

Agenda Item 8: **Any other business**

Minutes of Workshop on GROMS, Bonn, 6 May 2002

Submitted by: **Secretariat**



ASCOBANS

NOTE:
IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF THESE DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING

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DISCUSSION I: DATA INTEGRATION – VISIONS AND PROBLEMS

In order to facilitate the flow of ideas, the discussion was set up as a brain-storming session about the positive, negative and interesting aspects of two possible opposite scenarios for the future of GROMS. The term *interesting* was used to refer to aspects which could not be properly classified as positive or negative, for instance because they represent both a potential opportunity as well as a potential problem, or because the participants did not have enough information at hand to make a value judgement on the issue in question.

The scenarios initially discussed were:

- Scenario 1: to continue the maintenance of GROMS as a comprehensive, centralised database, maintained either by one organisation or by a small consortium.
- Scenario 2: to deconstruct GROMS into different ‘modules’ to be given back to the organisations that originally contributed the data to each module, and use these modules to establish a decentralised, international information system on migratory species.

From the discussion of these two scenarios a number of related issues and further alternative scenarios were also identified, and are listed below.

SCENARIO 1: Continue the maintenance of GROMS as a comprehensive, centralised database, maintained by one organisation or by a small consortium of organisations.

Positive

- Enables managing organisation(s) to produce thematic/geographic syntheses, and to identify unanswered questions and/or information gaps.
- Acts as trigger of funds – at University level (e.g. Bonn), in the form of studentships.
- Provides the mechanism to maintain data about ‘forgotten’ migratory taxa (e.g. insects).
- Enables taught courses on data management about migratory species.
- CMS Secretariat as owner of the system receives credit for the initiative.

Negative

- The data produced and maintained by expert organisations normally serves as a source of income for them. Therefore there is a natural reluctance to give information away to centralising initiatives that end up competing for funding.
- There is possible conflict between interpretations of the data made by the centralising system and the original owner of the data.
- The CMS (Secretariat?) as owner of the centralised mechanism can be apportioned responsibility (blame) for conflicting assumptions/interpretations made by the centralised system.
- Rights management of third-party data are difficult to reconcile to enable distribution of copies/analyses of the data.

Interesting

- May rely on public sources of data to avoid problems of acknowledgement/discrepancies with interpretations.
- May serve as a mechanism to identify new methods for the investigation of migratory species (potentially costly, as new methods may not be really successful/useful).
- Not clear what direct benefits there are in a centralised system for the contributors of the data outside the ‘consortium’.

SCENARIO 2: Deconstruct GROMS into different ‘modules’ to be given back to the organisations that originally contributed the data for each module, and use these modules to establish a decentralised, international information system on migratory species.

Positive

- Ownership remains at source (thus encouraging involvement of a wide array of national/international expert organisations).
- Responsibility/maintenance (of scientific input and costs) remains at source.
- Encourages the building of capacity of expert organisations (development of systems for organisations to manage their own information).
- Benefits from the standardisation of formats already achieved by GROMS during the integration of data in the current database.
- Encourages standardisation of protocols/formats (so that the data can be analysed in conjunction with the data of others).

Negative

- Different systems can easily drift apart due to the lack of a *central rule*
- Internet use is still limited in some countries, which would therefore not be able to participate

Interesting

- A distributed arrangement may lack the *glue* to keep the various modules integrated
- May depend on possibly different levels of capacity in different organisations

ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING THE DISCUSSION

- The target group(s) for the initiatives have not been clearly defined. Without clear target groups the level of detail at which information is gathered and analysed can be too fine and too costly.
- For the future success of GROMS it is important to develop a business plan identifying clearly the needs of users, and the expectations of, and benefits for, contributors of data.
- The position/preference of the CMS Secretariat/Parties is not known.
- The future development of GROMS should be project-driven, in order to maintain its effectiveness.

OTHER SCENARIOS SUGGESTED DURING THE DISCUSSION

- Maintain scenario 1, while scenario 2 is implemented.
- Ask UNEP-WCMC to integrate GROMS to UNEP’s species information services.