

16th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Sofia, Bulgaria, 6 June 2019

Record



1. **Attendance**

This is listed as Annex 1 to the Record.

2. **Opening of the meeting**

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Jeroen Panis, opened the meeting by inviting the representative of the host Government to take the floor. Mr. Kalugerov, the Director of the National Nature Protection Service Directorate, Ministry of Environment and Water, welcomed the participants of the 16th Meeting of the EUROBATS Standing Committee to Sofia, Bulgaria, and explained that bat studies in Bulgaria began in the early 20's of the previous century. After giving extensive information on bats and the importance of their conservation and protection in Bulgaria, also in the context of conservation efforts within the entire European area, Mr. Kalugerov expressed his honour to welcome EUROBATS meetings for the third time to Bulgaria. In 2003, Bulgaria hosted the 4th Session of the Meeting of the Parties; in April 2013, an Advisory Committee meeting took place in Sofia, and finally, the 16th Meeting of the Standing Committee was the third EUROBATS meeting hosted in Bulgaria. Mr. Kalugerov concluded by wishing the participants good luck, a fruitful meeting, and a pleasant stay in Sofia.

The Chair of the Standing Committee thanked the host government and Ms. Radostina Galitionova, the EUROBATS administrative focal point from Bulgaria and a member of the Standing Committee, for inviting the meeting. He further thanked the EUROBATS Executive Secretary, Mr Andreas Streit, for the organisation, and all the participants for their attendance. Mr. Panis reminded the participants of the debates and discussions on the budget that took place during MoP8 in Monaco. The outcome was a rather good strategy which would ensure that the following MoP could solve all the budgetary problems, but it involved the Standing Committee keeping a close eye on the budget and the spending. Exactly that issue needed to be addressed during StC16. Mr. Panis concluded by wishing

everybody a successful meeting and giving the floor over to the Executive Secretary, Mr. Andreas Streit.

Mr. Streit thanked Ms. Galitionova as well as her Ministry for generously welcoming the meeting. The preparation of the meeting was quite easy and straightforward. The Executive Secretary also thanked the participants for making the effort to attend the meeting: Though it was a small meeting, it was quite an important one. The Agenda of the meeting was heavier than it appeared at the first glance, but Mr. Streit was optimistic that the Standing Committee would find a good way forward.

3. **Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted unanimously.

4. **Adoption of the Rules of Procedure**

Germany referred to Rule 12 which stated that the Standing Committee should normally have deliberations at least once every year. In Germany's opinion these deliberations did not require a face-to-face meeting. For the reason of reducing climate pollution and since there were already similar movements on the European level, Germany suggested to consider having two of the meetings in the quadrennium as face-to-face meetings, and two remaining meetings by other means of communication. The proposal found support among the members of the Committee, also for the reason of cost saving. After some discussion, it was concluded that the first and the last meeting in the quadrennium should be face-to-face meetings. For the other meetings it could be decided based on the agenda if these needed to be done face-to-face, or, in case these were routine meetings, if they could be conducted by other means such as video conferencing, etc. It was agreed that the Secretariat should explore the possibilities of having video conferencing. It was also agreed that a test run would be conducted later in the year to check whether video conferencing was a plausible alternative.

<p>Action point 1: <i>The Secretariat to explore the possibilities of having video conferencing. A test run to be conducted later in the year.</i></p>

5. **Adoption of the Record of the 15th Meeting of the Standing Committee (Monte Carlo, Monaco, 10 October 2018)**

The Vice-Chair, Mr. François Lamarque from France, inquired on the proposal, mentioned in the Record, to make the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties a day or half a day longer. The Executive Secretary suggested that this should be considered in the year of the MoP, as it depended on the financial situation as well

as on how many resolutions there were to be discussed. Technically this was possible, and it would also not affect the costs of the meeting very much. The MoP would then continue on the 4th day in the morning, and the participants could travel in the afternoon. Thus, the costs for accommodation and travel would remain the same. And since normally the costs for the conference facilities were covered by the host country, no additional costs would occur in this respect as well.

Germany requested a change in the text on page two, which would shorten the record and make it more concise. Instead of “Germany suggested to make this exercise broader and more general – the Secretariat could prepare a document where it could explain what the lessons learned were from MoP8 and what could be improved”, the text should read “Germany suggested to consider in the protocol also what the lessons learnt were from MoP8 and what could be improved”. There being no further remarks on the record, it was adopted.

Action point 2: *The Secretariat to change the Record of StC15 in accordance with Germany’s request.*

6. **Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee**

The Executive Secretary drew the participants’ attention to the report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee, Professor Danilo Russo from Italy, that was made available before the meeting as Doc.StC16.4. Commenting on the report, the Executive Secretary expressed his opinion that AC24 was a remarkable meeting, and probably the biggest EUROBATS meeting ever organised. He further stated that the Advisory Committee had a good start into the work after the MoP to implement the work programme for the quadrennium. Though the goal of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee, Ms. Ruth Petermann from Germany, was to reduce the number of IWGs, this number remained the same, as there were still so many topics that needed to be addressed. France reminded the participants of the appeal expressed during AC24 to translate the guidelines on Bats and Light Pollution into different languages. France further informed that a quotation was obtained for the costs of the translation into French. The costs would amount to ca. 6,000 EUR, and Switzerland already expressed its willingness to cover a portion of these costs. Germany also expressed its interest for the guidelines to be translated into German and would be glad to dedicate a portion of its annual voluntary contribution for this purpose. The Executive Secretary explained that the funds from this year’s voluntary contribution from Germany were sufficient to cover the costs of translation into German.

7. **Secretariat report:**

Referring to the written report available as Doc.StC16.9, the Executive Secretary confirmed that Serbia became a Party to EUROBATS as of the 10th of March 2019. Bosnia and Hercegovina, though it had completed the internal ratification process, was not yet a Party but was expected to become one soon. There was a formal problem with the instrument of accession, for which reason it was not accepted by the Depository. Anticipating the question regarding Spain joining the Agreement, the Executive Secretary stated that for the first time an official delegate from the Spanish Ministry of the Environment took part at an AC meeting (during AC24 in Skopje). This was a result of a meeting Spanish NGOs had held with the Ministry of the Environment, exercising very high pressure on the Ministry to accede to the Agreement. And though there were signs of positive development, Mr. Streit did not dare to make any predictions as to when Spain could join the Agreement.

Referring to outreach and publications, Mr. Streit stated that the Guidelines for Consideration of Bats in Lighting Projects had been a tremendous success. He was glad to hear that translations of the Guidelines were being prepared as these were very important to amplify the outreach of EUROBATS. Finally, he explained that an equally high demand existed for other EUROBATS publications as well, and that the International Bat Night was also vital in terms of outreach

Speaking of EUROBATS Project Initiative, Mr. Streit drew the delegates attention to a separate document, Inf.StC16.4, which offered a summary of the outcomes of the EPI projects conducted in 2018. Owing to the work of the Scientific Officer, EPI continued to operate very well, with a number of good projects conducted every year.

The Executive Secretary further mentioned that the joint EU-EUROBATS Species Action Plan on Bats had been adopted and it needed to be implemented by the EU member states. The Advisory Committee was also looking into the ways to support the implementation of the action plan. Mr. Streit expressed his hope that the joint plan would open the funding opportunities from the EU side for important projects and other activities. However, these possibilities still needed to be explored.

The Executive Secretary concluded by informing the participants that three weeks earlier a new acting CMS (the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species) Executive Secretary, Ms. Amy Fraenkel, arrived in Bonn. The former Executive Secretary of CMS, Dr. Bradnee Chambers, unexpectedly passed away in January 2019. The post of the CMS Executive Secretary would be advertised,

but in face of CoP13 preparations, it was necessary to fill the time until the recruitment procedure could be completed, and Ms. Fraenkel kindly stepped in. Mr Streit could report that there was a very positive start and that the Agreements had very good meetings with Ms. Fraenkel.

Referring to the significance of the International Bat Night for the outreach, Germany suggested that, since 2021 would mark the 25th anniversary of the International Bat Night as well as 30 years of the Agreement, the Advisory and the Standing Committees could include in the agendas for their meetings in 2020 a discussion on the ways the anniversaries could be used for outreach purposes, what activities could be planned, and whether the member states could provide voluntary contributions for this matter. Including the anniversaries in the meeting agendas in 2020 would allow enough time to prepare. This point was accepted without any objections.

Action point 3: *The Secretariat to include a discussion on the 30th anniversary of the Agreement and the 25th anniversary of IBN in the agendas for the meetings in 2020.*

8. **Administrative matters:**

a) Report on income and expenditure in the financial year 2018 as well as Trust Fund status as of 31 December 2018

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.StC16.5 and explained that, on the side of contributions, the situation was good since most of the Parties were paying their contributions in a timely manner. In total, the amount of contributions in arrears was very small, especially when compared to other agreements. Mr. Streit also informed the delegates that North Macedonia as well had started paying their arrears, and that the Secretariat had already received a good portion of it.

Referring to Annex 1, the table of contributions, Mr. Streit mentioned that two countries used to pay their contributions in the year before the financial year would begin (France and the Czech Republic), which enabled the Secretariat to have a good start.

Annex 2, the table of expenditure, did not show anything unexpected. One positive surprise was the fact that the over-expenditure for 2018 was less than predicted during MoP8. At that time, the Executive Secretary estimated that the over-expenditure would be around 45,000 USD. However, 2018 ended with a minus of 22,452 EUR, mainly due to the exchange rate problem and the 80 percent post occupancy of the Scientific Officer in 2018. Commenting on the over-expenditure

not being as big as expected, the Chair reminded the delegates that the Secretariat had received a significant amount of voluntary contributions in 2018 for the organisation of MoP8. The Executive Secretary confirmed that, saying that MoP8 would not have been possible without those voluntary contributions. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the donor countries. The biggest contribution came from Sweden; unfortunately, the Secretariat could not use all of the funds and had to return a significant portion of it. Mr. Streit was in contact with the Swedish donors regarding this matter. The other donors included Germany, Belgium – the Walloon Region, and Monaco. Germany made an ad-hoc voluntary contribution for the organisation of MoP8 in addition to its regular annual voluntary contribution. Similarly, Monaco made available additional funds besides covering all the costs for holding the MoP itself. It should be considered making a call for voluntary contributions for the organisation of the following MoP as well. This should be done early enough to allow the Parties to prepare and take into account supporting the organisation of the MoP. Commenting on it, Sweden explained that its contribution for the organisation of MoP8 was a one-time event. However, Sweden could serve as a positive example for other countries.

France, returning to the topic of regular contributions, commented that, due to the return to the UN scale of contributions, its contribution for 2019 was supposed to decrease in comparison to 2018. However, since the 2019 contribution was paid in 2018 already, France was wondering whether this difference would be credited to its account and whether it meant that France would have to pay less in 2020. The Executive Secretary explained that the agreement for the transition to the UN scale of contributions was that during the period of transition no Party would pay less than before. For those Parties that would pay less based on the UN scale, the contributions would remain frozen, and only those Parties that had increases in their contributions based on the UN scale would gradually pay more. Otherwise the transition as it was planned would not be possible. He further explained that the table in Doc.StC16.8 only gave a projection of what the contributions would have been based on the UN scale. Since Doc.StC16.8 was already being discussed, Mr. Streit further mentioned that the return to the new UN scale generated a small increase in the contributions from the Parties and thus decreased the amount needed to be withdrawn from the reserve. It was a decrease of about 2,000 EUR.

Germany asked for a clarification as to why its contribution in 2022 would increase for more than 10,000 EUR in comparison to 2021, and whether this could be a

mistake since the increase was too high. The Executive Secretary promised that he would look into this matter and provide a clarification.

Coming back to the table of expenditure and to conclude the discussion on this topic, the Executive Secretary asked whether there were any other points to be raised with this regard. The Chair remarked that the figures in the last lines of the table (Total, Programme support costs, Grand total) did not match. Considering that the grand total of expenditure was 464,430 EUR and the contributions amounted to 369,232 EUR, the gap to be covered from the trust fund was about 95,000 EUR. The table, however, showed the figure of 67,513 EUR. The Executive Secretary explained that the figure for the withdrawal from the trust fund represented the figure agreed at the MoP, not the figure that was actually to be withdrawn. It was also commented that having the tables for income and expenditure for both BTL (regular budget) and QFL (voluntary contributions) in one document led to a wrong assumption that the funds were complementary to each other. It was agreed that in the future the income and expenditure for the two funds should be presented separately. Finally, in answering the Chair's question, Mr. Streit also explained that the programme support costs (PSC) were paid upon expenditure (like a value added tax) and not upon income. Since the expenditure was higher than projected, the programme support costs were higher as well. Speaking of PSC, the Executive Secretary also used the opportunity to inform the participants that, following the decision of UNEA (United Nations Environment Assembly – the governing body of UNEP), UNEP was no longer supposed to apply PSC to voluntary contributions used for the organisation of meetings to cover the travel costs of participants from countries with economies in transition. EUROBATS benefited from this decision and the voluntary contributions given for the organisation of MoP8 were not charged with PSC.

The Chair then summarised the discussion by saying that in 2018 there was a gap of 95,000 EUR, which was 35,000 EUR more than expected. In EUROBATS terms that was not a small amount of money. The Executive Secretary clarified that this gap was to a large part related to the unfavourable exchange rate – had the euro been stronger, the over-expenditure would not have been as high as 22,000 EUR. The over-expenditure was primarily related to the professional staff costs. In conclusion, the Chair pointed out other budget lines where the expenditure was also bigger than anticipated. One of them was the budget line for the organisation of the Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Streit observed that the costs for the organisation of the AC meeting in 2018 were higher than normal since it was also

the last meeting before the MoP, but that this budget line was traditionally underbudgeted. It was well known that the budget allocations for the meetings were too low. The same applied to the budget line for the staff travel costs. The situation could be slightly improved by the decisions taken at the previous MoP, but the problem still existed. Since the discussion already touched upon the costs of the organisation of Advisory Committee meetings, Mr. Streit used the opportunity to seek guidance from the Standing Committee on one issue referring to the participation at AC meetings. He pointed out that, in addition to a small number of experts who played a crucial role in the Advisory Committee and who did not belong to any institution that could cover their participation, only the representatives from the countries with economies in transition could receive travel support from the Secretariat. From the EU member states, it was expected to cover the travel costs of their official representatives. Unfortunately, among the EU member states, there were two Parties whose scientific focal points were not government employees and whose financial rules did not allow them to cover the travel costs for non-government persons. Since one of the AC representatives of these Parties also played a key role in the Advisory Committee, the Secretariat had no other option but to cover the travel costs and make sure the representative of this Party could attend the meetings. The Secretariat was, thus, in a difficult position towards representatives of other countries who also applied for funding and whose support the Secretariat had to refuse. Additionally, though it was not the main cause for over-expenditure on this budget line, even these small savings could make a difference. Since it was not a matter of a lack of will, but a matter of rather technical obstacles, the Secretariat suggested that the Standing Committee could approach these Parties and ask them if it would be an option to add the funds necessary to cover the travel costs of their AC participants to the invoice for the Party's regular annual contribution. This proposal was put for discussion. It turned out that there were also other countries with similar financial rules of which the Secretariat was not aware, and where diverse solutions were used to cover the travel costs of the scientific focal point's participation at AC meetings. After an extensive discussion, it was agreed that the Standing Committee should send a letter to the two Parties in question, recommending them as a possible solution for the situation that the travel costs of their representative were added to their annual contribution, or covered by means of a voluntary contribution, or in any other way suitable to the Party.

The Executive Secretary then proceeded with the discussion on the trust fund. He explained that, due to an extremely unfavourable exchange rate between the euro and the US dollar, there was a significant reduction of the available funds in the reserve. The trust fund reserve went down from 236,976 USD in 2017 to 98,121 in 2018. It had two components: The mandatory minimum, which in case of EUROBATS was 85,837 USD, and an unrestricted component that could be used for the purposes of the budget. As shown in Doc.StC16.7, the unrestricted component shrank to 12,284 USD, while the budget for 2019 alone foresaw a withdrawal of 38,526 EUR from the trust fund. This development in the trust fund reserve was indeed a bad surprise, also for the Secretariat, that had taken immediate steps to address the situation by putting in place an austerity plan for the current year to reduce the expenses to an absolute minimum, and thus free the funds for unavoidable expenditure. The first outcome of this austerity plan was cancelling the participation of the other staff members at the Standing Committee Meeting, to which the Executive Secretary went alone. Furthermore, all other budget lines had been examined in search of margins for potential savings. A bigger saving potential existed in relation to the travel budget line, so that travel would be reduced to the absolute minimum. If no emergency arose, only two missions were planned until the end of the year – to the host country of the next AC meeting for logistical preparations and, if possible, to the Standing Committee meeting of the Bern Convention at the end of 2019, as this was a great networking opportunity. The other more significant saving potential existed in relation to the budget line for information material. The Executive Secretary was to contact the government of Switzerland, and he hoped that at least a portion of their voluntary contribution for the current year could be used for information material. This would be of great help since there were three new guidelines in the pipeline and expected to be finalised already within 2019.

Taking into account all the possible margins for savings – also the smaller savings in other budget lines – the total amount that could be saved in 2019 was about 25,000 EUR. This amount would not need to be withdrawn from the reserve, and together with the unrestricted component of the reserve of 12,284 USD, it could be sufficient to finance the budget in 2019. The projection was the worst-case scenario based on the current very bad exchange rate between the euro and the US dollar. In summary, for 2019 Mr. Streit was optimistic that the situation could be managed, but the bigger problem existed in relation to the budget for the following three years.

The Chair then highlighted that, disregarding 2019, a total of around 130,000 EUR was missing in the trust fund to cover all the planned expenditure for the quadrennium. If the costs for the increase of the post occupancy of the P2 Officer by the end of the quadrennium were deducted from this sum, the minimum of 60,000 EUR was needed over the three years to cover the budget.

Germany mentioned that, though in the last years its voluntary contribution was mostly used to support EPI projects, it could consider offering a portion of its voluntary contribution for 2020 for the purposes foreseen in the running budget, especially for the publication of guidelines, and in particular for the publication of guidelines on bats and insulation projects. The Executive Secretary answered that these guidelines were already included in the three publications, for whose production support from the government of Switzerland was sought.

Looking at the budget lines with a bigger impact on the budget, the delegates further discussed the AC budget line as a potential for savings. The Chair emphasised that efforts should be made to at least not over-spend on the AC budget line, which traditionally was the case. He inquired whether the 20,000 EUR allocated to the budget line were sufficient for the organisation of the AC meetings. The Executive Secretary promised to find out how much the balance on the AC budget line was in 2019, and to compare the sum with those from 2018 and 2017. However, the meeting in 2019 was not exemplary since this time the Secretariat even had a surplus on this budget line. It was due to the fact that the voluntary contribution from Belgium arrived too late to be used for MoP8 and was, with the consent of the donor, used to cover the costs of the AC meeting in 2019. The Chair pointed out the importance of finding hosts for the AC meetings as well as MoPs that could keep the expenses for the Secretariat at the minimum. Unfortunately, all these measures helped contain the expenditure at the same level but did not result in any additional savings.

Considering saving measures, Germany proposed organising the joint meeting of the Advisory and the Standing Committees later in the year before the MoP, and scheduling the MoP early in the following year, so that the AC and the StC meetings in the MoP-year could be omitted. It would result in the saving of approximately 20,000 EUR. The Chair commented that this proposal needed to be discussed with the Advisory Committee. The Executive Secretary assured the delegates that this would result in protests on the side of the Advisory Committee. It already had a huge work programme. Since most of the work was done during

AC meetings, cutting one of the meetings would have a significant impact on the output of the Advisory Committee.

Germany further proposed to prolong the MoP sessions for a day or two to organise the Advisory Committee meeting in continuation of the MoP, as a post-MoP meeting. This measure would save the travel costs for the delegates of the AC meeting, since most of the representatives came to both MoP and AC meetings. This proposal was rejected as it resulted in increasing the costs for the organisation of the MoP, and producing savings for the following quadrennium, since the AC meeting that would be omitted was the one in the first year of the quadrennium.

In continuation, the costs of AC meetings in the period during the last three years were analysed, particularly the funds necessary to cover the travel support for the participants from Non-Party Range States with economies in transition. The Executive Secretary explained that these costs were higher in 2018 than in the remaining two years, since also the administrative focal points of Non-Party Range States were invited to the meeting preceding the MoP. The largest part of these costs was covered by voluntary contributions and only a small part was covered by the regular budget. The Chair summarised that the costs amounted to 12,000 EUR at the most for the period of three years (with two regular AC meetings and one joint meeting). It was concluded that the savings made by not supporting the participation of Non-Party Range States' representatives at the AC meetings would be too little to make an impact.

The Chair further informed the participants that apparently the European Commission had LIFE operating grants which were normally reserved only for NGOs and which offered funding for seven years in a row. However, within the LIFE programme, there seemed to be also budgets used to support CBD and other conventions. The Chair suggested that it should be explored whether there were similar programmes into which EUROBATS could tap in based on the joint EU-EUROBATS Species Action Plan on Bats. Germany commented that there was already a precedent case where a position within the MIKT programme of CMS was financed entirely by the European Commission. Since MIKT was also a working group including non-EU states, it might be possible to seek funds from the European Commission to implement the joint multi-species action plan. It was agreed that this could be an option for funding the post of the Scientific Officer and that this possibility should be further explored. However, the Chair reminded the Committee that it still needed a fall-back position, in case the opportunity with the

European Commission did not materialise. The only two options remaining were either cutting the staff costs or cutting the costs of an AC meeting. Skipping a meeting would save 20,000 EUR, which combined with the savings in travel expenses (estimated at ca. 5,000 EUR per year). would result in ca. 25,000 EUR per year. Bulgaria asked whether combining these savings with voluntary contributions would not solve the problem. Germany proposed, instead of eliminating one of the AC meetings altogether, to postpone the AC meeting in 2020 to early autumn to be able to properly estimate the financial situation. Germany was optimistic that if ca. 10,000 EUR were saved on the participation of Non-Party Range States in the AC meeting and if the German voluntary contribution could be used to co-finance certain parts of the budget, there might still be a possibility to keep the AC meeting. It would, however, be wise to organise the meeting in the early autumn to be on the safe side in case the budgetary situation turned out to be even worse.

The Chair summed up the results of the discussion up to that point. He concluded that, in the first place, it was necessary to explore the possibility of getting funding from the European Commission. However, it was also necessary to have a plan in case it was impossible to obtain EU-funding, or it would take longer until this plan materialised. In this case there would be a gap that needed to be filled, either by eliminating the support for Non-Party Range States participants and combining these and other savings with the extra contributions from the two Balkan countries (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), or by skipping an AC meeting. In continuation, the Standing Committee had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Advisory Committee. He was not in favour of skipping one AC meeting altogether – the AC meetings were crucial to keep up the continuity in the work of the Advisory Committee. Though it was also possible to work via email and other means of communication, the meetings represented a great momentum for the work of the Committee. He suggested, if necessary, to rather shorten the meetings, or eliminate the excursion. Another suggestion included organising a meeting only with the Convenors of the IWGs. It was concluded that no final decision could be taken at this point. Therefore, the Secretariat was instructed to explore the lead of structural EU-funding through LIFE by the end of September 2019. An additional meeting in the form of a video conference, at which also the Chair of the Advisory Committee would take part, would then be organised by the end of October 2019 to look at all the different proposals that had been made to address the issue of the lack of funds. The Secretariat was also asked to make an estimation until

October as to how much a meeting with only the Convenors of the IWGs would cost. Additionally, the Standing Committee will send a letter to call for voluntary contributions to shore up the funds for AC meetings, etc.

b) Projection of the financial situation in 2019 including voluntary contributions

See discussion under Agenda item 8a.

c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat

See discussion Agenda item under 8a.

d) Secretariat Work Plan

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.StC16.10 and explained that the work plan did not change in comparison to the previous years; it was only updated for the period until May 2020. The Chair asked for an explanation regarding Activity 1, Task 2, in the work plan – what exactly was meant by “Act as Designated Official a.i.”, as it was a new point in the work plan. The Executive Secretary explained that earlier in the year he was appointed as the so called interim Designated Official of the UN in Germany. There being a permanent Designated Official who oversaw security matters related to the UN in Germany, the interim Designated Official took over whenever the permanent Designated Official was unavailable. Mr. Streit, being the least travelling officer among the Heads of Agencies in Bonn and wider, often took over this role in the past, and then got appointed as Designated Official at interim. This task did not take up much of his time, however, there was still a one-day training he needed to undergo. The Chair then asked whether Activity 3, Task 2, was not a repetition of the doings already mentioned in Activity 1, Task 1. He got the reassurance that the two points referred to different actions. Further, in relation to Activity 4 and 5, the Chair noted that the meetings mentioned there were already partially covered by the previous work plan and that these points needed to be re-checked. The final question referred to Activity 8 – Analysis of MoP reports. The number of days needed was estimated at 15, but the number of allocated days was zero, which implied that there would be no analysis of the national reports. The Chair asked whether this matter needed to be addressed. The Executive Secretary answered that he was uncertain as to what the benefit of such an analysis would be, especially since very few national implementations reports had been submitted for the last MoP. At least for this series of national reports, an analysis would give a very limited picture of the situation within the Agreement area. Germany mentioned that CMS was currently doing an analysis of the national reporting concerning the implementation of CMS in its member states. Considering the limited resources currently available in EUROBATS as well

as the fact that this analysis would give only limited results, Germany recommended postponing this question until the following MoP and seeing what the outcome of the CMS report would be to then decide how to proceed. It was also agreed, since this was one of the very few mandatory requirements of the Agreement, that the Standing Committee should take up this issue again and should send a letter in 2021 to put pressure on the Parties to prepare their national reports in time for MoP9. Bulgaria mentioned that there would be reporting done under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, which would also contain bats information. This should make the preparation of the national implementation reports under EUROBATS easier. Commenting on this, Sweden explained that it was exactly due to the reporting under Article 17 that Sweden could not prepare its implementation report for EUROBATS in time for MoP8, as the reporting under Article 17 took up a lot of man power. Sweden would finalise its report in autumn 2019. In conclusion of the discussion on the Secretariat work plan, Germany pointed out that, in case no travel support would be given for the participation of the Non-Party Range States' representatives at the AC meetings, not only the funds spent on the travel costs, but also work days and resources of the Secretariat would be saved.

Action point 4: *The Secretariat to check why there will be a big increase in the regular contribution of Germany between 2021 and 2022.*

Action point 5: *In the future the Secretariat to prepare the report on income and expenditure with separate tables for BTL and QFL.*

Action point 6: *The Secretariat in consultation with the Standing Committee to prepare and send a letter to the two EU belonging Parties not covering the costs of participation of their scientific focal points at AC meetings. The letter should offer possible solutions to the problem.*

Action point 7: *The Secretariat to explore the lead of structural EU-funding through LIFE by the end of September 2019.*

Action point 8: *An additional StC meeting in the form of a video conference to be organised by the end of October 2019 to look at all the different options available to address the issue of the lack of funds in the budget.*

Action point 9: *The Secretariat to make an estimation until October 2019 as to how much a meeting with only the Convenors of the IWGs would cost.*

Action point 10: *The Secretariat in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee to prepare and send a letter to call for voluntary contributions.*

Action point 11: *The Secretariat in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee to prepare and send a letter in 2021 to put pressure on the Parties to prepare their national reports in time for MoP9.*

9. **Implementation Priorities and resource requirements resulting from the decisions taken at MoP8 and as identified by the Advisory Committee at its 24th Meeting (Skopje, North Macedonia, 1 – 3 April 2019)**

The Executive Secretary explained that there were no immediate requirements, especially resource requirements, other than the ones already mentioned in the report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee, which primarily referred to the work of the IWGs. This, of course, affected and involved the work of the Scientist in the Secretariat as well, and this part was included in the work plan. Additionally, several IWGs were expected to finalise new guidelines until MoP9, so that, in future, there would be resource requirements for printing costs, etc. However, at this point, it was not necessary to discuss this issue. The Chair proposed that, for the future meetings, this agenda item should be dealt with together with the work plan as the two matters were similar in nature.

Action point 12: *For future StC meetings the Secretariat to combine the discussion on the work plan with the discussion on implementation priorities and resource requirements under one agenda item.*

10. **Upcoming international events and developments in Nature Conservation relevant for bats and the Agreement**

Germany informed the participants that, on the 24th of June 2019, it planned to hold a meeting upon the occasion of the 40th anniversary of CMS. The Ambassadors of all CMS member and non-member states had already been invited to the meeting that would take place in Berlin. Furthermore, the Minister of the Environment, Nature Conservation and the Nuclear Safety as well as the Acting Executive Secretary of CMS, Ms. Amy Fraenkel, were also expected to join the meeting. This would be a good chance to try and enlarge the membership not only of CMS but also of its other Agreements, since, for example, the Ambassador of Spain should also be present at the meeting.

The Executive Secretary informed the delegates that in February 2020 the CMS 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13) was taking place in India. It was still uncertain whether Ms. Streit could attend the CoP, or whether he should

just submit a written report. Though it was undoubtedly a great opportunity to meet a lot of country representatives and to actively participate in a number of side events and make presentations that raise public awareness in relation to bat conservation questions, the costs of participating at the CoP would be very high. It was decided that this matter should be reconsidered at the StC meeting in October. Until then the Secretariat should get an estimation as to how much the costs of this mission would be.

Another important event was the International Berlin Bat Meeting, taking place in March 2020. This was a series of meetings being organised every couple of years. It was already a well-established event at which at least one of the Secretariat's staff members should participate, also considering that the costs of participation were relatively low.

Action point 13: *At the meeting in October 2019 the Standing Committee to reconsider the participation of the Secretariat's staff members at CMS CoP13 and Berlin Bat Meeting.*

11. **Any other business**

The Chair explained that Doc.StC16.12, Elements for a Protocol on Handling of Future Documents and Guidelines, still needed to be discussed. It referred to one of the issues raised during the Standing Committee meeting in Monaco. The Secretariat had already circulated the document prior to the meeting, and the Chair asked the Executive Secretary if he could elaborate on it. Mr. Streit explained that, during StC15, there was a brief discussion on a possible necessity for a formalised protocol on how to handle future documents. The Secretariat was not completely certain as to what exactly this protocol should regulate, so that also the MoP8 record was checked for such requests. It turned out that there were a few requests that could be easily addressed, for which no protocol was necessary. One of such requests came from the Advisory Committee, which asked for a template for drafting resolutions. The reason for this request was the impression that draft resolutions for MoP8 were not written in the same manner, and that they should be harmonised. This need emerged for the first time for MoP8 since the Working Groups of the Advisory Committee, though they were asked to send only the substance of the draft resolutions to the Secretariat and the Secretariat would take care of the wording and formatting, for the first time fully drafted the resolutions themselves. This request could easily be addressed, and the Secretariat would

also make sure that in future all the draft resolutions were properly reviewed before they could be posted on the website. The Chair expressed his opinion that the request mainly referred to the proper wording and the meaning of various terms. Thus, it would be good to include into the template a kind of glossary, a table with the most common terms used, where the meaning of these terms would be explained as well as what consequences they implied. In this way it could be ensured that the terms were used by everybody in the same way. Bulgaria mentioned that there was already a similar template for CITES CoPs and offered to share this with the Secretariat, which thankfully accepted the offer.

The second point raised also mainly applied to draft resolutions, but it could be done for all the other documents as well. It was the request to add a date to the documents indicating when they were posted on the website.

The third request was that the changes made to draft resolutions should be done in track changes in order to make more visible what had been altered in the text. Additionally, it was requested that, during MoP sessions, in-session documents should also be put online as soon as they were ready. In the past, revisions were just shown on the screen, with usually the Convenor explaining what had been changed. This request could also be easily responded to.

From the Secretariat's perspective, the only bigger issue where a final decision on the way forward for a protocol was necessary referred to the future guidelines. For guidelines which would be submitted to the MoP for formal endorsement, no such protocol was necessary since in preparation for the MoP all the Parties would be given the opportunity to express their views on the guidelines and request changes. A more sensitive issue would be were the guidelines published without an endorsement of MoP – it was important to find a way to make sure that all the Parties had a chance to check the guidelines and give their comments before the guidelines were published. The Executive Secretary then explained that there already was a written procedure proposed at MoP8 which could be applied in such cases. The Chair suggested that there could also be two types of documents: In addition to guidelines that were endorsed by the MoP, the so-called recommendations of the Advisory Committee could be introduced. These would be the documents that either did not need any endorsement or were not yet endorsed by the MoP. Mr. Streit was under the impression that the Advisory Committee would not be in favour of introducing the second type of documents, as guidelines had more of an official character. The Chair explained that the recommendations could be endorsed at the following MoP and would thus become

a guideline document. Mr. Streit also pointed out that some documents were addressing a pressing bat conservation issue and, for this reason, needed to be published and endorsed as soon as possible as guidelines, and not as recommendations. In this case it would be good to have a written procedure involving all the Parties which would give them sufficient time to review the guideline document so that it could be published even before a MoP session. This written procedure would be reserved only for exceptional cases. The Chair still saw the need to introduce the second type of documents that would not have such a stringent procedure and that could be used for publications such as leaflets, etc. This would also allow for publishing documents that needed to be quickly presented to the public as a recommendation and having the written procedure for endorsement run in parallel. Additionally, the Chair insisted that the written procedure needed to be strict, as guidelines were the most stringent document of the Agreement. Germany supported the proposal of the Chair and welcomed the introduction of recommendations. Bulgaria mentioned that even EUROBATS guidelines were not mandatory, and that the situation would be made more difficult if another type of documents was introduced that was even less binding. The Executive Secretary explained that those guidelines that were made part of the resolution were of a more binding character. The Chair added that, in his opinion, whatever was approved by the MoP also needed to be changed by the MoP. A recommendation would make the procedure of publishing documents easier and more flexible. It was agreed that the Secretariat should bring this issue to the attention of the Advisory Committee and report back at the next meeting of the Standing Committee about the results of the discussion.

Another point brought up under Agenda item 11 came from France. Mr. Lamarque wished to inform the participants that the yearly balance of the French national action plan for chiroptera was available online.

Action point 14: *The Secretariat to prepare a template for drafting resolutions in time for the next MoP. The template should include a glossary of most common terms used in resolutions with explanations of their meanings and implications.*

Action point 15: *The Secretariat to add dates to future meeting documents (in particular to draft resolutions) indicating when they were posted on the website.*

Action point 16: *The Secretariat to make alterations in the future meeting documents (in particular in draft resolutions) in the track changes mode.*

Action point 17: *The Secretariat to put future MoP in-session documents online as soon as they were ready and not show alterations on screen only.*

Action point 18: *The Secretariat to prepare a more elaborate Protocol on the handling of future documents and guidelines and to put it for discussion at the next AC meeting (in particular the matter of introducing the second type of documents – the so called AC recommendations and the matter of written procedure for endorsing a guidance document).*

12. Date and venue of the 17th Meeting of the Standing Committee

The Chair informed the participants that the next meeting will take place in October 2019 by means of video conferencing, and that it would then be decided when the meeting following the one in October should take place.

13. Close of Meeting

The Executive Secretary used the opportunity to thank the host government for their warm welcome as well as all the members of the Standing Committee for their efforts made to solve the difficult financial situation, for the positive spirit that was visible during the discussion, and for coming to the meeting. The Chair fully agreed with what was said by the Executive Secretary and thanked, also on his part, the members of the Standing Committee for their hard work. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16:27.

16th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Sofia, Bulgaria, 6 June 2019

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