

CMS COP12 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2017

CMS COP12 opened on Monday, 23 October. During the morning plenary session, participants heard keynote speeches, enjoyed a cultural presentation, addressed a number of organizational matters, and heard reports from the CMS subsidiary bodies.

In the afternoon, CMS Executive Secretary Bradnee Chambers presented the report of the Secretariat and implementation of the Programme of Work 2015-2017. The Committee of the Whole (CoW) convened to address budgetary and administrative matters, and the review of decisions. A number of working groups were also established and held their initial meetings in the evening.

In a brief ceremony, Tarsicio Granizo Tamayo, Minister of Environment, Ecuador, signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks.

OPENING PLENARY

Nadya Yuti Hutagalung, UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador, hosted the opening ceremony.

Cynthia Villar, Senator and Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines, drew attention to her country's megadiversity, citing the successes of Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area in linking conservation of habitats and species to livelihoods.

Zack Beaudoin, winner of the CMS-UN Foundation essay competition on the COP12 theme, noted that although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is key, "it needs teeth for its bite to be effective."

Yann Arthus-Bertrand, UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador, said 71 years ago there were 450,000 lions but today there are only 20,000. He stressed that nature is not separate from man and decied environmental destruction and species loss. In response, Hutagalung said we have "failed terribly" and soon elephants will only be in the books we read to our children.

Following the opening ceremony, Øystein Størkersen, CMS Standing Committee Chair, presided over the opening of COP12.

Tarsicio Granizo Tamayo, Minister of Environment, Ecuador, on behalf of the COP11 host country, highlighted several initiatives in South America enhancing the coexistence between human and nature, noting actions on biodiversity aerial corridors and marine protected areas around the Galápagos Islands.

Roy Cimatu, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines, stated that cross-boundary cooperation among range states is imperative for the conservation of migratory species.

Ibrahim Thiaw, UN Environment, argued that without a healthy environment there are no healthy people or healthy economies.

He said fighting pollution and reflecting the value of biodiversity into development choices should be key priorities.

Citing the common origins and complementary mandates of CMS and CITES, John Scanlon, CITES Secretary-General, called attention to the conventions' Joint Work Programme 2015-2020. He highlighted three areas of collaboration: the African Carnivores Initiative; a global study on the conservation and trade of marine turtles; and the African Elephant Action Plan.

Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), provided an update on CMS-CBD joint activities. She highlighted: guidelines on integrating migratory species into national conservation plans; a joint work plan to identify activities contributing to both the Aichi Biodiversity and migratory species targets; and a CBD-CMS-CITES partnership on sustainable wildlife management.

CMS Executive Secretary Chambers said COP12 would focus on strengthening the convention to deliver on streamlined programmes that respond to parties' expectations.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Rules of Procedure:

CMS Standing Committee Chair Størkersen introduced the Rules of Procedure (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.4/Rev.1). The Secretariat cited pending issues in the review of the rules and introduced a draft decision asking for the Secretariat to submit revised rules at COP13 (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.4/Rev.1/Annex 2).

Election of Officers: Parties elected by acclamation: Roy Cimatu (the Philippines) as COP12 Chair; Rod Hay (New Zealand) as CoW Chair; and Ariuntuya Dorjsuren (Mongolia) as CoW Vice-Chair.

Adoption of the Agenda and Meeting Schedule: Chair Cimatu invited delegates to review the draft provisional agenda (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.6.1/Rev.4) and annotations (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.6.2/Rev.1), which the COP adopted.

Establishment of the Credentials Committee and Other Sessional Committees: Chair Cimatu invited delegates to establish the CoW and the Credentials Committee. The COP elected Republic of Congo, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Norway, and Uruguay to the Credentials Committee.

Admission of Observers: The COP admitted international and national agencies, and bodies that meet the criteria set out in Article VII, paragraph 9 of the Convention to participate at this meeting as observers (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.8).

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE CONVENTION: Standing Committee Chair Størkersen described the two Standing Committee meetings since COP11, highlighting: collaboration among the CMS Family; stronger partnerships with other multilateral environmental agreements and UN entities; and work on the strategic plan, finance and budget, and reporting templates.

Scientific Council Chair Fernando Spina discussed the Council's activities, including: Council restructuring; preparations for the scientific aspects of COP12; work on illegal killing, trapping, and trade; a draft decision on connectivity; and animal culture and social complexity.

The COP took note of the reports.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK: CMS Executive Secretary Chambers presented the report on the implementation of the Programme of Work (PoW) 2015-2017 (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.18), focusing on marine, terrestrial, and avian species. He informed that almost €4 million of voluntary funds were raised by the Secretariat, and underscored 11 new signatories and one new cooperating partner as part of the MoU on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU). He concluded by mentioning that more than 500,000 people have visited the CMS website, a sign of improved outreach.

Following the report, SWITZERLAND and MONGOLIA said parties should concentrate on PoW priorities and fundraising.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The CoW, chaired by Rod Hay (New Zealand), began its work in the afternoon.

BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION: Execution of CMS Budget 2015-2017: The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.14.1). She detailed challenges of implementing the budget, including staff budgeting, information technology, contractual services, and new policies for strict cash management. TANZANIA called for a "results-based" presentation of the budget, which would present the implementation status against the activities of the strategic plan. CMS Executive Secretary Chambers clarified that the core budget provides only for Secretariat support, stating that other activities are funded through voluntary contributions. The CoW took note of the report.

Budget and Programme of Work 2018-2020: CMS Executive Secretary Chambers introduced the relevant document (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.14.2). He presented three budget scenarios: zero nominal growth (scenario one); zero real growth (scenario two); and 4% increase on scenario two (scenario three). On scenario one, where there is no foreseen increase of the 2015-2017 budget, he said all existing staff posts could be retained. However, he stated no funds would be available to provide for the work of the subsidiary bodies and COP13 arrangements, including interpretation, report writing, and travel support for developing country delegates. The second scenario, he said, while allowing for funding of COP13 and the work of the subsidiary bodies, would fall short in supporting CMS information management and outreach activities. He recommended the third scenario, saying it is best suited to support all Secretariat functions and services.

Several parties, including COSTA RICA, ISRAEL, MONGOLIA, SWITZERLAND, and TANZANIA, expressed preference for scenario three, with the EU urging the budget committee to ensure a sound, efficient, and affordable budget for CMS.

Resource Mobilization: The Secretariat also reported on fundraising for the 2018-2020 triennium (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.14.3). She highlighted voluntary and in-kind contributions for implementation of priority actions. The CoW took note of the report.

REVIEW OF DECISIONS: CoW Chair Hay opened the discussion by reminding delegates that Resolution 11.6 directed the Secretariat to prepare a list of resolutions and recommendations that should be completely repealed or repealed

in part. He added that this was a housekeeping exercise, in which the Secretariat reviewed resolutions or paragraphs that were outdated, redundant, or superseded.

The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.21/Rev.2 and noted that: Annex 1 contains resolutions or recommendations previously repealed by other resolutions or recommendations; Annex 2 contains resolutions or recommendations that should be repealed in full; Annex 3 contains resolutions or recommendations that should be repealed in part; and Annex 4 contains resolutions and recommendations to retain without changes. She also noted that Resolution 11.6 directed the Secretariat to establish registers of resolutions by theme and whether the resolution or decision is in force. However, she added, a thematic register may no longer be necessary. Finally, she said paragraphs 25-30 provide advice on drafting text for future resolutions and decisions.

CoW Chair Hay made a number of proposals to which the CoW agreed, including accepting: the Secretariat's advice on drafting resolutions in paragraphs 25-30; the Secretariat's advice that a register is no longer needed (paragraphs 7-11); and Annexes 1, 2, and 4.

The CoW then considered Agenda Item 21.1, the review of decisions to repeal in part (UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.21.1 and UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.21.1.1 to 21.1.35). Hay noted that five of these documents will be considered elsewhere on the agenda. As for the other documents, he asked delegations to identify any concerns about specific resolutions to be repealed in part for consideration by the working group. The EU, AUSTRALIA, and ISRAEL noted the documents where they had concerns. Hay said these would be discussed in the working group on review of decisions.

The CoW then considered document UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.21.2 and UNEP/CMS/COP12/Doc.21.2.1 to 2.13 on consolidation of resolutions. Hay noted that only four of these proposed consolidations were not being considered elsewhere on the agenda and, after comments from the EU, said they would be referred to the working group on the review of decisions.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The first official day of CMS COP12 began with an upbeat cultural performance, which had some delegates hoping that this energy would inspire the week's discussions. However, some of the keynote addresses took a somber turn. Speaker after speaker outlined run-away rates of species and habitat loss, noting in particular the impacts of unprecedented pollution on migratory species, especially plastics and e-waste. Likewise, the potential collapse of African vulture populations has emerged as an urgent theme given their role in keeping the environment clean and preventing disease. Lamenting the decline of worldwide elephant populations, UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Nadya Yuti Hutagalung encapsulated the negative sentiment in the room by announcing bluntly: "We have failed. We have failed terribly."

Yet others, while acknowledging scientific evidence of declining ecosystem health, asserted that the outlook is not entirely bleak. Many pointed to examples of on-the-ground successes as signals of progress and a reason to maintain hope. From the podium, CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon and CBD Executive Secretary Cristiana Paşca Palmer highlighted the positive impact of synergies and joint programmes with the CMS. Citing a "global collective effort," Scanlon predicted a dramatic turnaround, concluding: "There will be African elephants in the wild. We are fighting together and we will win." By the end of the day, one observer was heard saying that he hopes this "fighting talk" will energize delegates to successfully address the pressing issues on the lengthy COP12 agenda, which will put the Convention in a stronger position to win the battle for the survival of endangered migratory species.