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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

41st meeting
29 November -3 December 2021

JOINT MEETING OF THE BERN CONVENTION NETWORK OF SPECIAL FOCAL POINTS ON ERADICATION OF ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING AND TRADE IN WILD BIRDS AND THE CMS INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ON ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE OF MIGRATORY BIRDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

3rd meeting *(virtual)*
9 – 11 June 2021

Meeting report

Joint Meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean

Online meeting 9 – 11 June 2021

FINAL MEETING REPORT

CHAMPION PLUS

The European Union was recognized as Champion Plus for their generous support and commitment towards addressing Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean for the period 2018 - 2023. This activity has been funded with the contribution granted by the European Commission under the Migratory Species Champion Programme and through the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC Programme) Cooperation Agreements with UNEP.

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List of Acronyms

AEWA	African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement
CABS	Committee against Bird Slaughter
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
EC	European Commission
ENPE	European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment
EU	European Union
EUFJE	EU Network of Judges for the Environment
FACE	European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation
ICCWC	International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime
IKB	Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Wild Birds
IMPEL	European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
ISPRA	Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LIFE	EU funding instrument for the environment and climate action
LIPU	Italian League for Bird Protection, BirdLife partner in Italy
MIKT	CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean
MME	Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society, BirdLife partner in Hungary
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
POW	Programme of Work
RSP	Rome Strategic Plan
SEO	Spanish Ornithological Society, BirdLife partner in Spain
SPFs	Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds
TAP	Tunis Action Plan
UK	United Kingdom
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Day 1 Wednesday 09 Jun 2021

1. Opening of the meeting

Marco Barbieri (CMS Scientific Adviser, CMS Secretariat) opened the meeting and welcomed participants. He confirmed that the CMS Executive Secretary, Amy Fraenkel, would be joining the meeting later in the day to deliver her personal welcome and opening remarks. He noted with pleasure the high number of registrations, which he hoped was a reflection of growing interest in and awareness of the issue of illegal killing of migratory birds but also recognized as a consequence of the meeting being held online. He introduced two new colleagues from the CMS Secretariat, Clairie Papazoglou, MIKT Coordinator since December 2020, and Iván Ramírez, Head of the Avian Unit, who had taken up his position on 1 June 2021.

Ursula Sticker (Secretary, Council of Europe Bern Convention Secretariat) thanked CMS for hosting the Joint Meeting. She introduced herself, having taken up her new tasks as Secretary to the Convention in September 2020, and her new colleague, Nadia Saporito, Junior Project Officer and IKB contact point in the Bern Convention Secretariat since February 2021, and looked forward to fruitful discussions during the coming days.

During the afternoon session, Amy Fraenkel, Executive Secretary of CMS, addressed the meeting and highlighted the close collaboration between the Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats on the issue of IKB, which was a top priority for CMS. The present meeting came at a critical time for further enhancing collaboration on IKB, and it was hoped that the new work plan being developed under the umbrella of the Rome Strategic Plan would be ambitious but pragmatic. The meeting was also charged with reviewing IKB Scoreboard results. It had been encouraging to see that in the two rounds of Scoreboard completion in 2018 and 2021 information had been provided by 35 countries, with 21 of them agreeing to make their submissions available to the public. MIKT served as a good model for other flyway regions in which CMS was working, given that collective work was essential for reducing IKB. Thanks were due to colleagues from both secretariats for the work put into organising the meeting and to the EU for the provision of financial support. Hopefully it would be possible to meet in person at MIKT5.

2. Election of officers: appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the meeting

Marco Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) noted that the meeting needed to elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair and recalled that it was customary for the Chair to be nominated by the host country and for the Secretariat to make a proposal to that effect. As the present meeting was being conducted online, there was no host country. Following consultations, the Secretariat had therefore approached Italy as the host of MIKT3. The Chair of that meeting, Mr Marco Valentini, was unable to attend the whole of MIKT4 and had therefore invited the Secretariat to look for an alternative representative from the Italian delegation. The Secretariat was therefore proposing Fernando Spina as Chair of MIKT4, and Luay Elsayed Ahmed Zonkle (Egypt), who had been Vice-Chair of MIKT3, to take up that role again for MIKT4. The meeting elected by consensus Mr Spina and Mr Zonkle to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair.

The newly elected Chair made brief opening remarks, underlining that IKB was a particularly challenging topic, given that by definition, it was an activity that was generally kept hidden as much as possible. It was also complex, involving law enforcement, judiciary, sophisticated investigative techniques, and a variety of other aspects.

3. Adoption of the agenda and schedule

3.1 Provisional agenda and documents

3.2 Annotated agenda and meeting schedule

The Chair referred the meeting to documents UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.3.1/Rev.1 and UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.3.2/Rev.1 – T-PVS/Agenda (2021)07_rev.1. He invited comments or questions.

Katie Brickett (United Kingdom) enquired about the breakout groups envisaged for Day 2 of the meeting, underlining that it would be important for all Parties to contribute fully to all parts of the work.

The CMS Secretariat presented information on the practicalities of the online meeting, including clarification from the MIKT Coordinator that there would be reports back to plenary from all of the breakout groups, so that Parties would indeed have the opportunity to review and comment on any of the groups' deliberations. There would also be a process for written comments on the Draft MIKT Workplan 2021-2025, to be submitted by 18 June 2021. The Secretariat would circulate a revised document by 2 July, to be considered for adoption by 16 July 2021.

There being no further requests for the floor, the agenda and schedule were adopted by consensus.

4. IKB Scoreboard

4.1 Report on second Scoreboard assessment

The Chair referred the meeting to document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.4 – T-PVS (2021)05 and supporting information documents UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.1 and UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.2 – T-PVS/Inf (2019)10 and invited the MIKT Coordinator to make an overview presentation. All papers can be found at the dedicated meeting's dedicated website.

The MIKT Coordinator recalled that the Scoreboard on IKB was a self-assessment tool that had been developed jointly by the Bern Convention and CMS in 2017. It was aimed at providing an objective, fact-based self-assessment of the current status of IKB at national level, and to enable countries to measure the progress of the implementation of the Tunis Action Plan and MIKT Programme of Work 2016-2020. There were 28 indicators covering five areas: national monitoring of IKB; national legislation; enforcement response; prosecution and sentencing; and prevention. To date, two rounds of Scoreboard assessments had been completed, in 2018 and 2020, respectively. The results of the 2020 Scoreboard had been compiled and analysed by Dr Umberto Gallo-Orsi and presented at the 40th Standing Committee Meeting of the Bern Convention in December 2020. Those results had now been updated to take account of additional submissions by Greece, Malta, Serbia, Spain and the United Kingdom, as well as by Belarus, the latter having completed the Scoreboard for the first time. Although the number of countries submitting Scoreboards in 2020 was lower than in 2018, at least one Scoreboard had now been completed for the majority of countries in all IKB severity categories, as classified by BirdLife International. A comparison of the 2018 and 2020 Scoreboards for the five thematic areas listed above showed modest improvements of between 1.2% and 8.3% for the first four, but a slight negative change under the heading 'prevention', which might however be due to more accurate scoring. It was hoped that more countries would adopt the Scoreboard tool, which had proven to be most effective when conducted as a broad collaboration of government, relevant agencies and other stakeholders. In conclusion, the meeting was invited to take note of the Second Scoreboard assessment.

The Chair invited comments from participants, but there were no requests for the floor.

4.2 Publishing Scoreboard results online

The Chair invited the Bern Convention Secretariat to present the background and current status of the Scoreboard initiative.

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) recalled that 30 countries had submitted Scoreboards in 2018, with 24 countries doing so in 2020/21 for the second assessment. The Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats had jointly approached the countries concerned to seek consent for publishing the Scoreboard data online. To date, 21 countries had given their agreement, representing more than half of those that had submitted at least one Scoreboard. The corresponding data were now available online, as a downloadable Excel spreadsheet, through the Bern Convention website. The two Secretariats wished to thank warmly the 21 national governments that had agreed to the publication of their Scoreboard data, something that facilitated international coordination and communication among stakeholders. It was hoped that other national governments would consider making their data available, to further increase the value of the Scoreboard mechanism.

Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International) noted that the IKB Scoreboard mechanism provided an interesting model for other thematic working groups and task forces under CMS. However, BirdLife was concerned that comparison of the 1st and 2nd Scoreboard assessments showed overall levels of IKB to be either stable or increasing. This suggested that the task for MIKT was only just beginning and that there was a need to step up efforts. The level of challenge going forward to implement the Rome Strategic Plan was clear. In most cases, BirdLife was satisfied that the validity of the information submitted for national Scoreboards was high, although there were questions about the validity of data for a few countries. In particular, submissions made by observers, on behalf of governments, had not been published in the Scoreboard tables. BirdLife would be pleased to provide details of these cases so that they could be followed up.

The MIKT Coordinator confirmed that the Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats had followed a policy of only publishing government-submitted Scoreboards. Early on in the process (in 2018), two Scoreboard reports had been submitted by NGOs, but these had not been included in either the analysis report or the data sets published online.

Ms Crockford asked whether a place could be found in the corresponding online tables to indicate the existence of NGO reports.

The Chair felt that this was a proposal worthy of consideration.

Luay Zonkle (Egypt) underlined the importance of the Scoreboard mechanism accepting official data only. There had been problems in Egypt with unofficial data, not approved by government, that had been submitted by NGOs.

The Chair concluded that it was clear that only official data would be published online by the secretariats.

5. Reports on implementation

5.1 CMS Secretariat

a. Overview of Programme of Work 2016-2020

The Chair referred the meeting to documents UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.5.1.a, UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.5.1.b and information document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.3 and invited the MIKT Coordinator to take the floor. All papers can be found on the meeting's dedicated website.

The MIKT Coordinator recalled that the MIKT Programme of Work (POW) 2016-2020 applied only to MIKT countries. She presented an overview of implementation progress for each of the key elements of the POW, rated as green, yellow or red according to the level of progress made. There were a good number of positives to report, rated 'green' including development of the IKB Scoreboard mechanism discussed under the previous agenda item. Progress was more patchy with a range of other topics, rated 'yellow', including the development of monitoring guidelines and identification of enforcement priorities at national level. Among the components in the 'red' category was development of National Action Plans (NAPs) – an obligatory element of the POW. The report showed that only six countries had fully or partly adopted NAPs. Development of a Monitoring Protocol for establishing status and trends of IKB was another key area where little progress had been made. In addition, there were many 'grey' areas, where information on progress was simply not available for assessment. For example, it was not possible to determine if there had been a measurable reduction of IKB in known hotspots, or if better cooperation between institutions had been established at national level.

Charles de Barsac (France) requested a status update on two topics – collaboration with Interpol, and preparation of a documentary to help raise public awareness of IKB issues.

Tilman Schneider (CMS Secretariat) recalled that Interpol was a MIKT observer, though not present at MIKT4. The CMS Secretariat had communicated intensively with Interpol in previous years but there had been changes of personnel at Interpol, including the focal point for CMS. The CMS Secretariat remained open to further cooperation and had attempted to trigger momentum in this direction. However the response to date had been limited. With regard to preparation of a documentary on IKB, a concept note and terms of reference had been developed and discussions had been under way with interested companies and potential arrangements through existing legal instruments under other UN entities with service providers, initially facilitated through the United Nations Office, Nairobi (UNON) in 2019 and early 2020. However, it had not been possible to progress the initiative significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chair underlined that Interpol was an important partner for MIKT.

In response to a question from Olivier Biber (UNEP/CMS/AEMLAP), the MIKT Coordinator explained that 'regulated communities' meant communities regulated under the law and was normally used to refer to the hunting community.

b. CMS Secretariat report

Updating the meeting on relevant activities of the CMS Secretariat since MIKT3, the MIKT Coordinator recalled the formal basis for the MIKT and the corresponding work of the Secretariat. The latter included provision of support for the Scoreboard process, capacity building initiatives (including a workshop for environmental prosecutors and translation of training packages from that meeting into French, Spanish, Italian, Greek and Arabic), and promotion of MIKT in the media and at multiple conferences and meetings.

5.2 Bern Convention Secretariat

Ursula Sticker (Secretary, Bern Convention) underlined that the main highlights for the 2019 - 2020 period had been adoption of the Rome Strategic Plan and the 2nd Scoreboard Assessment. The Convention's Case File tool continued to provide a monitoring mechanism for addressing IKB, through which NGOs and private citizens had the possibility to bring possible breaches of the Convention to the attention of the Standing Committee. 'Voice of Nature' was a new communications campaign featuring success stories about nature protection based on democratic participation, whilst the Council of Europe's 9th World Forum for Democracy had established a platform for debate on the topic of 'Can Democracy Save the Environment?'. The Standing Committee had set up a working group to develop a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention to 2030. It was hoped that a draft would be ready for the Standing Committee to consider and adopt at end of the year. A new, free online course on 'The Environment and Human Rights' of the Council of Europe HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) programme was now available.

5.3 Reports from Members of MIKT and Bern Convention SFPs

The Chair referred the meeting to document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.5.3 and invited oral interventions briefly summarising progress, obstacles encountered and priorities for future actions.

Eliska Rolfova (Czech Republic) reported on adoption in January 2020 of a national strategy, valid to 2030, that established a framework for prosecution of illegal killing of wildlife in the Czech Republic. Other improvements had included awareness raising and training activities involving the police, prosecutors and judiciary, and more general seminars for stakeholders. April 2021 had seen the first successful prosecution and conviction for a case of illegal poisoning of wildlife, in which key evidence had come from the Czech Society for Ornithology. The main obstacles included: capacity limitations of police forces (no specialized unit for wildlife crime). Priorities for the future included: a focus on implementation of national strategy – including capacity building and further education and training, and establishment of a specialized wildlife crime unit.

Pierre Felten (Belgium) reported that the Scoreboard process was challenging for Belgium given the administrative complexity of the country. Not all administrations had fully understood the value of the Scoreboard or the work of MIKT. Belgium had therefore yet to submit a Scoreboard but it was hoped that the new government would provide the means for doing so.

Maya Polić (Croatia) advised that institutional changes since MIKT3 had introduced a number of challenges, including delaying work on preparation of a National Action Plan on IKB. The will to begin working on such a plan was there but the necessary formal basis had yet to be established.

Panicos Panayides (Cyprus) highlighted a number of achievements including an overall decreasing trend for IKB, the introduction of deterrent fines as part of new legislation in 2017, the almost complete eradication of the serving of protected bird species in restaurants, and a reduction of trapping during the spring season to historically low levels. Among obstacles to further progress were lack of awareness (particularly among prosecutors and judiciary, but also in the wider public), the need for more involvement of the police (especially in relation to complex or high-profile cases and those involving organized crime), and further amendments to legislation (for example, to make admissible evidence from surveillance systems, including drones). Addressing these gaps were priorities for the future. With regard the use of lime sticks, the reduction of fines introduced in 2020 applied only to very specific circumstances. The slides comprising Mr Panayides's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and on the Bern Convention website.

Luay Zonkle (Egypt) highlighted an increase in the geographical extent of Egypt's Mediterranean coast that was closed to hunting of birds during the hunting season, as well as designation of a new protected area in the region. In terms of duration of the hunting season, hunting was now completely closed in spring and for three weeks in autumn, meaning that the season was now restricted to the period September to February. Efforts were under way to raise awareness of the government and courts about the need to apply maximum available penalties of up to EUR 100,000. Legislation was generally very good but there were too few people working on monitoring of hunting. Efforts were being made to engage with local people through training courses on hunting issues and to increase financial resources for implementation. BirdLife International had made an assessment of hunting, and there was good cooperation with NGOs in Egypt.

Joseph Van der Stegen (European Commission) noted that collaboration with the IMPEL programme in relation to hunting tourism had yet to be established but that this matter was due to be addressed in an upcoming meeting that it was hoped might lead to dedicated actions in one or two countries. Potentially interested countries were invited to contact the Commission's representative at MIKT4. Within the Commission's initiative on Environmental Compliance Assurance, work had recently started on producing a document on good practice in relation to IKB. This would be a concise document focused on the key steps needed to tackle IKB and would replace the EC Roadmap towards eliminating illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds.

Charles de Barsac (France) introduced himself as the new focal point for MIKT for France since 1 March 2021. Since 2019, key achievements were linked with better data in terms of quality and availability. Recent progress had also been in the areas of communication, awareness raising and education. These included making available to the public, on the website of the competent agency, information about prosecutions and convictions with regard to illegal trade in birds. Concerning awareness raising, there had been work on developing alternatives to prosecution in cases of minor infringements as a means of altering behaviour. With regard to future challenges, there needed to be more focus on improving knowledge of status and trends of IKB for different species, in particular by strengthening methodologies for collecting and analysing such data.

Oliver Schall (Germany) recalled a 2014 assessment that had concluded that Germany had much work to do to tackle IKB, and that offences against raptors were of greatest concern. A study had been undertaken by CABS during the period 2015-2018. This had led to a number of recommendations that had since been followed up, including submission of proposed legislation to the Federal Parliament that would have the effect of forbidding ownership and use of certain kinds of traps, doubling of fines in case of criminal acts, and better training of hunters, with more time devoted to the correct identification of bird species and avoidance of protected species. It was unclear if new legislation would be passed by the end of the current legislative period in summer 2021; if not, it would be reintroduced in the next legislative period.

András Schmidt (Hungary) reported on a LIFE project co-financed by the EU (PannonEagle LIFE project), involving the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia and Hungary, aimed at reducing illegal killing of raptors. At national level, in April 2021, seven government organizations (including the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Police Authority, the National Tax & Customs Office and others) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to organize work and institutionalize cooperation in the field of conservation and environmental protection, including IKB. This had been supported by the EU Internal Security Fund. Priorities for the future included strengthening police investigations of IKB and working with the judiciary to ensure that truly dissuasive sanctions were applied.

Simon Nemtzov (Israel) advised that the of level of IKB in Israel was rather low. Major threats for birds were mainly associated with invasive species, agricultural conflicts, illegal poisoning and wind farms. Migratory birds were also arriving in Israel having been shot outside the country, and were treated at a number of wildlife rehabilitation hospitals. Poaching and trapping were relatively minor, with the main target species being Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Chukar *Alectoris chukar*, the latter for food. A new action plan had been produced for European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, which was now fully protected. Other achievements included an initiative on feeding migratory pelicans to reduce conflict with aquaculture, and increased monitoring and enforcement efforts by the Nature and Parks Authority. They were particularly proud of the enhanced capabilities of the Nature Tracker application for recording anything in relation to wild species. The slides comprising Mr Nemtzov's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and the Bern Convention website.

Arianna Aradis (Italy) recalled that work to develop and implement Italy's National Action Plan on IKB had started in 2016. Recent developments had included establishment of a national portal on poisoning, through which data on suspected cases was gathered as a tool to monitor the problem. Anti-poaching and anti-poisoning police currently maintained 21 dog units with others due to be trained. Police had carried out several operations in IKB blackspots identified in the National Action Plan. Efforts involving the police, ISPRA and other National Action Plan stakeholders were being made to increase the knowledge base for prosecutors and judges. Italy had submitted Scoreboards in 2018 & 2020. The main obstacles included a lack of commitment by several National Action Plan stakeholders; a challenge was to get everyone on board. Priorities included work to plan and develop a new database on IKB, improve communication and awareness raising, and to standardize data collection to evaluate trends and identify priorities for actions.

Jessica Fenech (Malta) emphasized that IKB had been an enforcement priority for Malta for nearly three decades. Throughout this time, efforts had been made to establish an effective regulatory regime coupled with specialist structures to assist law-enforcement bodies. She provided details of the principal agencies involved in coordinated action aimed at ensuring effective detection, recording and prosecution of bird-related crime. Enforcement action was shared by three units, Wild Birds Regulation Unit, Environment and Resources Authorities, and the Malta Police Force. In 2019, the Conservation of Wild Birds Fund was relaunched and awarded about EUR 100,000 in grants to three NGOs for projects promoting the conservation of wild birds according to the set priorities. In spring 2021, the Wild Bird Regulation Unit introduced a mobile app through which hunters who were authorized app users could report any game caught or killed. Users were also able to view their past reports in order to present proof of reporting during field inspections by the police. Additional information was provided by Ms Fenech on a range of awareness-raising activities. The major challenges for the future encountered by Malta were linked to human resources and expertise. In order to maximize cooperation on law enforcement, the Maltese authorities were involved in various international information exchange mechanisms, such as EUTWIX, EnviCrime Net, and others. There had been a significant increase in the staff allocation for permitting, compliance and enforcement linked to IKB, but there was a shortage of relevant experience and skills, combined with delays in recruitment, and difficulties in attracting applications from suitably qualified candidates. National authorities would continue to invest in staff training initiatives to ensure that law enforcement bodies were equipped with the necessary human resources. Malta aimed to continue building on its present mechanism, promoting zero tolerance towards IKB, and scaling up its efforts as necessary with the aim of contributing to the international goal of eradicating IKB along the flyways.

Anela Sijaric (Montenegro) introduced herself as the new focal point for CMS. She recalled that in 2020 there had been a change of government in Montenegro for the first time in 30

years. A new government had been formed and had introduced many institutional and administrative changes. The Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (MESPU) had received an open letter from the NGO Center for Bird Protection and Research (CBPR) calling for reform of the national hunting law. Hunting issues came under the competences of the Ministry of Agriculture, and MESPU had therefore proposed a joint meeting to address changes to the hunting law and the development and adoption of a National IKB Action Plan. There would hopefully be results from this initiative in the coming months.

Latifa Sikli (Morocco) from the Department of Water and Forests, reported on several actions framed by the national hunting law and Law 2905 on the conservation of wild flora and fauna, including trade-related aspects. The main achievements had been development of a national action plan to implement Law 2905. Other steps included creation of wildlife surveillance and control units, and establishment of dialogue involving the Department of Water and Forests, the Ministry of the Interior and the Public Prosecutor, with the aim of establishing regional commissions for implementation of Law 2905. Obstacles included a lack of human and material resources, a lack of staff training and insufficient awareness among hunters and the wider public. Addressing these gaps was the key priority for the future.

Wiktor Wyżyński (Poland) stated that IKB was not a serious issue in Poland. Whilst there were no official estimates of mortality from illegal killing or trapping, there was an established legal framework with penalties. Brief information was provided about a LIFE project 'You have rights for the effective protection of nature', which aimed to increase awareness of the relevant authorities and to improve coordination with law enforcement, prosecutors' offices and other key stakeholders.

João José de Bastos Loureiro (Portugal) provided a national update report in writing: He apologized for not being able to fully participate in the meeting due to several other commitments mainly related with court cases and involvement in the Portuguese EU Presidency Team. A summary of the main actions undertaken by Portugal in the past 2 years follows. "Portugal remains fully committed to the prevention, control and eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds. Since those actions are considered important and as high priority the Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests, ICNF, as the national authority for nature conservation continues to promote and implement several actions for public awareness and training of the different stakeholders. Some of those actions proved to be successful as most of the infractions are now treated as criminal offences, which are much more effective and dissuasive than the administrative fines. Furthermore, Portugal continues to improve its national legislation and on 31st May 2021 an update was published of the Portuguese regulations of the Bern and CMS Conventions which include, among others, two new actions: the increase of the fines (an offender network of wildlife can be fined up to EUR 5,000,000 in addition to a criminal sanction) and finally it is prohibited now to sell means and methods of killing, and capture that have been allowed to be used for more than 40 years."

Snežana Prokić (Serbia), speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, reported on progress from 2016 to 2020. In reference to the request of the Bern Convention Secretariat for updated progress reports on Complaints 2014/3 and 2016/3 on presumed deliberate killing of birds in Serbia, reports had been sent to the Bureau of the Bern Convention for its consideration. National progress relevant to IKB included the Programme for Nature Protection of the Republic of Serbia and its associated Action Plan for 2021-2023 adopted in May 2021. The Government of Serbia had also accepted Recommendation 205 (2019) on the Rome Strategic Plan in April 2021. As a consequence, a number of key Ministries were obliged to take necessary measures, according to their respective competences, to prevent IKB. Further strengthening and integration of relevant national legislation was planned, and Serbia was committed to updating its IKB Scoreboard. Additional information was presented on stakeholders, enforcement and control mechanisms,

as well as capacity building activities relevant for combatting wildlife crime, including IKB and designating prosecutors for wildlife crime.

Rubén Moreno-Opo (Spain) recalled that it had originally been planned for MIKT4 to meet in Valencia. That had unfortunately not been possible. He referred participants to Spain's two Scoreboard reports for detailed information, and briefly introduced three official plans already approved, dealing with the topics of poisoning, illegal trafficking of wildlife, and trapping of wild birds. The Scoreboard process had seen increasing involvement of Regional Administrations which sent data from wildlife rescue centres, and collection of data from the prosecutors' unit, including annual statistics on the number of individuals being investigated in cases of suspected IKB under the criminal law. Data on potential offenders had also been received from SEPRONA, a specialized environmental unit in the police.

Tassos Shialis (BirdLife Cyprus) recalled that the Larnaca Declaration of 2011 had set out a policy of zero tolerance for IKB. Referring to the intervention of the official representative of Cyprus, he supported some of the information presented but had been sadly disappointed by recent legislative changes, especially the lowering of fines for illegal trapping with lime sticks, or shooting of up to 50 birds of 14 species (including Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla*, other warblers, Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*, and Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*) to just EUR 200. This was a huge step backwards. More generally, there had been an increase in fines, but the new system of on-the-spot fines meant that fines were not being paid, with cases ending up in the courts, which handed down much lower fines. There was an urgent need for training of the judiciary to increase awareness and understanding of IKB as a serious environmental crime.

Elvana Ramaj (Albania) recalled that a seven year hunting moratorium was in place until the end of 2021, after which a decision on possible extension would be taken. The duration of any such extension had yet to be discussed with stakeholders. Revision of the law on protection of wild fauna had taken place in 2019. The National Council on Wild Fauna was established as a consultative body to the Minister. Revision of Albania's penal code in 2019 had categorized offences relating to endangered wild fauna as criminal offences for the first time, but there was a need for corresponding awareness-raising and training. The extent of the protected areas network had increased to 18.5% of national territory, with no hunting permitted in any category of protected area since 2017. Enforcement and implementation challenges included limited human and financial resources, especially for local government units/municipalities and the State Inspectorate of Environment. Structural reforms had led to inspections being divided between two or three agencies. There was a willingness to have a dedicated National Action Plan for IKB but this had yet to be realized.

Hounana Sadat (Syrian Society for the Conservation of Wildlife) reported that technical difficulties meant that no representative of the Government of Syria had been able to participate in MIKT4. Due to the circumstances in the country, there was limited progress to report but the Government had been working hard with stakeholders on IKB. The hunting law had been updated by the Hunting Council with help from NGOs (SSCW) and was expected to receive approval of the Syrian Parliament soon. The next stage would be training for hunters with regard to the new law, training for monitoring and developing a National IKB Action Plan

Jamel Tahri (Tunisia) briefly summarized the importance of Tunisia for migratory birds and reported that efforts to meet the objectives of the MIKT Programme of Work and the Tunis Action Plan had been stepped up. Achievements included revision of the law relating to the hunting of migratory birds, including setting a daily harvest quota for individual hunters, reducing the length of the hunting season, and decreasing the number of hunting days per week. Tunisia had also banned hunting in wetlands of international importance and organized patrols at these sites, and established a 'Stop Poaching' platform to receive and process

complaints. Obstacles included a lack of means for compliance monitoring and enforcement, a lack of scientific underpinning of quota setting, a lack of wildlife rehabilitation centres, and the absence of a judiciary trained in the protection and conservation of biodiversity. Priorities for the future include the implementation of the Rome Strategic Plan and Tunisia was seeking technical support for the organization of various workshops, training activities, and other actions related to the implementation of the Plan. The slides comprising Mr Tahri's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and the Bern Convention website.

Fehmi Arikan (Turkey) reflected on a tough year due to the pandemic, with long lockdowns that had interrupted much important work. Nevertheless, there were still positive things to report. Turkey had been using a 'hunting ground information system' for the previous four years. Each penalty/fine for IKB and other wildlife offences was now being recorded throughout the country. It was possible to see at a glance the type of crime, the date, the place, and the amount of any fine imposed. There was also a mobile app for use in the field. In 2020, according to this database, the number of penalties was over 14,000, involving over 7,000 individuals. There were currently almost 1,500 wildlife rangers working in Turkey. Implementation of the Turkish hunting law was determined on an annual basis by the National Hunting Commission. The number of members of the Commission had been increased from 21 to 25, including four new members from NGOs and universities working for nature conservation, achieving a better balance of nature conservation and hunting interests. The main priority was to decrease and eventually stop poaching of huntable species, and the second priority was to decrease and stop trapping and illegal trade of raptors.

Kate Brickett (United Kingdom) emphasized that tackling raptor persecution was a wildlife crime priority for the UK. The Raptor Persecution Delivery Priority Group was taking forward activities to raise awareness for increased enforcement, including the national launch of 'Operation Owl' in September 2019 designed to increase public awareness, and a Zero Tolerance Pledge on raptor persecution signed by key country sports NGOs. 'Operation Easter' was now in its 24th year of protecting nests from egg collecting. Ms Brickett provided further information on the work of Police Scotland in relation to Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*, Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus,* and other raptor species, including an evidence-gathering protocol outlining best practices from the initial stages of reporting, throughout the investigation, and use of satellite tracking data. With regard to the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) on the island of Cyprus, there was a zero tolerance approach to IKB, recognizing that effective partnerships were fundamental to success. There had been a 94% reduction in illegal trapping in SBAs in 2021 versus 2016 levels. Removing planted Acacia *Acacia saligna* would lead to a further reduction in trapping. The pandemic had had some impacts on planned work, but the UK welcomed the opportunity to shape future work under MIKT and remained convinced of the need for continued international cooperation on IKB.

Nicholas Barbara (BirdLife Malta) referred to the report presented by the official representative of Malta. He could vouch for the opportunities and incentives being provided, but in spite of this, there was still much to improve on IKB. BirdLife Malta was actually observing an increase in current trends of IKB. There was remarkably low participation from the hunting community in reporting their harvests, with fewer than 3% making submissions. The numbers derived from this small minority were then being used to justify applications for derogations under the European Commission Birds Directive, for example in relation to Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. There was a failure to ensure adequate staffing for proper enforcement. The already low prosecution rate for IKB had fallen even further. BirdLife Malta would like to see the same effort going into reducing IKB as was currently being put into seeking derogations at the European Commission.

Claudio Celada (LIPU/BirdLife Italy) noted that Italy had adopted a National Action Plan on IKB well ahead of MIKT3 in Rome. LIPU regarded the structure of the National Action Plan as more than adequate, and considered that Italy had made a good start setting up the required coordination bodies and implementing actions. A participatory process had been very important in this. However, little progress on implementation had been made since MIKT3 and this was correctly reflected in monitoring on-the-ground of illegal killing and enforcement actions. There were two areas where little progress had been made, namely on-the-ground monitoring and enforcement of IKB, and necessary legislative changes. Italy needed to make progress on these issues to maintain its position as a good example for other countries. LIPU would continue its tradition of active engagement as a National Action Plan stakeholder.

Marija Stanišić (NGO Center for Bird Protection and Research, Montenegro) confirmed some progress at national level but believed much more effort was needed to solve the IKB issue. It was to be hoped that the newly formed government would show much more commitment to this topic than the former administration. The NGO Center had been supporting efforts to combat IKB in Montenegro in many ways, and hoped to see a National IKB Action Plan adopted by the new government.

Guy Shorrock (RSPB, United Kingdom) concurred that the UK had a smaller IKB problem than some countries, but there was nevertheless a significant and serious problem for some species of raptor. The extent and scale of the issue was well understood. In relation to points B12 and C19 of the Scoreboard, IKB was not assessed to be an organized crime in the UK's Scoreboard submission. There was, however, a major problem with raptor persecution on large sporting estates, and under UK law enforcement definitions, this clearly amounted to serious and organized crime. Much of the current enforcement action relied on NGOs, and RSPB would be grateful for clarification of why raptor persecution was not assessed as organized crime and how scores of 100% in the Scoreboard could be justified. Mr Shorrock also asked how the UK believed it could meet the requirements of the Rome Strategic Plan without targeted action against sporting estates

Sandra Jovanović (BirdLife Serbia) reported that BirdLife Serbia held information on more than 3,000 bird-related crimes in its database, and had observed a clear decrease in the quality of government reports and in the work of certain institutions. In 2017, BirdLife Serbia had had 97% success in obtaining data, but by 2020 this had fallen to 16%, with particularly low participation of the police, institutions and hunting organizations. This was a really critical situation given that most of the IKB cases in Serbia were reported by NGOs. BirdLife Serbia expressed concern that there is no evidence of a decrease of IKB and dissatisfaction with answers shared through the Scoreboard.

Claudia Feltrup-Azafzaf (Association Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO) BirdLife Partner in Tunisia) congratulated the Tunisian authorities for participation in both Scoreboard assessments. National and local hunting brigades had carried out vital interventions at important IKB blackspots. AAO was calling on the national authorities to increase the budget and other resources for addressing IKB, and requested the withdrawal of the derogation allowing falconers to trap Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* at Cap Bon using non-selective nets at a major bottleneck for migratory species, thereby having major adverse impacts on non-target species. There was also a need to focus on training, monitoring and enforcement, rehabilitation of birds, and awareness-raising.

5.4 Reports from MIKT Observers

The Chair invited brief reports from MIKT Observers concerning their activities contributing to the implementation of the MIKT Programme of Work 2016-2020 and the Bern Convention Tunis Action Plan 2013-2020.

Farah Bouquelle (European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment – EUFJE) provided background information on EUFJE, a network of hundreds of judges and courts from EU Member States, candidates and third countries. She spoke about a project called BIOVAL, aiming to offer a voluntary tool to judges for valuing ecological damage, focusing on compensation as opposed to fines and sanctions. She detailed a study of variability across Europe in the monetary value assigned to individuals of species affected by IKB, using the example of Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. The value assigned to a single Red Kite varied from EUR 150 in Bulgaria to EUR 17,000 in Latvia, showing the lack of any consistent baseline for assessing compensation to be applied in prosecutions involving IKB. Furthermore, it had been very difficult to find information on how values had been derived in each country. In some cases the criteria being applied were completely unrelated to the intrinsic value of the species concerned. Further research was under way to prepare the first draft of a consistent methodology, based on objective criteria, for discussion at a multidisciplinary workshop. She also emphasized the importance of the study and methodology developed in the framework of LIFE Nature Guardians about the economic valuation of crimes against protected animal species, which was included in the documentation of the meeting (UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.8).

David de la Bodega Zugasti (SEO/BirdLife) summarized a study under the LIFE Nature Guardians project, examining the origins and motivations of environmental crime. The slides comprising Mr de la Bodega's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and on the Bern Convention website. This work had involved a review of scientific literature, a survey of social perceptions, analysis of legal judgements, and interviews with professionals. The literature review had shown that no single motivation was predominant, but the more important motivations included tradition, elitism (the luxury/prestige dimension), social cohesion (maintaining social ties), non-conformity (disagreeing with rules), profit, conflicts (e.g. financing of terrorism), corruption, and beliefs/superstitions. However, lack of awareness and understanding were also recurrent factors, showing that enforcement actions alone were not enough. He provided further details of the other components of the study, including details on profiling of perpetrators of poaching, and the sale and purchase of wildlife. Finally, he presented a number of proposals for action. Among the latter were more targeted and efficient reporting, investigation and prosecution systems, and development of strategies for raising awareness and engagement in the general population.

Jessica Williams (BirdLife International) provided an overview of the work of the BirdLife International Partnership on the issue of IKB. The slides comprising Ms Williams's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and on the Bern Convention website. The main message was that BirdLife and other NGOs were ready to work with governments on IKB. The zero tolerance principle agreed under the Rome Strategic Plan needed to be put into practice through legislation, enforcement, judicial processes, education and communications. There were promising signs in some countries but backward steps too, showing that work needed to be stepped up with greater urgency. The IKB Scoreboard was a unique process that could exemplify best practice for other international fora. Overall, engagement had been positive but there was room for improvement. BirdLife had been pleased to see that most countries had made their reports available online and encouraged others to do so. The Scoreboard showed that progress in actually tackling IKB had been negligible; IKB was either increasing, stable or unknown in most countries. Only four reporting countries had reported a decrease. There was an urgent need for better monitoring to fill knowledge gaps, and BirdLife urged governments to reach out to NGOs on this topic. BirdLife was working on all five of the Rome Strategic Plan objectives, including, for example,

facilitating the development of National Action Plans, and undertaking IKB awareness raising and advocacy.

Cy Griffin (European Federation for Hunting and Conservation – FACE) underlined that the hunting community across Europe was part of the solution to IKB. The slides comprising Mr Griffin's presentation can be found on the meeting's dedicated webpage and on the Bern Convention website. It was important to get the terminology right and to refer to "illegal killing of birds" rather than "illegal hunting". It was important to avoid creating a situation where the wider hunting community protected an irresponsible minority. FACE itself had a long-standing policy of zero tolerance towards illegal killing, which was not only a conservation issue, but also damaged the reputation of sustainable hunting. Details were provided of work carried out by FACE in Malta, Cyprus, Greece and Italy, involving awareness raising within hunting communities, and actions to support training and enforcement. FACE urged government authorities to increase collaboration at national level with national hunting organizations and BirdLife, and to engage in greater information exchange.

Luay Zonkle (Egypt) agreed that it was very important to be clear in the use of terminology relating to hunting and IKB, and provided information about the definitions and implications of relevant terminology used in Egypt.

Edward Van Asch (CITES Secretariat) stated that overall, the CITES Secretariat very much encouraged the ongoing efforts of MIKT and would continue to support this work. He provided information on relevant initiatives under CITES and made available links to a number of pages on the CITES website that might be of interest. He also mentioned various tools and resources developed by CITES that could be used in the work of combating IKB.

Simon Brusland (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria – EAZA) provided a brief introduction to EAZA, a membership organization of scientifically run zoos in 43 countries that adhered to a common set of standards, mainly dealing with conservation, sustainability and animal welfare. Among relevant EAZA initiatives had been a campaign on Asian songbirds in 2017-2019. Together with the organization Species 360°, EAZA had developed a knowledge index on traded songbird species, covering those entering the EU, and were currently working with partners to develop a songbird and trade database that would soon be available online. EAZA was still considering how best it could contribute further on the issue of IKB, noting that illegal trade was the most evident area of interest as it provided the opportunity to raise awareness within the zoo community of IKB.

Gary Timbrell (International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey – IAF) referred to a workshop that had taken place in Abu Dhabi in 2019, involving representatives of five governments from the East Mediterranean and Middle East regions. A Declaration had been agreed and published online in the languages of the countries concerned. A meeting had been held with the Egyptian government and stakeholders in March 2020 to develop a plan for enforcing legislation in markets where illegal trade was taking place. A key activity arising from this was to ensure that falconers developed a code of conduct, which would in turn support policing and enforcement. Mr Timbrell stressed the importance of face-to-face meetings in further implementation of MIKT and looked forward to IAF's continued participation.

Laura Dami (Tour du Valat) noted that Tour du Valat was a research institute for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands, and although not especially focused on IKB, was aware that IKB often affected waterbirds in the region. Tour du Valat worked locally in the Camargue, France, and internationally. Among specific activities relevant to IKB were organization of annual awareness raising on hunting regulations in France, work on lead poisoning in waterbirds, and work with a range of partners around the Mediterranean on

drivers of IKB and development of tools to encourage change. In the framework of an international project Tour du Valat was conducting training on waterbird census techniques, and using census work to monitor any illegal activities in relation to waterbirds.

Day 2. 10 June 2021

5.5 Considerations for options for future reporting in the framework of the Rome Strategic Plan and frequency of future meetings**.**

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) introduced document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc5.5.- T-PVS/Inf (2021)19 through a presentation titled *Future reporting in the framework of the Rome Strategic Plan, and frequency and format of future meetings.* All the papers can be found on the meeting's dedicated website.

The Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) foresaw two types of assessment: periodic self-assessment by governments using the IKB Scoreboard to assess progress in combating IKB, and a mid-term assessment in 2025 followed by final assessment in 2030. These assessments were complemented by national reports, developed under the Tunis Action Plan for 2013-2020. The Scoreboard assessments were planned to be completed in 2023, 2026 and 2029. The future of the national reports, currently submitted ahead of each joint meeting of the Bern Convention Network of SFPs and the CMS MIKT, and the future schedule of the meetings themselves, had yet to be decided.

Despite the widely recognized value of the Scoreboard in assessing progress in fighting IKB, considerations to discuss included that some elements of the RSP were not sufficiently covered by the Scoreboard, and that member governments suffered from reporting fatigue because of multiple national reporting commitments. Three options were proposed to ensure complete reporting under the RSP using a new complementary reporting template:

A) A report ahead of each joint meeting, using a new template to better complement the Scoreboard;
B) A report similar to A), to be submitted ahead of the mid-term assessment in 2025 and the final assessment in 2030; and
C) A similar report, submitted at the same time as the Scoreboard every three years.

Further questions concerned whether a more structured approach to reporting by observers, and by the Secretariat, was required. Considerations for future meetings included the frequency of joint meetings, possible alternative formats for more frequent meetings, the financial implications of more frequent meetings, and the kind of reporting that might be associated with more frequent meetings, should this possibility be agreed.

James Williams (UK) said that it was important to note that the RSP was not legally binding, which meant that reference to 'entry into force' in document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc 5.5 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)19 was not accurate. As with the Scoreboard, it would be important to ensure that national reports were not used to compare progress between countries. He also considered it important to avoid creating another level of reporting, and felt that the Scoreboard was already reasonably comprehensive, although there was no clear place to include fundraising.

Tilman Schneider (CMS Secretariat) responded that the non-legally binding nature of the RSP had been discussed at previous meetings and it was well understood that its general character was supportive. It was important to streamline and maximize the effectiveness of reporting, and national reporting was one means of verification of the many activities in the RSP. It was also clearly understood that the Scoreboard was not intended for comparative use, and what

was needed now was discussion of how missing elements in the Scoreboard could best be covered.

The MIKT Coordinator thanked the UK for the information submitted for the Scoreboard, the UK being the only country that used exclusively a narrative report for Scoreboard purposes. A limitation of the Scoreboard was that the tick-box format meant that some important information was not captured if participants did not add narrative information in comments, and not all countries did this.

Ursula Sticker (Secretary, Council of Europe Bern Convention) understood the issue of reporting fatigue, but considered it important to complement the Scoreboard with more detailed narrative information.

James Williams (UK) stressed the importance of clarifying what was needed, when and from whom, and how it was going to be used. There might be scope for making more effective use of the Scoreboard, and, for example, one-page written national reports might be more useful than oral reports at meetings. A more effective reporting process was needed.

Charles de Barsac (France) asked for more information about the elements of the RSP that were not adequately reported through the Scoreboard.

The MIKT Coordinator said that although the Scoreboard was generally well aligned with the RSP, there were instances where this was not the case. Topics such as details of networking, capacity building, and fundraising were only covered in sufficient detail in the Scoreboard if countries gave information in comments.

Panicos Panayides (Cyprus) stressed the need to streamline reporting, while if possible reducing the burden for those involved in the reporting process, for whom reporting every year for the Bern Convention and every three years for the Scoreboard was excessive duplication of effort. He suggested requesting additional information in the Scoreboard that would cover existing gaps, and extending the national reporting interval to two to three years. When deciding the frequency of meetings, it was important to maintain momentum by meeting every two years or less, and the reporting schedule would not necessarily have to align with meetings.

James Williams (UK) said current gaps in data collected by the Scoreboard could be filled by providing guidance on the information that was needed in the free text sections. Clear prioritization of the required information would also be helpful. The Scoreboard and national reports needed information from many sources that was a burden for governments to collect. The preference of the UK for reporting under the RSP was option B. The Secretariat should consult MIKT members to reach consensus on final complementary sharing of information. The expertise of observers was welcome, and their focus should be on assisting the efforts of member governments. If observers were to provide written reports, they should be complementary to national reports, not contradictory, and their frequency should align with the frequency of national reports.

Regarding frequency of meetings, Mr Williams suggested that face-to-face meetings could align with Scoreboard reporting in 2023, 2026 and 2029. Meetings that involved negotiation were better held face-to-face, and any additional meetings should have low financial implications. The Scoreboard and National Action Plans should provide sufficient information about activities undertaken by MIKT members.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) said that her organization would welcome opportunities to report their own progress, and would be in favour of more structured reporting by observers

at the same interval as MIKT members. The priority should be to inform the Scoreboard in each country, and reporting by observers at national level might be worth considering. Regarding the frequency of meetings, BirdLife International would welcome an annual meeting to maintain momentum and would favour more coordination in the period between meetings so that momentum was maintained.

The MIKT Coordinator clarified that observers worked at both national and international level, and that national-level observers should be able to report through the group of stakeholders contributing to the Scoreboard. Contributions of international observers were currently *ad hoc*, and it was possible that useful information was being lost.

Gary Timbrell (IAF) observed that it was quite normal for observers to make reports that contradicted national reports. This was one of the advantages of the Bern Convention system where files could be opened at the request of NGOs.

Charles de Barsac (France) expressed support for the suggestion of Cyprus that the Scoreboard indicators could be amended to obtain the information currently missed, and also supported the idea of more structured reporting from observers.

The Chair said that a mix of physical and virtual meetings would allow more frequent contact at less cost, and suggested that focussing online meetings on specific themes might be worthwhile.

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) observed that there was consensus emerging about having more frequent meetings, with some online and others face-to-face and that in-person meetings would coincide with Scoreboard submission years.

James Williams (UK) expressed concern about the resource implications of annual meetings. If agreed to, they would need to be very clearly focused. The same people from many countries participated in a range of international meetings and MIKT should not be considered in isolation. He stressed the importance of spending resources on actual implementation activities rather than on discussing these activities.

Simon Nemtzov (Israel) said that a compromise might be to have an annual online meeting lasting one day. This would maintain momentum but not be too burdensome.

Rubén Moreno-Opo (Spain) supported the idea of an annual thematic one-day online meeting, supplemented by three or four face-to face meetings before 2030.The Scoreboard, amended to ensure provision of currently irregularly supplied data and with the addition of clearer guidance for respondents, should be the principal means of reporting.

Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) stressed the importance of annual meetings to maintaining momentum. There was much to discuss and he proposed a two-year cycle of alternating face-to-face and online meetings.

Arianna Aradis (ISPRA, Italy) agreed that an annual one-day online meeting for updates would be a good compromise.

The MIKT Coordinator responded to suggestions to use the Scoreboard for reporting instead of developing a new template for this. She agreed that a Scoreboard with clearer instructions might fulfil this function, but it would necessitate using option C and meeting triennially, in years when the Scoreboard was updated. This could certainly be considered to reduce concern about the burden of additional meetings.

James Williams (UK) thanked the MIKT Coordinator and suggested that the Bern and CMS Secretariats should together prepare a revised proposal for further consideration and comment by the members. It should be clear how decisions would be made after the meeting, and he suggested a consensus view by members via email.

Tilman Schneider (CMS Secretariat) pointed out that any substantive amendments to the Scoreboard would have to be adopted at the level of the CMS COP, adding complexity to the process.

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) agreed, and said that it might be possible to focus on expanding the narrative aspects of the Scoreboard without changing the basic structure or questions.

Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) said the Secretariat would use the input of meeting participants to prepare a proposal of options for future reporting and frequency of meetings, for the approval of the group.

6. Draft MIKT Workplan 2021-2025

The MIKT Coordinator gave a presentation introducing the Draft MIKT Workplan for 2021-2025, drawing attention to documents UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.6, UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.5 and UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.6. All the papers can be found on the meeting's dedicated website.

The Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) had been adopted by the Bern Convention in 2019 and by CMS/MIKT members in 2020 on the understanding that a detailed and ambitious workplan would be developed for its implementation, which included the possibility of an independent monitoring mechanism.

The Objectives of the RSP comprised one process-oriented objective, the preparation of National Action Plans, and five objectives for implementation, under the customary headings of Scope, Prevention, Legislation, Enforcement and Justice. Meeting participants were divided into six breakout groups to review each of these objectives and suggest amendments to the workplan. A timetable was proposed under which participants were encouraged to submit written amendments to the workplan by 18 June 2021, with a revised text to be prepared and circulated by the Secretariat by 2 July 2021, ready for final consideration and approval by MIKT members by 16 July 2021.

Simon MacKown (UK) considered this to be the most important part of the meeting, and expressed concern that the workplan presented for discussion by the breakout groups appeared to differ from the strategic plan that had been agreed by the Bern Convention Standing Committee. It was unclear to him where the differences had arisen, and whether they had been approved by the MIKT members. He wanted to ensure that the process of amending and finalizing the workplan was transparent, and asked for clarity about how the CMS Secretariat would handle differences of opinion in the review process.

The Chair pointed out that CMS had a long tradition of seeking consensus and maximizing transparency in all its processes, and these approaches were enshrined in its meeting protocols. He asked Mr MacKown to provide written comments on the workplan, highlighting examples where there were differences with respect to the RSP, so that these could be taken into account in the final version of the workplan.

Marco Valentini (Italy) expressed surprise at the lack of transparency perceived by Mr MacKown. He was very satisfied with the process and supported the approach of the Bern and CMS Secretariats.

Mr MacKown stressed that he was not accusing anybody of a lack of transparency, rather, he was asking the CMS and Bern Secretariats to ensure transparency in the process of updating the workplan. He remained concerned about differences between the workplan and the RSP, and would be happy to detail these concerns in writing as suggested by the Chair.

Tilman Schneider (CMS Secretariat) clarified that since the adoption of the RSP by the Bern Convention Standing Committee, CMS/MIKT had developed the workplan to accommodate MIKT members' ambitions. This had been communicated to MIKT members in June 2020. The Secretariat had developed a draft MIKT workplan and had consulted with the MIKT Consultative Group, which was open to all interested members. The draft had been tabled for amendment by this meeting, but it was by no means final, and further amendments would be made in a completely transparent manner.

Report back from Breakout Groups

Breakout Group 1: National Action Plans

Willem van den Bossche (BirdLife Europe and Central Asia) said that the work of the Bern and CMS Secretariats in developing a draft guidance document on preparing National Action Plans (NAPs) was much appreciated, but the group felt that the timeline suggested for countries to discuss the format of NAPs was too short, and should be extended if possible.

Parts of the guidance focussing on potential options for countries seemed prescriptive, and the group felt it would be preferable to be given a choice of options rather than being presented with a way forward.

Some countries in the Mediterranean region would like to see legally binding NAPs, which would raise the profile of IKB and the priority given to it by government authorities. This in turn would increase the chances of funding being made available for implementation.

Understaffing was a serious issue in most countries, and the NAPs should help with securing resources. Effective coordination of NAPs required a steering committee comprising a wide range of stakeholders. The assessment of the need for a NAP in a country could be assisted by using the data and information provided in the Scoreboard for the country.

The Bern and CMS Secretariats could help national focal points with drawing the attention of government agencies to the issue of IKB by providing letters of support emphasizing the benefits of developing a NAP.

It would be useful to have existing examples of NAPs available online, with translations into English, French, Arabic and other languages. Many NAPs were, of course, written in local languages and so were difficult to share. Assistance from the Secretariats in translating and making available NAPs and other relevant documents would be appreciated.

It was thought that workshops and training could be highly beneficial, and that regional and thematic approaches might be most useful. The Bern and CMS Secretariats might have a role to play with these. Regions such as the Balkans had issues in common, and topics for thematic workshops might include cross-border issues such as hunting tourism. Funding permitting, it was felt that meeting face-to-face was preferable to online meetings.

The group did not welcome the idea of additional reporting commitments but welcomed further guidance on reporting.

Breakout Group 2: Scope, scale and motivations behind IKB

Laura Dami (Tour du Valat, France) said that this was a topic with strong differences between countries, and that each country would need to adopt appropriate methodology. It would be important to share resources, but sensitive translations would be helpful, allowing for differences in meaning in different languages.

The group considered the Actions in the draft workplan point by point. Under Action 1.1.a) *Establish a baseline for 2020*, progress would be difficult, and funding would need to be allocated on a country-by-country basis. Monitoring was not the same as enforcement, being used, for example, in establishing baselines. Flexible guidance and online training would be useful.

Action 1.1.b) *Adopt a methodology for assessing progress towards targets of RSP*. An amended Scoreboard could contribute to this. Flexible guidance and training, eventually online, and translated if possible, would be helpful. It was suggested that funding from the private sector could be sought for monitoring. For analyses, it would be important to engage appropriate experts, possibly from universities. When discussing responsibilities of stakeholders, the group did not know whether Bern Convention parties should be included, or whether the workplan only applied to MIKT members.

Action 1.1.c) *Identify and map IKB hotspots*. It was noted that some countries already had maps of hotspots, but others still needed to compile these. Tackling IKB hotspots would benefit from sharing experiences between countries

Action 1.1.e) *Promote information sharing among MIKT countries through a pan-Mediterranean portal*. The group underlined that this would need a lot of support from the Secretariats and was likely to be expensive.

Under Action 1.2. a) *Compile a common format*, work undertaken by another group on socioeconomic outlook was needed. This stakeholder should be included, together with a budget. The group was unclear whether a budget for this had been agreed at the CMS COP.

Action 1.2.b) *Carry out an overall survey and review of motivations behind IKB* might already be covered by the Scoreboard, and was considered to be a responsibility of the Secretariat.

The three most important actions were considered to be 1.b) – adopt methodology; 1.e)-promote information sharing among countries, and a Mediterranean portal, and 1.2. a) and b).

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) confirmed that the Secretariat would commit to the Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) workplan, as it had to its predecessor, the Tunis Action Plan. The Bern SFPs would be asked to take note of the MIKT workplan, not to adopt it, because they were not planning to take it to the Standing Committee.

The Bern Convention would contribute to Action 1.1.b), because this was included in the RSP, and a system was already in place in the form of the Scoreboard.

James Williams (UK) clarified that with regard to Action 1.2.a), he was seeking coherence with what had been agreed at CMS COP13 in February 2020, and clarity about whether more funding would be required.

Breakout Group 3: Establishment of active prevention of IKB

Lilla Barabas (BirdLife Europe and Central Asia) started by stating that increased enforcement had the best deterrent effect. The right laws and levels of enforcement needed to be embedded in different objectives. For example, if environmental crime was recognized as organized crime, it might result in better enforcement, in turn helping prevention.

The group considered reaching key decision makers in each country to be key to prevention. The Secretariats could support this by helping to open doors for addressing the appropriate authorities.

Another key aspect was that people, organizations and institutions were often set in their ways, and new incentives might not be implemented because of the effort required to use new tools and methods. Support from the Secretariats could again prove useful to provide best-practice guidance on activities for prevention. In some cases, it might not be enough for best practices to be optional, and binding commitments might be needed. Stakeholder meetings and workshops could be one of the best ways of identifying barriers to using new incentives.

When communicating with the general public, and in developing national communication strategies, it would be important to avoid engaging only with MIKT members' existing networks. Emphasis on education should be from early childhood. Ministries of Education could support top-down interventions and extra-curricular activities outside schools. Young people constantly used communication technology and social media, and this should be seen as an opportunity. Social science methodology such as public opinion polls should be encouraged to help understand drivers and impact of measures taken. Knowing motivations could help address campaigns appropriately.

Special target groups mentioned in the workplan included a special role to link with local communities and with hunters. To these should be added birdwatchers and ecotourism businesses, that could have a role in prevention and reporting of illegal acts. Reporting tools such as hotlines to local authorities and mobile phone apps could play important supporting roles.

Modern technology offered opportunities, and satellite tracking was a powerful way for people to make emotional connections with individual birds, identifying problems on migration routes and engaging the public. Nest cameras also gave positive messages. Tracking individuals with GPS loggers could provide an instant alert system, as highlighted by a recent case in Israel. Further ideas for using modern technology to prevent IKB included mining social media information, and using nanotechnology to identify poisons. Dissemination of information about these technologies was another area where the Secretariats could help. Workshops on special technologies would be a good dissemination tool.

Gary Timbrell (IAF) stressed the importance of reporting satellite tracking locations several days after their real time occurrence.

Breakout Group 4: Ensuring IKB is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation

Vasileios Papadopoulos (Hellenic Ornithological Society/BirdLife Greece) reported that with regard to actions on revision of legislation, the group recognized that there were enough international legislative instruments to guide countries. Participants agreed that a Model Law would also be very useful, and it would be important for such a law to account for different situations in different countries.

There was good awareness of what legislation was effective in the EU. However, there was not sufficient information and knowledge about the situation in countries of North Africa and

the Middle East, including on the development and implementation of relevant legislation in these countries.

The group considered that a permanent, high-quality helpdesk, or list of known experts reachable at any time during the process of development of national legislation would be useful. These should be additional to the available documents.

This objective could also be supported by taking advantage of work done by observers such as NGOs who have undertaken LIFE projects on how to successfully develop appropriate legislation.

Breakout Group 5: Ensuring effective and efficient enforcement

Cy Griffin (FACE) reported that under Action 4.1.a) *Provide detailed information on existing enforcement resources and the prioritization of enforcement*, the group considered it important to identify enforcement needs and record enforcement effort. If many cases were reported, it might be due to a high level of effort.

Action 4.1. b) *Compile and analyze the information collected regarding the existing enforcement resources*, was an issue where support from the Secretariat with analysis would be helpful. Capacity for this action would generally need strengthening.

Action 4.1. c) *Organize specialized training for compliance, assurance and enforcement personnel* would need to take into account that enforcement and inspections in the field were very different from addressing organized crime, for which special help would be needed. There were many different kinds of IKB, and it was important to understand the supply chains.

Action 4.1. d) *Develop specialized enforcement units for dealing with wildlife crime* was an issue to be dealt with at national level, maybe requiring less input at international level. It would be useful to have exchange on these points, maybe at an online annual meeting.

Under Action 4.2. a) *Ensure that specialist support, including specific information and materials for raising awareness, is available to enforcement agencies*, it might be useful to have environmental impact statements and other pre-written materials for prosecutors to take to court. If they had set texts to follow it would increase their effectiveness.

Monitoring of trade would also be useful, not just for CITES species. Support of customs authorities could be linked to hunting tourism. Paperwork in different languages might be an issue with this.

IMPEL had in the past raised the issue of close rings. It would be useful to have a standardized list of close rings used per species.

It would be helpful to know which countries were using what types of packages of legislation, and what areas they covered. Legislative gaps could then be identified.

Guy Shorrock (RSPB) emphasized that the relevant enforcement agencies could identify where legislation was preventing them from being effective. If this were done across countries, patterns might emerge. 'Strategic disruption' was a method used in the UK under which agencies disrupted the way criminals operated. This could be very effective when offences were difficult to prosecute. A whole package of methods beyond prosecutions had proved effective in the Sovereign Base Areas on the island of Cyprus.

Breakout Group 6: Ensuring effective and efficient justice

Francesco Maletto (ClientEarth) reported that Group 6 had reflected on training, sharing of best practice, and guidelines, which could be summarized as raising awareness and expertise for judges and prosecutors.

The judiciary rarely perceived the nature and impact of IKB and most would benefit from training, but few agreed to it. There was a strong correlation between trained judges and better/stricter judgements. The need for training and networking at national and international level was high, involving police, prosecutors and judges.

A way to increase expertise was through sharing best practices and guidelines, which were strongly needed, and which should target all stages of criminal proceedings. Sentencing guidelines were especially important to differentiate offences, and were also a means of providing interpretation of case law and practice.

The MIKT Coordinator said that looking at the actions proposed in the workplan under this issue, the first, covering reduction of the length of court proceedings was difficult to influence at international level, but it could probably be effected indirectly at national level.

7. Baseline and Methodology: Adopting a methodology for assessing scope and scale of IKB

The Chair informed participants that discussion of this topic would be held in plenary.

The MIKT Coordinator gave a presentation that referred to document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.7 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)20 and informed the meeting that participants were being asked to endorse the document, not to adopt it. All papers can be found on the meeting's dedicated website.

The primary objective of the Rome Strategic Plan was the reduction of the scale of IKB by 50% by 2030. In order to implement this objective, a baseline was needed. The only available baseline at present comprised the BirdLife International reports by Brochet *et al.* (2016 and 2017), who estimated that up to 26 million birds were victims of IKB in the Mediterranean region and more widely in Europe every year. Apart from this, data were sparse, and the RSP in objective 1.1.a) proposed that countries should decide on an approach using the Scoreboard to set a baseline, and a methodology for assessing progress.

When using the Scoreboard to monitor IKB, the relevant indicators were A1 to A4. Before assessing the level of IKB in a given country, there was a need to understand the nature of IKB in that country, it was also important to understand the motivations driving IKB in a country. There were many kinds of data sources that could be used to assess the scope and scale of IKB, and two main approaches for countries undertaking monitoring of IKB: option A, when the country chose to estimate the full scale and extent of IKB, and option B, when the country chose to use indicators of scale that allowed the trend to be tracked.

The steps in the process of adopting a methodology at national level were outlined. When measuring IKB, the periodic survey methodology used by BirdLife International was a good example to follow for complete surveys (option A). For surveys based on indicators (option B), a regular survey also needed to be established.

Challenges included allowing for differences between methods adopted in different countries, and difficulties in making quantitative and direct comparisons. The use of indicators would also complicate judgement of whether there had been a 50% reduction in IKB by 2030.

The Chair remarked that it was, by definition, difficult to estimate and monitor an illegal activity. There were even difficulties in Europe in obtaining data on legal harvest levels of birds, despite the obligations of countries to report these under Article 12 of the EU Birds Directive.

The MIKT Coordinator said that the Scoreboard did request trend data, but only generically/anecdotally, asking whether the trend was increasing, stable or decreasing. There was a need for a more precise, quantitative approach.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) observed that many countries reported unknown trends in IKB in their Scoreboard assessments. Assessments of IKB in most countries were undertaken by NGOs, and systematic monitoring involving government authorities was generally lacking, making it difficult to judge the effectiveness of the Rome Strategic Plan. Monitoring always presented challenges, but with a good sampling strategy, and by concentrating effort on hotspots, it could be scaled to the resources available. This was already working in countries such as Cyprus, Egypt, Italy and Lebanon. BirdLife International urged national authorities and other stakeholders to work together on this. The report from breakout group 2 emphasized that this was an area where written guidance, with translation where necessary, would be useful. BirdLife International was always available to assist, including with national monitoring guidelines, and national authorities not yet engaged in the process were encouraged to establish methodologies and begin systematic assessment of the scope and scale of IKB in their countries.

The Chair said that this was an issue that could benefit from something such as a one-day webinar during the proposed short, annual online meetings.

The MIKT Coordinator pointed out that there was a link to the best-practice guide for monitoring IKB, mentioned by BirdLife International, in document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.7.

Kate Brickett (UK) expressed a wish for further development of the document, with a greater emphasis on implementation, before it could be endorsed. More guidance was needed on issues such as how to set a baseline and undertake follow-up measurements. The UK had a number of proposed amendments, stressing a flexible and proportional approach, that would be submitted by email.

Willem Van Den Bossche (BirdLife Europe and Central Asia) understood that Spain had developed a good scheme for monitoring poisoning and shooting, based on data collected at wildlife recovery and rehabilitation centres.

Rubén Moreno-Opo (Spain) gave further details of this scheme, which was based on data from 30 or 40 wildlife hospitals managed by the regional authorities. He liked the approach provided in document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.7, which allowed flexibility for different situations in different countries.

The Chair suggested that cooperation between wildlife hospitals in a country could be facilitated by a website where data could be compiled into an online database.

Tassos Shialis (BirdLife Cyprus) said that his organization had run systematic monitoring of illegal mist netting and other bird trapping since 2002, and would be happy to share experiences with other countries.

Umberto Gallo-Orsi (CMS Raptors MoU) pointed out that indexes based on different data sources such as wildlife hospitals, cases prosecuted by law enforcement agencies, and local

monitoring schemes, could be compared and combined, providing more complete, more reliable and mutually reinforcing databases.

Pavle Jovanović (MEP, Serbia) mentioned the EU-TWIX database, which had been developed to assist national law-enforcement agencies, including CITES Management Authorities and prosecutors, in their task of detecting, analyzing and monitoring illegal activities related to trade in fauna and flora covered by the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations.

Marco Valentini (Italy) said that if local and national authorities were unaware of the IKB issue, they considered it not to exist. NGOs played a vital role in raising awareness and drawing attention to illegal situations. The issue of trust then arose, and while BirdLife and FACE were well-known and generally highly regarded, other organizations could lack credibility in the eyes of the authorities. Italy had been the first country to draft a National Action Plan for IKB, and this had been triggered by a critical situation publicized by an NGO. Clear criteria were needed for making data widely available and trustworthy, and the idea of an online system for wildlife rehabilitation and rescue centres was very useful. The start of this process could be demanding, with the possibility of conflict because, for example, some bodies might feel excluded. Mr Valentini also commented on the usefulness of EU-TWIX and other systems.

Claudio Celada (LIPU/BirdLife Italy) gave details of a standardized methodology, taking account of sampling effort, that had been developed by LIPU to track IKB at a hotspot in Sardinia. He welcomed suggestions for further improvement. Such monitoring was challenging at the beginning, and often needed subsequent improvement, but the key was to get started somewhere. Dialogue with government could follow. LIPU had also developed a database for bird hospitals, since the organization managed more than ten such hospitals, and this could be made available to the Italian government and to the CMS Secretariat.

Guy Shorrock (RSPB, UK) said that the RSPB had kept accurate records of raptor persecution for decades, but it remained unknown what proportion of crimes were missing from the records. In a typical year they would record 80 cases, but this might be less than 1% of actual cases. Consequently, using only those cases as the baseline for deriving an annual index would be unreliable. However, the UK had excellent species population monitoring that did provide a reliable index of the health of raptor populations, and helped to identify persecution hotspots and interest groups responsible for these crimes. A possible measure of progress might be to estimate the predicted population response for a given raptor species for specific reduction in the level of IKB, and to apply this in assessing the accuracy of existing estimates of levels of raptor persecution.

Laura Dami (Tour du Valat, France) asked whether it was important for surveys to take place at a particular time of year. Organizing surveys would be particularly challenging in some countries such as Libya and Algeria. She drew attention to the RESSOURCE project, led by the FAO with NGO partners in the Sahel region, that had collected a lot of data using questionnaires about the scale of hunting, which was mostly for subsistence. This information was unknown by the authorities in the Sahelian countries.

The Chair remarked that IKB had different impacts in different seasons. General information on impacts at different stages of the annual cycle could be provided to prosecutors and judges.

Ohad Hatzofe (Nature and Parks Authority, Israel) reported that many birds tagged with GPS loggers in Israel died in other countries along the flyway. Over 1,400 Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* had been tagged, and birds were poisoned, shot or trapped as far south as Sudan and west to Niger. He asked how this information could best be recorded and whether it was valuable to MIKT.

The Chair said that this was extremely valuable information about anthropogenic causes of bird mortality.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) said that BirdLife was undertaking a multi-collaborator study of mortality of satellite-tracked large landbirds in Africa-Eurasia, and that this information – and anything similar collected by other practitioners – would be a very useful contribution.

The Chair mentioned an analysis of intentional killing of birds in the forthcoming Atlas of African-Eurasian Bird Migration. The analysis included 3.4 million data points over 119 years, and was providing fascinating insights into relations between birds and man in time and space, also in relation to legislation such as the EU Birds Directive.

Nuno Saaverdra (Portugal) drew attention to new legislation in Portugal officially published the previous week. The sale or purchase of any equipment that could be used to illegally kill birds, such as traps, poisons and glues, was now forbidden by law without a permit. Permits would only be issued for bird ringing or other legitimate scientific study.

Marco Barbieri (CMS Secretariat) proposed a way forward for completion of work on this item. It would not be possible to conclude and finalize document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.7 on baseline methodology at this meeting. The proposed approach was similar to that adopted for the Draft MIKT Workplan discussed earlier in the meeting. He proposed a deadline of 18 June 2021 for written amendments and comments to be sent to the Secretariat. The Secretariat would compile a revised version of the document by 2 July which would be circulated again for approval. Hopefully, a final version could then be adopted by consensus.

Day 3. 11 June 2021

8. National Action Plans

The MIKT Coordinator introduced document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.8 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)25 and related information documents UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.9 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)27, UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.10 - T-PVS (2014) 14, UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.11 - T-PVS (2015) 19, and UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Inf.12 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)26, with a presentation titled *Proposal for preparation of a format and guidance for the development and implementation of National IKB Action Plans.* All the papers are on the meeting's dedicated website.

The development of National Action Plans (NAPs) was an opportunity for wide collaboration of government agencies with other stakeholders, nationally and internationally, and a means to encourage ownership of the process of combatting IKB. It also offered ways of coordinating actions of different stakeholders, monitoring and reporting on action, and measuring success against objectives and targets. Under the Rome Strategic Plan (RSP), the Bern Convention and MIKT Coordinator were expected to provide a format, including guidance, for development and implementation of NAPs by September 2021. By December 2021, each national government, together with associated stakeholders, was expected to assess the need for developing and adopting a NAP, based on the Scoreboard and other information sources.

Indicators of progress in each country, and a possible process for developing an IKB NAP were outlined, together with the possible content of a NAP. Actions could be outlined with consideration of priority, the responsible stakeholder, budget, available resources, and timetable for implementation.

The Chair emphasized the important role played by the Bern and CMS Secretariats in providing this guidance. Countries could learn from the experience of those that had already

started preparing NAPs. The involvement of all relevant stakeholders at national and provincial level had been vital in Italy.

Luay Zonkle (Egypt) highlighted some of the challenges encountered when establishing a NAP in Egypt. It was essential that the Plan was based on accurate information and that it had clear objectives. There was often a gap between the data recorded by the authorities and the true situation, and it was important to distinguish between legal hunting and illegal killing. Until data from BirdLife International became available, the information base in Egypt had been unreliable. It was essential to build the NAP on recent, accurate data, with ownership by all parties. The country was formerly a blackspot for IKB, but the situation had changed dramatically and hunting was now forbidden along about 60% of the Egyptian Mediterranean coast.

Arianna Aradis (Italy) stressed the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders were fully engaged with the process, or it was likely that many actions would not be followed up by implementation, because some actors either did not regard IKB as a priority, or did not want to be involved. Having deadlines for actions could help with this. Much of the funding in Italy came through an EU LIFE project, and the interest of a former government environment minister had helped with engagement of the carabinieri. There was scope for many improvements, and a more strategic approach was now being adopted.

Maja Polić (Croatia) said that the process of producing an NAP had started in Croatia, but there was insufficient high-level political interest. She asked if the Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats were in a position to help by writing letters to the relevant ministries to motivate their interest. These letters should ideally be followed up by requests for information about action taken.

The Chair recalled that in Italy, high-level political concern had been engaged when the European Commission opened a pilot procedure against Italy because of the IKB in the country.

Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International) reported that prior to MIKT4, the BirdLife Partners had been asked to outline the most important challenges in tackling IKB in their countries. The most frequently mentioned problem was weak political will caused by lack of government recognition of the extent of IKB, in turn resulting in lack of willingness to develop a IKB NAPs. The RSP goal of a 50% reduction in IKB by 2030 would require considerable upscaling of effort, and so an increase in resource and capacity levels, which itself would require greater political will. The countries represented at MIKT4 that were already working on NAPs were setting an important example to the many countries with serious IKB issues that had not yet taken the step of joining the Bern Convention/CMS/MIKT process. The BirdLife Partnership was available and ready to help, for example by sharing updates on IKB derived from its reviews. BirdLife International believed that there were very few countries which would not benefit from having an IKB NAP. Increased monitoring might reveal higher levels of IKB than expected, and levels of IKB could surge if enforcement was reduced, for example as had happened in some countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was an urgent need for rapid progress, and NAPs were effective tools to facilitate this. BirdLife International was strongly hoping for increases in momentum, not only in developing and implementing NAPs, but also in enthusiastic engagement by countries currently outside the Bern Convention/CMS MIKT process.

Simon Brusland (EAZA) said there was good evidence of the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder workshops in the field of conservation. EAZA had had very good results working with the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), which had established a methodology for workshops with independent facilitators all over the world.

The Chair considered this to be an option worth exploring and remarked that the more stakeholders that were involved in this process the better.

Kate Brickett (UK) said that it was good to see detailed guidance and a toolkit of actions for developing NAPs, but there was concern in the UK that the document might be too prescriptive. It would be preferable for there to be options that parties could choose from to allow flexibility for different national situations.

The MIKT Coordinator asked for existing National Action Plans to be shared with the Bern and CMS Secretariats to support the development of further guidance.

The Chair emphasized the importance of the link between NAPs and self-assessment through the Scoreboard.

9. Assessment of National Legislation, Legislative Guidelines and Model Law

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) provided an update on the status of the assessment of National Legislation, Legislative Guidelines and Model Law.

An objective of the Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) was to ensure that all countries had effective legislation in place by 2030, and the first step towards this was to make an assessment and provide guidance. The Bern Convention and CMS Secretariats would engage a consultant to assess national legislation for addressing IKB, identify gaps and good practice, and develop legislative guidelines and a Model Law.

The methodology of the assessment involved a subset of countries that had not yet been identified. Countries would be divided into two groups. In the first group, legislation, enforcement mechanisms and sanctions would be addressed, whilst in the second group only the enforcement mechanisms and sanctions would be addressed. The timeline foreseen by the RSP proposed the development of guidelines by December 2021, but it now looked as if this might be unrealistic.

The consultancy was envisaged as taking place in three phases, the first of which would be to create a database of similar projects that included information on legislation, the second would develop a Model Law and Legislative Guidelines, and the third would assess legislation in countries to identify gaps. The CMS Secretariat had developed draft TORs and was ready to discuss these with candidate consultants. Resources were available but the Covid-19 pandemic had caused problems with the availability of suitable consultants which was likely to lead to delays in initiating the work.

Stefan Ferger (EuroNatur) recalled that EuroNatur had analyzed legislation in west Balkan countries, and that BirdLife International had done so on a wider Mediterranean scale. The information was publicly available and these studies could be used in the assessment. EuroNatur and other NGOs offered their support and would be glad to be involved in gap analyses, especially at national level.

Lilla Barabas (BirdLife Europe and Central Asia) said that the EU LIFE ‘Against Bird Crime’ project partnership had recently written-up a policy recommendation report for tackling IKB in the participating countries: Cyprus, Croatia, Greece and Italy. This looked at both legislation and enforcement and was available online. A similar exercise in other countries would be worthwhile.

Kate Brickett (UK) said that the UK welcomed helpful examples of model legislation, but they had some concerns. The guidance should align with the RSP, especially Action 2.1.b), to make it clear that it applied to range states. There were different approaches to legislation and there was concern that the draft guidance was prescriptive.

The Chair stressed that there was no question of imposing guidance on countries.

Nadia Saporito (Bern Convention Secretariat) added that the guidelines would, of course, align fully with the RSP, and it would be up to each government to decide how or whether to amend their legislation.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) asked whether the review of legislation would include enforcement authorities and prosecutors working in the field as well as a desk study. Enforcement agents were often aware of the situation on the ground and what might be holding things back.

The Chair felt sure this would be included in the work of the consultant.

10. Budgetary matters: Funding for activities to counter IKB

Ursula Sticker (Secretary, Bern Convention) reported that the Programme of Work of the Bern Convention for 2022-23 would be discussed by the Bern Convention Standing Committee at the end of 2021. The Council of Europe core funding for the Convention was heavily supplemented by voluntary contributions, and provision for IKB activities was dependent on this fragile and unsustainable source. The Bern Convention was currently undergoing reform with the aim of securing a more sustainable financial basis. Meeting participants were encouraged to raise the issue of funding for the Bern Convention with their national governments.

The Chair said that weaknesses in baseline financial support for combatting IKB were cause for concern

Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) gave a presentation on financial needs and opportunities. MIKT was a successful joint initiative that needed to continue. The work of the permanent coordinator ensured good participation and feedback, which increased awareness and funds raised, in turn improving the effectiveness of the Secretariat, which allowed employment of the permanent coordinator. This virtuous circle had not yet been fully achieved.

To date, most of the available funding came from the European Commission. The available budget for 2021 covered the coordinator position and some dedicated activities, but the latter needed to be completed before October 2021. The CMS Secretariat was proposing that available funding be divided between two key actions: a) an assessment of legislation and development of a Model Law and legislative guidance (through a consultancy contract) and b) Capacity building activities, as proposed the previous day during the MIKT4 breakout groups (North Africa and the Middle East were highlighted). From 2021 onwards, available MIKT funding was lower and while the Coordinator position was secured until 2023 (with approximate costs of USD 43,000 to 53,000 per year) very little funding remained for dedicated activities such as workshops, travelling or training.

Mr Ramírez highlighted the importance of jointly considering funding opportunities and asked parties or observers with specific proposals to reach out to either himself or the MIKT Coordinator. He added that discussions were ongoing within CMS about how to prioritize and address identified gaps.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) felt that achieving the goal of a 50% reduction in IKB by 2030 was going to need significant additional resources. She hoped that the National Action Planning process would help increase recognition of the importance of the issue. NGOs had engaged in significant fundraising, and BirdLife itself had raised EUR 7 million over six years to combat IKB, including work at flyway level. Fundraising would continue but it was no substitute for increased involvement from national governments. BirdLife was open to working with national authorities and the Secretariats, on joint initiatives if appropriate. One possibility might be the establishment of a small grants programme. It was important to know the funding needs of national authorities for combatting IKB.

Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) stressed that the CMS Secretariat was open to joint initiatives with national authorities, working as an advisory body, and encouraged all meeting participants to share their ideas and needs.

11. Preparations for upcoming meetings, next Joint meeting

Rubén Moreno-Opo (Spain) confirmed that following consultation with colleagues in the regional administration, he was pleased that Spain could offer to host the next face-to-face joint meeting in Valencia. The original plan had been to host MIKT4, and it was now a pleasure to extend the offer to MIKT5. More details would follow when the timing was clear.

The Chair thanked the authorities in Valencia and Spain for this generous offer.

Iván Ramírez (CMS Secretariat) opened discussion of the timing and nature of future meetings. It seemed that many participants were keen to have an annual online meeting, and the main question concerned the frequency of joint face-to-face meetings. Face-to-face meetings should include the possibility to participate online to maximize attendance, reduce costs and conserve the planet. The offer from Spain to host the next face-to-face meeting was welcome and there was a question of whether 2022 would be too soon.

Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International) said that this had been an extremely important meeting, consolidating the work of MIKT and setting the stage for the next five years. In future, BirdLife International would support the idea of more technical meetings focused on solving particular problems. The increase in participation allowed by online participation was very welcome and important. She proposed that as a follow-up to the meeting, a questionnaire could be sent to all Bern Convention and MIKT focal points to find out what would be most useful for maximizing the value of future meetings in helping them to deliver their work.

The Chair said that a post-meeting questionnaire could certainly be considered.

Simon Nemtzov (Israel) proposed that large meetings should not be annual, and that perhaps they should be biennial.

Gary Timbrell (IAF) expressed concern that observer participation in smaller meetings to discuss specific topics might be limited to larger NGOs, and that smaller organizations such as his could be excluded.

The Chair reassured Mr Timbrell that meetings would continue to have as wide a participation as possible.

Vicky Jones (BirdLife International) said that sometimes national authorities had separate budgets for meeting attendance and training, and it might help maximize engagement in physical meetings to incorporate some training opportunities back-to-back with such events.

Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International) proposed that if joint meetings took place biennially in future, the more technically focused, problem-solving meetings could take place in alternate years.

The Chair asked all participants to inform the CMS Secretariat about their preferences in terms of timing, format and content of future meetings, including both joint meetings such as the present one, and smaller, more technical meetings. The Secretariat would prepare a proposal based on these inputs, and share it widely across all involved with MIKT for further consultation.

12. Other matters

Charles de Barsac (France) asked for clarification about the deadline for submission of comments under Agenda item 8, and about the status of document UNEP/CMS/MIKT4/Doc.8 - T-PVS/Inf (2021)25.

The MIKT Coordinator confirmed that the document had been intended for endorsement, not adoption, by MIKT4.

Kate Brickett (UK) asked for an extension of the timelines for consultation on documents for which amendments were being sent to the Secretariat, indicating that a period of two working weeks would be preferable.

Tilman Schneider said that there was scope to adjust the timeline and that the Secretariats would consult and advise participants accordingly.

13. Closure of the meeting

After the customary expression of thanks to all who had contributed to the successful organization and conduct of the meeting, the Chair declared proceedings closed.