the Advisory Committee there were already discussions under way, however, that both suggestions would be considered for the near future.

It was also agreed that the members of the Standing Committee would be consulted in case financial issues arose with regard to the participation of the Spanish administration representative at the next AC.

The Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, Dr. Michel Perret, raised two points with regard to EUROBATS Projects Initiative. The first one referred to the possibility to have

an exchange between the AC and the StC with regard to what projects would be funded. The second one referred to the existence of a mechanism to ensure a wider dissemination of the projects' results, especially when those projects concerned the whole EUROBATS community. The Executive Secretary explained that summaries of completed EPI projects were to be found on the EUROBATS website, but he agreed that it could be useful to draw attention to this section more directly.

Italy asked whether the work space was being extensively used and, if yes, whether it might be used for this purpose as well. Italy suggested creating different fora in the work space where the projects' results could be discussed. The Executive Secretary explained that the extent to which the work space was being used very much depended on the Intersessional Working Groups. He agreed that it could definitely be used as one platform where the results could be published. However, this would always remain a restricted area, limited to the EUROBATS focal points and experts, and it would be good to find a platform that would get the news about the good work done within the initiative spread more widely in the public as well. It was agreed that the Secretariat should look into how the dissemination of the lessons learnt could be improved.

Germany further expressed its support of the first point raised by the Vice-Chair and the idea to consult the StC on the decision which projects should be funded, since this decision also had financial and political implications. In response, the Vice-Chair clarified that there was a resolution which determined that this task lay with the AC, and that he did not intend to suggest changing it. However, he would appreciate the possibility to have an exchange of information with the AC to be up-to-date on the directions the AC had taken. It would be more of a guidance for the StC. The Executive Secretary pointed out that, if the way EPI projects were selected was to be changed and a new procedure was to be set up, it had to be done at the next session of the Meeting of the Parties and it could not be changed by the StC. He further reminded that, in case of projects financed from the voluntary contributions, the last word as to which project would be funded remained with the donor. Some donors left the selection to the AC, others preferred to choose themselves the projects that should be funded.

Germany commented that, if the decision of the AC would be backed up by the decision and support of the StC, the probability would be much higher that the projects chosen by the AC would indeed get the necessary funding. If the StC was to be consulted, it would be beneficiary for all, as then the scientifically based decisions would also get the political back-up. The Chair of the AC then explained that the AC had delegated the responsibility

of EPI projects selection to a small working group of senior experts, very experienced in terms of research and project development, and representing different geographical areas. This working group was re-elected after every MoP. The AC was very satisfied with the composition of the group as well as with its work. The group based its decisions and the selection of the projects on scientific, and not on political criteria, and in the AC-Chair's point of view this should also remain so. However, he agreed that it might be useful to share and explain this mechanism to the StC. The AC-Chair concluded by also offering to provide an annual report to the StC, but stressed the fact that, if the existing procedure of the EPI projects selection was to be changed, this first had to be discussed and altered at the MoP. Consequently, the timing of the proposed reports was discussed, as well as whether they would offer the necessary political backing of the decision which projects to fund, since they would still not imply the involvement of the StC in the decision making. In the end it was concluded that once a year a written report should be provided to the StC, not for it to endorse it, but just as an exchange of information. The practicality and usefulness of such a mechanism should be tested until the next MoP, and, in case there was still a need to change the existing procedure, this should be put for discussion at MoP8.

7. Administrative Matters

a) Report on income and expenditure in the financial year 2014 as well as on the Trust Fund status as of 31st of December 2014

The Executive Secretary started by reporting on income and referred to Dok.Eurobat.StC11.4.Annex1. He stated that most contributions for 2014 had been received. However, six Parties were in arrears, amounting to the total of outstanding contributions for the period of 2014 and before of 23.562 EUR. For 2013 and before only two Parties were in arrears. The Parties concerned received regular reminders from the UNEP headquarters. The Executive Secretary was certain that the outstanding contributions would be paid, but it had to be kept in mind that the missing sum was also reflected in the Trust Fund status.

In the Annex 2 of the document, the first column showed the budget lines as approved by the Parties, the second showed the revised allotments, and the third showed the actual expenditure. Overall the budget performance was good and according to plan – there had been no shortfalls but some savings. The Executive Secretary anticipated the greatest interest to be related to the second line with the revised allotments and he reported that there had already been some questions with regard to it. He proceeded to offer explanation why revisions of the allocated sums become necessary.

One of the reasons lay in the fact that savings from one financial year were carried forward into the next financial year. At the end of each financial year the procedure was to check if there were any savings in the budget lines and to decide, to which budget lines of the next year's budget they should be allocated. However, at the end of each financial cycle, which for EUROBATS lasted four years, any remaining savings would go into the Trust Fund Reserve.

Savings at the end of financial years could either be left in the same budget line, as it was done in case of staff costs, or, alternatively they could be moved to the budget lines where there were shortfalls, or to those budget lines that were traditionally budgeted below the expected expenditure (for EUROBATS these were the meetings related budget lines). With regard to staff costs, the Executive Secretary explained that it was possible to move those savings to other budget lines, but that it was not advisable. As staff costs represented the biggest single component of the budget, the savings were kept in that component as a precautionary measure.

The Executive Secretary also clarified that budget revisions were conducted not only at the end of but also during financial years, and that this was a standard procedure.

In the past, at the end of a financial year, some budget lines were on purpose kept in the negative in order to make it more transparent that the allocation in that budget line had not been sufficient. However, under the new accounting standards this would not be possible any more. Moreover, already in preparation for the transition to the new accounting standards the budget lines had to be balanced out, which made the negative balance in the budget line 5201 for information costs surprising. The Secretariat was not aware of the reason for the negative balance in this budget line, but the Executive Secretary was convinced that it was only a technical issue that would be easily settled.

Attention was then drawn to the budget line 1102 for the scientific officer. The Executive Secretary reminded the participants that the biggest revision happened in this budget line. It was a decision of the StC to use the savings in this budget line from 2013, since the post was vacant but the funds had already been allocated for it, and to shift them to the same budget line in 2014, to allow the new staff member to work 80 percent for the preparation and the wrap up of MoP7. In addition to this, the revised sum for this budget line contained also the recruitment costs, for which savings from other staff related budget lines were used.

Italy pointed to the difference of around 100.000 EUR in total between what had been approved by the MoP and what had been revised. The Executive Secretary was asked if

this meant that the sum of ca. 100.000 EUR were savings from the previous years. He explained that the sum consisted of savings and authorised withdrawals from the Trust Fund. Italy then asked for clarification as to how much was taken from the reserve and how much were the savings. The Executive Secretary responded that the authorised withdrawals amounted to 22.403 EUR per year for 2013 and 2014 for the new post, since 50 percent of the post were financed from the contributions and the other 50 percent from the reserve. These were the only withdrawals made. If ca. 40.000 EUR were the withdrawals from the reserve for the new post, and if this figure was deducted from 100.000 EUR, the difference of around 60.000 EUR represented mostly the savings from the previous three years. However, one other component, though not big, was included in this sum, and these were the contributions from the new Parties. Since for eight years there had been no change in the contributions of the Parties, the contributions of the new Parties accessing the Agreement represented additional income and were included in the budget.

Italy asked if in the future the reports for the StC could not only show the difference between the allotted and the revised sums, but if they could also provide the information on what the revised sums were composed of, i.e. how much of it came from the savings, how much from the reserve and how much was new income. The Secretariat agreed to it and also offered to provide the members of the StC with a revised version of Annex 2 after the meeting.

Italy further requested to consider shifting the recruitment costs for the P2 position from the budget line 1102 to another budget line. Though it was made clear that the expenditure of around 96.000 EUR included recruitment costs as well as staff costs for the 80 percent post occupancy, it did not look plausible that the costs for the 80 percent post occupancy were more than double the costs for the 50 percent post occupancy, which were 42.400 EUR. The Executive Secretary clarified that it was not possible to establish a new budget line for the recruitment costs, but offered that the Secretariat provided a footnote stating exactly how much were staff costs and how much were recruitment costs.

After a quick calculation the recruitment costs for the position of the scientific officer were estimated at about 25.000 EUR. The Vice-Chair, supported by Italy, was of the opinion that those recruitment costs were quite high, and requested the Secretariat to provide a detailed breakdown of the costs. The Executive Secretary informed the participants that the standard figure in the UN for recruitment costs was 50.000 USD. This figure depended

on a number of components, including the size of the family, transport costs for furniture, etc. Recruitment costs included not only relocations costs, but also an assignment grant to cover start-up costs at the new duty station which equalled to a one month salary. The Executive Secretary concluded that recruitment costs in this case were comparably low and agreed to provide a more detailed explanation of what they were composed of.

The Vice-Chair further raised the question why, though it was known that a new post was to be established, recruitment costs were not foreseen in the general budget as adopted at MoP6. The Executive Secretary reminded the StC that it had been explained at MoP6 that the standard procedure implied taking funds for recruitment costs from savings. Normally, there was no separate budget line for recruitment costs, since these were not foreseeable. In this particular case, as it concerned the establishment of a new post, it was known in advance. However, recruitment costs also occurred in cases of normal staff fluctuation, and this was something that could not be planned. The other option would be to have a separate budget line for this kind of expenditure, which would then most of the time not be used. The Executive Secretary summarised that he saw no need for it, as recruitment costs had not caused any shortfalls in the budget and that there were always enough savings in other staff related budget lines which could compensate for these unexpected costs.

Italy then pointed out that in the meeting related budget lines, 3301 and 3303, there was also a significant difference between what had been approved and what had been revised. The Secretariat was asked how it was possible that the costs for the AC meeting in 2014 were so much higher than the allotted sum.

The Executive Secretary explained that the Parties in the past had been always aware that the funds allocated to these budget lines would not be sufficient. The allocations for meetings were not based on realistic cost estimates but the Secretariat needed to find the necessary funds from savings in other budget lines or voluntary contributions.

In response to Italy's question as to what could be done to change this practice, the Executive Secretary urged the members of the StC to help the Secretariat getting realistic funds allocated for the meeting costs at the next MoP. Every year it was extremely difficult to organise the meeting knowing that there were insufficient funds in that budget line and that the Secretariat had to find them somewhere else. The Executive Secretary also reminded the members that in view of the number of participants that were brought together and the outcomes, the costs of the meetings were comparatively low.

Italy argued that the question was not whether the costs were high or low, but that the practice of spending more than was allocated was a dangerous one and it made the exercise of budgeting pointless. As a way of solving this matter, Italy suggested encouraging hosting countries to take over a greater portion of the costs. The Executive Secretary agreed that in terms of planning and financial security it was important to have a realistic budget and a realistic estimation of the costs, which was the case for all the other budget lines except for the meeting budget lines. He once again invited the StC members to assist changing this at the next MoP.

At the Chair's proposal it was agreed to postpone the discussion on this issue to the last meeting of the StC in the quadrennium, since for the current budget cycle the allocated sums for the meetings could not be altered.

The Vice-Chair suggested it might be useful to get an analysis of the costs for the last few AC meetings to see how they evolved. It was logical that they grew, since there were more and more Parties joining the Agreement. However, the costs for the AC meeting in 2014 were higher than even the costs for MoP7 and it would be interesting to see why it was the case. Germany suggested that the costs for the Secretariat also depended on which country hosted the meeting and what portion of the expenditures it was capable of taking over. The Executive Secretary responded that the costs of the AC meetings did increase in comparison to the past. This was due to the enlargement of the Agreement area and more Range-State representatives participating in the meetings. However, he commented that the costs were relatively stable in the past eight years and that AC19 represented the upper limit.

Italy maintained that, though it was plausible to postpone the discussion until the last StC before MoP8, it was still necessary to do something about reducing the costs of the AC meetings. It urged the Secretariat, when selecting a host country, to keep in mind the interest of the Agreement to spread to a particular area as well as other political reasons, but to consider budgetary constraints as well. The Secretariat was further advised, when engaging in discussions for a country to host a meeting, to ask for more financial support from the host government.

The Executive Secretary found it important and helpful for further discussion to explain how the costs of the meetings were distributed between the Secretariat and the host government. Only the logistical costs were normally covered by the host country and they represented the smallest portion of the expenses. A much bigger portion were per diems, travel and accommodation costs for the participants. In case no country offered to host

the AC meeting, it would have to be organised in Bonn, which would be even more expensive, since the daily subsistence, accommodation costs etc. would be comparatively high.

The Executive Secretary proceeded by stating that, though the costs of the AC meetings for the Secretariat of course depended on the capacity of the hosting country to bear the expenses normally covered by the host, from the Secretariat's point of view it was not a reason to exclude certain countries as hosts. Organising a meeting in one country had a great impact on bat conservation there; it promoted the work of NGOs in that country; it gave the experts the possibility to see new species. The Executive Secretary concluded that, if there was no flexibility with this regard, the number of possible host countries would drastically reduce. It was a fundamental decision that needed to be taken, whether this was really wanted or not.

The AC-Chair suggested, as there was little chance that the budget could be increased, to allocate a realistic sum for the organisation of the meetings, i.e. to take savings from the other budget lines and reflect them in the meeting budget line.

The Chair of the StC concluded that there was a need to analyse the costs and have a more realistic figure for the next MoP.

The Executive Secretary then carried on to give a report on the Trust Fund status. He informed the members that the Secretariat had not received the Trust Fund report for 2014 from Nairobi headquarters, however, that the finance colleagues in Bonn had made an effort to provide the Secretariat with preliminary figures based on the data they had.

He reminded the StC members that in the previous year the expenditure was fully within expectations and that there were no shortfalls and that the expenditure of 2014 had not affected the reserve. The Trust Fund status as of the 31st of Dec. 2013, based on the December exchange rate, was 400.526 USD, which corresponded to 294.787 EUR. The preliminary figures for 2014 showed the Trust Fund status as of the 31st of Dec. 2014 to be 253.639 USD, which corresponded to 207.983 EUR. In order to understand the developments in the Trust Fund, it was important to keep in mind that there was a dramatic change of the exchange rate towards the end of 2014. Though the dollar figures of the Trust Fund status 2013 and 2014 differed significantly, the difference was not that big when the figures in euro were compared and it amounted to 86.804 EUR.

To explain where this difference originated from, the Executive Secretary reminded the delegates of the reported arrears in contributions for the period of 2014 and before

amounting to 23.562 EUR. Furthermore, starting from 2013, the post of the scientific officer was partly financed from the Trust Fund, so that 22.406 EUR per year for 2013 and 2014 were withdrawn from the reserve. This all left the amount of 18.430 EUR difference still to be clarified. The Executive Secretary assured the delegates that in terms of expenditure everything was correctly reflected, both in the UN accounting system and in the expenditure sum used for assessing the Trust Fund status. In that sense, the amount that still had to be clarified were not funds spent by the Secretariat. These could either be the exchange rate losses or other costs that the Secretariat was not aware of. In any case, it required clarification with UNEP headquarters and the official report would be provided to the members of the StC after the meeting.

Italy asked as to when this clarification could be expected. The Executive Secretary responded that, due to the change to a new accounting system which took up a lot of time and resources at headquarters, this was difficult to predict.

The Vice-Chair then referred to the Annex 2 of the document on income and expenditure and pointed out the figure of ca. 43.000 EUR savings. If savings had been made that roughly corresponded to the amount that had been withdrawn from the reserve for the new post, it should be as if no money had ever been withdrawn. On the other hand the Trust Fund was still showing a significant loss. The Vice-Chair requested an explanation why the savings from 2014 were not reflected in the reserve. The Executive Secretary stated that, in his understanding, these 43.000 EUR were already included in the balance of the Trust Fund, however that it needed to be clarified with UNEP headquarters.

Italy expressed its concern about the way the two Trust Fund reports were produced, as they did not seem to be consistent with each other. In the report for 2013 the arrears in contributions were included in the total balance of the Trust Fund, which the Executive Secretary explained was not the case in the document for 2014. This made the reports difficult to understand and compare. The Executive Secretary assured the delegates the final documents would be produced in a consistent manner.

Finally, it was agreed to suspend the discussion on this agenda item until more information was available. The Chair also requested the explanations that were to be circulated after the meeting to contain the information on the exchange rate differences and the information on what figures were used.

b) Projection of the financial situation in 2015 including voluntary contributions

The Executive Secretary reported on the regular and voluntary contributions expected for 2015 and there were no questions raised to this subject.

c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat

The Executive Secretary informed the delegates that the Secretary was expected to go on maternity leave at the latest in mid-July 2015. After the maternity leave, she would take her accrued leave, so that maternity and accrued leave would cover most of the period between July and the end of 2015. She planned to then take a special, unpaid, leave for one year. The absence of the Secretary would in the current year have no financial implications, since maternity and annual leave were paid. However, for the year of 2016 there would be no expenditure on that post. Moreover, her absence would also require a reorganisation of the work in the Secretariat, resulting in additional tasks for all the staff members, in particular for the administrative assistants, but also involving the scientific officer who would take over the administration of the EPI projects.

Taking into account the explained staffing situation as well as the implementation priorities identified at AC20 and the work-plan for the Secretariat resulting from it, the Secretariat believed it necessary to increase the occupancy of the scientific officer post to 80 percent starting from September 2015. Alternatively, in case the StC considered there were not enough funds to increase the post occupancy from September, this should at least be done from January 2016, when the other post would be vacant and would not incur any costs.

There was also one more point which was relevant for deciding on the scientific officer post occupancy and which was not reported during the discussion of income and expenditure. Starting from 2015 UNEP headquarters would cover the IT costs for the whole CMS family. The amount that the EUROBATs Secretariat used to pay to the UN Bonn administration for the network, internet access, storage space, maintenance, help desk, etc. and that had also been foreseen in the budget for 2015 was 10.000 EUR.

The Executive Secretary concluded that he would suggest postponing making a decision on the scientific officer post occupancy until the Secretariat was able to present a more detailed work-plan as well as the information on the funds available.

8. Implementation Priorities and resource requirements resulting from the decisions taken at MoP7 and as identified by the Advisory Committee at its 20th Meeting (Budva, Montenegro, 23 – 25 March 2015)

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.Eurobat.StC11.10 and explained that this document listed the tasks for the Secretariat for 2015 onwards, emerging from the implementation priorities identified by the Advisory Committee at its 20th Meeting in Montenegro. He explained that already before the StC Meeting the Secretariat had received comments from the UK and Belgium stating that a more detailed document had

been expected, including also information on timelines and the amounts of work, i.e. man-days needed for the completion of the activities, etc. The Executive Secretary apologised that the initial document did not meet the expectations of the StC members and clarified that for some aspects the Secretariat was not aware they should be included in the document. He also invited the meeting participants to provide details on what information they expected to be contained within in the work-plan, but asked them to keep in mind that the Secretariat was depending on the work pace of the IWGs. For some of the tasks it would be difficult to define a timeline.

The AC-Chair added that at AC20 the IWGs were asked to re-discuss their terms of reference and their work-plan. They were also asked to identify what support they would exactly need from the scientific officer and the Secretariat. The AC-Chair agreed with the Executive Secretary that the IWGs worked at quite different pace. He expressed his hope to establish the practice where the IWGs would finish their work within one quadrennium, and where with new MOP resolutions new IWGs could start. However, there was still some catching-up that needed to be done. In that sense, for those IWGs that had already finished their work, it would be easier to provide a timeline, whereas this might prove more difficult for the other IWGs.

The StC-Chair requested the Secretariat work-plan to include also the core tasks of the Secretariat, such as the organisation of the meetings (StC, AC, MoP). This should be the starting point for the work-plan, as these tasks had to be completed. Only what time and resources were left after the completion of these core tasks could be used more flexibly and on the other tasks as they arose.

The Vice-Chair reminded that the request of the MoP did not only refer to the post of the scientific officer. It was necessary to take into account the general picture and to assess the capacity and composition of the whole Secretariat. This was important not only in the context of making a decision whether to enhance the post of the scientific officer, but also in order to have a realistic work plan for the Secretariat and to know what could be expected from it. The Vice-Chair concluded that the work-plan should contain both the information on general tasks of the Secretariat and what percentage was taken up by these tasks, as well as the information on what was done by whom in the Secretariat, i.e. on staff members' profiles.

Another question of the Vice-Chair referred to the time period covered by the work-plan – whether it was only for 2015 or for the whole quadrennium. The Executive Secretary responded that it would cover what was known at the moment, so that it would partly

cover the whole quadrennium. He added that it would also have to be updated every year after the meeting of the AC, as the implementation priorities might change or new tasks emerge.

Germany repeated that at least for some tasks there were timeframes and schedules and although they depended on the pace of work of individual IWGs, still certain planning was possible. The timelines would also be useful in terms of combining requests of IWGs to answer their questionnaires. Germany would appreciate if these questionnaires could be combined, so that the requests to answer them would not have to be sent that frequently. The AC-Chair informed Germany that the AC delegates favoured both of the options – to send the questionnaires as they were ready or to collect a couple of them and then send them out. The Executive Secretary added that one of the tasks of the scientific officer would be not only to assist the IWGs with questionnaires – their drafting, circulation, and compiling of the results – but also to coordinate the circulation of the questionnaires in an efficient and more user friendly manner for the EUROBATS focal points.

The StC-Chair summarised what information needed to be included in the work-plan:

- a. Regular, general tasks (including liaising with CMS and other Agreements, general correspondence, etc.),
- b. Timelines and milestones, especially for the general tasks where it should be possible to have them. For the other tasks it would depend on the IWGs. It should also be considered to have a deadline, once or twice a year, for sending out questionnaires.
- c. Information on responsibilities and roles of the staff members – who does what and in what time. The estimate of resources and the required time is important to see what would then be left for assisting the IWGs.

The question was then raised as to when the revised work-plan could be expected, and it was agreed that the Secretariat should circulate it by the end of June 2015.

With regard to the tasks for the work-plan, Germany suggested to have the Guidelines produced by the IWG on Wind Turbines and Bat Populations translated not only into German and French, but also into Russian and Arabic as this was an essential publication. Furthermore it was proposed that major projects from other IWGs should also be translated into these languages, as it would contribute to a wider distribution. Germany informed the delegates that it might consider helping with the financing of the translations under its voluntary contributions. It was agreed that the Secretariat should take this proposal into consideration.

9. Introduction of new accounting standards and accounting system in the United Nations and its impacts for EUROBATS

The Executive Secretary reported that, following the decision of the UN General Assembly, the whole UN was introducing new accounting standards and a new accounting system. Some parts of the UN organisation had already changed to it, and this year it was UNEP's turn.

The new accounting standards were called IPSAS – International Public Sector Accounting Standards. They would have an impact on how financial documents were produced and new financial rules were introduced etc.

With the new accounting standards a new accounting system came along. It was a software system used to compute all financial data, as well as all the data related to travel, human resources etc. It was called UMOJA and was scheduled to go live on the 1st of June 2015. The Executive Secretary reported that practical implications for the Secretariat had already started. As the second half of May was supposed to be the black-out period, in which no transactions would be possible and which would be used for converting and transferring data from the old into the new system, all financial transactions had to be closed before the black-out period. This took a lot of time and resources and it would take even more as it involved a lot of training for all the staff members.

10. Upcoming international events and developments in nature conservation relevant for bats and the Agreement

The Executive Secretary requested feedback from the delegates in relation to this agenda item. The Secretariat was aware of the Ramsar CoP, taking place in June 2015 in Uruguay. Though many Ramsar sites were also important for bats, it would be too expensive for the Secretariat to take part in the meeting and since CMS colleagues would be present there, the Secretariat would ask them for assistance. In addition to that, there was also EXPO 2015 in Italy

The StC-Chair asked the delegates if they were aware of any other events.

Italy mentioned a high level meeting taking place with the participation of the CBD Secretariat, to which also Mr. Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, was invited. Italy did not have more information available at the time, but it informed the delegates that the event was related to biodiversity and food production.

The Vice-Chair suggested that the CMS colleagues should be informed about it. The event could be an opportunity to stress the role of bats with this regard, though not

European bats. The Vice-Chair suggested also that Dr. Bradnee Chambers, the Executive Secretary of CMS; should be informed about it, but that EUROBATS should not take part in the meeting. Sweden added that not only the role of bats in the production of food should be stressed, but also other important ecosystem services they were performing (e.g. their importance for forests and agriculture).

11. EUROBATS Anniversaries in 2016

There would be three anniversaries with relation to EUROBATS in 2016: 25 years since the signing of the Agreement in 1991; 20 years since the permanent Secretariat was established in 1996; and 20 years of celebrating International Bat Night.

As it had already been decided that Germany would host the 12th meeting of the StC in 2016, it raised the question as to how the StC could back these anniversaries. Germany informed the delegates that it considered reserving funds for this purpose and asked if it would be possible to have the 12th meeting of the StC in the second half of the year in order to combine the meeting with one of the anniversary events.

The Executive Secretary responded that it would be difficult to wait with the StC meeting until autumn, as one of the tasks of the StC was to assess the priorities identified by the AC and the resources needed for the completion of these tasks. After short discussion the proposal to schedule the 2016 StC meeting in autumn was not accepted.

In the further discussion several suggestions had been made as to how the EUROBATS anniversaries could be marked. These included making a press release to be spread by the EUROBATS focal points throughout the entire range of the Agreement, tying one of the anniversaries with the coming out of the book by Mr. Peter Lina on bat names in different languages etc.

In conclusion the AC-Chair suggested that the 25th anniversary of the Agreement could be tied to the publishing of the book of Peter Lina; the 20th anniversary of the Secretariat could be associated with the StC meeting in Bonn, and for the 20th anniversary of the IBN, since posters were distributed for this purpose, a poster reminding of the anniversary could be produced.

12. Any other business

The Executive Secretary had two practical issues to raise. The first one referred to the use of blue folders provided to the meeting participants for the meeting material. The Executive Secretary informed the StC that at AC20 it was decided to reuse those folders and the Secretariat would only provide the new labels for them. It was a measure to save

costs, not only in terms of not having to buy new folders, but also not having to transport them. This suggestion was accepted without objections.

The other issue referred to the change of the staff members' email addresses. The participants were also informed that the domain would remain the same, as well as the EUROBATS general email address: eurobats@eurobats.org. Though staff email addresses would change based on the principle firstname.lastname@eurobats.org, the old email addresses would remain operational for a while longer.

Italy suggested that it would be good to have the meeting documents on the EUROBATS website not only as a pdf file but in the word format as well, which could then be used as a working version. The Executive Secretary saw the risk of misuse of documents, if they were available in the word format to the public. He offered that as a routine the original documents could be sent to the meeting participants per email. Sweden also supported the suggestion of the Secretariat and it was agreed to do so in the future.

The question also arose if there were any news about the Memorandum of Understanding with UNEP. The Executive Secretary informed the delegates that there were no news to report.

13. Date and venue of the 12th Meeting of the Standing Committee

With regard to the date of the 12th Meeting of the Standing Committee to be held in Bonn, Germany suggested that it might be useful to have a bigger time space between the AC meeting and the StC meeting to allow the Secretariat more time to prepare the documents. The Executive Secretary supported this suggestion, especially since there was an Easter break in between. This year the time between the meetings was too short and, in addition to it, the Secretariat had to prepare for the transition onto the new financial system. Since in 2016 the AC meeting was planned for after the Easter break, it will be easier to schedule both meetings with sufficient time in between. The AC was expected to take place in April, so that the StC meeting could be foreseen for the end of May or beginning of June. Germany suggested that at least two months should be between the two meetings. The Executive Secretary answered that this could be too long and that the practicality of it had to be checked. However, the members of the StC would be consulted to make sure the date was suitable.

14. Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 17:25 h.

11th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Rome, Italy, 28 April 2015

Provisional List of Participants



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