



## CMS COP-6 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 1999

Delegates to COP-6 convened in an opening Plenary session to elect officers, adopt the agenda and hear reports from the Secretariat, Standing Committee, Scientific Council and Depository. In the afternoon, the Committee of the Whole (COW) began a review of implementation, focusing on Party reports, information management and review of Agreements on Appendix II species (Article IV Agreements).

### OPENING PLENARY

Gerard Boere, Acting Chair of the Standing Committee, opened CMS COP-6 and invited delegates to consider the provisional agenda (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.1/Rev.1). With regard to the COP rules of procedure (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.4), he noted a Standing Committee proposal to bracket the rule stipulating that Parties three or more years in arrears are not eligible to vote (Rule 14.2). Delegates adopted the modified text.

The Plenary elected: Tanya Abrahamse (South Africa) as COP-6 Chair; Robert Hepworth (United Kingdom) as COP-6 Vice-Chair and Chair of the COW; and Jorge Cravino (Uruguay) as COW Vice-Chair. Chair Abrahamse thanked delegates for her election and welcomed them to her country. Douglas Hykle (CMS Secretariat) overviewed document preparation and administrative matters and drew attention to the timetable for COP-6 (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.3). He invited delegates to attend the screening of a film on migratory species produced by the German government. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda and the work programme. Chair Abrahamse requested each region to appoint a representative to the Credentials Committee and asked the Secretariat to review the list of observers. She welcomed delegates to submit their opening statement in writing to the Secretariat.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT:** Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht (CMS Executive Secretary) presented the report of the Secretariat (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.5.1). Marking the 20th anniversary of the CMS, he said this past year represents the CMS's most significant annual growth with the addition of ten new Parties. He underscored that expanding CMS membership remains an essential task. Highlighting the establishment of more Agreements and MOUs, he noted the importance of effective coordination, information exchange and cooperation within the CMS framework. He called for increased cooperation between the CMS Secretariat, UNEP and UNON and recognized UNEP's support in the development of GEF projects. He noted efforts to stimulate coordination with other conventions, as well as to demonstrate that CMS instru-

ments are tailored to compliment the CBD. Hykle informed that the CMS Secretariat is attempting to develop an internship programme similar to that of Ramsar and has abandoned efforts to second an African Junior Programme Officer.

Commenting on the report of the Secretariat, GERMANY lauded the Secretariat's efforts to increase CMS membership and stressed encouraging greater representation in some regions. He underscored the budgetary implications of a recent UN Resolution applying conditions concerning staff secondment free of charge which would necessitate funding of secondments in the future.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT:** Reporting on the Standing Committee, Boere noted it had met four times since COP-5, and stressed the Committee's attention to the draft strategic plan for the CMS (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.12) and noted the plan's importance as a guiding document on CMS priorities for a period of 5-8 years. He also noted efforts to synchronize the terms of office for Standing Committee members and the need to promote attendance of NGOs as observers. Boere supported monitoring of UN processes to address consequences for the CMS and harmonizing of conventions.

**SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL REPORT:** Delivering the report of the Scientific Council, Pierre Devillers (CMS Scientific Council Chair) highlighted progress on concerted actions, cooperative actions and agreements. On concerted actions for Appendix I species, he noted their primacy for active conservation and implementing the CMS directly in the field. He said the actions engage the Scientific Council in a three-step process of drafting a review report, compiling detailed action plans supported by workshops and adopting action plans. He noted the role of international cooperation for regional projects implementing action plans, such as recent GEF support for Siberian Cranes, and highlighted the usefulness of working groups for specific species such as for the Siberian Crane, Slender-billed Curlew, Lesser White-fronted Goose and Sahelo-Saharan Antelopes and stressed the disastrous impact of incidental taking. Devillers underscored the valuable contributions of the five COP-appointed Councillors and of COP-granted funds. He identified projects for the next triennium, subject to availability of funds.

Reporting on Annex II Agreements in progress, Devillers highlighted upcoming agreements on the Sand Grouse and the Alb-tross. On the more recently developed co-operative action tool, Devillers highlighted an initiative to add the African Elephant to the list of species requiring this type of action. Devillers noted proposals to add the Whale Shark and Sturgeon to Annex II. He

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stressed that adding species to an Appendix is only a first step which precedes more proactive measures. Michael Moser (COP-Appointed Councillor), noting the lack of Parties in Asia, proposed appointment of a Councillor on taxa in Asia and possibly Oceania in order to raise the CMS profile in those regions. PAKISTAN identified the White-headed Duck as an important species for concerted action. FRANCE highlighted conservation projects in progress.

Presenting the report of the Depositary (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.5.4), GERMANY noted: the completion of translations of the Convention text and their submission to the UN Secretariat; actions to produce a new Headquarters Agreement; events in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Convention, including a film on the Convention; and annual allocation to the Trust fund of a voluntary contribution of 100,000 DM from the German government. Responding to a request for updates on accession to the Convention, CÔTE D'IVOIRE assured it would attend COP-7 as a member. ZIMBABWE noted its imminent signing of the CMS and the AEW. BULGARIA expressed gratitude for financial support enabling it to become a member.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**PARTY REPORTS:** Chair Hepworth invited the Secretariat to review Party reports on CMS implementation (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.6) and called on Parties to submit their reports. Hykle noted variation in length and format of the reports and said less than half of the Parties have forwarded reports. He said low submission prevents meaningful synthesis by the COP. Introducing a World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) project proposal to harmonize CMS national reports, Tim Johnson (WCMC) highlighted the objectives of the proposal, including: an evaluation of the benefits of synthesizing reports; recommendations to improve reporting; and determination of linkages and synergies with other biodiversity conventions. He identified four stages in developing a synthesis of national reports: assessment of current positions; proposed changes; evaluation of proposed changes with select Parties; and the development of a reporting methodology.

GUINEA stressed that the large number of biodiversity-related international conventions, combined with limited time and technical resources, make it difficult for countries to report on CMS implementation and called for format standardization with other conventions in a timely manner. MONACO noted that it interprets the text of the CMS as establishing voluntary reporting and called for improved compilation of reports rather than synthesis. Müller-Helmbrecht clarified that reporting is mandatory. MOROCCO highlighted that developing countries have limited staff to draft reports. The UK recommended including best practices in the WCMC project. AUSTRALIA suggested that Parties who have submitted reports should provide guidance to others and said minimum standards of reporting should be included in the WCMC proposal.

Hykle underscored the distinction between harmonization within the CMS, for which the WCMC project would be useful, and CMS Agreements covered by the Information Management Plan. He proposed a working group on the WCMC project.

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:** Hykle said COP-5 had commissioned a WCMC study to harmonize the CMS national reporting requirements, which led to a detailed information plan for CMS. He stressed that information management activities must be considered in the context of the CMS strategic action plan. Johnson introduced the study (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.7) which endeavors to: analyze the CMS text; review information needs, sources and dissemination requirements; and assess stakeholder needs. SWITZERLAND raised budgetary issues and questioned whether the

Plan's recommendations would stimulate action. Chair Hepworth established a working group, chaired by Svein Aage Mehli (Norway), to address national reporting and information management, and to ask participants to prioritize issues based on costs.

**REVIEW OF AGREEMENTS:** Müller-Helmbrecht introduced the review of Article IV Agreements concluded or under development (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.9) and invited Agreement Secretariats or representatives to provide reports. He highlighted the Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea as the first Agreement to enter into force and noted that while the seal populations have recovered, the environmental conditions remain unsatisfactory. Gerhard Adams (Germany) reported on the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Sea (ASCOBANS), noting the ASCOBANS Secretariat has moved to Bonn. He identified bycatch as the biggest threat to cetaceans and estimated it kills 4,400 Harbor Porpoise per year.

Patrick van Claveren (Monaco) hoped the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) would enter into force within a year. Noting Monaco hosts the interim Secretariat, he offered to host MOP-1 and the permanent Secretariat.

Highlighting the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (EUROBATS), Andreas Streit (EUROBATS Secretariat) remarked that populations have suffered from, *inter alia*, increased agriculture, forest exploitation, degradation of the countryside and ill-founded public prejudices against the species. He supported development of other regional agreements on bats where necessary.

Reporting on the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), Boere remarked that the AEW encompasses the largest geographical area and the most species of all CMS Agreements. He highlighted the results of AEW MOP-1, including: establishment of the permanent Secretariat; adoption of the budget; expansion of the Action Plan to include all AEW species; and establishment of the Technical Committee. Müller-Helmbrecht commended the AEW for being the first Agreement to begin implementation before entering into force. GHANA and NIGERIA endorsed extension of the EUROBATS agreement to include Africa, stressing the importance of bats for pollination of plants and the need for improved knowledge on their ecological roles. PARAGUAY supported expanding the EUROBATS Agreement and drew attention to its wide range of bat species. BULGARIA commended EUROBATS on its success in raising public awareness of the importance of bats.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Some delegates opined that limited resources combined with onerous and uncoordinated reporting requirements for international environmental agreements forces reporting for lower profile agreements, such as the CMS, onto the back burner. Others suggested feedback on or synthesis of information provided would generate motivation for submitting reports.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**COW:** The COW will reconvene at 9:30 am to consider: Agreements for which the CMS provides Secretariat services; Agreements concluded or under development; guidelines on the harmonization of future Agreements; the CMS strategic plan; and the CMS budget.