

## 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Sweden, Stockholm, 27 April 2017



### 1. Attendance

This is listed in Annex 1 to the Record.

### 2. Opening remarks

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Jeroen Panis, opened the meeting by inviting the hosts to address the participants.

Dr. Mark Marissink, Deputy Director of the Environmental Analysis Department of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, expressed his pleasure at being able to greet EUROBATS Standing Committee delegates in Stockholm. He reminded them that bats were very important in Sweden and that Sweden had been a member of the Agreement from the very start. Dr. Marissink thanked the Swedish Ministry for the Environment for co-hosting the meeting and asked its representative to address the participants. In conclusion, he wished everybody a successful meeting.

Mr. Stefan Berggren, Head of the Division for Natural Environment at the Swedish Ministry of Energy and Environment, expressed his gratitude for getting a chance to participate at EUROBATS StC13. He was interested in listening to the discussions during the meeting and getting to understand better the work of EUROBATS, for which he and the Swedish focal points had fought and succeeded to secure the Swedish contribution.

The Chair then welcomed the participants, particularly the delegate from Italy, Mr. Vittorio De Cristofaro, who participated at the Standing Committee Meeting for the first time. He also thanked the hosts for inviting the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee to Stockholm, and apologised for having had to reschedule it. He asked the Vice-Chair, Dr. Michel Perret, if he wished to address the participants.

The Vice Chair then also thanked the Swedish government and the Environmental Protection Agency for hosting the meeting. He expressed his feeling that the spirit of cooperation among the delegates was strong. The habitats in different countries were quite diverse, but bat threats were the same everywhere, and it was the task of the

Agreement and its justification to spread and share the experience in bat conservation and protection.

Finally, the Executive Secretary to UNEP/EUROBATS, Mr. Andreas Streit, also welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretariat, and expressed his pleasure to be in Sweden. Already 18 years ago, in 1999, he took part in an Advisory Committee meeting that was organised in Sweden. At the time, there were only 14 Parties. The Agreement had grown in the meantime and was currently totalling 36 Parties, with hopefully even more Parties to join the Agreement soon. The Executive Secretary wished all a successful meeting.

### **3. Adoption of the Agenda**

The Agenda was adopted without any remarks or additions.

### **4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure**

The Rules of Procedure were adopted unanimously.

### **5. Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee**

Since the Chair of the Advisory Committee to UNEP/EUROBATS, Dr. Ferdia Marnell, could not attend StC13, he had submitted a written report which had been circulated before the meeting as Doc.EUROBATS.StC13.4, and which was presented at the meeting by the Executive Secretary. He pointed out that the report from Dr. Marnell very well summarised the results of the previous AC meeting. There was an impressive list of Working Groups – 16 permanent and four additional ad hoc Working Groups; dealing with important topics for bat research and conservation. A new Working Group was established at AC22 to deal with bats and climate change.

The Executive Secretary further stated that all the groups had made quite a good progress in their work, and that their members were well aware of the fact that, in the prospect of MoP8, they had to speed up their activities to produce resolution proposals, which would then be agreed upon at the joint AC/StC meeting in spring of 2018 and put forward for adoption at MoP8.

The Executive Secretary concluded by saying that the report also well explained the importance of the AC experts and their work, as well as the importance of the Scientific Officer and the high need for this post, which added great value to the work of the Agreement and its Advisory Committee. Mr. Streit clarified that the Secretariat had no possibility to hire external professional consultants, and that all the experts from the Advisory Committee were volunteers, whose activities within the Advisory Committee

came in addition to their regular work. Thus, it was very important to have this one post within the Secretariat that could assist those experts in coordinating their work or in compiling the results of their surveys.

The Vice-Chair commented that, for the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to be properly prepared, the joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting had to be well organised, and the Standing Committee should discuss how it should arrange to consider the recommendations emerging from the work of the Advisory Committee.

Secondly, referring to the Working Groups, the Vice-Chair commented that all the subjects they were dealing with were quite technical and considered bat threats, but that the key issue should be to find a way how to link the technical proposals with real implementation. It might be good to send a signal to the Advisory Committee to put emphasis on the implementation of the proposals by concretely linking them, whenever possible, to the legal frameworks.

The Chair supported these suggestions. Regarding the second remark, he commented that this might be out of the scope of the Standing Committee work, but that it should certainly be considered. Regarding the first point raised by the Vice-Chair, Mr. Panis suggested to discuss this at a later point, once the organisation of the next Standing Committee meeting was dealt with.

*Action point 1: Standing Committee to suggest to the Advisory Committee to consider linking technical proposals with implementation.*

## **6. Secretariat report**

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.EUROBATS.StC13.10, which had been circulated before the meeting.

a) Agreement membership (recruitment of new Parties): The Executive Secretary informed the delegates that, since the last meeting, no new Parties had joined the Agreement. Two countries were in a quite advanced stage of accession – Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He expressed his hope that by the next MoP, these two countries could be welcomed as Parties. In that sense, the AC meeting in Belgrade was intended to encourage the Serbian government to speed up the process of accession. The hosts were glad that they could welcome the Advisory Committee meeting to Belgrade, and they had a chance to see all the valuable work done by the AC experts. Mr. Streit hoped that this would positively influence the speed of Serbia's accession.

b) Eurobats Projects Initiative (EPI): EPI continued to be very successful. Inf.EUROBATS.StC13.4 contained summaries of the outcomes of the projects conducted in 2016. From the report, it could be seen that a variety of different topics had been covered, and that EPI continued to be successful, also due to the Scientific Officer who worked closely with the EPI Evaluation Group and the project partners.

c) Outreach and Publications: The Executive Secretary informed the delegates that a new EUROBATS publication, Publication Series No.7, had become available. It was a special publication marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Agreement, and not only was it highly demanded, but it also triggered the interest for other valuable EUROBATS publications. Mr. Streit explained that Publication Series No. 7 as well as most of the other publications were no longer on stock, and that the Secretariat would have to organise the reprinting of these publications immediately after the Standing Committee Meeting. This indicated how valuable these publications done by the experts of the AC were and how much impact they had. He concluded that the publications were a good investment and informed the delegates that several new guidelines (e.g. on bats and light pollution, bats and traffic infrastructure, etc.) would have to be published after having been adopted at MoP8. This would require additional funds as well as expertise from the Secretariat.

## **7. Administrative matters**

### **a) Introduction of new accounting standards and accounting system in the United Nations and its impacts for EUROBATS**

The new accounting system (UMOJA) was introduced already in 2015 with quite some hick-ups. However, the situation had improved in the meantime, and the Secretariat was again fully operational, though some procedures got slower and were thus taking longer. The situation was getting better, but still some more time was needed for the system to start running at the level that was intended. The Executive Secretary further mentioned that the new system also had an effect on the synergies within the CMS Family. Since the system required a lot of enterprise roles and these had to be given to different staff members for the segregation of duties, small secretariats had no capacity to cover all the roles on their own so they had to cooperate closely. Thus, EUROBATS provided work in procurement and travel administration for other CMS Family secretariats as well. This was also reflected in the Secretariat work plan. It was a good example of synergies between Agreements.

The Vice-Chair welcomed synergies, but required that attention should be paid to the good repartition of the work. He asked what EUROBATS received in compensation for the work its staff members did for the other Agreements.

The Executive Secretary answered that the staff members of other secretariats were assigned other roles in the process so that EUROBATS indeed received benefits back. He explained that EUROBATS was still weighing out costs and benefits and that the administrative assistants were asked to record the time they spent on tasks other than EUROBATS tasks. Mr. Streit, however, assured the Standing Committee that, in exchange, EUROBATS received back activities that were required for its work.

**b) Report on income and expenditure in the financial year 2016 as well as Trust Fund status as of 31 December 2015 and 2016**

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.EUROBATS.StC13.5 and commented that the income situation for contributions was quite good. Since the writing of the report a few more contributions had arrived, leaving only a few arrears for EUROBATS. There was only one country that had not paid its contributions for many years. The Executive Secretary mentioned that he had had a chance to meet a high-ranking delegation of this country at one conference, and that he had used the opportunity to alert them to making up for the arrears. If the problem persisted, he would bring this to the attention of the Standing Committee and would discuss how it should be dealt with. One possibility would be not to fund the participation of the delegates from this country at EUROBATS meetings, the other would be not to allow the delegates from this country to vote at MoP8. However, Mr. Streit expressed his hope that the issue would be solved by then. It was not a significant amount of money – arrears in total were at a low level, summing up to a bit more than 10.000 EUR. A bit more than half of this sum was owed by one country. All in all, the arrears did not negatively impact the work of the Agreement.

Referring to Annex 2 of the document, Mr. Streit stated that the expenditure in 2016 was satisfactory in view of the Secretariat. There was an over-expenditure in the category of professional staff, since staff costs were computed in USD. Due to the weak Euro, a moderate over-expenditure occurred since the budget allocation was made and based on the calculation done when the Euro was strong. However, overall the budget was stable. It was important to monitor whether some adaptations would be needed for MoP8, but for the time being there was no reason to worry. Additionally, the exchange rate seemed to be slowly improving and getting more stable.

Referring to the budget line for bat conservation projects, the Executive Secretary explained that some projects had been wrongly charged against the regular budget, and not, as intended, against voluntary contributions. In the past it was possible to correct such mistakes. However, the new accounting standards and system did not allow for this. The amount that was wrongly charged totalled ca. 11.000 EURO and this was the sum that was remaining in the trust fund for voluntary contributions. In correction of this mistake, the Executive Secretary proposed not to use the 10.000 EUR planned for projects in the regular budget for 2017, but to use the voluntary contribution funds instead. Mr. Streit concluded that the budget year 2016 ended with a small surplus, which could have been bigger if the projects had been paid from the voluntary contributions.

The Vice-Chair referred to the fact that EUROBATS was no longer making any savings due to an unfavourable exchange rate. He reminded the delegates that in the past only for the position of the Executive Secretary approximately 10.000 EUR were saved yearly. The situation had changed and attention had to be paid to this. The Vice-Chair further asked for an explanation why savings could still be made for the administrative posts, but not for the post of the Executive Secretary?

The Executive Secretary explained that it was a UN standard that the staff costs (not only salaries, but also contributions to the pension fund, medical insurance, dependency allowance) for the posts from the international category (professional staff) were processed in USD, whereas the costs for the locally recruited staff were computed in the local currency of the duty stations. A change in the exchange rate had no impact on them. For professional staff, for whom the staff costs were computed in USD and had to be paid in USD, in case the EURO was weak, bigger EURO amounts were needed to get to the same amount of USD. The Vice-Chair commented that it would be better to recruit professional staff locally. Mr. Streit explained that this would not make any difference, and that this applied to all professional staff, even if they would be coming from the country of the duty station.

The Vice-Chair then reminded the Executive Secretary of his reassurance that the UN standards for staff costs calculations were very cautious. It seemed that these standards were not that cautious as they did not take the exchange rate fluctuations into account. Mr. Streit explained that what he had told the Standing Committee members was that the UN standards for the staff costs calculations had not been applied in case of EUROBATS professional staff. If the UN standard costs had been used, much more funds had to be allocated for the staff costs. Due to the budgetary constraints, the decision was made not

to use the UN standards for this, but to base the budget allocations as much as possible on actual expenditure with some contingency. Mr. Streit reminded the delegates that, in relation to the total amount, the over-expenditure in the category of professional staff was not dramatic. Additionally, there were no indications that the situation would aggravate – most likely it would become better. Also, the over-expenditure was balanced out with the surplus from the staff costs on the assistants' level. The developments would have to be monitored further to see if action would be required at the next MoP, but it was by no way dramatic and it showed tendencies to improve. The Chair concluded that the staff costs calculation would have to be more closely considered for the following MoP.

Ms. Marie Nedinge from Sweden went back to the fact that projects were wrongly charged against the regular contributions fund (BTL) and not against the voluntary contributions fund (QFL). She asked whether it would be possible to shift funds from QFL to BTL. The Executive Secretary answered that this was not possible, and that one solution could be to finance projects in 2017 with funds from QFL instead of BTL. The donors had already agreed to it, also since the Secretariat would not use these voluntary funds for anything else apart from financing projects. Thus, EUROBATS regular contributions fund could get back the funds that it in a way borrowed to the voluntary contributions fund.

The Chair asked where this described situation could be seen in the income and expenditure report. The Executive Secretary explained that it mostly affected the budget lines for projects, for the organisation of the Advisory Committee Meeting (since one donor country provided funds for participation of Non-Party Range States at the AC meetings). Additionally, more funds could have been spent from the budget line for information material for producing publications.

The Vice-Chair pointed out the costs for IT services – 10.000 EUR were foreseen, but only about 1.000 were spent. Mr. Streit explained that this was only because the invoice for the IT services had not yet been paid due to some problems with the new accounting system. However, this invoice would have to be paid. The Vice-Chair asked whether this invoice would then be paid in 2017. The Executive Secretary confirmed it. The Vice-Chair then explained that he was looking for the possibility to make savings, but this seemed difficult, as there were no margins left. This was an important point when the employment level of the P2 officer was to be considered. The budget was balanced, but there was no possibility for savings. The Chair reminded the delegates that the trust fund was also at their disposal. The Executive Secretary replied that the trust fund status would be discussed subsequently. The Chair then concluded the discussion on the topic of

expenditure by asking whether there was consensus to skip using the 10.000 EUR from BTL for projects in 2017, and he got a positive answer.

The Executive Secretary proceeded to explain that the trust fund status reports came from the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi and that they were all processed in USD. In the report for 2015 he drew the delegates' attention to the sum of 35.571 USD for other expenses. He explained that these expenses represented exchange rate losses following a re-evaluation of the entire trust fund because of the exchange rate fluctuation. These expenses had an impact on the trust fund, as it was almost the same amount that was agreed to be withdrawn from it. The good news was that the income and expenditure deficit (5.794 USD) did not include the annual withdrawal for the budget. Thus, much less funds had been withdrawn than planned for in the budget.

For 2016 the deficit was higher – 22.090 USD. However, more than half of it was related to the problem that projects were funded by the BTL and not the QFL fund. Also in 2016 the withdrawal from the trust fund was significantly below of what had been budgeted (35.421 EUR had been initially planned for). In conclusion, the Executive Secretary stated that there had been some movement in the trust fund reserve, but the balance of 225.756 USD represented still a healthy reserve.

The Vice-Chair pointed out that at Mop7 it was decided to withdraw some money from the trust fund for the regular budget, however, that this had been done to a lower extent as planned. He asked what the difference would have been if the total planned sum would have been withdrawn. The Executive Secretary reported that the amount not withdrawn in 2015 was 26.138, in 2016 it was 26.928, thus a total of 53.066 EUR. The Vice-Chair repeated that it was important to consider this when discussing the possibility of increasing the post occupancy of the P2 officer.

### **c) Projection of the financial situation in 2017 including voluntary contributions**

The Executive Secretary presented the financial situation so far in 2017. The Chair asked if it was safe to say that EUROBATS would again have another 20.000 EUR of not spent withdrawals. Mr. Streit answered that there was no indication that it would be any different. The organisation of the Advisory Committee Meeting this year had been cheaper than usual. The budget line for the AC meetings was traditionally overspent, however, this year's meeting was cheaper than the one organised last year. The Vice-Chair reminded of the 10.000 EUR that would have to be spent on the IT services. The Chair commented that these 10.000 EUR would be compensated by the 10.000 EUR that would not be spent from BTL on EPI projects. The Vice-Chair insisted that, when

considering the capacity to withdraw from the reserve, the IT costs that were not paid should be taken into account. Still there would be 43.000 EUR available. The Vice-Chair would not advise to withdraw all that was budgeted – the reserve had to be kept healthy for the following quadrennium, as this was an important margin for the discussions at MoP8. He would advise caution, but it could be considered to use the funds saved through not withdrawing from the reserve the whole amount that was budgeted to bring the post of the P2 officer to an 80 percent occupancy starting from July 2017.

The Executive Secretary added that, in the projection of the income for 2017, there was another positive development that had to be considered. In 2016 EUROBATS received 20.000 CHF as voluntary contribution from Switzerland. EUROBATS was informed that this donation would continue as a voluntary contribution on a yearly basis. With the Swiss contribution, the voluntary contributions reached the level of what the Secretariat could manage in terms of projects. It might therefore be considered at the next MoP to remove the BTL budget line for projects.

#### **d) Staffing situation in the Secretariat**

The Secretary, Ms. Kate Horn was in 2016 on maternity related leave. She came back in 2017. The funds for her post in 2016 were used to increase the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer. At the same time, the tasks had been reallocated within the team. The Secretariat benefitted a lot through the increase of the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer. With the return of Ms. Horn, these funds were used for her post, and the post occupancy of the P2 officer had to be reduced back to 50 percent. Apart from that there had been no other changes.

The Chair suggested to postpone the debate about the post occupancy of the P2 officer until after the discussion about the Secretariat work plan.

#### **e) Secretariat Work Plan**

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.EUROBATS.StC13.11. He reminded the delegates that it was decided for the Secretariat to update its work plan for each Standing Committee Meeting, covering the period from June to May to include the activities and priorities set by the Advisory Committee at its yearly meeting. Mr. Streit further explained that the Secretariat was not yet in the position to entirely estimate the implications of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee and its decisions on the work plan for June 2017 till May 2018. It was done to the extent possible since the AC meeting took place shortly before StC13. Only the P2 Officer managed to do so as he was much more involved with

the Working Groups and knew what was still needed to be accomplished until MoP8. Additionally, the P2 Officer also adjusted his work plan to the 50 percent level.

The Executive Secretary then pointed out for which activities from the work plan the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer had the biggest impact. Special attention was paid to adjusting the national reporting system. If it had not been for the Scientific Officer, who also possessed very good IT skills and who managed on his own to adapt the national reporting system for EUROBATS purposes, EUROBATS would have needed to employ an external consultant. For the final tuning of the system, the P2 Officer would need 10 work days with none being allocated at that moment, and for communication with the Parties 15 work days were needed and none were allocated.

The Chair then summarised that the biggest gaps in what was needed and what was available in terms of P2 working days were in relation to the work with Intersessional Working Groups, on publications, and on the national reporting system.

Ms. Marie Nedinge commented that, when all the tasks of the Scientific Officer were taken into consideration, even more than one full-time position was needed to manage the work load. The Vice-Chair commented that it was important to be careful when deciding on withdrawing funds from the reserve, and that, at the following MoP, it would have to be made clear to the Parties that there could be no reduction of the contributions. In that sense, at the next Standing Committee Meeting the Parties would have to decide if they wanted all this good and useful work to continue, if they wanted to make further progress or not. The Chair added that it was for this reason that the Secretariat work plan was made – to see clearly what was done and what could have been done. For the following StC meeting it would be advisable to produce a document that would link the work plan with the budget. The Executive Secretary responded that the first version of the draft budget scenario would have to reflect what was actually needed. For the future, he could not see how it would be possible to manage this work load with keeping the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer at the 50 percent level. It should be at least at the 80 percent, ideally on a 100 percent basis, and a solution for this situation should be looked for. The Chair of the Advisory Committee had also pointed out that this was a matter of concern for the AC members. The Parties saw the good work that was being done and they offered voluntary contributions for projects. The Secretariat would therefore wish to present a budget with 80 or 100 percent employment level for the P2 position. The Chair agreed to this, but he emphasised again that it would be necessary to have a document that would link the budget with the work plan to see what the consequences would be –

what would be done or not done depending on the available budget. Referring again to the immediate work cycle, he reminded the delegates that it involved the first part of the following year as well. In that sense, it would also be important to see where the crucial need was. Since the biggest gap was related to the national reporting system, the question was whether it might not be better to increase the P2 post occupancy with the beginning of the following year, or whether this should be done over the year. The Vice-Chair suggested doing it for one year from September to September, until and for the preparation of MoP8. The Executive Secretary proposed, in turn, to start with the increase of the P2 post occupancy immediately, and to consider the situation again at the next joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting, when the Secretariat would have a better insight into what the budget situation in 2017 was like. In the end, it was agreed to increase the post occupancy until (and to include) the next MoP.

The Chair then asked in terms of costs what the difference would be between 80 percent and 100 percent employment for one year. Mr. Streit replied that this was difficult to answer as there was no reference for 100 percent employment for one whole year. For the orientation purposes, the expenditure for 2016 could be taken into account, as in 2016 the Scientific Officer was employed at the 80 percent level for the entire year. The Chair concluded that if the post occupancy would be increased to 80 percent, all the savings created by not withdrawing funds from the reserve in 2015 and 2016 would be used up. It was a risk but not a big one. The Executive Secretary reminded the delegates that there would be new savings by not withdrawing money from the trust fund in 2017 and 2018. The Chair asked the Executive Secretary to find out how much it would cost if the Scientific Officer was employed at 100 percent basis for the whole year. He further commented that by not increasing the P2 employment level to 100 percent, 80 working days of the P2 Officer would be missed. The Vice-Chair pleaded for more caution and suggested that even an increase to 80 percent employment would have an impact. Ms. Nedinge agreed with it, but also reminded the participants that the following year was the year in which the Meeting of the Parties would take place, as well as the joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting, and that the work load would thus increase even more. The Executive Secretary then informed the delegates that between 94.000 USD and 105.000 USD (depending on seniority and the number of dependants) were what CMS had budgeted for a similar post. The Chair concluded that 60.000 EUR more than were currently budgeted for were needed for an increase to 100 percent, i.e. 40.000 were needed for an increase to 80 percent.

The Vice-Chair reminded that it was still necessary to determine the period in which the post occupancy would be increased. The Chair replied that this was more or less decided – it was agreed that the increase in the post occupancy should include the next session of the Meeting of the Parties, so it would have to be counted backwards to see when the increase should start. Mr. Streit concluded that the increase should include October 2018 and should start with November 1, 2017. The last remaining question was whether to increase the post occupancy level to 80 or to 100 percent. The Chair commented that the increase to 80 percent could be covered by the 40.000 EUR for the regular budget that had not been withdrawn from the reserve in the last two years. Ms. Radostina Galitionova from Bulgaria reminded that EUROBATS would make savings in the following two years as well. The Executive Secretary proposed to start with 100 percent employment and ideally continue with it, but to review the issue at the next joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting. The Vice-Chair was more in favour of starting with 80 percent and then checking the situation at the joint meeting. Dr. Volodymyr Domashlinets from Ukraine supported this view. The Vice-Chair explained that at MoP7 it was decided to allow a withdrawal from the reserve for 2015 and 2016. By not withdrawing the full amount, 47.000 EUR were saved. If it was decided to employ the P2 Officer at 80 percent, the costs would remain within this framework of withdrawal, and it could be checked at the next joint meeting if there was a capacity to increase the post to 100 percent. The Chair argued that, per Resolution 7.1, the Standing Committee had the mandate to withdraw funds from the reserve. The Vice-Chair insisted that this was possible only within the agreed framework, and that the Standing Committee could not agree to withdraw more. Furthermore, it was not cautious enough to count on the budgetary savings for the following two years as these were only anticipations. The Chair explained that the Standing Committee was given the mandate to decide on the post occupancy of the Scientific Officer based on the availability of funds, which meant that it could decide to withdraw funds up to the limit of leaving 80.000 EUR in the trust funds. Though he was not advising for it, he wanted to point out that the funds were available. His bigger concern, however, was the fact that most of the work load was to be anticipated at the beginning of the one year period. In that sense, it might be more advisable to start with 100 percent and then reduce it after the joint meeting. Ms. Nedinge from Sweden was also in favour of it. Until the joint meeting most of the work for the preparations of the resolutions would have been done. The Vice-Chair still preferred the other way around. The Executive Secretary then summarised that it was agreed to increase the post occupancy to at least 80 percent. It was also agreed that the increase should start as of

the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017. He suggested reviewing the situation in October 2017, as at that point the Secretariat might have a better view of what funds were realistically available and how much could be saved in 2017 through withdrawing less from the reserve. Dr. Volodymyr Domashlinets as well as the Vice-Chair agreed with the proposal and it was concluded that the post occupancy of the P2 Officer would be increased to 80 percent for one year starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017, and whether the post would be increased to 100 percent would be considered at a later stage when more information on the budget for 2017 was available in October 2017. It was also agreed that if there would be no consensus regarding the increase to 100 percent, the 80 percent employment would remain.

Action point 2: Standing Committee to consider more closely staff costs calculation in preparation of MoP8;

Action point 3: Secretariat to skip using 10.000 EUR from the regular contributions fund to finance projects in 2017, but to use voluntary contributions fund instead;

Action point 4: Secretariat to produce a document for the next joint meeting of the Advisory and the Standing Committees to link the budget with the Secretariat work plan – what would be done or not done depending on the budget;

Action point 5: In October 2017 Secretariat to check the budgetary situation and report to the Standing Committee, that would then decide whether to increase the post occupancy of the P2 Officer to 100 percent or to 80 percent level, starting from November 1, 2017 for one year.

## **8. The future scale of contributions of Parties 2019 onwards**

The Executive Secretary opened the discussion by summarising the situation. The following year the contributions would have been frozen for the period of 12 years – not even an adjustment for the inflation rate in this period had been included. This was a unique situation that could not be found in any other international agreement. EUROBATS had managed to deal with the situation, but in the past four years withdrawals had to be made from the reserve which was unlikely to be possible to the same extent in the following years. If this continued, the trust fund would eventually get exhausted. In addition, at MoP7 the Parties had requested the Standing Committee to identify a way back to the application of the UN scale of contributions, which as a side effect had no longer applied with the decision to freeze the contributions at the 2007-2010 budget level. The Secretariat had sent a letter to all the national administrative focal points with two

proposals how this could be achieved. If the UN scale of contributions were to be applied immediately, one third of the Parties would pay less, one third would remain approximately at the same level and the other third would have to pay more. Annex 1 presented the contributions that would apply with the UN scale for the present budget period (withdrawals from the reserve included). For the Parties whose contributions would increase, it was the increase in percentages that was significant – even though the increase in real figures was not drastic, in percent it was. As this would be very difficult to be accepted by the Parties, another way had to be found to get back to the UN scale of contributions. The Secretariat had developed two scenarios as possible approach. Scenario one proposed to keep those contributions that would otherwise decrease at the same level to allow for the gradual increase (in 25 percent steps) of the other contributions and to create a surplus that would slightly reduce the amounts withdrawn from the reserve. Scenario two also included the gradual increase of the contributions as well as setting the level for minimal contributions to 2.000 EUR. The increase in the minimum contribution from 1.000 to 2.000 EUR would also take place in 25 percent steps.

Ms. Nedinge commented that it was good to have these two scenarios for discussion, but that Sweden was not yet in the position to give a definite answer. Ms. Galitionova stated that Bulgaria for now supported scenario one but had an open position. Dr. Domashlinets explained that Ukraine was also in favour of scenario one but would not block the decision, if scenario 2 would be agreed upon.

The Vice-Chair explained that the goal of that Standing Committee Meeting was not to be in favour of one of the scenarios, the goal was to prepare possible scenarios. It was not necessary to take a position on one of the scenarios, but to prepare for the next Standing Committee Meeting a scenario that was feasible and could be presented to MoP8. The decision needed to be made whether it was wise to propose these two scenarios, or whether the StC members should ask the Secretariat to prepare further options.

Mr. De Cristofaro from Italy commented that Italy was in favour of scenario two.

The Chair said that Belgium supported going back to the UN scale, as well as raising the level of the minimum contribution, if the minimum paying countries agreed with it. However, the main concern for Belgium was that the budget had to be planned without deficit. Commenting on this, Ms. Nedinge stated that it was important to urge the Parties to keep in mind that there had been 12 years without any increase in the contributions,

and to keep in mind the good work of the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat. If the good work was to be kept up, raising of contributions had to be considered.

The Executive Secretary thanked all the delegates for their statements, as well as all those Parties that had submitted their comments in writing before the meeting, in which strong support for strengthening the financial situation was prevailing. He concluded that going back to the UN scale was acceptable for all the Parties that had responded that far, with some hesitation from Poland. This position of Poland was understandable as it was one of the countries that would have a 30 percent increase in contributions. It was agreed to follow up on this and to develop a scenario that would be acceptable for all, because otherwise, Parties would be facing problems to reach a consensus at the next joint meeting and in particular at MoP8.

The Executive Secretary further reminded the delegates that most of the Parties had not responded at all. Additionally, even if everyone was happy with scenario two, it was not yet a solution, as it did not cover the full gap in the budget. The scenarios only represented a redistribution of the present sum of contributions, which did not fully cover the current budget (with this level of contributions withdrawals still needed to be made to cover the costs). The Vice-Chair stated that for this reason it was necessary to be very careful and to prepare several scenarios, for which the existing scenarios were the basis. The Chair suggested, as one way of tackling the subject, to present the Parties what EUROBATS could do, to give the information as to how much it would cost, and how these costs could be distributed in terms of contributions.

The Vice-Chair again advised that the Secretariat should be told if it needed to prepare additional scenarios. He suggested that the Chair and the Vice-Chair should have a discussion together with the Executive Secretary on the possible scenarios two months before the joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting to see which further scenarios should be prepared. The Executive Secretary explained that he intended to prepare all the information for the next meeting, including tables that would show realistic contributions. The Chair then concluded this point for discussion.

*Action point 6: The Secretariat to continue providing clarifications to Parties regarding the future scale of contributions.*

*Action point 7: Two months before joint AC and StC meeting, StC Chair and Vice-Chair together with Executive Secretary to discuss further possible scenarios to be presented to the Parties for going back to the UN scales.*

## **9. Date and venue for the 8th Session of the Meeting of Parties in 2018**

The Executive Secretary explained that there was a country considering to host the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties but the Secretariat was still awaiting the official invitation before it could be announced. Mr. Streit hoped to be able to announce the host country in due course. The precise date of MoP8 then had to be consulted with the host country. Usually the Meetings of the Parties took place in autumn, ideally in September or early October.

## **10. Upcoming international events and developments in Nature Conservation relevant for bats and the Agreement**

The Chair asked the delegates if they any information on the topic. The Executive Secretary reported that in August 2017 the European Bat Research Symposium would take place. It was organised every three years, and this time it took place in the first week of August in Spain. This was a very important event for the bat research community and EUROBATs would be represented by its Scientific Officer. Since this was a scientific event, and due to budget restrictions, the Executive Secretary did not intend to take part in this meeting.

Mr. Streit further proceeded to inform the delegates that the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS would take place from the 23 to 28 of October 2017 in the Philippines. Considering the remote location and the travel costs, it was still not clear if the Executive Secretary could participate at the event.

Finally, the United Nations Environmental Assembly was planned to meet at the end of November 2017. Since the next assembly in 2018 would be even more important, the Executive Secretary was considering attending the assembly then, but saving the funds this year.

## **11. Any other business**

The Chair requested a change in the way the records of the Standing Committee meetings were written. To make the records more reader friendly, he suggested having a list of action points at the end of every section. This would be a list of decisions taken, containing also the information by whom these decisions will be taken care of and at what time.

## **12. Date and venue of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

The Executive Secretary stated that there was an informally confirmed host country for the next Meeting of the Standing Committee, i.e. joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting, and he hoped that he could soon announce the host publicly.

The Chair referred to the Vice-Chair's request to discuss the organisation of the joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting to ensure that the Standing Committee could look into the proposals emerging from the work of the Advisory Committee. The Chair suggested changing the point in the agenda to "Organisation of the Standing Committee Meeting together with the Advisory Committee Meeting". It was necessary to be clear on the how the work of the Standing Committee should be organised.

Commenting on this, the Executive Secretary stated that the joint meeting in 2010 was the first of that kind, and that there were, indeed, some frictions between the two committees. However, already at the joint meeting in 2014 on Crete this was improved and the two committees worked well together. There were joint sessions, but during the time the Standing Committee focused on the financial matters, the Advisory Committee focused on finalising draft resolutions. In that sense, there was no overlap, and draft resolutions were then discussed in the joint plenary session. On the first day of the joint meeting, the timetable foresaw one half of the day for a joint plenary session, after which the committees would separate. On the second day, the committees would meet separately, and on the third day, they would start separately to then join in the afternoon. It was important to allocate sufficient time both to those issues that had to be discussed separately and to those issues that had to be discussed jointly. The Chair commented that, since the discussion regarding the budget was expected to be more lively than usual, it was crucial to link the scientific and the financial part. Mr. Streit remembered that the greatest frictions during the first joint meeting came from the fact that draft resolutions were first prepared by the Advisory Committee, then revised by the Standing Committee, and then given back to the Advisory Committee. This was then solved by the joint sessions. The Vice-Chair found the joint plenary sessions also practical, as well as the fact that the plenary sessions were chaired by both the StC and the AC Chairs.

The Chair added that it would be important to brief the Working Groups convening during the joint meeting that they should make an estimate in terms of the work load expected for the Secretariat. It does not have to be included in the draft resolution, but it was important to have it in writing.

The Vice-Chair also pleaded for considering the organisation the Agreement overall, and developing a strategy for it, that would give it stability for the next years. It might be helpful if the Parties decided what the goal of the Agreement should be, whether it should grow, or remain as it is, etc.

The Chair summarised that there was a work plan, but that now a realistic strategy for the future period should be developed. Ms Nedinge found the idea good, though the content of the strategy still had to be discussed. The Vice-Chair explained that developing a strategy would contribute to the stabilisation of the Agreement. It was not always easy to justify the existence of the Agreement, nor to ask for more funds from the governments, and it would be easier if it was clear where the Agreement was heading to. This discussion could not be completed at the next MoP, but it could be started.

The Chair proposed to ask the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution on the subject to present at the next joint meeting and the next MoP on the development of a long-term plan and strategic goals for the Agreement, including a mission statement, a vision statement and long term strategic goals.

Action point 8: Secretariat to develop for the next joint Advisory and Standing Committee Meeting a draft resolution on the development of a long-term plan and strategic goals for the Agreement.

### **13. Close of the Meeting**

The Chair and the Executive Secretary thanked the hosts for a very good and successful meeting. There being no further points for discussion, the meeting closed at 14:57 h.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Stockholm, Sweden, 27 April 2017

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