



Lesson - Unit 6 - National Reporting

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Site: UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION PORTAL ON MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Course: Course for the National Focal Points for the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and its Instruments

Book: Lesson - Unit 6 - National Reporting

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1. Why have National Reporting at all?

National Reports are the official documents by which countries report to the decision-making bodies of the CMS Family and/or its instruments on the measures they have undertaken to implement the priorities of the instruments. National Reports provide an official record of national implementation of each instrument over time and collectively they draw the picture of the overall implementation of the instrument.

The National Reporting process is essential for the effective functioning of the instruments, and when properly carried out, can provide substantial benefits both to the instrument and to the country concerned.

The reporting process holds immense value for the countries themselves by charting their own progress and identifying their future implementation priorities. It also helps countries to assess implementation and to plan with other countries. National Reporting provides information to increase awareness of national activities, help mainstream biodiversity issues across sectors and encourage and further investments in the national implementation of CMS and its instruments.

How National Reporting Fits into the Overall Implementation Process

National Reporting is an integral part of the overall implementation process of the CMS Family instruments. This process usually occurs at the end of the intersessional period before the meetings of the decision-making bodies. However, it should also be seen as a continuous underlying process influencing the planning of activities, their implementation and the assessment of progress made under CMS and each of its instruments.

Legal basis for National Reporting

All CMS Family instruments include provisions for the preparation and submission of National Reports prior to meetings of their decision-making body. However, obligations differ depending on the legal status of the CMS instrument.

For CMS and its Agreements - which are legally binding - reporting is an obligation for each Party.

However, there is no mandatory reporting requirement under the MOUs, which are legally non-binding in nature. Nonetheless, Signatories to these MOUs are requested to make periodic reports on their national implementation.

References to the legal texts of each Instrument with regard to national reporting are summarized in the table on the right (click to enlarge).

Table 6.1 Legal Basis and Deadlines for National Reporting under CMS and its Instruments (reporting deadlines may change over time, therefore please check with the relevant Secretariat/Coordinating Unit for the most up-to-date information on the frequency and deadlines for National reporting)

CMS Family Instrument	Legal basis	Deadline / frequency
CMS	Article VI (c)	Six months before the COP
Agreements		
ACAP	Article VII (1) (c) & Article IX (B) (b)	120 days before the meetings of MOP
ACCOBAMS	Article VIII (b)	120 days before the meetings of MOP
AESA	Article VI (1) (c)	120* days before the meetings of MOP
ASCOBANS	Article 2.5	annual submission by 31 March
EUROBATS	Article VI	90 days before the meetings of MOP
GORILLAS	Article III and Article IV (1) (c)	120 days before the meetings of the MOP
WADDEN SEA SEALS	N/A	N/A
MOUs		
West African Elephant	Paragraph 7 of the MOU	reports submitted every two years
Aquatic Warbler	1. Paragraph 6 of the MOU; 2. official document CMS/AN/1/6	reports submitted every two years by 31 March of alternate years
Bukhara Deer	Paragraph 5 of the MOU	annual reports
Dugongs	1. Paragraph 6/6f; 2. meeting documents: CMU/Dugongs/2002/2, Rule 2	regular reports; documents for the meeting shall be available at least 30 days before the start of the Signatory State Meetings
Grassland Birds of South America	Paragraph 5 of the MOU	(determined by the first meeting of the signatories)
Great Bustard	Paragraph 4 of the MOU	regular reports
High Andean Flamingos	Paragraph 5 of the MOU	regular reports (format and frequency of reports decided at the first meeting of the signatories)
South Andean Huemul	Article 7 of the MOU	annual reports
Marine Turtles IOSEA	1. Paragraph 8 of the MOU; 2. report of the first meeting of the signatory states: point 74	90 days prior to the annual meeting of signatory states. (use online reporting database)
Marine Turtles Africa	Paragraph 6 of the MOU	annual report by 30 September each year
Monk Seal	Paragraph 8 of the MOU	reports submitted every two years
Pacific Cetaceans	Paragraph 8 of the MOU; UNEP/CMS/PC/Doc.5-01/Rev.1	regular reports coincide with MOU signatories' meetings
Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia	1. Paragraph 11 of the MOU; 2. CMS/Raptors/MAS1/Doc.12.2: point 9	reports submitted every three years according to the cycle of meetings of signatories; deadlines set midway between Meetings of the signatory states
Ruddy Headed Goose	Articles 4 and 7 of the MOU	report on the development of the MOU at least once a year
Saiga Antelope	Paragraphs 3 and 6 of the MOU	regular reports; detailed report within one year of the date of its entry into effect (report requirement according to report format determined by the signatory states in consultation with the CMS secretariat)
Sharks	Section 5: Paragraph 15 (b) of the MOU	regular reports
Siberian Crane	Paragraph 5 of the MOU	annual reports by 31 March
Slender Billed Curlew	MOU text (other duties: point 2)	annual reports
Western African Aquatic Mammals	Paragraph 8 of the MOU	regular reports

* The AESA MOP resumed, through Resolution 3.1, the deadline for submission of national reports to MOPN to 180 days and leave members of the MOP over the earlier deadline. For updates on the deadline please check the AESA website: www.aesa.org or contact the UNEP/AESA Secretariat.

2. Benefits of National reporting for the reporting country

National Reporting under CMS and its instruments, if carried out properly, has numerous benefits for the reporting countries:

- The National Reporting process can serve as an incentive for the systematic collection of data and information related to migratory species. It also provides for the regular updating of this data and information and for some countries can provide a unique framework for collating and archiving data and information.
- National Reporting leads to an increase in knowledge on migratory species and other related issues as well as the identification of gaps in knowledge.
- National Reports are a tool for sharing information – both within the country and internationally. They also bring the data and information collected to the public domain.
- National Reporting also allows countries to identify conservation issues that need to be tackled within their own country, in a region and/or more broadly internationally by a number of countries.
- Due to its multi-stakeholder nature, National Reporting establishes and builds a national alliance for implementation.
- National Reports can serve as the starting point for the planning of national implementation activities under the CMS Family Instruments.

Value and Use of Information provided in National reports

The data and information gathered in the National Reports, when objective and comprehensive, are of great value for many processes and user groups. For this reason it is important that the data be as complete and accurate as possible.

National Reports functions as a “one-stop-shop” for a country’s official information on migratory species and the measures undertaken to conserve them. Through this, the Government fulfills its obligations under CMS and its instruments.

From the viewpoint of CMS and its instruments, the data collected in the National Report provide information against indicators of the Strategic Plans or other implementation indicators and on the broader international level can also provide information on progress made towards achieving the Aichi targets. Thus they provide an assessment of implementation of the instrument as a whole and informs decisions of its decision-making body as well as feeds into the broader international biodiversity governance processes.

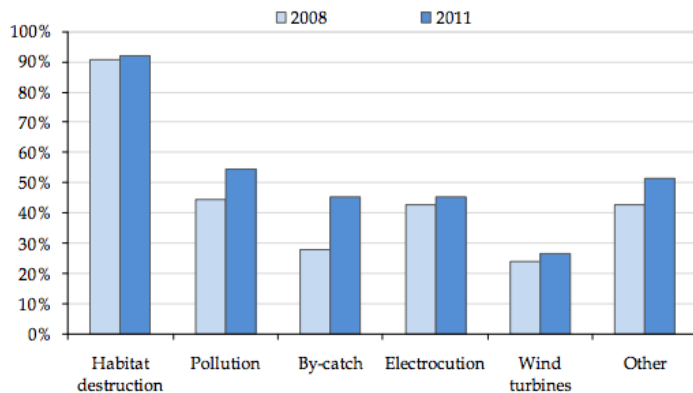


Figure 3. Percentage of Parties reporting each type of obstacle to migration for Appendix I birds, as recorded within the 2008 and 2011 national reports. Percentages are based on the total respondents for this question: 54 respondents in 2008 and 64 respondents in 2011. N.B. Parties can select more than one obstacle.

Nationally, the National Reports are essential for understanding the overall picture of implementation - progress and strengths, but also gaps and weaknesses - of the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans and National Implementation Plans and achieving the objectives of the Instrument. With the development of an analytical tool to complement the Online Reporting System the analysis of data and information will be automated and access to and use of the information will increase significantly, giving an unprecedented web-based gateway to information collected through national reports.

Governments can use the data and information to inform their decision-making and further implementation planning. NGOs can also use the information collected to direct their priorities for activities on the ground. The information contained in National Reports also provides a useful data source for academic research in the fields of conservation, sustainable use, environmental governance and others.

The private sector, for example, can use the information made available through National Reports in their strategic business planning.

Analytical tool

The Online Reporting System will in due course be complemented by an Analytical Tool. This will make possible instantaneous and automated analysis of the data submitted and should be designed in a way to allow easy, web- based access to customized reports.

3. When and What to report

The frequency and deadlines for National Reporting under each CMS Family instrument are defined in their texts.

Member States are strongly urged to submit National Reports to the relevant Secretariat/Coordinating Unit by the given deadline, in order to allow for timely analysis and synthesis of all reports submitted. Reports that are submitted after the deadline will not be considered in the synthesis prepared by the Secretariat/ Coordinating Unit. This in turn will mean that the assessment of the implementation of the instrument is neither comprehensive nor reliable and is an imperfect basis for decision making.

National Report Formats

Most CMS Family instruments have their own National Report Format. The format defines which type of information needs to be reported by the countries under each Instrument. Broadly the categories of information concern the status of the migratory species covered by the instrument, threats and pressures facing them, relevant responses taken as well as knowledge, capacity, institutional and financial matters. The formats are closely aligned with the *Strategic Plans* and *Action Plans* of the Instruments and the decisions of their decision-making bodies which establish the requirement to make a report.

The reporting formats are provided in the appropriate working language(s) CMS and its instruments. The CMS National Reporting Format is available in the three working languages of the COP which are English, French and Spanish. In the cases of some of the Agreements, such as AEWA and EUROBATS, however, the National Reporting Formats are only available in English and French which are the two working languages of their MOP.

Report formats are usually approved by the decision-making body of CMS or the given instruments concerned. The mandate to make revisions and amendments to the reporting formats in the inter-sessional periods can be given to the subsidiary bodies such as the Standing/Advisory Committees.

For the latest version of the individual national report formats, please contact the Secretariat/Coordinating Unit of the relevant CMS instrument.

The AEWA Format

AEWA is working towards a modular format. In addition to the main module there will be two specific ones – one on species status and the other one on site status. The main module is to be submitted to each Meeting of the Parties (MOP), which meets at intervals of three years, while the specific modules will have to be submitted less frequently.

4. Who reports and how to report

The responsibility for the National Reporting process under CMS and its instruments lies with the designated NFP for each country. The NFPs can however appoint a designated National Respondent to run the National Reporting process in their place.

The National Reporting process is a collective, collaborative and participatory exercise. This multi-agency, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder process should ideally involve all relevant governmental, scientific and academic institutions, non-governmental and other organizations and stakeholders at different levels who contribute to the implementation of the CMS Family instruments and/or can provide necessary data and information.

These institutions, organizations and stakeholders should form the core National Coordination Mechanisms for the implementation of the CMS instruments. These Mechanisms should be coordinated by the NFP.

Reporting platforms

Within the CMS Family, National Reporting currently takes place using two main methods. Until recently, the report formats were only made available in standard office software applications (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF). This meant that the standard Word or PDF files were filled in by each country and sent to the Secretariat/Coordinating Unit.

As an alternative, some of the Agreements such as those of IOSEA, ACAP and ACCOBAMS have started providing their National Report formats as online templates which can be accessed and completed via their websites.

A new central web-based reporting platform – the Online Reporting System (ORS) - has been developed to support the National Reporting processes for the CMS Family. Within the Online Reporting System the report formats are provided as online templates. This allows for data to be directly inserted into a web-based system and saved into an underlying database. Currently the Online Reporting System is being used by CMS, AEWa and ASCOBANS. The Online Reporting System is available for all CMS instruments to use and several more of them have already taken steps to adopt it.

The Online reporting System and its advantages

The Online Reporting System (ORS) was developed in 2010-2011 by UNEP-WCMC in close collaboration and under the guidance of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. AEWA was the first CMS instrument to use the ORS for its reporting to the 5th session of the MOP in May 2012.

The ORS is a versatile web-based platform for national reporting. It is a sophisticated, but flexible and easy-to-use system, which allows for easy creation and modification of customized national reporting templates. No IT programming skills are required to reproduce a report format within the ORS. Therefore, even Secretariats/Coordinating Units with no IT capacity can administer reporting processes through the system.

The system includes a delegation function, which allows the person responsible for the reporting process in a country to assign sections or even individual questions of the report to different contributors. All national contributors can access and work on the same national report simultaneously. This is a useful tool for managing the involvement of many contributing stakeholders in the national reporting process.

Once a complete report has been submitted, the information remains available and pre-filled for the next reporting cycle. It will only require the information to be updated, if necessary, thus significantly reducing the workload over for subsequent reporting cycles.

The information inserted flows directly into a database from which data can be easily extracted and analyzed by the Secretariat/Coordinating Unit. This saves substantive resources and time in comparison to the Microsoft-Word or Adobe-PDF-based report formats formerly used.

It is planned in the near future to complement the ORS with an analytical tool module. The analytical tool envisioned will be accessible by any internet user and will allow automated analysis of data across time and across different user records. The analytical tool will significantly increase access to and use of data and information provided through the national reports and will amplify the advantages of the ORS as a whole.

Last, but not least, the ORS is being considered for use by other biodiversity-related treaties outside of the CMS Family, such as CITES and the Ramsar Convention. Broadening the user community of the ORS can facilitate harmonization of report formats and reporting processes, where feasible, and will likely lead to cost sharing arrangements between participating MEA Secretariats, which will help reduce the costs associated with long-term maintenance and further development of the system.

The "Quick Guide for the CMS Online Reporting System" is available as an Annex to this Unit

5. Steps for compiling the National report

As an integral part of the implementation, reporting is a rolling and iterative process. It starts with the planning of implementation and carries through to the assessment of what has been done.

CHECKLIST

Steps for Compiling the National Report

- Start to plan the reporting together with the implementation planning
- Be clear on what needs to be reported
- Identify who can help and contribute to the information compilation process
- Make sure you obtain the correct information for National Reports
- Enter information into the report format as it becomes available throughout the implementation cycle
- Ensure regular national coordination throughout the implementation cycle
- Be mindful of the timing for National Reporting and the set milestones and deadlines
- Finalize and prepare the National Report for submission
- Use the finalized National Report as the basis for input into the next national implementation and reporting cycle for CMS and/or the concerned instrument

STEP 1: Starting to plan the reporting together with the implementation planning

BE CLEAR ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE REPORTED

It is fundamentally important to have a clear understanding of what needs to be reported at the end of the implementation cycle. Therefore the NFP should study and be fully familiar with the report format at an early stage. It is important to review each question and have a good understanding of what information is being requested. If a report has already been submitted in the previous reporting cycle start from it – this will also provide the NFP with the overview of what data and information have been provided and what is missing.

IDENTIFY WHO CAN HELP AND CONTRIBUTE

Knowing what they will need to report will help NFPs to identify the most suitable institution, organization or stakeholder to provide the required information. Different sections and even individual questions of the national report can be assigned to members of the National Coordination Mechanism according to their expertise, data custody as well as their involvement in the implementation process.

HOW TO OBTAIN INFORMATION

NFPs should identify all potential sources of data and information, nationally or internationally, which could be used to complete each question in the national report and clarify on the means to obtain the information. Checks should be made regarding what data and information are or are not actually available and whether their format is compatible with what is required within the National Report. NFPs also need to anticipate any possible need of analysis and/or summarizing of the data and information prior to inserting them in the report.

NFPs must make sure that they have identified any possible parallel reporting processes under other instruments or treaties, which require similar data and information, so that they can avoid duplication of work and reporting contradictory or different information.

TIMING - SET MILESTONES AND DEADLINES

NFPs must also create a calendar for their reporting process. To do this, milestones and internal deadlines should be set to help NFPs ensure that they receive the necessary information in time to complete the national report. Other players must be made aware of the major deadlines which lead to the timely submission of the report as well as the final submission deadline.

STEP 2: Entering information into the report format as it becomes available throughout the implementation cycle

In accordance with the milestones and deadlines set – the data and information should be inserted into the national report throughout the implementation cycle. This will spread the workload over time and will avoid last minute overload trying to complete the report. Responses should be objective and honest – the national report aims at identifying gaps as much as achievements.

STEP 3: Ensuring regular national coordination throughout the implementation cycle

In order to ensure smooth progress of the compilation of the national report, NFPs should include monitoring and review of the reporting process as part of the regular meetings of the National Coordination Mechanism.

These meetings should be used to harmonize and verify the data and information coming from various sources. Between meetings or in cases when holding meetings is not feasible, other means of communication can be used such as e-mail, teleconferences or the above-mentioned function in the ORS to delegate and continuously review the contributions made to the national report.

STEP 4: Finalizing and preparing the National Report for submission

Before submitting the national report, NFPs should ensure that any last missing data and information are inserted, if available. The correctness of all information entered and the completeness of the report as a whole should be verified. Fields should not be left blank– so if no data and information are available, this should be indicated. This will usefully pinpoint gaps and causes and avoid unhelpfully leaving an unclear situation.

It should be ensured that the National Report is agreed upon by the National Coordination Mechanism.

The final step is the approval of the report for submission by the relevant governmental authority.

Practical Example - Protection and management of sites of importance for migratory waterbirds

In the 2009-2011 report format the Parties to AEWA were supposed to report on the protection and management status of the identified as being sites of international or national importance for migratory waterbirds. For each of these two categories of importance, summaries were required in the following fields:

- Total number of sites
- Total area (in hectares)
- Number of protected sites out of the above total
- Protected area (in hectares) out of the above total
- Number of protected sites with management plans in place that are being implemented Area under protection (in ha) covered by management plans that are being implemented



In order to produce the figures required for each field, a large amount of data on protected areas had to be identified, accessed, analysed and summarized. This required, in the first place, identifying where the information about the national inventory of sites important for migratory waterbirds and the protected areas database were stored. The next step was to obtain this information and extract the data relevant for the shortlisted sites, which had to be analysed in order to bring all parameters into the same format. The last step was to aggregate and summarize the data in order to come up with a single figure for each of the fields described above. Above all, this was a time consuming exercise, which had to be taken into account from the very beginning when planning the reporting process.

6. Submitting the National report and Follow-up

Once the National Report has been verified and approved, it should be submitted to the appropriate Secretariat/Coordinating Unit of the CMS Family. Once submitted, the report will be reviewed by the Secretariat/Coordinating Unit and possibly returned to the country with a request for additional input and further refinement, if necessary.

The final report will be included in the overall international implementation analysis for the respective Instrument. It should be borne in mind that following its final submission, the report becomes an official and public document and will be submitted to the forthcoming meeting of the CMS or its instruments' decision-making body.

What happens after the National report has been Submitted?

The submission of the National Report marks the beginning of a new reporting cycle. NFPs should start planning their implementation and reporting activities according to the latest report format adopted or the latest National Report in the cases when one has been submitted. It should be noted that decisions taken at the meetings of the decision-making bodies can lead to changes in the report formats. NFPs must therefore ensure that they adjust their implementation and reporting to reflect the new report format once it becomes available.

When the revised formats have been approved, they will be made available by the Secretariat/Coordinating Unit.

Once the National Report has been submitted, the full report will be made publicly available on the website of CMS or the instrument concerned. All national reports submitted by countries will be uploaded on a central webpage and will be permanently archived and made accessible through the Internet by the individual Secretariat/Coordinating Unit. In addition, National Reports that have been submitted to the CMS Family instruments will also be further distributed and made available through online portals such as InforMEA, where they will become part of the global information base of National Reports submitted by countries to Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs).