



COUNCIL OF EUROPE    CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 12 May 2003  
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**T-PVS (2003) 4**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

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**Meeting of the Bureau**

Strasbourg, 16 April 2003

**MEETING REPORT**

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

## 1. Adoption of the agenda

Ms Ilona Jepsen (Latvia), Chair of the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention, opened the meeting, which was held on 16 April 2003. She welcomed the two other members of the Bureau – Ms Véronique Herrens Schmidt (France, Vice-Chair) and Mr Patrick Van Klaveren (Monaco), as well as the representatives of the Secretariat.

The draft agenda, as set out in appendix I, was adopted.

The list of participants appears in appendix II.

## 2. Implementation of the 2003 Activity Programme

### a. Monitoring of the legal application of the Convention

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that, since funding for this activity had not been provided, no report had so far been prepared.

### b. Conservation of natural habitats – Emerald Network

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the latest developments in the Emerald Network:

- The Republic of Azerbaijan had officially expressed its intention to join the network and to carry out a pilot project;
- A first African pilot project had been launched in Senegal during a workshop held on 1 and 2 April 2003; Burkina Faso had officially announced its intention of joining the Emerald Network at the workshop;
- Tunisia had announced its intention of joining the network at the last meeting of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat was waiting for confirmation regarding the pilot project;
- Contact had been made with the Armenian representative during the Conference on “Ethics, the Environment and Sustainable Development”;
- The reports for the pilot projects in Albania, the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Georgia – which had identified 6 sites, 3 sites and 6 sites respectively, and proposed them for inclusion in the network – had been transmitted to the Secretariat;
- The joint meeting between the STRA-REP Committee of Experts and the Group of Experts on the Emerald Network would be held in Dubrovnik on 14 and 15 October 2003. A schedule for the Network’s implementation was due to be submitted by participant countries at the Group of Experts’ meeting.

### c. Species monitoring and conservation incentives

#### - *Invasive alien species*

A meeting had been held with the consultants in Paris on 6 March 2003, in order to discuss the comments submitted by the Parties regarding the draft European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species and the changes to be made to it. The consultants and the Secretariat had also met the secretariat of the EPPO to discuss possible co-operation with this organisation.

The revised text would be presented at the meeting of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species, due to be held on Strasbourg on 19 and 20 June 2003. The definitive text should be ready by mid-July. It would be submitted to the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the European Commission’s interest in this field. The Bureau emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication of work, and considered it essential that close co-operation be established with the European Commission, so that work carried out in the context of the draft strategy would be given full consideration.

A symposium organised by the Regional Government of the Canary Islands, on control of invasive vertebrates in the islands of Spain and Portugal, had been held in Tenerife from 11 to 15 February 2003. A declaration on the preservation of biological diversity in view of invasive species and conclusions on the fight against invasive vertebrates had been adopted, and would be presented to the Standing Committee.

- ***Conservation of invertebrates***

The 7th meeting of the Group of Experts would take place in Cardiff (United Kingdom) on 6 and 7 September 2003. It is organised back to back with the 14th Colloquy of the European Invertebrate Survey (EIS) and the meeting of the IUCN's European Invertebrate Specialist Group. One of the objectives would be to review progress in terms of invertebrate conservation and to put forward appropriate activities for the future. The possibility of drawing up a "European Strategy for the Conservation of Invertebrates", in the context of the Convention, was discussed.

- ***Conservation of large carnivores***

The meeting of the *Core Group* of the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE) was held on Strasbourg on 23 and 24 January 2003, financed by France. Its aim was to address topics concerning both the future of the LCIE and co-operation with other organisations, particularly the European Commission, as well as the position of large carnivores in Europe and prevention of and compensation for damage.

The European Commission was interested in establishing co-operation in this area. A questionnaire had been sent to the various governments to gather information on aspects of conservation, management and compensation.

A meeting had been held in Slovenia on 15 and 16 April 2003 on the brown bear. The quotas granted for hunting of this species had been sharply reduced.

A visit to Spain had been organised from 17 to 19 March 2003 with the LCIE and UICN, focusing on the Iberian lynx; the main aim had been to monitor the conservation measures being taken. The species' situation was worrying, but there were good prospects for the finalisation of an agreement between the central government and the Andalusian government. This would enable a programme for breeding in captivity to be implemented [document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 5].

The 2nd Conference on the Status and Conservation of the Alpine Lynx Population (SCALP) was due to be held in Amden (Switzerland) from 7 to 9 May 2003.

The Workshop on the conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathians would be held in Brasov (Romania) from 12 to 14 June 2003. It would be organised by the Council of Europe in collaboration with the LCIE and the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. One of the expected results was the launch of an action plan for carnivores and herbivores in the region.

The Bureau noted all this information with interest, as well as the signature of the Convention on the Carpathians at the forthcoming Kyiv Conference. It stressed the value of establishing synergies with the Alpine Network of Protected Species.

- ***Plant conservation***

A European list of 50 plants which could be the subject of action plans as part of implementation of the European Plant Conservation Strategy would be drawn up by the *Conservatoire botanique national de Brest* (France) [document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 8]. A data base on the most threatened elements of European flora would be prepared by the European Environment Agency (ETC/NCB), in co-operation with the Conservatory.

Planta Europa's next Conference would be held in 2004 in Valence.

- ***Conservation of amphibians and reptiles***

A meeting of the Group of Experts, organised jointly with the Swedish authorities, would be held in Malmö on 26 and 27 September 2003. Its task would be to propose action plans.

**d. Marine and coastal biological diversity**

The Secretariat presented the objectives of the Dubrovnik Seminar (Croatia) on 17 and 18 October 2003, organised in the spirit of the recommendations made at the World Summit in Johannesburg, on the topic of protected maritime zones. The first day would be given over to the presentation of existing initiatives and programmes, and the second would focus on aspects of sustainable protection and management.

The Bureau thought that this meeting would be an excellent opportunity to meet experts and secretariats from the various regional conventions and governmental agencies and, possibly, representatives from the contracting Parties, to assess the situation at regional level, with a view to the next meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and to learn about the status of protected zones in each system.

### **3. Implementation of the Convention – Files**

#### **3.1. Files open**

##### **a. Akamas peninsula (Cyprus)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that, so far as it was aware, there were no new facts concerning this file.

##### **b. *Chelonia mydas* (Green Sea Turtle), Kazanlı (Turkey)**

There was no new information to report.

#### **3.2. Possible new files**

##### **a. Dam project in Odelouca (Portugal)**

At the invitation of the Portuguese authorities, Mr Hervé Lethier, expert, accompanied by a member of the Secretariat, had visited the sites from 6 to 8 April 2003, in order to study the dam construction project and its impact on the natural environment, especially the habitat of the Iberian lynx.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the results of this visit, which had made it possible to meet with all the talking partners and to gain better understanding of the various elements in the file:

- reasons for and development of the project, following the conclusions in the first impact study;
- the lack of alternatives;
- the monitoring programme for the operation, and minimisation and compensation measures;
- situation of the Iberian lynx, and of other species which appear in the Appendices to the Convention and are concerned by the project.

The expert concluded that:

- since the preparatory work was already very far advanced, it would be difficult to stop or postpone construction of the dam;
- the consequences for the Iberian lynx were not as harmful as had been supposed; at the same time, other fish or plant species would be affected;
- construction of the dam should be accompanied by an ambitious programme to reduce its impact, and by measures to conserve biological diversity;
- monitoring of how the operations were executed should be conducted, with regard to water flow and ecological changes;
- the draft national action plan for conservation of the Iberian lynx should be finalised.

Recommendations to this effect would be prepared by the expert.

The Bureau took note of this information and held that the dam should be an opportunity to carry out a pilot operation; it was important to monitor how the works were carried out, and the effectiveness of the compensatory measures.

It decided against proposing that a file be opened. A draft recommendation to the Portuguese Government would be submitted to the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

##### **b. Wolf control (Switzerland)**

The decision concerning the change in the wolf's status had not yet been taken.

The Bureau decided to leave the file as it stood, pending the decision by the National Council (lower chamber).

### **3.3. Complaints in stand-by**

#### **a. Military antenna in Akrotiri (Cyprus)**

The Secretariat of the Convention had received a letter from the Cyprus Conservation Foundation and the Ornithological Society about the plan to install a large communications antenna satellite (196m wide and 100m high) in Akrotiri, an extremely important wetland situated on bases under British sovereignty.

This concerned the 2nd phase of the PLUTO Project. The first phase had been operational since 1998.

The two NGOs were of the opinion that implementation of this project was likely to have serious consequences for the flora and fauna, particularly migratory birds, due to the risk of collision; it was also likely to be detrimental to the health of the local population.

The United Kingdom Government had submitted a report. The project, which was considered an essential element of the United Kingdom's communications network, was justified for security reasons and by the absence of another possible site. Consultations had been held between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Cyprus. A panel of independent experts had drawn up recommendations with a view to avoiding and/or minimising the environmental impact, and these had been implemented by the Ministry of Defence. The site at Akrotiri Salt Lake had been decided on by the two governments, in the context of the Ramsar Convention. Data on bird mortality had been collected, and tended to show that the number of birds killed was very low. The effects on human health were being studied; assessment of the levels of electromagnetic emissions proved that they remained well within the limits set by the European Union.

The Bureau thanked the United Kingdom Government for having transmitted this information. It considered that the Government had fulfilled its obligations under the Convention and decided to drop the complaint. Nonetheless, it asked that the results of the monitoring of bird mortality rates be submitted once the impact study was completed.

#### **b. Caves in the Thrace region (Turkey)**

The UICN Bats Specialist Group had drawn the Secretariat's attention to tourism development activities and projects likely to harm the bat populations in a set of caves in the north-west of Turkey.

According to research carried out by scientists at Istanbul university, 37,000 bats representing 13 species had been counted.

The Secretariat had written to the Turkish authorities asking for information on the protection status of these cavities and the projects to open some caves to the public.

A reply should be received shortly. The Bureau decided to re-examine the file at its next meeting.

#### **c. Other information**

The Secretariat had received other complaints. Requests for information had been sent to the authorities concerned. The Bureau noted that the information requested with regard to the following questions had not yet been communicated. Accordingly, it decided to examine these complaints in more detail at its next meeting.

#### **- Sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in the Gironde (France)**

The Secretariat had received a complaint from *France Nature Environnement* (FNE) concerning protection of the west European sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) whose only population in the world could be seriously affected by the creation of a very wide route for shipping Airbus A380 aircraft parts between the port of Bordeaux and Toulouse.

Since a complaint had already been lodged with the European Union and this was a future "special conservation zone", the Bureau tended to consider that this case should be dealt with by the EU, since it was inappropriate to deal with complaints simultaneously in Brussels and Strasbourg. Nonetheless, it asked the Secretariat to write to the French Government.

- ***Bialowieza National Park (Poland)***

BirdLife had contacted the Secretariat to inform it of the situation of forests in the Bialowieza national park in Poland.

This complaint concerned tree-felling in the Bialowieza forest (outside the National Park), which was considered excessive, management of the forest – considered as taking insufficient account of environmental concerns – and the difficulties of extending the forest's protection zone, due in particular to hostility on the part of local populations.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to write to the Polish authorities with a request for information on the prospects for long-term management of the forest, while bearing in mind that it was difficult to open a file on the basis of continued practices concerning forest use. The European significance of the Bialowieza forest was an important element that merited consideration. The Polish Government had planned to extend the protection zone, but this had not been done.

It would continue to examine the file at its next meeting.

- ***Hydro-electric dams at Karahnjukar and Nordlingaalda (Iceland)***

BirdLife had contacted the Secretariat to inform it of the possible consequences for avifauna if two large dams were constructed in Iceland to cover the energy needs of an aluminium factory, and its fears regarding the cumulative effects arising from other installations.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that all decisions had already been taken. According to the preliminary evaluation reports, already drawn up, these projects should not have too great an impact on natural assets, particularly birds. Nonetheless, it was clear that if many other projects were brought to fruition, the overall impact could be significant and species and habitats which were protected by the Convention could be affected.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to write to the Icelandic Government, informing it that the Bureau was closely monitoring these projects, and asking what long term projects were foreseen for the areas concerned.

- ***Canal Imperial d'Aragón- Conservation of the pearl mussel (Margaritifera auricularia) (Spain)***

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that part of the Canal Imperial d'Aragón had been drained following maintenance work, resulting in the death of numerous specimens of the *Margaritifera auricularia* species, one of the most threatened invertebrates in Europe. The operations had been carried out by a body within the Ministry of the Environment. The Secretariat had written to the Spanish authorities, reminding them of the Standing Committee's numerous recommendations concerning this species, and of the action plans.

The Bureau took note of this information.

- ***Nieszawa dam (Poland)***

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that BirdLife had again drawn its attention to the plans to construct a new dam on the Vistula.

It noted that the Bureau had already been contacted about this project in 2002 and had deemed it inexpedient to retain this as a possible file.

### **3.4. Fact-finding visits**

#### **a. Via Baltica (Poland)**

The Secretariat had received a complaint from BirdLife concerning the building of a motorway between Warsaw and Helsinki that would cross the Biebrza national park, which was home to vast populations of species threatened worldwide, such as the Corncrake (*Crex crex*), and the ancient forests of Augustow and Knysyn. The park had been designated a Ramsar site and was considered as an important zone in the composition of the Emerald Network. BirdLife asked that the route opted for be reconsidered and that a full strategic environmental assessment be carried out.

At the 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee (2-5 December 2002), the delegate of Poland had

proposed organising an on-the-spot appraisal to study the situation.

The Polish Government had replied to the request for information sent to it.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to organise a fact-finding visit in order to clarify the situation and study the options for alternative routes.

#### **4. Follow-up action**

##### **a. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 84 (2000) of the Standing Committee on the conservation of Western Milos and in particular the Milos viper (*Macrovipera schweizeri*) (Greece)**

The Secretariat had asked the Greek authorities for information concerning the application of Recommendation No. 84 (2000) and the development of the situation in Schinias-Marathon.

No reply had been received.

Bearing in mind the particular importance accorded by the Standing Committee to the follow-up to certain recommendations, the Bureau considered it appropriate to remind the governments concerned to submit all useful information for this purpose to the Secretariat.

##### **b. Follow-up to the illegal killing of birds in Cyprus**

No new information had been received by the Secretariat concerning illegal killing and trading of birds in Cyprus.

##### **c. Bald ibis in Souss Massa (Morocco)**

No new information has been transmitted to the Secretariat by the Moroccan authorities concerning the tourism development project in the Souss Massa national park in Morocco.

The French Delegate informed the Bureau about the contacts made by her country with Club Méditerranée. Investment in the region had been reduced, but the project idea had not been abandoned. A meeting had been held in Morocco in February 2003, during which the possibility of going ahead with a smaller project, which could meet the requirements of Recommendation n° 97 (2002) as adopted by the Standing Committee at its last meeting, had been discussed.

The Bureau thanked France for this information and instructed the Secretariat to ask the Moroccan authorities for their opinion on this new project.

##### **d. Kresna Gorge (Bulgaria)**

The Bulgarian authorities had submitted a report on the development of the situation. A new impact study would be carried out, in accordance with Standing Committee Recommendation n° 98 (2002). All the alternatives, including those proposed by NGOs, would be taken into account. The process for declaring a new protected area, to include the gorge and contiguous areas, was continuing.

The Bureau noted with satisfaction that the fact-finding visit had enabled dialogue to be resumed amongst all the interlocutors. It hoped that this dialogue would be stepped up, so that nature conservancy requirements and the aspirations of the local populations could be taken fully into account. Rigorous monitoring should be conducted with regard to progress of the project and how the recommendation was applied. If necessary, the expert could be invited to visit the area a second time.

#### **5. Proposals for programme of activities in 2004**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the draft Activity Programme for 2004 had not yet been drawn up. It would be submitted to the Bureau members at their next meeting.

#### **6. Other business**

No other points were raised.

The date of the next meeting was fixed for 19 September 2003.



## APPENDIX 1

### CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 3 March 2003

#### Standing Committee Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 16 April 2003  
(Room 16, opening 9.30)

#### DRAFT AGENDA

1. **Adoption of the agenda**
2. **Implementation of the 2003 Programme of activities**
3. **Implementation of the Convention : Files**
  - 3.1. **Specific sites**
    - o Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)
    - o *Chelonia mydas* at Kazanlı (Turkey)
  - 3.2. **Possible new files and other informations**
    - o Portugal : project of the dam in Odelouca
    - o Switzerland : control of the wolf
  - 3.3. **Complaints in stand-by**
    - o Cyprus : military antenna in the Akrotiri British bases
    - o Turkey : caves in the Thrace region
    - o Other informations :
      - ✓ Sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in the Gironde (France)
      - ✓ National Park of Bialowieza (Poland)
      - ✓ Hydro-electric dams at Karahnjukar and Nordlingaalda (Iceland)
      - ✓ Imperial Canal of Aragón – Conservation of *Margaritifera auricularia* (Spain)
      - ✓ Nieszawa dam (Poland)
  - 3.4. **On-the-spot appraisals**
    - o Poland : Via Baltica
4. – Follow-up of Recommendation No. 84 (2000) on the conservation of the Western Milos and the Milos viper
  - **Evolution of the situation in:**
    - o Cyprus : illegal killing and trade of birds
    - o Morocco : tourism development in the Souss Massa National Park
    - o Bulgaria : motorway construction in the Kresna Gorge
5. – **Proposals for programme of activities in 2004**
6. **Other business**





## APPENDIX 2

Strasbourg, le 6 avril 2003  
[list part Bureau Avril 2003.doc]

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 16 avril 2003  
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 16

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