



CMS COP-8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2005

On Tuesday, 22 November, delegates to the eighth Conference of the Parties (COP-8) to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) met in plenary in the morning to address the strategic plan and budget, and in the afternoon for the signing ceremony of the West African Elephant MOU. The Committee of the Whole (COW) met in the morning to consider party reports and the CMS information management plan, and in the afternoon to address measures for the conservation of Appendix I and II species, and recommendations and resolutions submitted by parties. Working groups on sustainable use, the new strategic plan and the budget met in the afternoon.

PLENARY

The plenary admitted as observers several national and international NGOs and heard a report from Ian McLean (UK), Co-Chair of the Sustainable Use Working Group. CMS Executive Secretary Hepworth suggested, and the plenary agreed, allowing the participation of observers in working groups.

STRATEGIC PLAN: The Secretariat presented the outcome of the 2000-2005 Strategic Plan (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.7), noting 75% overall engagement rate in activities. Olivier Biber (Switzerland), Chair of the intersessional working group on the strategic plan, introduced the resolution on the proposed 2006-2011 strategic plan (UNEP/CMS/Res.8.2/Rev.1.5). He noted that the plan's goal on ensuring the favorable conservation status of migratory species contains alternative bracketed text on contributing to sustainable livelihoods or to global sustainability. Highlighting the financial implications of the plan's objectives, ARGENTINA proposed prioritization of the plan's targets. AUSTRALIA and the EU suggested, and the plenary agreed, forming a working group to discuss the draft resolution.

BUDGET: CMS Executive Secretary Hepworth introduced an overview of the outcome of the 2003-2005 budget (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.18), noting that due to the US dollar devaluation, CMS reserves had been used to deliver programmes agreed to at COP-7. He invited parties with contributions in arrears to expedite their payments. Andy Williams (UK), Chair of the Standing Committee's financial working group, presented an introductory document on budget scenarios and options for reducing the costs of the Convention (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.19 and Add.1). CMS Executive Secretary Hepworth explained that Scenario Three reflects the amount needed to maintain existing efforts and Scenario Four would allow carrying out the strategic plan.

MOU SIGNING: In the afternoon plenary, the MOU on a strategy for the conservation of West African elephants was signed

by CMS, IUCN and 12 range states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo).

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

SYNTHESIS OF PARTY REPORTS: Gerardo Fragoso, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, presented the synthesis of party reports (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.5, Add.1), stressing the need for an online reporting system to facilitate report submissions. He highlighted parties' calls for: a special task force including CMS and other bodies on by-catch in international waters; a working group on international corridors to avoid habitat destruction and fragmentation; enhancing information exchange among range states and international bodies regarding national legislation and enforcement; involving indigenous groups in species management; and liaising with the CBD Working Group on Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge).

The EU announced its intention to table a draft resolution on reporting. NEW ZEALAND suggested language including the International Whaling Commission (IWC) among the organizations working on by-catch. CHILE suggested including information on species status in party reports. NIGERIA called for intersessional regional meetings to finalize reports, with MALI highlighting the possibility of sharing information on species status within regions at such meetings. The Secretariat suggested the Scientific Council and Standing Committee's meetings assist communication with and among parties.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PLAN: Review of GROMS: The Secretariat presented a review of the Global Register on Migratory Species (GROMS) (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.12), highlighting its role in providing the best available scientific information, and stressing the need for GROMS to be user-friendly and integrated within the Information Management Plan. COW endorsed the relevant resolution (UNEP/CMS/Res.8.9/Rev.1).

Information Management System: The Secretariat outlined a proposal on implementation of the CMS Information Management System (UNEP/CMS/Res.8.10/Rev.1). HAITI suggested using national observatories. BANGLADESH called for integrating updated species information. The Secretariat suggested providing a link with the UNEP GEO Data Portal. The EU proposed language on: information sharing between the Secretariat, agreements and parties; establishing an information system on a group of high-profile species; and continuing dialogue with information managers for biodiversity-related conventions.

Format of party reports: The Secretariat presented on the format of party reports (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.14), which details opportunities for standardizing national reports and suggests



the creation of a single harmonized online reporting system for the distinct taxonomic species. Delegates underlined the need to maintain both a regular and an online reporting system.

MEASURES ON APPENDIX I SPECIES: Major projects: Delegates considered major concerted action projects to promote the conservation of Appendix I species, in particular a report on the Sahelo-Saharan antelopes concerted action (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.24/Rev.1), concerning six species threatened with extinction in 14 range states in the Sahara and Sahel regions, and the relevant provision in the draft resolution on implementation of existing, and development of future, agreements (UNEP/CMS/Res.8.5).

Potential additional projects: SWEDEN presented an initiative undertaken together with Uzbekistan, India, Belgium and France, focusing on large mammals of the Central Eurasian arid zones. He said this initiative will include the development of an action plan and status reports for all relevant species, and that he will table a draft recommendation on this project.

MEASURES ON APPENDIX II SPECIES: Agreements in force: The Secretariat presented on agreements currently in force (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.25/Rev.1), outlining the role of CMS as an umbrella convention. He underscored the need for CMS to improve the integration of work of the agreements with the work of the COP. He noted that the document includes principles for considering the extension of existing agreements. He proposed the endorsement of these principles by the COP. The EU, however, indicated that the agreements are separate legal entities under international law, and that these instruments have their own ability to take decisions on broadening their mandate or geographical scope. He said he would draft an alternative text. ACCOBAMS noted that when a party is covered by two agreements, the CMS Secretariat should act as an intermediary.

Future agreements: The Secretariat noted that the development of new agreements (UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.10) and the administrative support to MOUs had so far been financed by surpluses from the Trust Fund. Noting that these had been depleted, he highlighted the Secretariat's efforts to outsource MOU activities to partners. He stressed the need to expand the Convention's regular budget to maintain the current level of agreement services.

Other measures: Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan, International Crane Foundation, presented the Siberian Crane Wetland project. He said this GEF-funded project aims at conserving a network of critical sites, building management capacity, and harmonizing regional and national legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

SUBMITTED BY PARTIES: African-Eurasian Raptors: The EU summarized the findings of a UK-funded report on raptors (UNEP/CMS/Inf.8.18), and introduced a draft recommendation on improving their conservation status in the African-Eurasian region (UNEP/CMS/Rec.8.12/Rev.1), offering to convene an intergovernmental meeting to further develop the initiative. Several countries supported the resolution, with BANGLADESH, the PHILIPPINES and INDIA expressing interest in participating in the proposed activities.

Dugongs: AUSTRALIA tabled a recommendation on regional cooperation for dugong conservation (UNEP/CMS/Rec.8.15), which, *inter alia*, encourages parties to conclude and implement an MOU and associated conservation plan for the conservation and management of dugongs. The recommendation was supported by BANGLADESH, SEYCHELLES, DJIBOUTI, INDIA and the PHILIPPINES.

Migratory sharks: AUSTRALIA tabled a recommendation, proposed also by New Zealand and Seychelles, on migratory sharks (UNEP/CMS/Rec.8.16), stressing the limited impact of current regional mechanisms. Many supported the recommendation, with the PHILIPPINES calling for the

development of an MOU. NORWAY questioned the inclusion of "management" of migratory species. ARGENTINA recommended a global "mechanism" rather than an "agreement." AUSTRALIA agreed to prepare a revised draft.

Marine turtles: AUSTRALIA introduced a recommendation on marine turtles (UNEP/CMS/Rec.8.17), supported by SENEGAL, the PHILIPPINES, SAMOA, and SIERRA LEONE, among others. Several African Turtle MOU signatories stressed time constraints in organizing the Year of the Sea Turtle in 2006.

Pacific cetaceans: NEW ZEALAND presented a recommendation, submitted also by Samoa and Australia, on the MOU for the conservation of cetaceans and their habitats in the Pacific Islands region (UNEP/CMS/Rec.8.19), emphasizing the rapid development of regional cooperation on this issue. SAMOA and WDCS supported the draft recommendation.

New proposals: PARAGUAY proposed a recommendation on the conservation of grassland birds in South America, and PERU on Andean flamingos. The Secretariat suggested identifying a lead country to facilitate the development of each proposed MOU.

WORKING GROUPS

SUSTAINABLE USE: The working group on sustainable use, co-chaired by Ronel Nel (South Africa) and Ian McLean (UK), met in the afternoon and evening. On preambular language, delegates discussed references to CBD and CITES, the ecosystem approach, migratory species and CMS-listed species. On the operative paragraphs, delegates agreed to instruct the Scientific Council to examine the applicability and usefulness of the Addis Ababa Principles to relevant CMS-listed species. They also decided not to limit this to species subject to use. Delegates were divided on whether or not to invite parties to consider use of the Principles with regard to migratory species.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN: In the afternoon, the working group chaired by Biber discussed the draft 2006-2011 strategic plan, as contained in UNEP/CMS/Res.8.2/Rev.1. Participants agreed that the plan's goal on ensuring the favorable conservation status of migratory species should contribute to "global sustainability" rather than to "sustainable livelihoods." Delegates debated whether to prioritize the proposed plan's targets according to criteria such as urgency and cost-effectiveness. The working group agreed that the strategic plan is not a work plan but an aspirational document outlining the future direction of the Convention. Participants agreed that prioritization of targets depends on the future budget, and will be carried out by the Standing Committee and the Scientific Council.

BUDGET: The working group on budget, chaired by Véronique Herrens Schmidt (France) with Anderson Koyo (Kenya) as Vice-Chair, met in the afternoon. Delegates agreed to the Chair's proposal to consider a new budget proposal, taking into account Scenario Two (no increase in the total 2003-2005 expenditure) and Three (maintenance of the 2003-2005 outputs), and add a new column reflecting savings measures pointed out in document UNEP/CMS/Conf.8.19. The working group will resume on Wednesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While some COP-8 participants were caught up in the new budget and strategic plan working groups, others continued their heated debate on sustainable use and migratory/CMS-listed species. In between, they dwelt on the intricacies of the legal relationship between the Convention and its daughter agreements. Behind the scenes, NGOs seemed to be working on a draft resolution on avian influenza, hoping to present it as an emerging issue. With such a busy day behind them, some delegates left Gigiri wondering whether the crowded agenda will hamper regional coordination.