

Discussions of the 1st CMS Civil Society Dialogue

The discussions of the first informal civil society dialogue session to explore the potential and the implications of building critical capacity into CMS agreements, convened by the Friends of CMS and the Migratory Wildlife Network

Meeting date: 21st November 2011 (CMS CoP10)
Report finalized: 20th March 2012

In the margins of what was to become a significant and at times historic 10th Conference of the Parties (CoP10) for Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Migratory Wildlife Network & Friends of CMS convened a *Civil Society Dialogue*. The *Dialogue* took place in the event of the first day of the CMS CoP10 and was well attended by civil society delegates, with over 35 participants able to make the session.

The aim of this session was not to seek concrete outcomes or answers, but to begin a process of discussion among civil society (Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), wildlife scientists and wildlife policy specialists) that could both influence CMS CoP10 and the CMS agenda beyond.

Introductions

1. The *Dialogue* began with a welcome from the Friends of CMS, with Prof Manfred Niekisch presenting the importance of CMS on the wildlife conservation landscape and the purpose of the Friends of CMS in providing financial support to CMS related activities.
2. The Migratory Wildlife Network introduced the meeting structure and explained that the *Dialogue* would proceed as a 'policy free zone' in that the *Dialogue's* purpose was to discuss the broader, shared objective of civil society's relationship with CMS. To allow a full and frank exchange of ideas, only the case study contributors would have their comments attributed in the meeting notes.
3. The CMS Secretariat gave a brief overview of

the current situation for CMS agreements. Five of the seven legally binding Agreements have their own Secretariats. The CMS Secretariat provides the interim Secretariat for the Gorilla Agreement, and secretariat services for Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS), as well as acting as the secretariat for 14 other agreements and support services for a further three located away from Bonn and supported by external funding. Two agreements have secretariat functions are fulfilled by the Signatories on a rotational basis. When funding and an appropriate partner are available, coordination activities can be outsourced. Securing resources for the CMS Secretariat to administer and process this many agreements is now quite critical.

Seven agreement case studies

4. Each of the seven brief case studies presented was chosen to highlight the breadth of involvement of civil society in CMS agreements, to briefly describe each organization's historical involvement in specific agreements, and to explore the value of CMS and these agreements to these organizations.
5. Wetlands International gave an overview of their work and involvement with the CMS Flyways detailing their historical involvement, the growth of the Flyways and the more recent process of developing a Flyways policy that was being presented to CMS CoP10 for adoption. Wetlands International has seen a significant organizational value through their involvement.
6. Birdlife International explained their involvement with both the Agreement on the

Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) which resonated similarities to Wetlands International in that they had provided substantive technical support to each Agreement's development and underpinned many of the programmes being activity pursued by both AEWA and ACAP. Birdlife International characterized extremely deep and long lasting relationships with these Agreements and also saw a significant organizational value to their involvement.

7. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) explained their history with the Pacific Cetaceans agreement where they were involved in the initial negotiation of the agreement and now formally providing Signatories with a formal Technical Advisory body as well as providing direct support to the Pacific Islands Governments to aid implantation and to report on progress. WDCS also saw a significant organizational value in their involvement.

8. The International Crane Foundation (ICF) detailed the history of the longest standing CMS agreement on Siberian Cranes. ICF moved from providing technical expertise and assistance to the CMS Secretariat to a lead coordinating role. CMS provides a critical role in coordinating with governments. Significant progress from 2000-2009 with Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding with increased emphasis on ecosystems and government support for protected areas. Progress has tapered off while follow-up funding is sought. ICF will focus activities on East Asia where 99 per cent of the population occurs. It is proposed that Western/Central Asia activities be incorporated under the Central Asian Flyway Initiative. Increased support is needed from the national governments and partner organizations.

9. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) -Russia provided background on the Bukhara Deer agreement, which has been developing for a decade but that had only just held its first meeting directly prior to CMS CoP10. In this instance, the agreement simply having been signed had provided a useful catalyst for political access for WWF in the region, bringing focus to a contentious area of work. The benefit was evident even before the long awaited first meeting took place, and WWF-Russia intended to maintain involvement into the future.

10. Finally the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) provided their reflection and thoughts about the Gorilla Agreement which was already

significantly reliant on WCS work programmes, although WCS was still determining what their involvement should be. They felt there was a need to for the role of this Agreement to be made clear. The case studies presented beforehand had given them an important new perspective.

General discussion

11. The *Dialogue* then opened for general discussion around the broad theme of the value of the CMS and CMS agreements as well as potentials and problems that were apparent to civil society.

12. Speakers from the floor commented that often civil society - mostly in the form of NGOs - were the implementers and sometimes even to the coordinators of work under the convention and its agreements. It was welcome to hear the extent to which other NGOs had successfully influenced the development of particular agreements, but that this influence was not strategically deployed or developed across all the CMS agreements.

13. While the technical expertise of some organizations was well integrated into the work of CMS (Birdlife and Wetlands International specifically), others were not. Better use of the extensive and important technical expertise, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Specialist Groups and the IUCN Red List, should be an important priority for CMS going forward.

14. Some CMS agreements were providing useful and formal links between civil society and Governments. However, most CMS agreements were poorly linked to other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and consequently NGOs often found their agreement focused work was then not reflected in the policy developments of other fora. CMS also lacks a direct leverage mechanisms like Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) trade restrictions and further thought should be applied to what might be developed to ensure national implementation of decisions taken during CMS CoPs and agreement meetings.

15. Migratory species are in decline, probably more than other species. To achieve the targets set in the Nagoya Strategic Plan will require coordinated decision making and a greater level of Government implementation. There was concern during the *Dialogue* that CMS was not perceived as a 'player', and that there are significant possibilities for CMS to function on that higher political level.

16. In a policy landscape where ecosystems are spoken of more than species conservation, CMS [and CITES] are particularly important to strengthen. Many of the organizations present at the Dialogue work specifically on species conservation and their commitment for working with CMS is high, yet Governments have prioritized funding support at the ecosystem level [for instance into Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) processes], when ‘wildlife’ are what involve communities which is where tangible difference can be made and measured.

17. Civil society provides a connection for communities to be involved in collaborative management and wildlife conservation. Communities and NGOs can provide fuel for decision makers. However, programs are often small and scattered and if facilitated properly, CMS could usefully pull these activities together.

18. Delegates of three Governments that were observers to the *Dialogue* expressed their surprise at the depth of NGO participation in CMS agreements. They reflected that there is no current mechanism for this involvement to be reported to CMS Parties, and they saw great potential for increasing these roles and for formalizing these technical and strategic relationships. It was suggested that a formal review should be conducted to articulate why certain agreements have been successful, where others not as much so, and to determine what roles NGOs played in these agreements.

19. The *Dialogue* spent a brief time discussing possible language to feed into specific resolutions during CMS CoP10, and there was agreement to develop this wording through email. The language development was ably handled by Birdlife International and key resolutions during the CoP were amended to reflect the views of the Dialogue. As a result, CMS Resolution 10.21 on Synergies and Partnerships now includes an operative clause on the development of national biodiversity working groups, supported by the European Union and a clause that calls for a clearer mandate from CBD for animal species conservation. CMS Resolution 10.6 on the Capacity Building Strategy (2012-2014) also includes an additional operative paragraph encouraging the CMS Secretariat to support the establishment of national biodiversity working groups.

20. The general tenor and tone of the *Dialogue* was also taken by the Migratory Wildlife Network into the Future Shape discussions, and NGO participation was subsequently reflected in

CMS Resolution 10.15: CMS Strategic Plan 2015–2023, where the Term of Reference provides for Partner organizations and relevant MEA Secretariats to also be invited as non-voting members of the Strategic Plan Working Group.

For further information about the *CMS Civil Society Dialogue*, contact:

Dr Margi Prideaux
Policy and Negotiations Director
Migratory Wildlife Network
Email margi@wildmigration.org
Telephone +618 8121 5841
Fax +618 8125 5857