



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

WELCOMING ADDRESS OF THE CMS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht TO THE 4th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF PARTIES TO EUROBATS Sofia, Bulgaria, 22-24 September 2003

Your Excellency, Ms Iliaz

Dear Dr. Bojinov,

Dear Colleague, Mr Andreas Streit, Executive Secretary of EUROBATS,

Dear Delegates,

It is with extreme pleasure and gratitude that I am addressing this 4th Session of the Meeting of Parties to EUROBATS here in Sofia, Bulgaria. I was very keen to attend this meeting personally since I clearly recall the splendid hospitality of the Government of Bulgaria and the people of Sofia when I participated in the Pan-European Ministerial Meeting "Environment for Europe" in 1995. I am convinced that the hospitality the delegates will experience at this meeting will be such as I experienced myself. I also fully recognise the excellent cooperation which I, personally, and the entire CMS Secretariat has had with Dr Bojinov and the staff of the Ministry of the Environment for Bulgaria.

EUROBATS is one of the three initial Agreements under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species. It is therefore a prototype for the entire implementation of the global convention for migratory species on a regional level and focuses on a certain group of migratory species. The development of EUROBATS in terms of membership of states, in terms of cooperation with other governmental, scientific and non-governmental institutes and organisations and in terms of public awareness raising is extremely important for the success and future development of the Convention itself.

I am particularly impressed by the number of countries which have acceded to EUROBATS in the past triennium and would stress that this alone indicates the reputation and success which EUROBATS is experiencing through progress in its implementation.

The EUROBATS Secretariat has been co-located for approx. 7 years now with the Secretariat of CMS and for more than 2 ½ years it shares a common administration with the CMS and 2 other Agreement Secretariats under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). We have undergone a hard time in organising ourselves and especially getting the ball rolling in the correspondence and decision-making processes with Headquarters in Nairobi. I would like to take this opportunity to let you all know that the team spirit of the EUROBATS Secretariat has always been outstanding and that with EUROBATS we have gained the best synergies. I am confident that these synergies will, in the short or medium term, lead to an increase in Parties to both CMS and EUROBATS e.g. with regard to Estonia, Serbia and Montenegro as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina etc.

I recently noted at the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) the important role that the Agreement has had as a prototype for the subsequent Agreement for Cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas (ACCOBAMS). CMS would be most happy if EUROBATS could assume a similar role for the conservation of bats in other global regions. I am most grateful that Andreas Streit has volunteered to initiate, with the assistance of Tony Hudson, a study on the distribution and conservation needs of bats in other global regions and I would hope that Parties to CMS would take up these results to develop one, two or even three more Bats Agreements in either Latin America, Africa or Asia.

Among the many important decisions to be taken at this meeting, I would like to highlight the endorsement of the CMS Headquarters Agreement for EUROBATS, which will not only settle the rights and status of the EUROBATS Secretariat and staff but also strengthen the privileges and immunities of delegates coming on official business to Germany.

Once again I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the government of Bulgaria for hosting the meeting.

To all of you I wish fruitful discussions and a successful outcome!

Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht