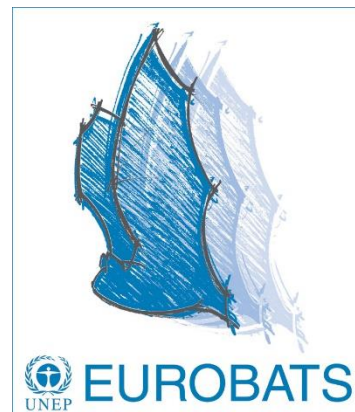


8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties

Monte Carlo, Monaco, 8 – 10 October 2018

Report of the Chair of the Standing Committee



In the period since the 7th Session of the Meeting of Parties, the Standing Committee has met annually to discuss administrative and financial matters as well as other relevant business pertaining to the Agreement.

10th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Brussels, Belgium, 17 September 2014

At MoP7 Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Sweden and Ukraine were elected as members of the Standing Committee. In addition, Germany as host country of the Secretariat and United Kingdom as Depositary are both permanent members. The 10th Meeting took place on the last day of MoP7 in order to welcome the newly elected members and to elect the Chair and Vice Chair for the term 2015 – 2018. Mr. Jeroen Panis (Belgium) was elected as Chair and Dr. Michel Perret (France) was elected as Vice Chair of the Standing Committee. Due to a change in post assignment of Dr. Perret, the seat of France and the post of Vice Chair were handed over to Mr. François Lamarque in November 2017.

11th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Rome, Italy, 28 April 2015

The Committee dealt with administrative matters including income and expenditure of the financial year 2014, the Trust Fund Status and financial projections for 2015.

Based on the Secretariat Report the Committee had an extensive discussion on how it could get better informed about the outcome of EPI projects or even could get involved in the project selection process. It was however recognised that the overall responsibility to overlook the EPI process had been assigned to the Advisory Committee, which itself had delegated the EPI project selection to a small working group of senior experts who were elected after each MoP. It was also noted that donor countries were given the option to choose particular projects to be funded with their contributions.

Following up on paragraph 9. of Resolution 7.1 which requested the Secretariat to “prepare a plan of action based on the implementation priorities identified by the Advisory Committee” the Committee discussed the format and level of detail it wished to see in a

Secretariat work plan. This workplan would be updated every year according to the work plan of the Advisory Committee and other emerging tasks for the Secretariat.

12th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Bonn, Germany, 18 May 2016

The Secretariat together with the Administrative and Fund Management Officer informed the Committee about the introduction of the new accounting system UMOJA which had commenced already in June 2015 but into 2016 continued to be a painful and challenging process. It was particularly difficult in the transitional period to have a detailed overview of expenditure items as a result of which it had not been possible to present a reliable Trust Fund Status report at that time. The new system also required extensive training for many staff members and specific authorising, certifying and approving roles had to be divided among more persons.

In the review of the financial year 2015 and the overall budget situation the Committee took note of the significant exchange rate loss of the Euro towards the US Dollar. This had a negative impact on the staff costs which for the professional staff are fully and for general service staff partly computed in Dollar. While in all previous years the strong Euro had generated considerable savings, this was no longer the case.

The Committee also reviewed the first comprehensive Secretariat workplan. It was found very useful and providing a better picture of the variety of tasks carried out by the Secretariat. The decision to update the workplan on an annual basis after each meeting of the Advisory Committee was confirmed.

Following the relating request of MoP7, the Committee started the important work on the future scale of contributions of Parties from 2019 onwards. At MoP7 the Parties had requested the Standing Committee to identify a way to return to the application of the UN scale of assessments. Since the contributions had been frozen for a very long period, an immediate return to the UN scale did not appear realistic since it had changed considerably over the years for quite a number of Parties. The Secretariat presented a possible scenario which foresaw a gradual return to the UN scale in 20% steps per year for those Parties that would otherwise face a sudden and significant increase. It was decided that the Secretariat should send a letter on behalf of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee to inform them in detail about this approach and its implications and to seek their feedback before the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

13th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Stockholm, Sweden, 27 April 2017

Also at this meeting the Committee had to take note of the continuing unfavourable exchange rate of the Euro towards the US Dollar which had negatively affected the 2016

budget performance with regard to the staff costs. However, the Committee also noted that in 2015 and 2016 the withdrawals from the trust fund reserve had been significantly lower than budgeted at MoP7 and the overall budget situation of the Agreement remained stable.

During the review of the Secretariat workplan the Committee recognised the importance and wide range of tasks of the scientific officer and that Parties should aim to increase the post occupancy on a permanent basis at MoP8. In view of the additional workload in preparation of the 23rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee and MoP8, the Committee decided to increase the post occupancy of the scientific officer to 80% for the period 1. November 2017 to 31. October 2018.

With regard to the future scale of contributions of Parties the Committee confirmed its approach for a gradual return to the application of the UN scale of assessments. This had also been largely supported by those Parties who had provided their feedback to the respective letter previously sent by the Chair and Vice-Chair. As a new element in the possible scenarios, the gradual increase of the minimum contribution to the level applied by the Parties to AEWA was discussed and decided to be carried forward.

14th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Tallinn, Estonia, 14 – 17 May 2018

In preparation for MoP8, the meeting was held jointly with the 23rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee in order to review and finalise all draft resolutions for submission to the MoP.

In separate sessions the Standing Committee discussed the two draft budget scenarios prepared by the Secretariat. It once again recognised the importance of increasing the scientific capacity of the Secretariat which was also strongly supported by the Advisory Committee.

In addition to a transitional phase of four years until the full application of the UN scale of assessments, a transition over the period of five years was introduced and favoured by many Parties present. As a result of its discussions the Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare one more possible scenario for submission to the 8th Session of the Meeting of Parties.

The Standing Committee continues to be useful. The meetings allow to clear budgetary and administrative issues. Despite the change in Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee the cooperation between the chairs and the Executive Secretary continued to be close. The addition of the work plan made matters more transparent. The participation of the Chair of the Advisory Committee to its meetings ensured a close link between the two bodies of the Agreement.

The experience of the Committee on financial and administrative issues and its preparation allowed an open en productive debate at the last joint meeting with the Advisory Committee and to prepare the necessary proposals and draft resolution to be submitted to MoP8.