

**SPEECH OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNEP TO
4TH SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO
EUROBATS (MOP-4)
SOFIA, BULGARIA, 22-24 SEPTEMBER 2003**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Dr. Klaus Töpfer, sends his best wishes to this meeting.

We are pleased that this Agreement is able to take advantage of its co-location with the CMS Secretariat and the Secretariats of other migratory species in Bonn. This co-location is one of the practical examples of synergy, which UNEP is supporting in response to decisions taken by the UN General Assembly, as well as by the UNEP Governing Council.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate EUROBATS - which has continued to grow steadily. I wish to acknowledge the commendable efforts of the Bulgarian government for hosting this meeting and also their role to improve conservation measures, including through transboundary co-operation.

The steady and speedy growth of EUROBATS family is most gratifying. Since MOP-3 in July 2000, nine countries have acceded, with Belgium and Latvia being the most recent ones. This makes a total of twenty-eight Contracting Parties out of the 48 EUROBATS Range States.

This is a strong indicator of the success of the Agreement and more so, of the increasing importance given to Bat conservation by governments. In addition, the important role of NGOs in bat monitoring and conservation is recognized and subsequent activities to establish a pan-European umbrella NGO "BatLife Europe" is encouraged. As a consequence, many other species of flora and fauna benefit from Bat conservation measures such as, for example, sustainable forest management. As you well know, the issue of forests is a very important topic as forests also make a substantial contribution to sustainable development in countries with economies in transition.

The Convention on Migratory Species is expressly designed to foster regional co-operation, and to intervene where necessary to ensure the protection of endangered species. Through this Agreement on the conservation of populations of European bats (EUROBATS) which entered into force on 16 January 1994, CMS aims to conserve these remarkable animals. It is gratifying that you have chosen the right framework in which to carry out this worthy goal.

This is of great significance as you consider for adoption the outcomes of the 8th Meeting of the Advisory Committee meeting which was successfully concluded in Røros, Norway in May of this year. In light of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, UNEP looks forward to a successful outcome of this 4th Meeting of the Parties to further progress as the Agreement moves ahead in the implementation of its workprogrammes in synergy with other biodiversity-related global and regional multilateral environmental agreements.

I wish this meeting the best in its deliberations of these important global and regional issues concerning the effective conservation of populations of European bats.

THANK YOU
