



Open-Case File on the Planned Hydropower Plants within the Territory of Mavrovo National Park

Government of Republic of Macedonia

36th Standing Committee of Bern Convention

15-18 November, 2016, Strasbourg

What will the presentation cover?

- ❖ Open case file chronological overview
- ❖ Update on Government activities since 2015 SC meeting
- ❖ Government position in relation to the Open Case File
- ❖ Further steps



Open case file chronological overview

- Complaint submitted - March 2013;
- A period of exchange of information with the Macedonian focal point at the Bern Convention did not result in satisfactory conclusion of the complaint;
- The Bureau decided to **open a case file and in 2015** requested an on-the-spot appraisal;
- **On-the-spot appraisal mission conducted in June 2015, Report issued in October 2015;**
- **Macedonia provided a detailed technical commentary** on the Report prior to the 2015, 35th SC meeting, **highlighting a number of issues;**
- These **deficiencies** raised **doubts** about the suitability of the ToR for the appraisal and the necessary grasp of the relevant issues on the part of the on-the-spot appraisal team. **In our view this led to unrealistic conclusions and resulted in inappropriate recommendations by the Bureau in 2015, at the 35th Standing Committee;**
- **At the 35th SC meeting, 2015, Macedonia proposed an additional on-the-spot appraisal mission to eliminate deficiencies of the Report.** Not accepted by the SC;
- Mini drafting group comprising Macedonia, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Albania **agreed on a set of recommendations** to be proposed to the SC, which were **subsequently accepted.**

Update on activities since 2015 SC meeting

- ▶ Government of the Republic of Macedonia **was informed** about the outcomes of the 35th SC meeting and **adopted** the recommendations;
- ▶ Open-case file Recommendations **followed**;
- ▶ All foreseen Government projects within the territory of NP Mavrovo **suspended immediately** after the 35th SC, 2015, meeting in accordance with the Recommendation;
- ▶ **Commitment from the Government** for following the recommendation through Reporting to the Bureau:
 - February 2016
 - July 2016
 - October 2016



Update on activities since 2015 SC meeting

- ▶ Activities in relation to Law for Re-proclamation of NP Mavrovo, which is a **pre-requisite for undertaking a SEA** for the management plan of MNP
 - Due to the extensive public consultation on the draft Law for re-proclamation of MNP (2013-2015) the regulatory process has been drawn out
 - **Closing out this process as soon as possible is imperative**
 - **Expected finalization of the process after the elections in December 2016**
- ▶ National Program for Monitoring and Recovery of the Balkan Lynx
 - Concept developed
 - Initial contacts made with some potential donors
 - **Macedonia yet to secure the state funding (co-financing) to firm up scope and schedule for the program**
 - **Relevant Government institutions must be closely involved in development and sharing of biodiversity/conservation scientific knowledge.**

Government Position on the Open Case File – what is the complaint about?

As a Reminder - the Complaint claims the hydropower developments in MNP will cause:

- **Direct destruction of forests,**
- **Severe disturbance of water sources,** and
- **Fragmentation of wildlife habitats** – MNP being home of numerous strictly protected species listed in Appendix I and II of the Bern Convention.

The complaint emphasized that some of these species, namely the Lynx lynx balcanicus, might be critically endangered if the projects are implemented.

It is imperative to address these concerns as soon as possible to inform future thinking in relation to the open-case file.

Government Position on the Open Case File - key points from Government assessment (1)

- ▶ **July 2016 Report** to the Bureau provided our detailed analysis, comments and position of the complaint.

- ▶ In summary:
 - Information being provided to the Bureau often contains inaccurate and misleading information. **This has to be rectified in future.**
 - Why impacts from hydro projects are exaggerated:
 - Boskov Most and Lukovo Pole, as well as other projects are located entirely within the area for sustainable use of the Mavrovo National Park-MNP. Avoid impact on priority habitat types or important plant and animal species. (July 2016 Report, sec. 8, 9);
 - Total forest affected by Boskov Most and Lukovo Pole projects **before compensation is 0.05% of total MNP area** (July 2016 Report, sec. 8, 9). Other project have even smaller footprint;
 - **Project design approach for avoidance of habitat fragmentation;**
 - Inclusion of **mitigation measures for large mammals over the life cycle of the projects;**
 - Impact on aquatic habitats and species - **significant scientific work completed. Best international practices employed on flow releases;**

Government Position on the Open Case File - key points from Government assessment (2)

- ▶ **Key internationally recognized threats to the Lynx and other large mammals:**
 - illegal hunting
 - fragmentation of habitats
 - food deficiency
- ▶ Lynx population relatively steady over several decades (app. 20 individuals);
- ▶ In **MNP key Lynx threats** according to recent studies are: **small Lynx population base, illegal hunting and depletion of the prey population;**
- ▶ Focus for improvement of Lynx and large mammals status should be pursued through stepping up efforts for addressing the key threat;
- ▶ MNP has competent and very experienced staff, successful management of the park over the long term proven in the re-valorization study (2011). Capacity to deal with many issues, assistance from third parties on equal partner basis always welcome;
- ▶ **Further discussions in relation to impact of hydropower projects on biodiversity, including Lynx and other large mammals must be based on sound arguments supported with scientific evidence and verified data.**

Further steps

- ▶ **The Standing Committee to observe the position of the Government of Macedonia with regards to the open case file;**
- ▶ **SEA for the Management Plan for MNP to be carried out. Law for Re-proclamation needs to be adopted first;**
- ▶ **The Complainant to provide sound arguments supported with scientific evidence and verified data in context of the MNP on how the hydropower developments will cause irreversible (unmitigatable) impacts on:**
 - direct destruction of forests,
 - fragmentation of wildlife habitats, and
 - severe disturbance of water sources
 - Endangerment of the Lynx lynx balcanicus and other large mammals



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

For any further information, please contact:

Marijan Galevski

marijang@primeminister.gov.mk

Andovska Sandra

sandra.andovska@gs.gov.mk