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OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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PRECONDITIONS FOR HARMONIZATION OF REPORTING
TO BIODIVERSITY-RELATED MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

The attached document has been submitted by the Secretariat on behalf of UNEP-WCMC*.

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Preconditions for harmonization of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements

Introduction and purpose of this paper

1. Most of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) require Parties to report on national implementation on a regular basis. In recent years there has been a growing recognition that the reporting burden for Parties has continued to increase, despite some efforts having been made to simplify and otherwise facilitate MEA reporting. In considering this, it is important to recognize that reporting processes and the reports themselves should be supporting rather than complicating MEA implementation, particularly at the national level. Following on from these observations, there are clear advantages to be obtained from streamlining and/or harmonizing national reporting to these conventions, as well as the underlying national information management. The practical implications of various harmonization options, however, should be well understood.

2. Spanning more than a decade, a series of papers has been written and a number of workshops conducted exploring options for harmonizing and streamlining approaches to reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs, trying to identify options to reduce the reporting burden for Parties (see *Annex I* for the history of efforts towards harmonization of reporting). In addition, the governing bodies of a number of biodiversity-related MEAs have adopted decisions or resolutions supporting this work (see *Annex II* for the mandates provided by biodiversity-related MEAs for harmonization of reporting). In particular, a series of national pilot projects coordinated by UNEP with the support of MEA secretariats (see Annex I for details) have provided insights into options for and challenges to harmonization of reporting at the national level where harmonization would need to be ultimately implemented.

3. The harmonization of information management and reporting can be defined as those activities that lead to a more integrated process, reduction of duplication and greater sharing of information. This would support the more efficient and coherent implementation of the conventions and agreements involved. A number of options for harmonization of reporting have been discussed over the years and the pilot projects have tested some of them. The options range from one consolidated report for all the MEAs involved to joint thematic reports between a limited number of MEAs, but they also include the identification of MEA information needs and subsequent reorganization and better alignment and coordination of different reporting formats. Importantly, the options for harmonization extend to the national level where information management could become a coordinated and simplified process between those in charge of delivering and/or assembling information for national reports. These aspects are discussed in more detail further below.

In collaboration with:



4. From 7 to 9 March 2008, UNEP convened a workshop on knowledge management for biodiversity-related conventions and agreements in Cambridge, United Kingdom. The workshop was attended by the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the African – Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the Indian Ocean South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA). Among other issues, the workshop discussed recent developments on harmonization of reporting and concluded the following: *A paper on pre-conditions for harmonization of national reporting can help countries understand the rationale for and challenges to harmonization of national reporting. This will be drafted by UNEP-WCMC for secretariats to distribute.*

5. Participants at the workshop felt that, after many years of discussing harmonization of reporting, it was time to move ahead but that there was a need to summarise the lessons from those discussions. This should help to correct possible misperceptions and to explain what is actually feasible or achievable regarding harmonization of reporting and its expected impact in terms of reducing the reporting burden. The purpose of this paper is therefore to inform discussions on harmonization at the meetings of governing bodies to biodiversity-related MEAs as well as at the national level.

Entry points for harmonization of reporting: the global and the national level

6. Harmonization of reporting is a process that needs to be addressed at both global and national levels.

- a) Globally, it affects the reporting formats used by individual conventions, although there remain major questions on the extent to which these can be harmonized. The decision about harmonization at the global level rests with the governing bodies of the MEAs, several of which have provided mandates for continuing work on harmonization (see Annex II).
- b) Importantly, harmonization also needs to be addressed at the national level to be fully effective. Harmonization of reporting has implications for the way biodiversity data and information are generated and managed nationally. It also affects the cooperative arrangements between the MEAs and their focal points within each country.

Obstacles to harmonization of reporting

7. A number of obstacles to harmonization of reporting have been identified. These include at the *global level* the following:

- The reporting processes for most MEAs, although evolving constantly, are well established and have been in place for many years – this might make major moves towards cooperation with other conventions more difficult.
- There is a concern that some States that are not Party to all MEAs involved might have little reason to agree to changes in the reporting process.
- The reporting cycles of MEAs differ considerably, varying between annual reporting and reporting on a six-year cycle.
- MEAs have not always identified what information they require. A thorough consideration of the information needs for the various bodies of MEAs and, not least, for Parties, has in some cases proven helpful for better focusing the requests for information that Parties might agree to provide or governing bodies to agreements might agree to request. This challenge has implications for the reporting process, through which a substantial part of the information needs of MEAs would be materialized.
- Different MEAs might use different terminologies or follow different nomenclatures for species or habitat types/ biomes, which might hamper harmonization efforts.

8. At the *national level*, major obstacles to harmonization of reporting may include the following:
- The information needed for reporting to an MEA might be widely scattered throughout different institutions and organizations, without a central mechanism (such as a national biodiversity database) that brings relevant data and information together.
 - There is often a lack of coordination among national focal points or the institutions in charge of national reporting. This leads to repeated calls for the same data and information for national reports to different MEAs reaching the holders of information (*e.g.* in one year the national focal point to one MEA requests information on forest biodiversity from the national forestry agency while in the following year this agency is asked by the national focal point to another MEA for the same or very similar information).
 - In some cases, there may be a lack of clarity or an overlap in the responsibilities of government departments or agencies in charge of different conventions, thus preventing coordination mechanisms from being agreed upon and accepted.
 - In many developing countries, there is a lack of human, financial and/or technical capacity to address issues of data and information management as well as coordination between various ministries, agencies and/or stakeholders.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting – general aspects of national reporting

9. ***Purpose of national reporting:*** It is crucial that national reporting is not just seen as a cumbersome obligation arising from an international treaty, but as a tool to support implementation. Reporting serves a variety of purposes, among them:

- demonstrating compliance, including the enactment of appropriate legislation;
- developing an overview of implementation, projects and financial matters;
- identifying relationships to, and interactions with, other MEA processes, including amongst the subject areas covered by the MEAs;
- reflecting on work done and identifying future/further work;
- sharing experience; and
- providing information on the status of biodiversity, for example in the framework of the 2010 biodiversity target.

Most of these aspects, in principle, should involve summarising information that already exists at national level and packaging it for transmittal to the MEAs. Ideally, there should be limited extra burden on national authorities because they would already be compiling much of the information needed for their own domestic purposes. In this respect, difficulties in reporting to the MEAs may reflect either a mismatch between information required for the MEAs and at national level, and/or inadequate national information management.

10. ***The use of reported information:*** While the articles of many MEAs define in general terms the contents of national reports, it is essential that governing bodies agree about the way the reported information will be used, *e.g.* for overviews of the status of implementation of treaties, for guiding decisions or resolutions of governing bodies, and for the preparation of publications. It is also essential that the reported information is actually used, and that Parties can clearly see and understand the use that has been made of the reports that they have submitted.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting at the national level

11. ***Arrangements between MEA focal points:*** At the national level, harmonization of reporting requires cooperative arrangements between national focal points and/or the institutions in charge of different MEAs. In some countries, there is a national committee which coordinates the implementation of a single biodiversity-related MEA (*e.g.* CITES or Ramsar). There are also a few national coordination bodies comprising the focal points of the biodiversity-related MEAs, and a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa, have established national coordination committees for the Rio Conventions (CBD, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification).

12. **Arrangements between data-collecting institutions:** Any harmonization efforts at the national level would benefit from cooperative arrangements between the national institutions that collect and manage biodiversity data and information. This could result in an information strategy, a more coordinated approach to information networking, and/or a more integrated and coordinated biodiversity information system. Whatever the cooperative arrangement, it is essential that information relevant for national reporting to MEAs is available and easily accessible for the focal points or agencies that assemble the national reports. For this to happen, some of the following issues would normally need to be addressed:

- Is the information needed for national purposes and for MEA reporting collected from all relevant data holders, including private and non-governmental organizations?
- Can data standards be harmonized?
- How is the information stored, retrieved, analysed and made available?
- Are there clear roles and responsibilities for collecting data and preparing national information and MEA reports based upon it?
- Is there duplication in information collection and storage?
- How often is the information updated?
- How easily can MEA focal points - and other stakeholders - access the information?
- Do MEA focal points have the authority and means to coordinate all aspects of the obligations for national implementation and to access the information available to support national implementation?

13. **Links between supporting reporting and supporting implementation:** Any improvement in data and information management and reporting at the national level will also support, and further encourage, harmonized national implementation. Indeed any support for national reporting should be considered in terms of support for national implementation and the work of national focal points in overseeing that implementation. Such support would also extend to the involvement in national implementation of indigenous and local communities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting at the global (MEA) level

14. **Clarity about information needs:** The governing bodies of MEAs often decide to request a large amount of information from Parties and sometimes other stakeholders. In some cases, two or more MEAs require the same or overlapping information. This fact raises the following questions:

- Is there scope for reducing the requests to Parties by one MEA because the information is collected already by another MEA?
- What is the balance between the need for information on the activities undertaken by Parties for implementation of the convention (processes) and the results of these activities (outcomes)?
- Similarly, what is the balance between qualitative and quantitative information?

These questions may need to be put into a wider context:

- What are the relations between MEAs in terms of decisions and actions taken to ensure their coherent implementation and arrangements for accessing the information required for that purpose?
- What information is available from sources outside a particular MEA and therefore, what information would need to be requested through the national reports of related MEAs?

The options that information technology offers in making available information from other MEAs or additional sources outside a particular MEA could play an important role in this regard. Online reporting, for example, makes it easier to provide information, which has been reported to one MEA, to the bodies and Parties of the other MEAs.

15. **Inter-MEA agreements on information needs and management:** The governing bodies of MEAs might not only wish to identify their own information needs but also where these requirements overlap with those of other MEAs. This could lead to agreements among MEAs on who is collecting what information, avoiding overlaps and duplication. It could also result in MEAs agreeing on which MEA will request which information from Parties, and subsequently how the information acquired will be shared among the MEAs.

16. **Joint systems of information management:** MEAs are increasingly considering joint systems of information management. This approach not only allows for a more efficient use of MEA resources, but also for easier access to information by Parties and other stakeholders. The Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) has established a CPF Portal on Forest Reporting (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar/en/>), a good example for such joint information management systems. In addition, the concept of a core report to all biodiversity-related conventions with smaller treaty-specific add-on-reports (as used by the Human Rights Treaty System) warrants further exploration (see <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm> for more information). Some MEAs are also examining ways to harmonize information formats, protocols and standards with a view to facilitating information exchange, development of new information products, and support for knowledge management initiatives. Online reporting could play a particularly important role here, as it makes the delivery of national reports by Parties and the analysis of reported information easier, with a view of improved access to such information across related MEAs.

17. **Addressing the different reporting cycles:** The widely differing reporting cycles of the biodiversity-related MEAs have consistently been identified as a major obstacle for harmonization. Harmonizing these cycles might be difficult and would involve mandates from the governing bodies of the MEAs involved and in some cases provisions within the MEAs themselves. Those differing cycles might, however, not be a real problem if the systems of information collection are better streamlined at the national level. If, for example, information at the national level, which is relevant to MEA reports, is made available on a regular basis (e.g. annually), focal points could use such information to fulfil their reporting obligations whatever the reporting cycles. The concept of a core report with treaty-specific add-on reports referred to in the previous paragraph would allow for the treaty-specific reports to be submitted by the different deadlines for the MEAs involved. If agreed, the core report could be up-dated on a regular basis independent of the reporting cycles. In this context, the MEAs could also consider agreeing on the simultaneous and coordinated production of summary reports, compiled from information from national reports and other reports. Each agreement could produce a summary of the status of, e.g. wetlands, migratory species, species in trade, the natural world heritage, or biodiversity in general. Such reports do exist but they have not been produced by the various MEAs in a coordinated manner. Preparation of these reports may require technical and/or financial support of some kind.

18. **Mandates from governing bodies:** Efforts to harmonize national reporting between MEAs need the mandate from the governing bodies of the agreements concerned. A number of biodiversity-related agreements have provided such mandates in recent years (see Annex II). Future major steps in harmonization would require renewed mandates – which themselves would need to be harmonized between the MEAs involved, with an expectation that the governing bodies would then take full account of the outcomes of the mandated work.

19. **Role of key stakeholders:** Moving the harmonization agenda forward at the MEA level requires commitment from key stakeholders, including Parties and secretariats. The CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting referred to above provides a good example: it was established through the initiative of committed staff members of the MEAs and agencies involved. Committed stakeholders would need to take, or suggest, leadership in driving the harmonization agenda forward.

Conclusions and suggestions for the way forward

20. Many years of discussing and testing potential approaches to harmonization of national reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs and beyond have produced a wealth of insight into the challenges and options. This paper highlights the most relevant of these. It is obvious that a more practical approach is now needed, addressing the preconditions identified above and moving towards harmonization.

21. The 2006-2008 UNEP Knowledge Management project (see <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm>) explored two possible ways forward:

- a) Firstly, the approach to harmonization that the Human Rights Treaty System has taken, where Parties are requested to provide a core report relevant for all treaties involved, supplemented by smaller treaty-specific reports that address the specific information needs of the MEAs involved. The work on harmonization of reporting under the Knowledge Management project suggested a framework for such a core report for CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention, AEWA and IOSEA.
- b) Secondly, the project suggested joint thematic reporting as a way to implement harmonization of reporting. Following on from a mandate from the CBD Conference of the Parties on joint thematic reporting with the Ramsar Convention on inland waters (see Annex II), a first step towards a comprehensive framework for joint inland water reporting was developed, as was a similar framework for reporting on drylands for the CBD and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. In addition, a framework for joint reporting for CMS, AEWA and IOSEA was developed.

22. Testing harmonization for specific themes of relevance to a limited number of MEAs, such as inland waters (see the previous paragraph), might result in important lessons about the feasibility of harmonization of national reporting. Such themes could be easily identified, and the lessons from the discussions between CBD and Ramsar on potential joint reporting on inland waters be analysed in order to inform similar approaches to harmonization for joint themes between MEAs.

23. An approach not dissimilar to the one of the Human Rights Treaty System is currently (as of February 2009) being explored through a project of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), in Pacific Island Countries. This project is testing a consolidated template for reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, World Heritage Convention). The draft template consists of a 'core report' for all the five conventions, with annexes providing supplementary information specific to the individual conventions. It is hoped that the project provides a regional perspective of harmonization as well as further insights into the feasibility of harmonizing reporting formats across the range of biodiversity-related MEAs.

24. In addition consideration should be given to the potential value of additional guidance for Parties on how to manage data and information in a harmonized manner for their own domestic purposes so that it is available for input to national reports for MEAs at the same time as supporting national focal points in tracking implementation and achievement of objectives.

Annex I

A short history of efforts towards harmonization of reporting to the biodiversity-related agreements

This annex is an attempt to provide an overview of the history of key events addressing harmonization of reporting. It is restricted to the biodiversity-related conventions and agreements and closely-related activities. It does not include the meetings of governing bodies of the conventions where harmonization was discussed (see Annex II for the mandates provided by the conventions) nor does it contain the guidance that bodies of the individual MEAs have provided on national reporting, such as guidelines and report formats.

1997 *Guiding Principles for National Reporting* (prepared for CBD SBSTTA 3, see <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-03/information/sbstta-03-inf-16-en.pdf>; redrafted for the 2000 workshop; see below and <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop/BP1.pdf>)

1998 *Feasibility Study for a Harmonised Information Management Infrastructure for Biodiversity-related Treaties*, by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, commissioned by CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention and UNEP (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/Feasibility%20Study%201998.pdf>)

1999 United Nations University International Conference on Inter-linkages: Synergies and Coordination between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, 14-16 July, Tokyo, Japan (see conference report at <http://www.ias.unu.edu/binaries/Interlinkages.PDF>). A paper on *Harmonizing the information management infrastructure for biodiversity-related treaties* was presented to the conference (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/Harmonizing%20info%20management%20JH%20&%20MC%201999.pdf>)

2000 *Towards the harmonization of National Reporting to Biodiversity-related Treaties* – UNEP/MEA secretariats workshop, 30-31 October, Cambridge, UK (http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop_00.cfm)

2001-2003 UNEP pilot projects on harmonization of national reporting in Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and the Seychelles (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm>)

2001-2004 Issue Management Group *Harmonization of Information Management and Reporting for Biodiversity-related Treaties* of the Environment Management Group. The activities included drafting a Harmonization Action Plan (<http://www.unemg.org/document/harmonization.php>)

2002 Establishment of the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/7692/en/>); the Task Force set up the CPF Portal on Forest Reporting (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar/en/>)

2004 *Towards the harmonization of national reporting to biodiversity-related treaties* – UNEP/UNEP-WCMC/MEA secretariats workshop, 22-23 September, Haasrode, Belgium (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop.htm>)

2006 UNEP Knowledge Management meeting - Workshop on harmonization of reporting, 16 June, Cambridge, UK (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/SUMMAR.pdf>)

From 2007 Project of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), on harmonization of national reporting in Pacific Island Countries. This project is testing a consolidated template for reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, World Heritage Convention).

2008 UNEP/MEA secretariats workshop on Knowledge Management among Biodiversity-related MEAs, 7-9 March, Cambridge, UK (http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/docs/KM%20workshop%20March2008%20report_final_18_Apr.pdf)

2009 ASEAN Workshop on Harmonization of Reporting to Biodiversity-Related Conventions, 15-17 April, Hanoi, Vietnam (http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=58&Itemid=127 and <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/papers.htm>)

Annex II
Mandates for harmonization of reporting by governing bodies
of the biodiversity-related agreements

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

COP Decision IX/19 (2008) (Biological diversity of inland water ecosystems): The COP invites the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Environment Programme and its World Conservation Monitoring Centre to continue their joint work on harmonized reporting between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

COP decision VIII/14 (2006): The COP takes note of the recommendations from the Workshop Towards the Harmonization of National Reporting to Biodiversity-related Treaties, organized by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) and held in September 2004 (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/1/INF/6), and encourages the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions, in liaison with UNEP-WCMC and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to give further consideration to issues of harmonization of reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to develop proposals thereon.

COP decision VII/25 (2004): The COP encourages the Executive Secretary to continue to participate in the ongoing efforts to harmonize and streamline the national reporting processes of the Convention with those of other biodiversity related conventions and processes with a view to reduce reporting burdens on Parties and increase synergies among biodiversity related conventions, without impeding progress on improvements to the national reporting process to meet the needs of Parties to the Convention.

COP decision VI/20 and decision VI/25 (2002): The COP welcomes the work of the United Nations Environment Programme on the harmonization of environmental reporting and encourages its continuation, whilst recognizing the need to ensure that this does not affect the ability of the Conference of the Parties to adjust national reporting procedures under the Convention in order to better meet the needs of Parties.

CITES

COP decision 14.38 (2007): The Secretariat shall a) continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP and other bodies in order to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting; b) identify additional ways to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, *inter alia*, in the context of its ongoing review of the Resolutions and Decisions of the Conference of the Parties, its support to the Standing Committee on electronic permitting and its work with IUCN or other organizations to compile and analyse CITES-related reports; and c) report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the results of this work.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

COP resolution 9.4 (2008): The COP requests the Secretariat to advance harmonization of reporting with other international biodiversity agreements through the development of common reporting modules, via the framework of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and in consultation with UNEP-WCMC.

COP resolution 8.11 (2005): The COP invites the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Biodiversity Liaison Group and UNEP, to advance the harmonization of reporting both within the UNEP-CMS 'family' of Agreements and between relevant conventions.

COP resolution 7.9 (2002): The COP invites the CMS Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC to work closely with the CBD Secretariat in developing a format for CBD Parties to report, through their national reports, on the extent to which they address migratory species at the national level, and on cooperation with other Range States as part of on-going efforts to harmonise national reporting requirements of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

COP resolution X.11 (2008): Noting that the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in its decision VIII/20 invited the Ramsar Convention to take the lead in developing a framework for harmonized reporting on inland waters, and that UNEP and UNEP-WCMC have commenced this work, as acknowledged by decision IX/19 of the 9th meeting of the CBD COP ... the Conference of the Contracting Parties ... requests the Secretariat to continue its participation in the UNEP-WCMC project for developing tools for the on-line use of the biodiversity-related conventions, including those for possible on-line harmonized reporting by the respective parties; ... also requests the Secretariat and the STRP to continue to cooperate with the CBD Secretariat, UNEP, and UNEP-WCMC in the development of a framework for harmonized reporting on implementation on inland waters for the CBD and the Ramsar Convention.

COP resolution IX.5 (2005): The Conference of the Contracting Parties, ... aware that UNEP-WCMC held a consultative workshop on the issue of Harmonized National Reporting (Haasrode, Belgium, September 2004), that this issue has also been discussed by the Biodiversity Liaison Group established under CBD Decision VII/26, and that this workshop specifically noted seven key issues concerned with the harmonization of national reporting (COP DOC. 32) ... requests the Secretary General to continue working with UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions and the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions and agreements concerning more effective convention implementation. Topics could include, inter alia, ... harmonization of national reporting requirements subject to the mandate of each individual convention bearing in mind their Contracting Parties.

COP resolution VIII.26 (2002): The Conference of the Contracting Parties ... urges parties to consider initiating trials of joint reporting involving Ramsar and other multilateral environmental agreements, seeking the advice, as appropriate, of the United Nations Environment Programme.

African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

Resolution 4.7 (2008): The Meeting of the Parties... requests the Secretariat, working closely with the Secretariat of the CMS, and with the assistance of UNEP, as necessary, to further advance harmonization of the national report formats of AEWA and CMS, where possible.

Resolution 3.5 (2005): The Meeting of the Parties... instructs the Agreement Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Technical Committee and the CMS Secretariat, to develop an online national report format to be submitted for approval to MOP4. The format should seek to advance harmonization of reporting with other international biodiversity agreements through the development of common reporting modules.