

11th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

City of Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 8 – 10 May 2006

Future structure of the Advisory Committee and possible establishment of a Standing Committee

Memorandum prepared by the Secretariat



Background:

Over the years and amplified by the significant growth of the Agreement, the Meetings of the Advisory Committee since several years already have reached the size of Meetings of Parties and require the same resources. However, no budgetary provisions have been made to cover the actual costs and are unlikely to be made in the future. Right now only about 32% of the costs can be covered through the regular budget. Every year again the Secretariat is obliged to endeavour finding the remaining 68% of funds through voluntary contributions, which originally were intended to be used for small projects, working group meetings, publications and public awareness raising. The reality however is, that these voluntary contributions are fully absorbed by the AC Meetings.

The Secretariat is concerned about this development and would like to suggest the following ideas for cost reduction and increased working efficiency to be discussed at this AC11 Meeting:

1. Establishment of a small EUROBATS Standing Committee (StC, max. 6 rotating members) by the forthcoming MoP5 to meet annually one day at Bonn Headquarters to discuss and review budgetary as well as other administrative issues.
2. To limit the participation of countries with economies in transition (that are eligible for funding through the Secretariat) in the Advisory Committee to one member from each Party and one observer from each Non-Party Range State (others welcome if they participate at their own or other institutions expenses). Furthermore to cease the funding of participants from EU Member States, even if the formerly adopted threshold (UN scale of 0.100 or below) would make them eligible for funding through the Secretariat.

In addition independent experts may be invited (and funded through the Secretariat if no other sources of funding can be found) if the AC considers their participation as being essential for achieving the goals of the work programme.

3. To reduce the duration of the AC Meetings to two days instead of three, as administrative issues would fall out of the agenda and be taken over by the Standing Committee.
4. To have a joint meeting of the Advisory and Standing Committees (plus administrative focal points not member of the StC) only in the year of a Meeting of Parties.
5. To accept invitations for AC Meetings only if the host country is willing and able to cover the major part of the (then much lower) logistical costs for the meeting and, if no such host country can be found for a given year, to hold also the AC Meeting at Bonn Headquarters.

Annotations:

Ad 1.: Right after the AC11 Meeting the Secretariat will be moved to the newly established UN Campus together with all other Bonn based UN Agencies. The new premises provide excellent conference facilities free of charge. Holding the one day StC Meeting there implies no travel or other costs for the Secretariat. Furthermore very cheap flights are nowadays available to Cologne/Bonn airport from nearly all European capitals and other cities. The travel and other costs for the StC members should be covered by their governments, except if they are eligible for funding through the Secretariat.

Ad 2.: As mentioned in the background remarks, the available funds do not allow to fund more than one participant per country concerned if the AC will only deal with scientific matters in the future. The number of countries eligible for funding could be significantly reduced by recognising the fact that a country that was accepted as EU member state cannot any longer be considered as being a country with an economy in transition. If needed, financial support should be sought from the EU Commission by these countries. This new policy would concern Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Estonia has already implemented it for its official EUROBATS focal points.

Ad 3.: Self explanatory.

Ad 4.: It is essential to discuss the draft resolutions at a meeting before the Meeting of Parties in order to have them ready at the time of the MoP. Therefore a joint meeting of both bodies seems to be imperative in such years.

Ad 5.: Should all suggestions above be adopted, the future AC meetings will become significantly smaller and cheaper. A host country should provide at least the conference venue plus the other basic logistical requirements to hold the meeting without costs for the Secretariat (other arrangements remain possible in countries with economies in transition). It is useful to hold the meetings each time in a different country as this increases the visibility of the Agreement throughout Europe as well as the awareness in the country concerned. However, should no host country be found for a given year, the above mentioned excellent conference facilities at Bonn Headquarters are a good and cheap alternative.