Determination of the Time and Venue of the Next Regular Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

TIME INTERVAL BETWEEN MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

This document has been prepared and is submitted by the Secretariat.

1. Resolution Conf. 6.2 recommends, among other things, "that the Standing Committee consider more radical options for the longer term to achieve economies" in the budget of the Secretariat.

2. At its 18th meeting in Lausanne (27 February to 3 March 1989) the Standing Committee considered a suggestion that the time interval between meetings of the Conference of the Parties be extended from the customary two years to three years.

3. Article XI, paragraph 2, of the Convention directs that the Secretariat "convene regular meetings at least once every two years, unless the Conference decides otherwise".

4. The Conference of the Parties decides the time interval between meetings when it votes at the end of each meeting for the time and venue of the next meeting.

5. The principal argument in favour of extending the time interval between meetings is economic. Direct expenditures by the Secretariat in support of each meeting of the Conference of the Parties approach US$ 300,000, with the host country expected to contribute a similar amount (either in actual expenditures or through the provision of goods and services). The extremely heavy workload imposed on Secretariat staff by the preparations for, and reporting of, a meeting of the Conference of the Parties also imposes additional costs. Extending the time interval would spread the required expenditures over a longer time period.

6. Meetings of the Conference of the Parties also impose additional costs for Parties and other participants, mostly related to travel to the meeting location and associated expenses. For many Parties these expenses can not be met through their normal budgets and assistance is provided through the Secretariat's Delegates Project. As the number of Parties increases the amount of money that needs to be raised for this project will also increase. Extending the time interval between meetings would allow more time to raise the required funds.
7. The principal arguments against the proposal concern the effectiveness of meetings of the Conference of the Parties in the implementation of the Convention. Experience has shown that, generally speaking, those international organizations that meet on a regular basis are more effective than those that do not, and the level of effectiveness increases with the frequency of the meetings.

8. Specific concerns have been raised that extending the time interval to more than the current 24 to 30 months could be detrimental to the ability of the Convention to react in a timely way to the changing conservation needs of species.

9. The Standing Committee recommended that the Secretariat prepare the documents for the seventh meeting, including the budget proposals, in such a way as to allow the Parties to decide on a three year interval between the seventh and eighth meetings of the Conference of the Parties. This has been done.

10. The Secretariat does not recommend the preparation of a specific Resolution on this topic, but suggests that Parties take into consideration the information presented in this document when considering the time and venue of the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.