



Strasbourg, 20 June 2001
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 3 May 2001

REPORT OF THE MEETING

*Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Mr Patrick van Klaveren (Monaco), who welcomed the Bureau members. The list of participants appears in Appendix 1 to this document.

The agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix 2 to this document.

2. Progress of the 2001 work programme and decisions

The Secretariat reported on the reorganisation of the Council of Europe's environment sector, recent developments in the Convention and the progress of the activities.

a. Reorganisation

The Directorate of Sustainable Development had been abolished. The "Environment and Sustainable Development" and "Nature and Landscape" divisions had been incorporated into the Department of Cultural and Natural Heritage which now comprised three divisions:

- the Cultural Heritage Division;
- the Natural Heritage Division;
- the Regional Planning and Technical Co-operation and Assistance Division.

b. New Contracting Party to the Convention

Morocco had ratified the Convention on 25 April 2001 and would become the 45th Contracting Party on 1 August 2001.

The Bureau felt that consideration should be given to how best to meet the needs of the African countries, of which there were now four, by involving them more closely in the Convention activities. There were two options: either help them to build an instrument for co-operation among themselves, or develop an African programme.

The Secretariat said that a pilot project to launch the Emerald Network would be developed this year in Tunisia.

c. Progress of activities

The Secretariat said that the report of the last meeting of the Standing Committee had been forwarded to the Committee of Ministers delegations.

- *Monitoring of the implementation of the legal aspects of the Convention*

Ireland and the United Kingdom had been chosen to carry out the monitoring, provided that they agreed. A reply from these states was awaited.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to remind countries to send in their biennial reports.

- *Emerald Network of areas of special conservation interest*

- Pilot projects

Several countries had expressed a desire to participate in the scheme. Pilot projects had been initiated or were due to start in the coming months in Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Tunisia and Ukraine. By the end of 2001, 17 countries would be involved in the activity.

- Ecological networks

The Group of Experts for the setting up of the Emerald Network was to hold its next meeting in Istanbul at the same time as the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (4-6 October 2001).

The Bureau questioned the need to keep both networks and wondered whether it might not be better to merge them, in the interest of a leaner, more cost-effective operation. The Secretariat explained that every effort had been made to co-ordinate the work of the two networks so that they complemented one another.

- Inclusion of sites of geological interest

A contract had been signed with a consultant to prepare a study and draft resolution which would be examined at the Group of Experts meeting.

- *Conference on marine turtles*

The conference, which was being prepared in conjunction with the secretariats of the Bonn and Barcelona Conventions, would take place in Rome from 24 to 28 October 2001.

A consultant had been hired to draft a report on the setting up of a Euro-African observatory on marine turtles, which would be presented at the conference.

- *Planta Europa Conference*

The 3rd European Conference on the conservation of wild plants would take place from 23 to 28 June 2001 in Pruhoňice (Czech Republic). Organised by Planta Europa and the Czech Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection, it was aimed at developing a European strategy for plant conservation and launching the Planta Europa network, as well as other projects.

- *Large carnivores*

A contract had been signed with a consultant to draw up action plans for large carnivores in the Baltic States.

The Secretariat said that the Working Group on the status and conservation of the Alpine lynx population was working on an action plan for the Alps, which it would like to submit to the Standing Committee.

The Bureau suggested that the group draw on the work of the Alpine network of areas protected under the Alpine Convention, so as to adopt a similar policy in the matter.

- *Eradication of non-indigenous vertebrates*

The Secretariat moved that this project be examined under item 2.2. of the agenda.

- *Action plan for 2 Appendix II birds species*

A consultant had been hired to prepare the new action plans.

- *Preservation of biological diversity in agricultural landscapes*

This issue would be addressed in the run-up to the “Pan-European Conference on Agriculture and Biodiversity: towards integrating biological and landscape diversity for sustainable agriculture in Europe”.

- *Awareness and visibility*

The updating of the website, which had been temporarily interrupted, would resume in August.

- *Delegates to be invited to the next meeting of the Standing Committee*

The Bureau decided to defray the expenses of delegates from the following countries: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Senegal, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Tunisia and Ukraine.

3. Development of the Convention

3.1. Outcome of the SBSTTA-6 meeting

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity had met in Montreal, Canada, from 12 to 16 March 2001. It had been proposed that a European strategy to eradicate invasive species be drawn up. The Bern Convention, whose work in this area was highly regarded, had been represented by the Secretariat.

The Bureau felt that, in view of the topical nature of the subject and the numerous achievements of the Bern Convention, it might be useful to draft a legal instrument such as a protocol. It asked that this item be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

It thanked the Secretariat for attending SBSTTA-6 and asked it to participate, along with the necessary resources, in the next SBSTTA-7 from 12 to 16 November 2001, which would be devoted to forest biodiversity.

The Bureau felt that the Convention could make a valuable contribution to SBSTTA-7 thanks notably to its work on saproxylic invertebrates, large carnivores and action plans for woodland birds.

The same applied to SBSTTA-8 (late 2002 – early 2003) which would focus on marine and coastal diversity and would provide an opportunity to present the conclusions of the pan-European conference on turtles, as well as the initial proceedings of a European preparatory meeting for SBSTTA-8. The meeting was to be organised in co-ordination with the secretariats of the regional seas programmes. The Chair told the Bureau that his government was open to discussion regarding the possibility of hosting the meeting in Monaco.

3.2. Signing of the Memorandum of Co-operation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Memorandum of Co-operation between the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in his capacity as secretary of the Bern Convention, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity had been signed at SBSTTA-6.

3.3. Preparation of a memorandum of co-operation with non-governmental organisations (NOGs)

The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers had authorised, on 17 January 2001, the signing of the memorandum of co-operation with the European Environment Agency (EEA), which would take place in Copenhagen at the beginning of July 2001.

A discussion on possible areas of co-operation would be held. Two areas which had already been identified concerned:

- the management of data relating to sites in the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks;
- the upgrading of the Emerald Network's computer programme.

The Bureau proposed that memoranda be concluded with other NGOs and appropriate conventions. The Secretariat said that these memoranda were part of the outsourcing strategy and helped to raise the profile of the activities concerned.

The Chair pointed out that there was hardly any mention of the Bern Convention in the actual text of these memoranda and suggested that some thought be given to amending the wording.

4. Implementation of Convention case files

4.1. Specific sites

a. Caretta caretta in Patara (Turkey)

The Secretariat said that it had written to the Turkish authorities at the beginning of April requesting information on the other measures which the Turkish Government had been asked to take by the Standing Committee in order to comply with Recommendations nos. 54 (1996) and 66 (1998).

The Turkish Government had informed the Secretariat that the follow-up studies on marine turtles would be carried out this year by Akdeniz University and that guards had been posted on Patara beach from May to October. An information and awareness campaign was due to be launched in June.

The Bureau welcomed these measures.

b. The Akamas peninsula (Cyprus)

The Secretariat reported on the latest developments. It said that the Standing Committee had been disappointed at the lack of progress in this case, which had first been discussed in 1996.

In March 2001, the Secretariat had received a letter from the "Cyprus Federation of Ecological and Environmental Organisations" informing it, *inter alia*, of government plans to open up the protected area of Lara to tourism and to build restaurants and a new road between the village of Inia and Lara beach. There were also plans for other tourism development schemes, including next to Limni beach, which was a major nesting site for marine turtles.

On 5 April 2001 the Secretariat had contacted the Cyprus Government asking for further information, which had been received in a letter dated 27 April 2001.

The Bureau considered that steps should be taken to:

- enlist the support of the European Commission in this matter, Cyprus being in the pre-accession phase of EU membership, as well as the support of regional conventions, such as the Barcelona Convention;
- draw on the work of other Council of Europe groups and committees dealing with "tourism and biodiversity", which had led to the drafting of guidelines for sustainable tourism development;
- ascertain whether the region in question had applied to the LIFE Programme, in which case it might be eligible for grants.

It asked the Secretariat to write to the Cypriot Government asking it to arrange another on-the-spot appraisal, which would focus not just on the scientific aspects but also on the socio-economic aspects, taking account of all the interests involved.

c. The green turtle *Chelonia mydas*) in Turkey

The Secretariat had written to the Turkish authorities at the beginning of April to express support, on behalf of the Standing Committee, for the measures already taken and to offer assistance.

The Turkish Government had informed the Secretariat that an application had been made to the LIFE Programme with a view to restoring Kazanlı beach, and that the hotel had been demolished.

At the same time, a monitoring centre for marine turtles had been set up in Kazanlı. Studies and educational programmes were under way.

The Bureau welcomed the extremely positive attitude displayed by the Turkish Government which was taking the matter very seriously. It decided to keep the situation under review.

The Chair proposed that a document be produced outlining those cases which had been successfully resolved and highlighting the political influence wielded by environment ministries compared with other ministries and the importance attached to preserving biodiversity, complete with statistics.

As for the rest, he proposed that the case files be reviewed in the light of the conclusions of the conference on marine turtles, which should help to settle cases involving their protection. It was important to avoid simply laying the blame on national authorities and to widen the target by raising awareness in the tourism sector and emitting countries.

d. Exploitation and trade in *Lithophaga lithophaga* (Spain)

The Secretariat had been informed that, by decree of 19 January 2001, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries had officially recognised the existence of commercial exploitation zones, while stressing that the species remained protected under the Habitats Directive and the Bern and Barcelona Conventions. The terms of the decree being rather vague, the Secretariat had asked for clarification in a letter dated 6 April 2001.

The main problem was the scale of human consumption of specimens imported from Morocco.

Listing *Lithophaga lithophaga* in Appendix I of the Washington Convention would help put an end to the trade in the species.

The Bureau stressed the need for co-ordination between the conventions. It felt that it was important to take a stand on cross-border trade by considering a recommendation on international trade in the species.

4.2. Possible new case files

a. Dam on the Vistula (Poland)

The Secretariat conveyed to the Bureau the Polish Government's arguments in favour of building the Nieszawa dam.

The Bureau endorsed the ministry's conclusion that the dam was necessary for safety reasons.

It decided that there was no need to submit the project as a possible case file at the next meeting of the Standing Committee, and that it could be presented purely for information. The Polish Government would be asked to submit a written report.

4.3. Complaints pending

a. Plan to build an Olympic rowing centre at the Schinias-Marathon site (Greece)

The Secretariat had written to the Greek authorities in April 2001 to express its concern over the choice of this site and to ask for further information on:

- the stage reached in this project, which appeared to be incompatible with the preservation of the site's ecological features and with the provisions of both the Bern Convention (Articles 4.1, 4.2 and 6) and the Habitats Directive;
- the assessment of the impact of this project on biological and landscape diversity;
- the status of the site, which was supposed to be included in the national list drawn up under the Natura 2000 Directive;
- the views of the various authorities concerned, including the Olympic Games Organising Committee.

It had also forwarded this information to the Council of Europe's Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS), which had close links with the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The Bureau decided to place this item on the agenda for its next meeting.

It instructed the Secretariat to ask the Greek authorities whether, with regard to the Olympic Games, Greece had satisfied certain terms and conditions relating to the environment.

b. Plan to build a wind farm in an area of international importance to the white-tailed eagle (Norway)

The Secretariat had written to the Norwegian ministry at the beginning of April 2001 to ask for information about this project, stressing the exceptional importance of the archipelago which was a veritable sanctuary for numerous bird species and referring to the resolution adopted at the "Sea Eagle 2000" conference held in Sweden, which had advised against this kind of development in Smøla.

The Bureau said it was important to be able to refer to the findings of the impact studies on bird fauna carried out to date.

The Bureau decided to place this item on the agenda for its next meeting.

c. Plan to build a motorway in Struma (Bulgaria)

The Secretariat had written to the authorities to ask for information on the progress of this project, which could have a very damaging effect on the Kresna gorge, home to a variety of habitats and species listed in the Convention appendices. It could also have a detrimental effect on the local community, who benefited from the income generated by eco-tourism activities based on discovery of the natural environment.

The Bureau observed that this was the first time a potential Emerald Network site had come under threat from development schemes.

The Bureau decided to place this item on the agenda for its next meeting.

d. Afforestation policy in Iceland

A letter complaining about the impact on birds of Iceland's afforestation policy, as a means of sequestering carbon, had been sent to the Secretariat.

It would write to the authorities concerned to ask for further details.

The Bureau decided to place this item on the agenda for its next meeting.

e. Illegal capture of protected birds in Cyprus

A letter concerning the illegal capture of birds in Cyprus had been sent to the Secretariat.

It would write to the authorities concerned to ask for further details.

The Bureau decided to place this item on the agenda for its next meeting.

4.4. Complaints on which no action is to be taken

a. Wolves in Norway

The Secretariat had received various letters concerning wolf control in Norway. On 1 February, the Secretariat had informed the parties concerned that it had contacted the Norwegian Government to ensure that the obligations concerning the protection of wolves were being met.

The Norwegian Government had submitted a report containing information on wolf control (letter of 19 April 2001).

The Bureau decided not to pursue the complaint and to present this item at the next meeting of the Standing Committee for information. It agreed to keep a close watch on the measures taken by the Norwegian authorities pursuant to Recommendation no. 82 (2000) which concerned the situation of the wolf in southern Fennoscandia and the need to maintain a viable wolf population.

The Bureau felt that the time had come for a new recommendation to look at ways of adapting methods of pastoralism, in order to avoid conflicts with livestock farmers.

b. Complaint made by a nature conservation specialist concerning the conservation of the common hamster in the context of the Vosges Foothills expressway project (France)

The Bureau decided not to pursue the complaint as it felt that the *Direction départementale de l'équipement* (DDE) had provided sufficient assurances in the matter.

c. Complaint made by Ecologistas en Acción-Onso et Asociación de Amigos de los Monegros concerning the *Unio elangatulus* species in Aragón (Spain)

By letter of 22 December 2000, these two associations had informed the Secretariat that the clean-up operation in irrigation canals in Aragon (Spain) was having an adverse impact on the *Unio elongatulus* population, a mollusc listed in Appendix III to the Convention.

The Bureau decided not to pursue the complaint, taking the view that the survival of the population concerned was not under threat and that the clean-up operation could be said to be of overriding public interest under Article 9 of the Convention.

d. Wolf in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia

The Secretariat said that it had received a complaint from the Wolf Federation concerning the situation of the wolf in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia.

The Bureau felt that there was no need to pursue this complaint as the three countries concerned had made an exception where the wolf was concerned and the case was therefore outside the scope of the Convention. It believed there was a need to better inform countries acceding to the Convention about the system of exceptions, derogations and reservations.

5. Draft agenda for the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee

The Secretariat said it would send the Bureau the first draft agenda as soon as possible.

Proposals for the programme of activities for 2002

The Bureau, after proposing the following changes, approved the draft submitted by the Secretariat:

- it proposed that the meeting of the Group of Experts for the setting up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest be held in Strasbourg rather than Cyprus;
- it proposed that the workshop on marine and coastal biological diversity, which could be held in Monaco, be split into two parts:
 - ? a meeting between the convention secretariats;
 - ? a meeting with the countries concerned.

With regard to the situation of the Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphin, the Chair felt that steps should be taken, with the support of the Bern Convention, to get this species listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES);

- it suggested including an activity focusing on the biodiversity impact of measures taken to combat the greenhouse effect.

Select Group on the strategic development of the Bern Convention

The Bureau went through the questions to be examined by the group at its meeting on 4 May.

6. Other business

Admission of the « Wolf Federation »

The Bureau held a discussion on the criteria for admitting this NGO.

It asked the Chair to write to the association to ensure that they satisfied the criteria in terms of international dimension and technically qualified organisation, and to ask them to send in an activity report.

7. Date and place of the next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 12 September 2001



APPENDIX 1

Strasbourg, le 21 mars 2001
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS
CONVENTION RELATIVE A LA CONSERVATION DE LA VIE SAUVAGE
ET DU MILIEU NATUREL

Standing Committee / Comité permanent

Meeting of the Bureau / Réunion du Bureau

Strasbourg, le 3 mai 2001
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 17

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APPENDIX 2

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 20 March 2001

Standing Committee Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 3 May 2001
Palais de l'Europe, Room 17
(opening: 9.30)

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Progress of the 2001 work programme and decisions
 - 2.1. Progress of activities
 - 2.2. Input into SBSTTA-6
 - 2.3. Signature of Memorandum with CBD
 - 2.4. Preparation of memoranda of co-operation with NGOs
3. Implementation of the Convention: Files
 - 3.1. Specific sites
 - *Caretta caretta* in Patara (Turkey)
 - Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)
 - *Chelonia mydas* (Turkey)
 - Exploitation and trade of *Lithophaga lithophaga* (Spain)
 - 3.2. Possible new files and other information files
 - Dam on the Vistula River (Poland)
4. – Draft agenda for the 21st meeting
– Proposals for the programme of activities for the year 2002
– Select Committee on the strategic development of the Bern Convention
5. Other business
 - Request for observer status by the International Wolf Federation