

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Administrative and financial matters

Administrative matters

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
ON ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. This document has been submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (prepared by UNEP).*

Summary

2. This document contains the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the Convention. The report provides updates since the previous report presented in August 2019.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for consideration at the seventy fourth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, to be held in Lyon, France from 7 to 11 March 2022. It provides information on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the Convention.
2. Building on the report provided to the Conference of Parties at its eighteenth meeting (UNEP/CITES/CoP18 Doc. 7.2) held in Geneva in 2019, the present report provides updates on the administrative and financial management support provided by UNEP to the Convention.

II. Administrative and financial management support provided to the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

UNEP led COVID-19 Pandemic assessment and support

3. In 2020 and 2021, UNEP monitored the impact of COVID-19 on funding and programme delivery ensuring that required administrative support was effectively provided. Consultations between the UNEP Secretariat and the Convention Secretariat reviewed the inflow of contributions, generation of programme support costs as well as expenditure trends, and suggested prudential measures where necessary, to meet programmatic and staff related expenses. The assessment confirmed the importance of maintaining a fund reserve at required levels across core funds as stipulated in UN's

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financial rules and regulations to guarantee the financial liquidity and integrity of the fund and to compensate for uneven cash flows. UNEP Secretariat is committed to the constant review of reserve levels taking into consideration the program of work and budget as approved by parties.

4. Further to the declaration of a pandemic by WHO, business continuity plans were activated globally throughout UNEP. Mechanisms were established to facilitate systematic, transparent communication and adoption of new administrative procedures which were appropriate to a remote working context, Decisions on working arrangements were made based on the guidance of host country as well as guidance issued by UN Headquarters at the Nairobi and New York levels. Safety and wellbeing of staff were a priority as well as capacities to engage and support parties.
5. This transition has demonstrated capacities of staff to adjust and manage significant change and to acquire new skills. In general, the Secretariat has significantly enhanced its capacity to operate utilizing new technologies and has to a large extent acquired new skills such as planning and administration of virtual and hybrid meetings.

Umoja

6. Umoja is the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tool that was first implemented in 2015 to process all administrative transactions within a common platform for the entire United Nations Secretariat. Umoja has since been rolled out in phases, with the Implementing Partner module being rolled out in 2018. This module enhances transparency, accountability and cost analysis in the selection of partners with whom the United Nations Secretariat engages with to execute its mandate while complying with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) adopted by UN Secretariat in 2014.
7. Beginning in 2021, additional modules have been rolled out to complete the implementation of Umoja as a one-stop solution for all administrative processes. These modules, which are collectively known as the Integrated Planning and Management Reporting (IPMR), include; (a) budgeting tool; (b) programmatic view that incorporates Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Gender markers; (c) Management tools that measure and record performance as well as highlight any existing funding gaps and finally; and, (d) Dashboards that present visualization tools of captured data for reporting purposes. UNEP will continue to engage the Convention Secretariat to ensure adequate representation, training and incorporation of its requirements resulting in a successful implementation.
8. Implementation of the full suite of Umoja brings efficiencies and transparency to the organization through the integration of processes across different functional silos. Umoja, which means “Unity” in Swahili, was requested by member states to provide a harmonized and real-time approach to the United Nations Secretariat’s management of finances, human resources and assets. As would be expected with the development of ERPs, implementation of Umoja has its associated costs that includes a license fee.
9. Prior to 2020, Umoja license fee was funded from UN Secretariat resources. This platform is comprehensive and in most recent phases has included program modules which facilitate improved monitoring capacities as well as efficiencies in engaging with implementing partners. However, in recent years, there has been a substantial increase of the Umoja license fees that are settled by respective MEAs as all other UN entities within the UN Secretariat. This increase in the license fee for the years 2020 and 2021 was significantly higher than previous years due to the new cost distribution methodology implemented by the United Nations Secretariat, which is now based on the number of registered users per entity. These costs are considered as direct costs to the implementation of programmes thus allowing better allocation of costs as required by IPSAS.

Delegation of authority

10. In 2019, the Secretary General implemented a new delegation of authority framework as part of the management reforms. They largely relate to administrative policies and procedures in the UN covering areas such as budget, property management, human resources and other administrative matters. UNEP has implemented this revised Delegation of Authority Policy Framework for the management and administration (DAPF) for MEA Secretariats. UNEP engaged with all MEA Secretariats to improve understanding on scope and intentions of the revised framework and held inclusive discussions that allowed the revision of the delegation of authority from the UNEP Executive Director to the heads of all UNEP administered MEAs. The new DAPF for MEA Secretariats was accepted by CITES Secretariat on 11 October 2021. This was critical to ensure CITES adheres to best practices within the UN.

Learning, Development and Gender parity

11. UNEP is pleased to report that there is equal gender representation in CITES in line with the 2017 UN system wide strategy on gender parity. In relation to learning and development opportunities, UNEP has ensured Convention Secretariat staff are included in general trainings for programme management and leadership. Convention Secretariat staff have registered for mandatory United Nations Leadership Programme, a requirement for D1 and D2 staff and the 360° Leadership Assessment that is hosted by the UN System Staff College at no cost to the Convention Secretariat. CITES staff have also participated in the Executive Management Programme, which is a mandatory requirement for P5 and D1 levels.

Financial advisory unit for the multilateral environmental agreements

12. In the last few years, the UN including UNEP has made significant efforts to increase efficiency and transparency around various administrative matters. It is appreciated that the MEA Secretariats are relatively small and need to be supported on other administrative issues that go beyond their approved programmes of work which is their primary focus. In this regard, the Executive Director decided to provide extra administrative coordination to the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements through the establishment of a dedicated unit within the Corporate Services Division and under the supervision of the Division Director. This unit was established in 2018. Support provided by the unit includes budget administration, audit coordination and risk management, backstopping of administrative staff, UMOJA training support and treasury functions for multilateral funds.

Programme support costs

13. With the introduction of IPSAS and Umoja, there has been enhanced transparency in the selection and monitoring of implementing partners across the UN Secretariat. Prior to Umoja implementation, each entity maintained its own database of implementing partners and there was no system in place to cross reference suitability of the partners. Umoja allows all entities to view the performance and track record of partners prior to selection. Report generation including dashboards is now real-time and incorporates data across all the entities within the Secretariat. These benefits to the management reforms over the years come at a cost ranging from more specialized staff within a unit, to software and hardware upgrade costs, to mention a few. Options will continue to be explored to contain this cost category but there may also be a need to consider transitioning some of these costs to the work of the programme budget. UNEP therefore continues to review its existing Programme Support Cost (PSC) policy to determine its adequacy in the sharing and apportionment of programme support resources.

Settlement of contributions

14. The United Nations Secretariat adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in 2014. Umoja implements strict IPSAS-based liquidity management, which requires that cash be available for the settlement of payments. Parties are therefore encouraged to settle their assessed contributions in full early in the year to guarantee continuity of operations under CITES. Those Parties that are in arrears are requested to engage with the Convention secretariat on settlement modalities.