

19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Online Meeting, 9 – 12 May 2022

Record of the Standing Committee Meeting



**1. Attendance**

This is listed in Annex 1 to the Record.

**2. Opening remarks**

In opening the meeting, Mr. Andreas Streit, EUROBATS Executive Secretary, explained that Ms. Barbara Geschier, EUROBATS administrative Focal Point from Belgium and the Chair of the Standing Committee (StC), would be chairing the plenary part of the joint meeting on Monday and that Prof. Danilo Russo, EUROBATS scientific Focal Point from Italy and the Chair of the Advisory Committee (AC), would preside over the plenary on Thursday.

Ms. Geschier greeted all the delegates. As she was new to EUROBATS, she was very much looking forward to meeting all the participants, but unfortunately, it was this time not possible to meet in person. She mentioned that EUROBATS had shown enormous flexibility in switching quickly to an online meeting and thanked the Secretariat for its support in this regard. She concluded by wishing all the participants a fruitful meeting.

Professor Russo expressed his pleasure to be together with the EUROBATS focal points and experts. It would have been much better if everybody could finally meet in person after two years of COVID-19 pandemic, but Professor Russo was optimistic that the following meeting would be a face-to-face one. Finally, he emphasised the importance of this meeting and expressed his hope that the goals to be achieved would be formulated during the next few days. He also wished success to all the participants.

Mr. Streit addressed the delegates as well. He regretted that, in the end, the meeting had to be held online. Unfortunately, under the circumstances, a video conference

was the only plausible option, but the Secretariat hoped and asked all the participants to prepare for the upcoming 9<sup>th</sup> session of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP9) in October being held in person. Mr. Streit was glad to see all the participants. The previous day marked the end of the World War II. It made him sad to see that Europe was again being ravaged by a new war. However, he was glad that the friends from Ukraine, though under difficult conditions, were both doing well and could join the meeting.

### **3. Adoption of the Agenda**

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.1a.rev.2)

Ms. Geschier asked whether there were any remarks on the agenda. There being no comments, the agenda was adopted unanimously.

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

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.3a)

Mr. Streit explained that the rules of procedure for the Advisory Committee remained unchanged. In the rules of procedure for the Standing Committee there was only a minor amendment which the StC requested at their previous meeting. Namely, it was added to the rules that every second StC meeting should be held online. There being no remarks, the rules were adopted unanimously.

### **5. Summary reports by the represented Parties and Non-Party Range States**

The Chair of the Standing Committee invited the representatives of the Parties, Non-Party Range States as well as Observers who wished to do so to give a short report on their activities since the last AC Meeting (these reports are reflected in the record of the 26<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee meeting).

### **6. Secretariat report – Part I**

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.5)

Mr. Streit referred to the written report available on the EUROBATS website as Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.5 and highlighted only the most important information.

#### **a) Agreement membership**

There had been no changes in the Agreement membership. At the previous StC meeting it was already mentioned that Bosnia and Herzegovina had joined the Agreement and the Secretariat hoped for more Parties to come.

**b) Ongoing projects**

The information on the projects could be found in the written document and details on many of the projects had also been included in the reports given by the represented Parties, Non-Party Range States, and observers. Mr. Streit used the opportunity to thank all the countries that continued to make voluntary contributions for this purpose, these being mainly Germany and Luxembourg.

**c) Publicity**

Referring to the outreach activities, Mr. Streit mentioned the publicity material that was produced upon the occasion of the anniversaries of the Agreement as well as the International Bat Night. This material was produced owing to a significant voluntary contribution from Germany. The material had already been distributed, however, with the demand for it being so high, the Secretariat continued reprinting it.

**7. Report on the preparations for the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of Parties**

Ms. Zrinka Domazetović, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Croatia, was given the floor. She was glad to be able to report that, together with the Secretariat, Croatia was planning to host MoP9 on the island of Brijuni. Brijuni was a national park, rich in nature as well as cultural heritage for hundreds of years. Ms. Domazetović expressed her hope that the delegates would have a fruitful meeting there but would also be able to enjoy what Brijuni had to offer.

Mr. Streit said that he was very glad that the following MoP would take place in Croatia. He reminded the delegates that the dates for MoP9, 10-13 October 2022, had already been circulated and that further details would be communicated soon. In June he planned to visit the venue and discuss all the details with the hotel, however, with the help of Ms. Domazetović, a provisional hotel reservation for the meeting had already been made. The nearest airport to Brijuni was in Pula, which belonged to a tourist area, so it should not be a problem to reach the MoP9 destination.

**8. Secretariat Report – Part II: Administrative matters**

**a) Report on income and expenditure as well as the Trust Fund status (Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.6 and Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.8)**

Ms. Geschier invited Mr. Streit to present to the meeting participants the report on income and expenditure for 2021. Referring to Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.6,

which was available on the EUROBATS website, Mr. Streit commented that most of the Parties paid their contributions promptly. Annex 1 of the document showed that very few regular contributions were outstanding, and that the total amount of unpaid contributions was also small in comparison to the total budget. Mr. Streit invited the meeting participants to closely examine the Annex 2 of the document, displaying the expenditure for 2021, and ask for further clarifications if needed. Pointing to the professional staff costs, he explained that, normally, there would be an over-expenditure on both budget lines due to exchange rate problems. Since for private reasons the scientific officer had not worked on 80 percent all the time, there was no over-expenditure on that budget line. Mr. Streit further explained that the meeting budget lines were set to zero for 2021, since, in expectation of large meetings in 2022, the funds had been shifted to the same budget lines in 2022. All the other budget lines were self-explanatory. Mr. Streit concluded that, in particular since no meetings were organised in 2021, savings could be made.

Ms. Domazetović asked what the current situation with the scientific officer's post occupancy was. She expressed her concern that a lot of documents needed to be prepared for the coming MoP9 in autumn 2022 and there was not much progress in this regard – only very few documents had been prepared for the joint 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee and the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee (StC19-AC26). Ms. Domazetović asked about the availability of the P2 Officer as it was crucial to have somebody speed up the preparation of the documents. Mr. Streit explained that the scientific officer was currently working on 100 percent owing to the savings made in 2021 and the surprising but very welcome voluntary contribution of 10,000 EUR from Luxembourg, earmarked to be spent for the P2 post. Mr. Streit agreed with Ms. Domazetović that the AC was very much in arrear and expressed his hope that during the coming two days it would speed up its work and come up with draft resolutions. Mr. Streit assured the StC that the Scientific Officer was doing everything in his power to support the work of the Intersessional Working Groups (IWGs), but that the rest was out of the hands of the Secretariat. If the IWGs did not proceed with their activities, there was not much the Secretariat could do.

Concerning the trust fund status report (Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.8), Mr. Streit explained that it was a very complicated document that most conventions chose not to present to the Parties. The most important part was the bottom line, which was showing the level of the trust fund reserve. This amount would be crucial for

discussing the future budget. There being a few new members to the Standing Committee, the Executive Secretary gave additional background information. At times when the euro was strong, the Agreement generated considerable income for the trust fund through exchange rate gains. In the years before 2015, the trust fund reserve was extremely healthy, which allowed for the budget to be subsidised by the reserve every year. This was a good thing to do and a standard practice of all conventions, as the money was not just left sitting in the reserve with very small interest income but was meaningfully used. This referred only to the funds above the minimum reserve, which had to be retained for unforeseen problems, to be used to keep the Secretariat operational even when bigger contributions were outstanding. Mr. Streit further explained that, starting with 2018, the trust fund reserve suffered under unfavourable exchange rate developments. Currently, the reserve was healthy, i.e. it was no longer in an alarming state, but there was also not much margin for withdrawals. In future budget scenarios a withdrawal of 25,000 euro per year was foreseen so that the contributions of the Parties would not increase that much, however, withdrawing more than this amount would not be responsible. Mr. Streit was glad to see that the balance was in a better condition than before two or three years, but the Secretariat and the Standing Committee also had the responsibility to keep it that way.

Ms. Nedinge, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Sweden, asked what the minimum reserve was that had to be kept. Mr. Streit was surprised that this was not indicated in this year's trust fund status report, which was the case for the previous ones, and explained that the minimum reserve was 86.000 USD.

b) **Projection of the financial situation in 2022 including voluntary contributions and progress on the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)**

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.7)

Referring to the voluntary contributions, Mr. Streit explained that the situation was very good and took the opportunity to thank all the donor countries, in particular Monaco, which in the past three years supported the EUROBATS budget with 30,000 EUR per year. These funds helped the Agreement tremendously, also to be able to increase the P2 post occupancy at any time. Additionally, both Germany and Luxembourg continued to support the Agreement with regular voluntary contributions every year. These were mainly used for projects and sometimes also for publications. Altogether, the voluntary contributions were extremely helpful.

Ms. Nedinge supported what Mr. Streit said – Sweden also recognised the importance of voluntary contributions and thanked all the donor countries for their efforts. Dr. Laurent Schley, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Luxembourg, wished to remind the Secretariat that, as long as the Atlas of European Mammals (EMMA) was being updated, the funds from Luxembourg should be used to finance the projects that would contribute to the production of this atlas. Mr. Streit answered that the selection of the projects was not in the hands of the Secretariat. The Secretariat would receive project proposals for the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI) every year and these would be forwarded to the EPI Evaluation Group, which was a panel of experts appointed by the Advisory Committee. They would evaluate and rank the project proposals and inform the Secretariat which ones should be supported upon the availability of funds. However, Mr. Streit was certain that, in case the Evaluation Group had received projects supporting the EMMA, they would rank them high if the proposal was good. He asked the focal points to encourage bat experts involved with the EMMA related projects to submit their proposals to the Secretariat. Mr. Schley concluded that he only wanted to make sure the earmarking was considered by the Secretariat. Ms. Céline Impagliazzo, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Monaco, thanked Mr. Streit for his kind words and expressed her pleasure that Monaco could help the EUROBATS Secretariat. As the voluntary contribution was coming to its end this year, she informed that she was going to investigate internally whether there was a possibility to proceed with this voluntary contribution. However, at this point she could give no definite answer to it. Mr. Streit said it was extraordinary that Monaco wanted to support the Secretariat further and thanked Ms. Impagliazzo for all her efforts.

**c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat**

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.9)

Speaking about the Secretariat work plan, Mr. Streit stated that it was not an agenda item, however, the Secretariat traditionally prepared this document to show what it was doing and what its workload was. The work plan was a long document which did not have to be analysed in detail, but in case there were any questions, the Executive Secretary would be glad to answer them. He also mentioned that the two administrative assistants had a significant amount of overtime every year. There was an attempt to address this situation in one of the future budget scenarios, but, unfortunately, this was also the most difficult scenario. Mr. Streit concluded by saying that none of the budget scenarios implied anything different or additional for

the future, but they only addressed the situation and needs as they were currently. Ms. Geschier then proposed to continue with the discussion on the budget scenarios and the Draft Resolution 9.1.

## **9. Draft Resolution 9.1: Financial and Administrative Matters – Budget 2023 - 2026**

(Doc.EUROBATS.StC19-AC26.10)

Offering background information for the discussion, Mr. Streit explained that one of the bigger problems resulted from the fact that EUROBATS contributions were frozen for long and the funds from the formerly very healthy reserve were used to support the budget. In the past few years, it became obvious that this practice could no longer continue – it was technically impossible. Already at MoP7 the Standing Committee was requested to find a way of equitable sharing of the budget based on the UN scale of assessment. Coming back to the UN scale was a big advantage – it was agreed upon by all governments in the UN General Assembly, so that there was no point in redebating it at any other level. Mr. Streit added that he had no knowledge of any exceptions where agreements did not use the UN scale. Unfortunately, since the contributions were frozen for so many years, they got increasingly away from the UN scale. During MoP8, it was decided that EUROBATS contributions would gradually go back to the UN scale in 25 percent steps. It was important to bear in mind that the move had not yet been completed – it would only be achieved in the first year of the new quadrennium. This fact alone, that the full effect of the UN scale would only be felt in 2023, would result in a big increase in a number of Parties' contributions between the current and the following year, even if there were no changes in the budget. Fortunately, though the increase in percentage was high, the increase in absolute numbers was not that big.

The other and more crucial factor was the very bad exchange rate, which became even worse in May. The exchange rate development had to be monitored closely until MoP9 in case adjustments were needed. Mr. Streit did not expect that the exchange rate could become any worse, so that there was a slight hope that the numbers could improve until MoP9.

Ms. Nedinge urged the Secretariat to circulate the scenarios in due time before the meeting as these first had to be discussed internally within the responsible ministries. Mr. Streit answered that one purpose of this meeting was also to inform the administrative Focal Points of what they could expect in terms of the budget. Mr. Streit further commented that this time it was very difficult to plan the budget for

practically five years in advance. The document prepared was the best that could be produced based on the facts available, so that the Parties could start with their consultations. He concluded that the shown budget scenarios were the worst-case scenarios: They represented a projection of the real costs that were to be incurred if the exchange rate remained unfavourable as it was currently the case. If the exchange rate improved, the numbers would improve as well. However, there was little contingency.

Mr. Charles-Henri de Barsac, EUROBATS administrative focal point from France, supported the intervention of Sweden. He also asked whether there was a policy or an instrument to cushion the exchange rate fluctuation. Mr. Streit answered that he was not aware of such an instrument. The problem lay in the fact that the professional staff cost, including not only salary, but also pension, dependence allowance, etc., were computed in USD. When in the beginning the EUROBATS budget was in USD, this was also a problem. Though it was not problematic for staff costs, at the times when the euro was strong, other costs of the Secretariat were much higher than allocated and massive losses were incurred due to a bad exchange rate. For this reason, it was decided that the budget should be changed into euro, and that helped generate a good trust fund reserve. Mr. Streit could not recommend changing the budget back to USD, because any changes would directly affect the Parties contributions. Additionally, apart from the staff costs, all the other costs were in euro as the Secretariat was in the euro zone. Mr. de Barsac explained that he did not have in mind changing the budget back to USD but that he had heard of the existence of such instruments in other UN bodies. It was agreed that more details on these instruments were necessary to further discuss this issue.

Mr. Simon Mackown, EUROBATS administrative focal point from the United Kingdom, explained that he was new to EUROBATS and to him it seemed quite unusual that the meeting participants were not presented the final budget scenarios that would be proposed at MoP9. In case of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Standing Committee would sign off the final budget scenarios before they could be presented at MoP. Mr. Mackown asked for more details on the timeline, as currently the meeting participants were not aware of what the final options would be and when they would be published. Mr. Streit responded that it was the purpose of this meeting that the participants could instruct the Secretariat as to what they wanted to have shown at MoP9. The prepared budget scenarios were only the proposals based on the Secretariat's needs, and



they only represented a starting point for the discussion. From Mr. Streit's experience and considering that many of the administrative Focal Points were not present at the meeting, though they had all been invited, the same discussion would take place at MoP9 again and the Secretariat might be asked to prepare even further scenarios. He believed this practice was not any different to AEWA's. Mr. Mackown responded that, in AEWA, the Standing Committee Meeting took place in June when the final budget scenarios were signed off and published afterwards. In EUROBATS, though this was the last StC meeting before the MoP, the participants were told that the scenarios might change, so Mr. Mackown was trying to understand the timeline – when the participants were likely to see the final set of scenarios ahead of the MoP. Mr. Streit agreed that, indeed, this tradition of AEWA was different to the one of EUROBATS. There would be no more meetings held before the MoP and based on the discussions at this meeting as well as based on the exchange rate development, the existing documents would be adjusted. However, the Secretariat would not come up with completely new scenarios unless it was requested by the Standing Committee. Ms. Nedinge commented that Sweden would support if EUROBATS would be more like AEWA in this regard and would have a fixed budget scenario. She proposed that the Standing Committee could try to agree on a scenario at this meeting. Mr. de Barsac saw no problems in the budget scenarios being discussed and agreed only during the MoP.

Commenting on the different scenarios presented in the draft resolution, Mr. Streit stated that scenario 1 reflected the status quo. All the budget lines remained the same, except for the StC meeting budget line where the amount per year was reduced for 500 EUR, since it had been agreed that every second StC meeting should take place online. However, more relevant was the fact that the staff costs increased due to the exchange rate development. Mr. Streit explained that there was no growth of the budget, but that there was a growth of the costs as these were expected to change due to the exchange rate. The staff budget lines contained very little contingency, which was not in line with the UN practices and rules but was one of the EUROBATS' traditions as well. He also expected that the Headquarters in Nairobi would warn the Secretariat about this, as they usually did, but that it would accept the decision of the Parties. In finalising the presentation of scenario 1, Mr. Streit explained that there was only a 2,83 percent increase of the budget, which was far below covering the inflation rate.

Ms. Impagliazzo asked why only the amount for the P2 post was being increased every year and not for the other staff members. Mr Streit explained that other staff members within their post grades had reached the maximum of seniority, so there were no more step increments possible.

Mr. de Barsac mentioned that normally the scenarios also included a zero nominal growth scenario and a scenario showing the increase for the inflation rate. To the question what the zero nominal growth scenario meant, Mr. de Barsac explained that the budget had to remain absolutely the same. Mr. Streit explained that scenario 1 represented no change in substance and in the budget as it had been for the past 4 years – it included no additional component or increase, but it only represented the costs as they were expected to be considering the current exchange rate development. It was agreed that scenario 1 could be considered as the zero nominal growth scenario.

Representing scenario 2, the Executive Secretary explained that in it the P2 post occupancy was at 100 percent instead of the current 80 percent. This increase was urgently needed for the scientific work of the Advisory Committee and its 16-17 thematic working groups. Everything else remained unchanged.

Mr. Oliver Schall, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Germany, referring to the remark from Mr. de Barsac, commented that so far it had been possible to avoid zero growth scenarios as these would have presented a problem for the staff costs. Additionally, Mr. Schall stated that, from the strategic point of view, it would not be smart to have such a scenario from the very beginning and that it could be introduced at a later stage if needed. Commenting on scenario 2, Mr. Schall reminded the delegates that an increase to 100 percent of the P2 post occupancy was hoped to be easier when Spain joined the Agreement. He asked if there were any news with this regard. Mr. Streit answered that, though the accession of Spain would be the game changer to adopt the budget that was needed, unfortunately, there were no news to that matter.

Ms. Carolin Kohzer from Germany asked whether the increase of 20 percent in the post occupancy of the scientific officer was currently financed by Croatia. Mr. Streit explained that Ms. Domazetović only asked for an increase of the P2 officer's post occupancy since she expressed her concern that the scientific capacity was insufficient to meet the needs. Ms. Domazetović clarified that she was not referring to an increase of the P2 post occupancy, but that, considering the fact that the scientific officer was last year available at 50 percent only, she would like to see

reflected in the Secretariat's work plan that the scientific officer would give more effort into the facilitation of the IWGs work and the production of the documents, which in the year of the MoP was extremely important. Ms. Kohzer then asked how the increase from 80 to 100 percent that occurred in 2022 was financed. Mr. Streit explained that this temporary increase was only possible due to the savings made in 2021 and the voluntary contribution received from Luxembourg, however, that formally the post was on 80 percent. It was for the reasons mentioned by Ms. Domazetović that the increase of the P2 post occupancy was needed on a permanent basis and this was proposed in scenario 2.

Scenario 3 incorporated a few more changes, while adding on scenario 2 – it contained an increase of the two administrative assistants' post occupancy from 50 to 80 percent as well as an increase on the budget lines for the AC and MoP meetings from 20,000 EUR to 30,000 EUR. Mr. Streit explained that an increase of the funds for the organisation of the meetings would help the Secretariat to have certain security and know in advance that sufficient funds would be available for the meetings. Until now the Secretariat succeeded to organise the meetings with the help of voluntary contributions. However, there were many participants from the countries with economies in transition for whom the Secretariat covered their costs of meeting participation, and these costs were big in comparison to a moderate increase proposed. Similarly, the increase in the post occupancy of the administrative assistants merely reflected the work reality and did not represent any addition. Mr. Streit was aware that, considering what this scenario would imply in terms of the increase in contributions for most of the Parties, he did not expect that this scenario would be easy to be adopted.

Ms. Nedinge stated that the increase in percentage in Sweden's contribution under scenario 3 was far beyond what could be accepted, but that the absolute numbers were not that drastic. Sweden would try to go in the direction of scenario 3 and Ms. Nedinge was glad that this scenario was presented to the Standing Committee to see what was really needed. However, she could not guarantee that Sweden would be in the position to support scenario 3. Dr. Schley agreed with Ms. Nedinge – it was good to have scenario 3, in which, in his opinion, the meeting costs and the staff costs were realistic. For this reason, scenario 3 would also be Luxembourg's preference. Dr. Schley also asked Mr. Streit how the 105 days of administrative assistants' overtime were dealt with. The Executive Secretary explained that the practice for UN professional staff did not allow any compensation for the over-time

worked. In case of the general service staff, to which the two assistants belong, the compensation was made either in time off or in payments. Mr. Streit explained that the two assistants never made full use of the compensation. He further said that, for the work capacity of the Secretariat, taking time off would be a more unfavourable option, and that payments were preferred in the margins of what the Secretariat could afford. Ms. Radostina Galitionova, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Bulgaria, was also in favour of scenario 3. She reminded how crucial it was to have the post occupancy of the scientific officer at 100 percent to prepare well for MoP9, but that also an increase of the administrative assistants' post occupancy was necessary. Ms. Galitionova said that, in comparison to the other Parties, it was easier for Bulgaria to be in favour of scenario 3 as it paid the minimum contribution. On the other hand, sticking to scenario 1 and keeping the status quo would not be helpful to keep up the good work of EUROBATS. Mr. Vittorio de Christofaro, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Italy, explained that Italy could not yet express its position as due to a cyber-attack on his ministry there was no possibility to share the budget documents with other services or internally within the ministry. Ms. Kohzer said she was also not in the position to make a statement for Germany since, due to the forming of the new government, there was no adopted budget available. She expected that the budget would be approved in summer. Ms Kohzer further suggested to have variants of scenario 3, for example, scenario 3.1 with an increase in the post occupancy of only one administrative assistant and scenario 3.2 with the post occupancy of both administrative assistants increased. Ms. Galitionova suggested also including scenario 3.3, in which the post occupancy of both assistants would be increased but the meeting budget lines would remain the same.

Mr. Streit said that he forgot to mention that the Secretariat currently had one staff member less in comparison to the years before. The work-load of the administrative assistants had further increased since they had to compensate for the loss of the G4 position. The G4 post was not truly lost but was left vacant because of the need for the post occupancy of the scientific officer to be increased. Mr. Streit's proposal was not to fill this vacancy in the future so that the P2 post could be increased on a permanent basis. However, the G4 post should also not be omitted, in case it might be needed in the future, once the Agreement grew.

Ms. Geschier asked whether there was a need to discuss the budget draft resolution in further detail and whether this draft resolution would also be discussed together

with the Advisory Committee. Mr. Streit explained that there was no need for it – the Standing Committee would just present the discussion that had taken place and what would be aimed for. On the other hand, the draft resolutions emerging from the meeting of the Advisory Committee would be discussed together with the Standing Committee to ensure that the proposed resolutions were feasible also from the administrators' point of view. In answering the first question of Ms. Geschier, Mr. Streit said that it was clear what the Standing Committee wanted to see, but that it was not clear whether this would be possible. He thanked the meeting participants and the Standing Committee members for their support, which was overwhelming and very encouraging. However, there was not much margin left for progressing any further on this issue as the Parties would first need to hold consultations on what was possible. The Executive Secretary was glad that further budget scenarios and options were identified, which would be prepared by the Secretariat and presented to the Parties.

Ms. Geschier then asked how it could be ensured that before MoP9 every Party considered the draft resolutions, in particular the budget draft resolution, and had a clear picture why these proposals were made. Mr. Streit explained that all draft resolutions, at the stage they would reach by the end of this meeting, would be attached to the record of the meeting, and sent to all the Parties and their Focal Points. They would be urged to read the draft resolutions and consult within their governments. Ms. Geschier expressed her concern, in case the Parties would at MoP9 still need to hold consultations with their governments, that this could cause problems for the continuation of the Secretariat. The current difficult economic situation made every budgetary discussion problematic. Mr. Streit was optimistic that an agreement would be reached. However, he was also certain that the same discussions that took place at this meeting would have to be repeated at MoP9. This could have been avoided if all the Parties had joined this meeting as they were urged to do. Unfortunately, since this was not the case, the views expressed at this meeting would have to be repeated at MoP9. And the Secretariat would make sure to draw attention to all the documents. Ms. Domazetović proposed that the budget documents should be sent separately to avoid having the same discussion at MoP9. Mr. Streit agreed to it and would also prepare a cover document that would explain the different scenarios as well as the deliberations of the Standing Committee and the discussions held at this meeting, so that the Parties could get an idea how strong the support of the StC was for certain scenarios.

Ms. Éva Fejes, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Hungary, proposed not to offer the option of the zero-growth scenario as it offered no real solution to the pressing staff problem of the Secretariat and, at the same time, was an option easy to choose and difficult to argue against from the financial point of view. Mr. de Barsac wanted to keep the status quo scenario. Referring to the discussions taking place at MoP, he considered this usual, in particular since at this point the country representatives had no mandate to make any decisions.

Dr. Schley asked, in regard to the scenario where the post occupancy of only one administrative assistant would be raised to 80 percent, whether it would be possible to raise both posts to 65 percent to ensure an equal treatment of both staff members. Mr. Streit explained that in the UN there were only three possibilities – working at 50, 80 or 100 percent, which corresponded to 2.5, 4 and 5 working days. All the systems that computed annual leave, payments, etc. were based on this, so introducing a different option would make the computing very difficult. However, as there was already a precedence in CMS, Mr. Streit promised to investigate how the practical problems related to administration were solved and how CMS obtained authorisation for this.

Ms. Geschier summed up that it was extremely important to communicate well to the Parties the significance of the budget draft resolution for the continuation of the Secretariat's work and to explain which scenarios the Standing Committee supported and why. Ms. Geschier also asked whether it was possible to suggest one particular scenario to the Parties. Mr. Streit answered that nothing could be decided at this meeting, but that it was possible to express preference of the Standing Committee for one of the scenarios. Mr. Streit also announced that the draft record of this meeting would first be sent to the meeting participants to check if it correctly reflected their views, before it would be shared with other Focal Points.

Ms. Nedinge inquired whether it was possible for the Secretariat to prepare the three newly proposed scenarios still during this meeting, so that the participants could have a better understanding of what these implied. Mr. Streit agreed to do so. Ms. Geschier also thought it important to share these additional scenarios with all the participants during the plenary session.

Ms. Impagliazzo added that it would be useful to include in the background of the scenarios the information that the G4 post was left vacant to increase the P2 post occupancy. This would clarify that the P2 raise in the post occupancy would not have much impact on the budget. Mr. Streit promised to do so in the document for

the MoP as well as in the document that would be distributed to the administrative Focal Points ahead of MoP9.

Mr. Streit further stated that he could prepare all the requested variations of scenario 3 except for the scenario proposed by Dr. Schley, as he lacked the necessary information for it. Dr. Schley responded that this scenario did not need to be prepared if it did not have a wider support among the Standing Committee members. He was also considering if the administrative assistants in question would approve of such an arrangement. Most of the participants reported that, in their administrations, there was no possibility of having a post occupancy other than the usual two or three options (50 and 100, or 50, 80 and 100 percent). Ms. Impagliazzo explained that the same was the case for Monaco, however, that she still considered it useful if all the scenarios would be examined. This should be done as a preparation for MoP9, where also other proposals might be made, such as keeping the P2 post at 80 percent and increasing the posts of the administrative assistants to 80 percent. Different options should be investigated and kept in stock for MoP9 discussions. Referring to the comment of Dr. Schley, the Executive Secretary explained that both administrative assistants already gave their consent to increase their post occupancies up to 80 percent. It was a preference of the Secretariat to have both assistants at the same level regardless of what that level would be since they were sharing one post.

Dr. Volodymyr Domashlinets, EUROBATS administrative focal point from Ukraine, asked if it would be possible to include a scenario that would also reflect the inflation rate. He also stated that for Ukraine scenario 3 would be acceptable. Mr. Streit answered that the inflation rate had to be monitored closely. It had gone up extraordinarily due to the unfortunate war going on in Ukraine. Some experts believed this high inflation rate would stay, the other deemed it would go down quickly once the war would hopefully be over. It needed to be kept in mind and monitored until the MoP.

The Secretariat then presented the new versions of scenario 3: 3a with one assistant at 80 percent, however, should the proposal from Dr. Schley prove doable, the increase would be shared between the two assistants equally; 3b being the previous scenario 3, with both assistants at 80 percent; and 3c with both assistants at 80 percent but with the meeting costs being set back to the level where they were before. It was considered whether these new scenarios would also be proposed to the MoP. Mr. Mackown was in favour of presenting all the different scenarios to, so

that the discussion at the MoP would not only focus on how much money was to be spent, but also how this money should be spent, and which of these options would best deliver. Ms. Kohzer agreed with Mr. Mackown that it would be good to have all the scenarios for the MoP. Ms. Libuše Vlasáková, EUROBATS administrative focal point from the Czech Republic, expressed preference for the scenarios 2 and 3a. Mr. de Barsac was in favour of presenting all the options at MoP9 as the participants of this meeting did not have a mandate to make any decisions.

Ms. Geschier asked whether scenario 3c was doable. Mr. Streit explained that it would depend on whether the Secretariat continued receiving voluntary contributions for big meetings. Otherwise, the Secretariat would need to reduce the participation in the meetings for those participants whose travel costs it had to cover. However, it was feasible, though less comfortable as the Secretariat had less planning security. Until now the Secretariat had always received voluntary contributions earmarked for the organisation of the meetings and Germany was also very helpful with their voluntary contribution since, when necessary, it allowed using a portion of its voluntary contribution for delegates' travel costs. If asked to choose between increasing the costs for meetings or the staff costs, the Secretariat would opt for the staff costs. Mr. de Barsac added that sometimes the voluntary contributions were not administered by the same division as the regular contributions and there was often more flexibility with voluntary contributions than with the mandatory ones. He believed it was worth keeping this option of relying on the voluntary contributions for the meetings as it could be a solution at the MoP.

Ms. Geschier also expressed her concern that different scenarios implied a significant rise in contributions of bigger payers such as Germany or France. She was considering how to present the draft resolution to show that the additions were necessary. Ms. Domazetović said that moneywise different scenarios did not make a big difference for Croatia, as it was paying the minimum contribution. She further stated that, as a gesture of good will to the bigger contributors, Croatia would be willing to increase the minimum contribution to 3,000 EUR i.e. that raising the minimum contribution should also be discussed during the MoP and that Croatia was willing to bring up this issue. Mr. Streit was sceptical about raising the level of the minimum contribution so quickly again. Before it was at 1,000 EUR and the Parties decided to increase it to the same level as for AEWA, where it was 2,000 EUR. Since even the change from 1,000 to 2,000 EUR was not done at once but in 25 percent steps, Mr. Streit was not sure how Parties concerned would react to such



a proposal. Ms. Galitionova suggested a compromise of raising the minimum contribution to 2,500 EUR. Since Croatia, Luxembourg, Bulgaria as well as Monaco all considered it acceptable to discuss the raise of the minimum contribution, it was agreed that this should as well be put forward to the MoP.

Ms. Impagliazzo further noted that the UN scale used for Monaco was wrong. Mr. Streit apologised for that and promised to correct this in the future document. He further explained that, due to Monaco's paying the minimum contribution, the change would have no impact. Ms. Nedinge asked, since there was a mistake in the UN scale for Monaco, if all the other contributions were correctly calculated. The Executive Secretary responded that he would check all the contributions again and that he had already thoroughly checked especially those contributions where there was a drastic increase.

Finally, it was agreed that all five scenarios would be presented to the MoP, but that they would be numbered from 1 to 5 as none of the options were particularly related or particularly different. Scenario 1 was the status quo scenario, scenario two implied only an increase of the P2 post occupancy, scenario 3 included an increase of the post occupancy of only one assistant (previous 3a), scenario 4 with both assistants at 80 percent (previous 3b), and scenario 5 with the AC and MoP meetings budget lines increased (previous 3c). Dr. Schley said that, if his proposal was acceptable, then scenario 3 (previous 3a) would be replaced by the one he proposed, namely both assistants at 65 percent.

Ms. Nedinge insisted that, since some of the scenarios included a big raise in the contribution for some of the Parties, the draft resolution needed to be presented well ahead of the MoP. Ms. Streit explained that, as the Secretariat was instructed to circulate the budget resolution separately, this could be done very soon, already by the beginning of June 2022. His preference was that the record of the meeting should be finalised and sent together with the resolution so that the discussions and deliberations from this meeting could be read by those administrative Focal Points who were absent at StC19. As soon as the record was finalised, it would be sent to all those present at StC19 on either of the meeting days. While waiting on the approval for dissemination of the record, the Secretariat would check the few remaining points needed to finalise the draft resolution, which should not take much time. Ms. Nedinge mentioned that the same should be the case for all the other draft resolutions, as they contained the text that had to be circulated among the responsible ministries and bodies for obtaining their approval. Mr. Streit supported

this and said that he was curious to see what the AC had achieved. The draft resolutions were not prepared by the Secretariat, which would only proofread and format the draft resolutions, but the substance needed to come from the IWGs.

Since quite a few of the administrative Focal Points were not present in the meeting, Ms. Geschier asked how their questions and remarks would be dealt with. Mr. Streit explained that, so far, the Secretariat had never received such questions ahead of the MoP, however, that, if necessary, a short additional meeting of the StC as a videoconference could always be convened to discuss these issues. Ms. Geschier was glad for this opportunity as the current economic situation caused some nervousness, and a significant raise in the contributions might result in a lot of questions. Mr. Mackown stated that every Party had been given the opportunity to join StC19. He believed that there would be a never-ending cycle of discussions if the scenarios would be reopened for debate. Therefore, Mr. Mackown was in favour of giving the Focal Points a chance to ask questions but would not allow for any changes of the scenarios or requests for new scenarios. Ms. Nedinge supported this view and concluded that a lot of other proposals would be raised at MoP9.

#### **10. Any other business**

Ms. Domazetović shared the link for the MoP9 destination: <https://www.np-brijuni.hr/en>.

Speaking about MoP9, Mr. Streit mentioned that it would be his last MoP as the Executive Secretary since he was going to retire in two years' time. Many of the meeting participants expressed their regret that Mr. Streit would be leaving EUROBATS as well as their gratitude for the great work he did for the Agreement. Mr. Streit promised he would make sure that a good successor would be found to replace him as the head of EUROBATS and that he would take care the transition was done as smoothly as possible.

#### **11. Date and venue of the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

Mr. Streit explained that the next StC meeting would take place immediately after the closure of MoP9. During MoP the StC members would be re-elected or newly elected, and the purpose of the StC meeting immediately after MoP9 would be to elect the StC-Chair and Vice Chair. As the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee was supposed to be a video conference, only the dates would have to be determined and not the venue. Both Mr. Streit and Ms. Nedinge expressed their hope that Ms. Geschier would continue serving as StC-Chair as she was doing an excellent work.

## **12. Joint plenary session with the Advisory Committee to mutually report on results and progress achieved**

The Standing Committee then joined the Advisory Committee in a plenary session to also discuss all other draft resolutions brought forward from the working groups.

## **13. Draft Resolutions emerging from the Advisory Committee**

For this part, please see the Record of the 26<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting.

## **14. Close of StC Meeting**

The Executive Secretary thanked all the StC members and participants of the meeting for their outstanding support, which was rewarding and encouraging. He hoped that a good result could be achieved at the MoP if this spirit of support would be kept. Ms. Geschier also thanked all the participants for a very productive meeting and for their feedback, as well as their support – being new to the function of the StC Chair, she very much appreciated it.

19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Online Meeting, 9 – 12 May 2022

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