

CMS COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2008

On Tuesday, CMS COP 9 resumed in a plenary session, chaired by meeting Chair Fernando Spina (Italy), to consider reports by CMS agreements, states and partners. In the afternoon, the Committee of the Whole, chaired by Vice-Chair Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana), met to discuss the 2006-2008 and 2009-2011 budgets and flyway conservation. Drafting groups on migratory marine species and climate change also met during the day. A budget working group convened in the evening, chaired by Paul Delduc (France).

PLENARY

REPORTS: Agreements: ACCOBAMS reported on its third Meeting of the Parties (MOP 3), progress with regard to marine protected areas, and guidelines on noise and by-catch (UNEP/CMS/Inf/9.15.1). AEWAs presented the outcomes of its MOP 4, including the adoption of the African Initiative, and described progress achieved in implementation, including through the UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways (“Wings over Wetlands”) Project (UNEP/CMS/Inf/9.15.3). EUROBATS highlighted its practical guidelines and small projects programme, and urged the development of an agreement for the protection of bats in Africa (UNEP/CMS/Inf/9.15.4). ASCOBANS highlighted entry into force of the extension of the agreement area to include the North East Atlantic and the Irish Sea, and the merging of the CMS and ASCOBANS Secretariats (UNEP/CMS/Inf.9.15.2). The WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WDACS) highlighted the problem of by-catch in the ASCOBANS area. The IOSEA marine turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) underscored its online reporting system for monitoring implementation, and development of a network of sites of importance for marine turtles.

The West-African elephants MOU reported on technical workshops for development of cross-border conservation zones, and assistance in development and implementation of national strategies. NIGERIA called for further addressing trade issues. CHAD, the REPUBLIC OF CONGO and the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO urged development of an MOU on Central African elephants. ACAP reported that the ACAP Secretariat will be established in Hobart, Australia, and added that resources are often lacking for research on national by-catch mitigation measures. The African marine turtles MOU appealed to parties to financially support the MOU’s implementation.

States: UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre presented an analysis of the CMS national reports (UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.10), highlighting national conservation problems and measures taken to counteract them. She noted, *inter alia*, that: national legislation on migratory species conservation is often lacking; there is minimal reporting on efforts to minimize

climate change impacts; and parties and regional fisheries management organizations need to improve their reporting on by-catch.

The EU suggested examining some of the report’s recommendations during the week prior to endorsing them. Scientific Council Vice-Chair Colin Galbraith (UK) encouraged parties to consider climate change adaptation mechanisms. Many countries highlighted national conservation initiatives: ARGENTINA on monitoring populations in wintering and breeding grounds, and on sharks and grassland birds; CHILE on cetaceans and sharks; PERU on penguins and marine turtles; MOROCCO on the clean beach programme for coastal migratory species; and the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN in relation to the UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project and the UN Development Programme/GEF Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project.

ACCOBAMS called for developing synergies between CMS and ACCOBAMS focal points and secretariats. AUSTRALIA pointed out that the report identified strategic opportunities for the Convention, and supported recommendations on by-catch, including greater coordination of work between members of the CMS family. COSTA RICA noted the high percentage of its national territory devoted to species protection. JORDAN and ECUADOR requested more time for national report submission.

Partners: UNEP described relevant activities in the last triennium, including harmonization of national reporting across all biodiversity conventions and development of an online information portal and online reporting facilities. Executive Secretary Hepworth, on behalf of the CBD Secretariat as the Secretariat to the BIODIVERSITY LIAISON GROUP (BLG), presented the BLG’s report (UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.12), outlining its recent activities. GHANA elaborated on the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The UNEP-CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME outlined conservation activities in the Caribbean. The COUNCIL OF EUROPE described relevant activities under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention).

WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL proposed establishing a CMS working group on flyway conservation and highlighted the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan and the UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project as CMS priorities. BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL strongly supported the draft resolutions on CMS priorities, particularly on flyway conservation, and climate change (UNEP/CMS/Res.9.2 and 9.7).

The INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE stressed the need for adequate resources to support the CMS Secretariat and facilitate agreements’ implementation, and highlighted priorities, including Asian big cat species. The

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC) urged cooperation between IWC and CMS and its cetaceans agreements, and underscored the IWC's strong scientific capacity. The REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS (RAC/SPA) presented on its activities under the Barcelona Convention for Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution. WWF outlined its work on species conservation and stressed the need to secure implementation of existing CMS agreements. WDCC urged for emphasis on marine species, particularly arctic animals, and for a new agreement on IOSEA cetaceans.

BUDGET: The Secretariat presented on the execution of the budget 2006-2008 (UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.33/Rev.2), highlighting activities undertaken and noting 95% collection of contributions. Several countries commented that their countries' contributions had not been reflected.

Executive Secretary Hepworth then introduced the budget for 2009-2011. He noted that the option of a 5.5% increase over the 2006-2008 budget total is a "zero real growth" option that includes contributions from new parties and is adjusted for inflation and other factors. He said this option could include two new junior posts, given the strength of the euro. He pointed out that the second option of a 9% increase per year would include four new posts and a full online reporting system for parties.

Argentina, on behalf of the LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), requested the inclusion of a 0% increase option. ECUADOR noted that the presented inflation rate should be recalculated given the current financial situation. The ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN called for core funding for the Siberian crane MOU. The EU urged caution in considering the budget before deciding upon the future shape of the Convention.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

FLYWAYS: Conservation: Franz Bairlein, Director, Institute of Avian Research Vogelwarte Helgoland, Germany, addressed the importance of migratory bird conservation at the flyway level. Highlighting the recent launch of the Italian Bird Migration Atlas, he urged the integration of national flyway atlases. He noted that long-distance migrants are the most vulnerable and declining the most rapidly, and underlined the need to conserve stopover sights in addition to wintering and breeding grounds. Emphasizing that the effective conservation of migratory species requires better understanding of spatial connectivity, also in view of avian-borne infectious diseases, he called for an integrated and collaborative approach.

UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Project: Douglas Hykle, CMS Senior Advisor, introduced the UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project, a twenty-million dollar GEF-funded project that is closely associated with the CMS Siberian crane MOU. Claire Mirande, International Crane Foundation, said the Project aims to establish a network of critical sites. Among areas of success, she noted: legal protection of sites and species; research and monitoring; education and awareness; and establishment of a regional database on cranes and other indicator species, as well as sites. Noting that the Project's GEF support will end in 2009, she called for a long-term funding mechanism.

Several national managers of the Siberian Crane Wetlands Project presented national perspectives. Qian Fawen, National Project Manager, China, elaborated on the development of a new flyway monitoring network in China. He outlined specific objectives, including determining the distribution, movements and habitat status of the Siberian crane and establishing the waterbirds monitoring network, and presented main achievements, including newly discovered staging sites and enhanced public awareness.

Alexei Blagovidov, National Technical Manager, Russia, described the development of a flyway-level network of protected wetlands in Yakutia, including capacity building for site management and monitoring, and collaboration with the

private sector. He highlighted environmental education and public awareness activities, and integration of biodiversity considerations into business practices.

Vera Inyutina, National Project Manager, Kazakhstan, reviewed the expansion of the wetland protected area network in northern Kazakhstan, stressing: accession of Kazakhstan to both CMS and the Ramsar Convention; establishment of stakeholder committees on project sites; and education and public awareness programmes.

Azin Fazeli, National Technical Officer, Iran, presented on community participation in conservation and management of Siberian crane habitat in Iran, involving: local capacity building for collaborative wetland management; awareness-raising activities; establishment of site management committees and trappers' associations; and development of co-management agreements. She highlighted lessons learned, including the need for formal structures for stakeholder involvement and alternative income generation for local people.

Delegates then witnessed a ceremony during which certificates of the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds were awarded to two sites in Iran, one in India and five in Kazakhstan.

Flyway policy: Executive Secretary Hepworth described a policy paper on future flyways (UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.27), as well as related policy options included in the resolution on priorities for CMS agreements (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 9.2). He described the major flyways of Africa-Eurasia, Central Asia, East Asia-Australasia, and the Americas.

SWITZERLAND, RAMSAR and AEWA called for the inclusion of other birds than just waterbirds. RAMSAR noted that the present grouping of flyways is not relevant for some birds, and AEWA lamented the lack of consultation during the document's preparation. The EU urged that these flyways be developed in a consistent manner. AUSTRALIA called for a dialogue among bird agreements. INDIA reported on a meeting of 30 range states of the Central Asian Flyway. WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL called for intersessional work on flyways, and for looking into global coordination among flyway instruments.

BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Many delegates expressed concerns with budget increases, given the current global economic situation, and the option of a zero nominal growth budget was mentioned. Others commented that their main concern was being able to justify any increases in the budget, and asked for clarifications on, *inter alia*, the inflation rate used in calculations, the increased costs of the Secretariat's information technology services, and changes in staffing costs. Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Some delegates' initial fears that deliberations at COP 9 would be merely procedural was allayed on Tuesday, as delegates spent most of the afternoon on in-depth presentations about tangible, local-level activities associated with CMS's flagship initiative, the UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project. While one delegate labeled the discussions as "refreshing," others feared that the scale may now be tipping, and wondered whether enough time will remain to agree on "big" issues, such as the future shape of CMS, climate change, and marine species.

As one participant put it, much will depend on the efficiency of the smaller drafting groups that have splintered off from the Committee of the Whole. Marine aficionados were eager to dive into draft resolutions on marine migratory species and by-catch, but, having to wait for the finalization of regional positions, they were restricted to a general discussion. Meanwhile, due to their specificities and controversies, it was decided that arctic animals and ocean noise will be dealt with by different drafting groups. Many expressed hope that this proliferation of focused resolution drafters will provide the much-needed balance to move deliberations forward.