



CMS

STATEMENT FROM
ROBERT HEPWORTH
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF
MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS)
TO THE 11th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE
CONSERVATION ON POPULATIONS OF EUROPEAN BATS (EUROBATS)
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to address this important meeting. As I will sadly not be able to attend the full MoP in Slovenia later this year, I hope you will forgive me for speaking at slightly greater length here this morning. While preparing to address this audience, I started digging into an old EUROBATS file. I was surprised to discover correspondence from 1987, including an invitation to attend a first meeting to discuss an 'Agreement on European Species of Chiroptera' to be held on 18-20 November 1987 in London. My curiosity rose, and I ended up reading the minutes of that meeting, including the speech my predecessor but one at the CMS Secretariat, Judith Johnson, delivered to that gathering.

Her speech sounded indeed like a prediction. She said: "These discussions are particularly important because, for the first time, an Agreement specified by the Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention is to be discussed in detail by potential Range States. The task is not an easy one, because the number of species and range States involved is considerable, although clearly the problems and the environmental threats for all European bats are similar". She then continued: "Participants must bear in mind that the product of these discussions may well become a model for similar Agreements under the Convention addressing other animals and other geographic regions and therefore a careful balance between essential detail, working ability and simplicity must be sought".

Ladies and gentlemen, almost 20 years later we can certainly say this prediction turned out to be accurate and truthful.

First, EUROBATS has been the first fruitful and effective spin-off from the Convention; a first delivery, after a long labour within the Convention on Migratory Species. EUROBATS contributed to strengthening CMS identity within the growing number of MEAs developed before and after the Rio meeting in 1992. In addition, as predicted 20 years ago, EUROBATS became the model for a series of other Agreements under the aegis of the Convention, - Agreements that strengthen the Convention's effectiveness and role in the biodiversity agenda.

I therefore do not need to stress the strong ties between the two Secretariats, and the good cooperative spirit that drives our work. It is indeed an historical alliance, which has been recently further strengthened by a common vision and strategy for the CMS Family of Agreements and excellent relationships between the Executive Secretaries.

I started with my story about what happened in 1987. Let me briefly continue by mentioning a second milestone for EUROBATS, which I remember clearly, being at the time a UK official taking the lead in negotiating this Article IV Agreement. I am referring to the signature of the Agreement 15 years ago in 1991. At the time, Luxemburg was one of the first seven signatories, and I am pleased to recognize today that after 15 years, the commitment to bat conservation in this country remains strong. This meeting demonstrates that Luxemburg is still extremely active in bat conservation and an example for other countries in the region on transboundary activities.

To continue in this backward time travel through EUROBATS history, we should also remember that 10 years ago EUROBATS nights were launched. I wish to stress the important and pioneering role of these events, at a time when the entire UN is realizing and acknowledging the important role of communication and public awareness. No successful conservation actions can be pursued without involving communities, by sharing with “we, the people of the United Nations” the rationale, scope and objectives of our action and mandate.

My time travel could continue but I wish to stop here, and bring you back to the current time and this meeting. I know you have important discussions ahead of you, in particular on three very important topics that will greatly reinforce the role and incisiveness of this Agreement.

The first is the possible establishment of a Standing Committee, given the current size and number of Parties. I do not need to remind you how steadily this Agreement grew, to reach a total of 31 Parties as of today. You have probably reached the size where it is more efficient all round to make separate institutional arrangements for scientific and technical work on the one hand, and administrative and policy work on the other. This is a normal pattern for MEAs, including your parent Convention.

The second major item for discussion is the establishment of an implementation mechanism, which should greatly enhance enforcement of the laws protecting bats and offer Parties practical tools and solutions to achieve this. I have considerable personal experience of helping to operate and promote the implementation and enforcement mechanism of CITES, especially when as a UK official I was Chairman of the CITES Standing Committee from 1997 to 2000. There are various schools of thought on this. Some favour using mainly sticks to enforce MEAs. Some – often more vocal in these post-Rio days - favour just using carrots. Personally, I think you need both. I have no doubt that MEAs which have a mixed system are more effective, CITES especially. The system being proposed here is cleverly tailored to EUROBATS ` niche, and I hope the Parties will give it serious consideration

The third major area where I also speak from much – probably too much – experience in other MEAs is the Agreement’s budget for the next triennium. I would make just two points here.

First, this is a notably lean and prudently managed Agreement under Andreas Streit. There really is no fat to cut. Secondly – and this follows from my first point – the ‘value for money’ looks rather impressive if you look at it in other ways. For example, I did some quick arithmetic to look at the costs per bat, per country and per year. Let’s take the average annual budget sought for the next triennium, and divide it first by the number of Party countries, and then by the number of bat species. The residual figure is just €250. I suspect the majority of European Ministers and the taxpayers whom thy tax would not be too horrified by this figure! Sometimes we need to look at the issue in these terms, and not just at the % increases in budget totals between triennia which I know tend to be the guiding light for many of your financial colleagues at home. When you are dealing with small UN programmes, expanding modestly to reach their correct potential and outreach, you will get some “lumpiness” in the % figures. We need to remember that the absolute sums are rather small, and the achievements considerable. It is also important that the effort put into trying to reach an agreed budget is proportionate to the amounts actually at stake, as I think for many parties as well as EUROBATS the cost of staff time is actually the main budget item

Finally, I should remind you of the future work for the development of the African Bats Agreement. A process was started at COP7 to review feasibility of developing appropriate CMS instruments for bats around the world. The issue was presented to the 11th and 12th CMS ScC meetings by Tony Hutson, co-chair of the IUCN Chiroptera Specialist Group. This is in our forward programme at CMS. I look forward to the birth of another successful bats’ agreement. In that context our forthcoming move to the former Bundestag offices in Bonn, which have been generously converted to become a new UN HQ by the German Government, will help because the four members of the CMS Family in Bonn – including CMS and EUROBATS – will be reunited. Indeed I hope we might be able to share some extra resources dedicated to the African bats agreement to support EUROBATS as well.

Let’s make this meeting and the next Meeting of the Parties another milestone in EUROBATS history. I wish you a successful meeting and fruitful deliberations. Thank you.