



**Statement on behalf of Mr. Bakary Kante
Director
Division of Environmental Conventions
United Nations Environment Programme**

to the

**11th Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Agreement on the
Conservation on Populations of European Bats**

Luxembourg
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Delivered by Mr. Jacob Duer
Division of Environmental Conventions
United Nations Environment Programme

Your Excellency, the Minister of Environment

Mr. Chairman and Ms. Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Mr. Bakary Kante, Director of the Division of Environmental Conventions, I would like to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. Mr. Kante sends his best wishes for the meeting and wishes it much success. Due to other commitments, Mr. Kante regrets that he is unable to be with us but has asked me to deliver his statement.

On Mr. Kante's behalf, I would like to deliver the following statement:

Your Excellency

Mr. Chairman and Ms. Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all I would like to thank Your Excellency - the Minister for Environment - and through you the Government of Luxembourg for the kind invitation to host this important meeting. Your hospitality and generosity demonstrates your commitment and dedication to not only the EUROBATS Agreement but to the conservation of bats in Luxembourg and beyond.

Being among the first to become Party to this Agreement, Luxembourg already back in 1991 dedicated itself to bat conservation. Since the Bat Agreement came into force in Luxembourg in 1993, you have escalated your efforts for bat conservation. In particular, you have shown leadership when it comes to the transboundary movement of bats. On behalf of UNEP, I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister for your personal involvement and guidance towards the implementation of the EUROBATS Agreement in Luxembourg.

Your Excellency

Distinguished delegates

Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements continues to be on the top of UNEP's agenda. Last September, the then Executive Director of UNEP restructured the organization with one of its aims to strengthen the cooperation between UNEP and the MEAs through a stronger Division of Environmental Conventions.

I am fully aware that UNEP not always has been as forthcoming as the Convention Secretariats and Parties may have wanted and hoped for. This relates both to our substantive cooperation but also the administrative services UNON and UNEP are to deliver as part of our agreement with the UNEP administered Conventions and Agreements.

With the appointment of Rob Hepworth as head of CMS, I know that many improvements already have taken place and I would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate and thank Rob for his tireless efforts to put things right.

I can assure you that we have and will continue to work closely not only with Rob Hepworth but also with Andreas Streit, your Executive Secretary, to further improve our relationship.

Under Andreas Streit's leadership, EUROBATS has grown in both importance and size. The number of Parties have increased from 14 in 1998 to a total of 31 Parties today. But more

importantly and thanks to your trust and confidence in the Secretariat, the Agreement has never been as important as it is today.

I would like to congratulate you – the Parties – as well as Andreas on the outstanding achievements in carrying forward the mandate of the Agreement.

I can assure you that you have the full support of UNEP in all your endeavors and that UNEP always will stand behind the Executive Secretary and be ready to support the Parties when means are available.

However, we can only move forward if we stand together, have mutual trust, a common goal and agree on how to reach this goal.

Therefore, UNEP looks forward to working with you and the Executive Secretary to explore new ways and means on how UNEP can better support the implementation of EUROBATS's programme of work.

I know that new ideas and projects are in the pipeline and there is no doubt that we can identify some activities which can benefit from UNEP's financial support.

Your Excellency

Distinguished delegates

2006 is a landmark year for the EUROBATS Agreement. It marks the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement but more importantly it marks 15 years of successful bat conservation in now 31 countries and beyond. Having said this much more still needs to be done.

2006 is also the 10th Anniversary of the European Bat Night. This popular night has become a true public awareness raising event involving not only experts and ecologists but the general public and especially children. The interest in bats continues to be great thanks to your efforts and those of the EUROBATS Secretariat. UNEP hopes to become an active partner in the organization of such events in the years to come.

The coming three days are very important for the future of this Agreement. This is the last time that you meet before the 5th Session of the Meeting of the Parties which will take place in September in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

This Advisory Committee meeting will concentrate and take stock of its impressive work programme and prepare the Meeting of Parties in September.

Two highlights of the agenda will be the discussions on the possible establishment of a Standing Committee in light of the increased number of Parties and the need for a streamlined meeting structure and more efficient use of scarce financial resources.

You will also be discussing the establishment of an implementation mechanism for the Agreement. The purpose of such a mechanism is for Parties to have a place to turn to for advice on issues and problems related to the implementation of the Agreement both at the national and regional level.

Both initiatives have been put forward as ideas by the Secretariat in support to Parties for the strengthening of the Agreement. UNEP fully supports these initiatives and hopes that this meeting can further discuss and fine tune the approach for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties in September.

Already today you will be reviewing the budget proposal for the coming triennium. I would like to congratulate the Secretariat for the very well presented budget proposal which we have in front of us. I know that you have put a lot of effort into presenting a realistic budget proposal and that you have worked closely with colleagues in Nairobi and in the CMS Secretariat to ensure that the proposal presents a correct and realistic estimate of costs.

I am also aware of the difficulties you were faced with in developing the proposal but believe that your proposal is not only realistic but reasonable taking into consideration the mandate and obligations of the Agreement as adopted by the Parties.

I appeal to all Parties to look favorably at the budget proposal and to have in mind that adequate financial and human resources are required in order to enable the Agreement to move forward and live up to your expectations.

I can assure you that UNEP will continue, whenever possible, to provide support – on an ad-hoc basis and upon request – to the Agreement. As some of you may know, UNEP provided significant financial support to both CMS and AEWA in connection with their respective Conference and Meeting of Parties. Should the need arise; UNEP is indeed open to consider similar support to your next MOP.

A few joint activities and projects are either being implemented or planned by UNEP for execution with MEA Secretariats in follow-up to COP or MOP mandates. It is our intention to increase our collaboration with the EUROBATS Secretariat in support of interlinkages and synergies among the CMS family of Agreements.

Your Excellency

Distinguished delegates,

This meeting is a good moment, not only to look back on what has been achieved during the last 15 years under the Agreement, but also to step forward and to find new opportunities towards successful bat conservation.

I am happy that EUROBATS and the other Bonn based Agreements are able to take advantage of their co-location with the CMS Secretariat. This co-location is one of the practical examples of synergy that UNEP is supporting in response to decisions taken by the UN General Assembly, as well as by the UNEP Governing Council.

I would like to reiterate that the Secretariat and its Executive Secretary have the full trust and support of UNEP. I am sure that you will agree with me that the outstanding work done so far and a wish to strengthen the cooperation is a clear testimony of UNEP's commitment.

UNEP looks forward to a successful outcome of this Committee Meeting as the Agreement moves towards the forthcoming Meeting of the Parties in September.

I wish this meeting the best in its deliberations of the important issues concerning effective bat conservation.

Thank you.