

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, Germany, 31 March 2009

### Record



#### 1. Attendance

This is listed at **Annex 1** to this Record.

#### 2. Opening remarks

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Michel Perret (France), opened the meeting. He welcomed the participants, in particular those attending for the first time from the UK and Poland as well as the representatives from UNEP. He also drew attention to the upcoming MoP in Prague (September 2010) and the preparatory work related to it.

The representative of Germany, Mr. Oliver Schall, welcomed the participants on behalf of the host government. He referred to two other important meetings taking place in Bonn at the same time, one on climate change, the other on education and sustainable development. Another upcoming event would be the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CMS in June with the emphasis being on Gorillas. 2009 was declared the year of the Gorilla and there had been significant cooperation with Frankfurt Zoo in this regard. Mr. Schall also drew attention to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EUROBATS in 2011.

Mr. Moulay Lahcen El Kabiri welcomed the participants on behalf of the Executive Secretary of UNEP/CMS and reported about recent conferences as well as the imminent opening of the new office in Abu Dhabi (which will work mainly to support the new Agreement on Birds of prey, the Dugong MoU and MOU on marine turtles). Another important topic was the future shape of CMS. An Intersessional Working Group had been set up by the CMS CoP 9 for this purpose.

The Chair of the Advisory Committee, Mr. Peter Lina (The Netherlands) reported about recent developments. In particular the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI) had had a very good start. New scientific evidence suggested that probably at least 5 more bat species would be added to the Annex of the Agreement at the next MoP.

The Executive Secretary of EUROBATS, Mr. Andreas Streit, also welcomed the participants, especially Ms. Alison Elliott as the new representative from the UK and Ms. Monika Lesz from Poland as an observer as well as the UNEP representatives, Ms.

Kamar Yousuf from DELC. He transmitted the apologies of Ms. Libuse Vlasakova from the Czech Republic.

The Chair thanked Germany for hosting the meeting and thanked all speakers for their opening statements.

### **3. Adoption of the Agenda (Doc.EUROBATS.StC3.1.Rev.1)**

The Agenda was by consensus adopted with the following amendments:

Requested by the Chair a discussion on EPI (item 5. b) and upon request of CMS the potential future Agreement on Bats in Africa (item 9) were added.

### **4. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure (Doc.EUROBATS.StC2.4)**

The Rules of Procedure were unanimously adopted.

### **5. Secretariat report (Doc.EUROBATS.StC3.12)**

The Executive Secretary referred to the relating document. He reported that the previous Secretary/Personal Assistant, Ms. Ayhan Polat had left the Secretariat to take up a full time post with the Framework Convention on Climate Change as of January 2009 and introduced Ms. Kate Horn, who was replacing her since February. The Meeting requested the Executive Secretary to convey sincere thanks to Ms. Polat for her valuable assistance in the previous years.

#### **a) National Reports and updates to National Reports**

The Executive Secretary reported about the National Implementation Reports and updates received and the preparation of a new synthesis for the upcoming AC14 Meeting. He recalled that the next mandatory reports were due 90 days before the MoP in 2010.

#### **b) Agreement membership (recruitment of new Parties)**

The Executive Secretary reported that the Republic of San Marino had ratified the Agreement but still had to deposit the instrument of accession with the depositary. He noted that the Republic of San Marino was to become the 32<sup>nd</sup> Party to the EUROBATS Agreement and was optimistic that more states would join the Agreement not too far in the future. He sent out his encouragement to all other Range States to follow the example of San Marino. The Executive Secretary also mentioned that Germany was assisting a lot in the effort to attract the Russian Federation as a Party to CMS and the relevant Agreements.

The Chair welcomed the accession of San Marino into the EUROBATS family.

**c) Ongoing projects**

Postponed to agenda item 5.b).

**d) Publicity**

The Executive Secretary reported that that media interest in the work of the Agreement was continuously growing. The EUROBATS Network was steadily expanding with an increasing number of activities and additional countries getting involved. The 2008 Advent Calendar had been a significant outreach success and was probably to be reproduced by NABU and BUND, the two biggest German NGOs in nature conservation. Furthermore the EUROBATS Publications Series continued to be very successful with two new volumes to be launched in 2009.

The Executive Secretary also reported that EUROBATS, together with other Bonn based UN Agencies (e.g. CMS) had received an award from the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**6. Administrative matters:**

**a) Report on income and expenditure (Doc.EUROBATS.StC3.6) as well as Trust Fund status (Doc.EUROBATS.StC3.8)**

It was reported that the Parties pay their contributions in a timely and reliable manner.

With regard to Annex 2 (Expenditure) the members of the Committee enquired about the in their view considerable unspent balance on staff costs and some other budget lines. The Executive Secretary explained that these savings had been accumulated over a number of years by shifting unspent balances to the following financial year instead of letting them drop into the Trust Fund Reserve. In addition allotments for staff costs always needed to contain some margin for contingency but that a large part of the savings was resulting from an unexpected freeze/reduction of the local UN salary scale in Germany. Overall the figures confirmed solid planning. Committee members asked who of the staff were affected by the freeze of local salaries. It was explained that salaries of Professional staff were adjusted on a monthly basis according to exchange rate and cost of living fluctuations at a given duty station and that a fixed local salary table in EURO was in place for the locally recruited General Service staff. For the EUROBATS Secretariat this meant that the salary for Christine Boye was frozen at the level of the first half of 2007 and that Tine Meyer-Cords and Kate Horn were employed at a lower salary level as they both were recruited after 1 July 2007.

In summary the Executive Secretary explained that the savings on other budget lines were generated in 2006/7 through so called prior-year adjustments as certain expenditures were retroactively covered by voluntary contributions and that the overall

budget performance for 2008 was in line with the planning. This was confirmed by the Administrative and Fund Management Officer, Mr. Sergey Kurdjukov.

The Chair requested the Secretariat to prepare for the next StC meeting a table with UN standard staff cost figures (especially for internationally recruited staff) to allow comparison with the budgeted costs as well as the actual expenditure. This was agreed.

### **Trust Fund Status report**

The Executive Secretary reported that the closure of accounts was on the day of the StC meeting, 31 March and that the figures were in US dollars. The operating reserve was lower this year because in line with a decision by the StC2, unspent funds had been placed in a newly established formal minimum trust fund reserve. These funds were now blocked for cases of unexpected shortfalls in contributions. However he expected that about 100,000 - 150,000 EUR could be withdrawn from the reserve at the next Session of the Meeting of Parties and be included in the new budget cycle in order to reduce Parties' contributions.

With regard to the Trust Fund for voluntary contributions (XF/QFL) it was explained that a part of the balance was committed to projects in 2009 but that the relating contributions had already been received at the end of 2008. However, the Executive Secretary explained that also quite some interest income had accumulated over the years. He requested the Committee to release this surplus for EPI. This was agreed.

The UK asked whether the funds were held in US dollars. The Executive Secretary explained that the funds were held in EUR but that the UN financial system computed in US dollars.

It was furthermore reported that following a recommendation of the UN Joint Inspection Unit, UNEP was reviewing the use of the 13% Programme Support Costs (PSC) that apply to all expenditures. In this context the whole CMS Family had sent a letter to UNEP with the request to consider refunding of PSC that had been generated through voluntary contributions in order to make them available for projects.

Germany enquired about the significant difference in the total amounts for voluntary contributions presented in documents StC.7 and 8. The Secretariat explained that document StC.8 additionally reflected two contributions from the Netherlands that were budgeted in 2007 but had only been collected in early 2008.

**b) Projection of the financial situation in 2009 including voluntary contributions and progress on the EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)**

The Executive Secretary reported that the financial situation for 2009 was excellent thanks to the prompt payments of contributions by Parties; savings from previous years and the meanwhile proven reliability of the annual budget figures presented to and adopted by MoP 5 (see also a) above). With reference to Doc.StC3.10 he expressed the hope that more Parties will consider voluntary contributions for the Projects Initiative in the course of the year.

Italy requested a brief report of the launch EPI in 2008 as well as progress achieved. The Executive Secretary reported that for the first time all voluntary contributions in 2008 had been available to be used for projects and publicity instead of for core work like meetings. In order to provide a clearer framework for projects as recommended by StC2, EPI had been launched during the European Bat Research Symposium and AC13 in August 2008. Thereafter a first call for voluntary contributions had been circulated among the Parties and a second call in January 2009. 25,400 EUR had been raised for projects in that first phase of EPI. There had been a discussion at AC13 on what the selection criteria for projects should be and who should decide about the fund allocations. It had been decided to wait for an initial period to see how EPI would develop and to evaluate first lessons learnt at the next AC meeting.

The Executive Secretary reported about comments received from donor countries that indicated a preference for conservation projects rather than fundamental research and that projects in countries with economies in transition should have a certain priority. He further explained that until then the donor countries had decided which projects to fund, with no intervention from the Secretariat. Seeing that the quality of the project proposals varied significantly, he proposed that a small sub-committee of the Advisory Committee should be established to evaluate the project proposals and to make recommendations. Also the positive level of additional voluntary contributions raised for EPI indicated the need to formalise the process.

The Chair commented that the administrative and scientific focal points of the country from where a project proposal comes should be consulted. In addition he said that projects should attempt to have a model character for other countries.

The Chair of the Advisory Committee remarked that sometimes fundamental research is required to obtain more knowledge about a species. He agreed with the Secretariat about the formation of a sub-committee to evaluate the project proposals and ensure that research is not duplicated.

Italy expressed the view that the EPI could be of real value for EUROBATS and also agreed that the StC should advise the AC to form a sub-committee. Italy further commented that the website should be used for more transparency and all project proposals could be published on the website and pointed out that projects could be partially co-funded by other contributors (government or NGOs).

The UK agreed that it would be very helpful for the AC to evaluate the project proposals and asked whether the AC would first make a priority list and then the donors could still decide which project they would prefer to support.

The Executive Secretary confirmed that the donor countries should still be able to choose projects that they would like to fund.

The Ukraine remarked that it would be useful to have guidelines for the sub-committee. There are many criteria already available in the Agreement text and in the Resolutions. There should also be an assessment to show where there are gaps in the knowledge which could be filled by future projects.

In summary the Committee decided to convey to the AC the following elements to be included in the terms of reference of the future sub-committee:

- 1) The administrative and scientific focal points of the country from where the project proposal comes (or from the project target country if different) should be consulted.
- 2) The Secretariat receives the project proposals.
- 3) The sub-committee to be established by the AC assesses the project proposals. The following criteria apply:
  - a) Priority should be given to projects that can serve as models for other countries.
  - b) Priority should be given to countries with economies in transition.
  - c) Priority should be given to conservation projects (and only to fundamental research, if the research is in the interest of the EUROBATS community).
- 4) The full information should be sent to all Parties to enable them to choose the project they would like to fund. This information should include the different contributions that have already been made and which projects are already partially funded by other countries.
- 5) All potentially required permits have to be obtained before a project can enter the implementation phase.

### **c) Staffing situation in the Secretariat**

The Executive Secretary recalled that although 4 persons work at the Secretariat, this only amounted to 2.5 posts (because 3 out of the 4 are part-time employees) and that this low staffing level had over the past years become a constraint in view of a significantly grown workload with a number of new tasks for the Secretariat.

The areas with increased and still growing workload were in particular:

- The impressive success of the Publication Series involving proof-reading, coordinating layout and translations, dealing with designers and printers as well as organising the shipping of the publications. For 2009 at least three new publications were expected (guidelines on overground roosts, bats and forestry and the monitoring guidelines).
- The successful start of EPI involving substantial additional work in compiling the project proposals, raising and managing the related funds, concluding the contracts with project partners, monitoring the project implementation and preparing the financial reporting to the donors.
- A general growth of workload due to the growing popularity of EUROBATs resulting in e.g. an increasing number of general information requests, requests for publications etc.

Since March 2008 the Secretariat has monitored the amount of additional work (600 hrs) most of which was covered by the increase of one staff member from 50% to 80% (584 hrs increase). Additional overtime work however also regularly occurred for the other staff.

The Secretariat kindly requested the authorisation of the StC to have one GS staff member on 80% again in the last 3 months of 2009. The Chair recalled that the next MoP in 2010 and the evaluations on the 2010 target would again cause additional work for the Secretariat and concluded, that due to savings in the current financial year a 80% post occupation over a total period of eight months would not create a financial risk. The Executive Secretary confirmed that the Trust Fund Reserve would not be affected. Germany commented that the need for a staffing increase had also been accepted for ASCOBANS and pointed out that another additional burden in 2010 will be the preparations of the Year of the Bat in 2011.

The Committee agreed an increased post occupation of 80% during 8 months in 2009 and recognised the likely needs for 2010.

## **7. Report on the preparations for the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee**

The Executive Secretary reported that he expected the next AC Meeting to become another milestone, due to the fact alone that 5 (possibly 7) additional countries would be represented for the first time. It was fortunate that it had become possible to hold the meeting in Cyprus, and that the interest was immense. High-profile participation was to be expected.

Germany repeated the offer to fund the participation of delegates from northern Africa and asked whether there was any progress in this regard. The Secretariat thanked Germany and reported that it was still in the process of identifying suitable experts from that region.

## **8. Report on the preparations for the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of Parties**

The Executive Secretary informed that the MoP was scheduled to be held from 18 – 23 September 2010 in Prague, Czech Republic and reported that preparations were already at an advanced stage. On behalf of the Czech Administrative Focal Point, Ms. Libuse Vlasakova, the Executive Secretary gave a presentation on the venue as well as the other activities planned for by the Czech hosts. The Chair requested the Executive Secretary to thank Ms. Libuse Vlasakova on behalf of the whole Committee.

## **9. EUROBATS' budget 2011 onwards: Level of the ceiling for maximum contributions**

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.StC3.11 and explained that usually every three years the Member States of the United Nations adopted the "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations" in a General Assembly Resolution, taking into account a number of factors, the economical strength of a country being one of the most important ones. This well established system ensured that the contributions of countries to any given budget within the United Nations System are equitable to the highest possible extent. This goal was achieved when applied on a global level, for which the UN scale was designed. However, the application of the UN scale on a regional level inevitably resulted in distortions of countries' contributions. This was historically the case for EUROBATS.

Similar to previous EUROBATS budget cycles, in the budget period 2007 – 2010 four Parties were covering 74% of the total budget, the remaining 26% being shared by the other 27 Parties. Although Article V, Paragraph 1 of the Agreement allowed the adoption of a EUROBATS specific scale of contributions, it would for many reasons not be advisable to stop using the commonly accepted UN scale as a basis for the calculation of the contributions. The most practicable way to at least reduce the most



significant inequities in contributions would be to lower the ceiling for maximum contributions of single Parties being at 20% for EUROBATS right now (adopted in Resolution 4.1 and confirmed in Resolution 5.1). As possible scenarios a table based on a 15% ceiling and a table with an additional 0,1% minimum percentage (Annexes 1 and 2 to Doc.StC3.11) were presented.

The Executive Secretary further emphasized that the Secretariat was taking a neutral position on this topic and that it was up to the Parties to decide if they wished to work towards or slightly more balanced cost sharing in the Agreement budget.

Germany commented that there was a minimum contribution based on a fixed amount in the AEWA budget and enquired why a minimum percentage was being proposed for EUROBATS. The Executive Secretary explained that the effect of the AEWA model was to create additional income but not to balance or reduce the contributions of the other Parties. This option had also been discussed at the last EUROBATS MoP but had met a lot of opposition. In EUROBATS a very small number of Parties were carrying the burden of the major part of the budget. This burden would be reduced if a lower ceiling was introduced. But as a consequence this would significantly increase the contributions for Parties at a medium percentage level. The possible minimum percentage would at least cushion this effect while keeping the contributions of the economically weakest Parties at a moderate level. In addition the expected savings from the previous financial years could be used to further balance the negative effects for these Parties.

The UK commented that it was in favour of the approach while recognising that such a new model would need to be well explained in order to make it acceptable for all Parties. Italy, France and Germany also expressed their sympathy.

Ukraine and Poland pointed out that the percentage increases for the Parties with low contributions were significant and that this would certainly be seen as a problem.

The Chair summarised that different scenarios should be prepared by the Secretariat and the persuading arguments for a new system should be presented at the next StC meeting. In addition and after further written consultation with the StC, the Secretariat would need to inform all Parties and collect their views before the next StC/AC meeting.

#### **10. The Future Shape of CMS: Collaboration between EUROBATS and CMS (Phase 1: Assessment of the current structure and functioning of CMS and the CMS Family)**

A presentation was given by Ms. Laura Cerasi and Mr. Francisco Rilla who were supporting the CMS working group on behalf of the Secretariat. A draft questionnaire

had been sent to all Agreement Secretariats in order to collect initial data that was considered relevant. The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.StC3.14 and explained that at this stage no particular input was required from this Committee.

**11. Implementation of Resolutions adopted at MoP5**

This agenda item was postponed to AC14.

**12. 2011 - Year of the Bat**

This agenda item was postponed to AC14.

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

This agenda item was postponed to AC14.

**14. Management Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations System**

The Executive Secretary referred to Doc.StC3.14 and explained that UNEP was giving much importance to this report and its recommendations. Another positive development was that the UNEP Executive Director had also been appointed Director General of UNON. Ms. Kamar Yousuf, representing UNEP, reported that the Governing Council had established a consulting group of regional representatives on the topic of Environmental Governance that was expected to start working soon and have the first meeting in Europe.

The Executive Secretary reported that positive effects of the ongoing UNEP/UNON reform had already been experienced in the improved speed and efficiency of staff recruitment.

The Chair asked about developments in the ongoing discussion on the Programme Support Costs (PSC). The Executive Secretary reported that UNEP had undertaken a study in this regard with the aim to make the use of the PSC more transparent. Positive signals had been received that PSC generated through voluntary contributions could be to a certain extent refunded for projects. The CMS Family had started consultations with the Executive Director.

**15. Any other business including Bats in Africa**

The Chair enquired on progress achieved concerning bats in Africa. The Executive Secretary reported that during the CMS CoP 9 in Rome, EUROBATS had organised two side events about bats in Africa with Mr. Peter Lina and Mr. Tony Hutson as experts. These side events were very successful and provided the floor for concrete discussions on how to move forward in Sub-Saharan Africa. Representatives from 13

countries of the region concluded that a capacity building workshop should be held in Nairobi as soon as possible with organisational and technical support from CMS and EUROBATS. Co-funding and other support had to be sought from international NGOs, Foundations and UNEP.

**16. Date and venue of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

Germany expressed its intention to host the joint StC4 and AC15 Meetings in 2010 and was in the process of reserving the required funds. It was hoped that a formal invitation could be announced at the upcoming AC14. The joint meeting would be held in Bonn from 3 – 5 May 2010 (arrival of participants on 1 May, departure 6 May). The annual “Rhine in Flames” fireworks display along the river Rhine would welcome the participants on 1 May. The biggest ever German bat conservation project would be presented the following day during a field trip to a former mining area near the City of Mayen.

**17. Adoption of the Record of the Meeting**

The record was unanimously adopted.

**18. Close of Meeting**

The meeting was closed at 16:35hrs.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, Germany, 31 March 2009

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