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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL
HABITATS

Standing Committee

Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 28 March 2008

MEETING REPORT

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

1. Adoption of the agenda

Mr Jón Gunnar Ottosson, Chair of the Standing Committee of the Convention, opened the meeting on 28 March 2008 and welcomed the other Bureau members, Mr Jan Plesnik, Vice-Chair, and Ms Veronique Herrenschildt, former Chair, as well as the representatives of the Secretariat.

The draft agenda was adopted, as set out in Appendix 1.

The participants are listed in Appendix 2.

2. Implementation of the 2008 programme of activities

The Secretariat outlined progress on the work programme and the planned meetings for the first half of 2008, including participation at a European conference on invasive alien species (IAS) in January 2008; the organisation of two side-events (on the Pan-European Ecological Network and IAS, respectively) held during CBD meetings in Rome in February 2008; the second meeting of the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change (13-14 March); the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma (17-18 March); an on-the-spot visit in Italy in mid-May 2008; a side-event during CBD COP-9 in Bonn, on 22 May 2008; and a meeting of the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Invertebrates (23-24 June 2008).

The Secretariat further informed that the new European Strategy on Plant Conservation has been submitted to the CBD Secretariat, jointly with Planta Europa, so that it is distributed as an 'information document' at the forthcoming CBD COP-9 meeting in Bonn. As agreed by the Standing Committee at its meeting in November 2007, a consultant has been engaged for the preparation of an European Action Plan for the Conservation of the Common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), which will be submitted to this year's meeting of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat informed that the only activity experiencing delays was the preparation of the report on the Bern Convention's contribution to the 2010 target.

In addition, the Secretariat informed that a report on the legal implementation of the convention in Bulgaria is being prepared. Furthermore, new publications include a "Questions and Answers" brochure on the Bern Convention, published in early 2008. Plans are underway to publish the results of 2007 activities such as species action plans and the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity, which has already been published by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), and the federation of associations for hunting and conservation of the EU (FACE). Finally, the report of the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, for information, in May 2008.

Mrs Herrenschildt added that a Memorandum of Co-operation between the Bern Convention Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) is under development, with a view to its signature during the next meeting of the Parties to the CMS, in December 2008. This enhanced co-operation follows on a meeting between both secretariats held in July 2007 to explore areas of common interest, at the request of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention.

The Bureau thanked the Secretariat and noted with approval the progress made in implementing the work programme.

3. Implementation of the Convention: Files

3.1 Specific sites – Files open

- Ukraine: Proposed navigable waterway in the Bystroe Estuary (Danube delta)

At its 27th meeting, the Standing Committee requested all the documentation mentioned by the Ukrainian delegation concerning this project, including the EIA and compensatory measures, in order to be examined by a group of independent experts. The Standing Committee decided to keep the file open and carry out an on-the-spot visit in 2008, to which the Ukrainian delegation agreed.

The Secretariat wrote to the Ukrainian authorities in January 2008 but no further information was received. An independent consultant has been contacted to carry out the on-the-spot appraisal in the summer of 2008.

The Romanian government informed the Secretariat about a Verbal Note received from Ukraine in January 2008 and transmitting “the Final Decision taken by Ukraine concerning the Full-Scale Implementation of the Danube-Black Sea Navigation Route Project in the Ukrainian Part of the Danube Delta” whereby the Ukrainian government confirmed the decision of carrying out this project.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Espoo Convention is organising an informal consultation to exchange information with other Conventions or legal instruments dealing with the “Bystroe Canal issue” in order to consider ‘possible measures that might be taken to support general compliance by Ukraine with its international obligations. The Secretariat of the Bern Convention will be represented at this meeting, to be held in Geneva on 18 April 2008.

The Bureau expressed its deep concern regarding the informations received from Romania and the lack of communication from Ukraine. The Bureau regretted the lack of collaboration from the Ukrainian authorities and was worried about the lack of implementation of Recommendation No. 111 (2004) of the Standing Committee on the proposed navigable waterway through the Bystroe estuary. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to contact the Ukrainian authorities with urgency to inform them about the meeting in Geneva and ask them for updated news on the status of the works. The Secretariat will write to the Ukrainian authorities again after the Geneva meeting to inform them about its outcome and to ask for all relevant information to be received before the next Bureau meeting.

- Cyprus: Akamas Peninsula

At the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee, the Cyprus delegation confirmed that the Council of Ministers had approved a Management Plan for the Akamas Peninsula to protect nesting beaches of the two turtle species. They reported that no developments are permitted on coastal areas and that there is a programme to exchange private property for public land in this area. The Cyprus delegation added that permits for safaris had been frozen and that the species to be protected are those in designated areas under the Birds and Habitats Directives. The Standing Committee decided to keep the file open and urged the Cyprus government to fully implement the Recommendation from the Standing Committee.

The secretariat wrote to the Cyprus authorities in January 2008 but no reply has been received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to contact the Cypriot authorities again and ask them for all relevant informations needed before the next Bureau meeting.

- Bulgaria: Project to build a motorway through the Kresna gorge

At its 27th meeting, in November 2007, the Standing Committee welcomed the forthcoming finalisation of the EIA for this project and agreed to keep the file open until the final decision on this project is taken.

The Secretariat wrote to the Bulgarian authorities in January 2008 and a report was received on 18th March 2008 (see document T-PVS/Files (2008) 1), which includes the following information:

- In January 2008, the Higher Expert Ecological Council of the MoEW considered the EIA Report and recommended to the Minister of Environment and Water to approve the realization of the investment proposal. As a result, the Minister has issued EIA Decision No 1-1/2008 for construction of the Struma Motorway.
- The EIA Decision has been taken after intensive preliminary consultations to find the most-appropriate decision for the route of the Struma Motorway in the region of the Kresna Gorge and for the sections passing in close proximity or through NATURA 2000 sites.

In their report, the Bulgarian government considers that Recommendation 98 (2002) concerning the stages of preparation and the quality of the EIA Report have been fulfilled, as well as the determination of the motorway route in the Kresna gorge, where decision making for the realization of the project has been carried out coherent collaboration between institutions, NGO and scientists aiming to reach an admissible and conserving the nature decision.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to recontact the Bulgarian authorities and ask them for confirmation of the final decision on this project to check that it is taken in line with the EIA report, as

well as for a map showing the final routing of the road. Upon receipt of these positive informations, the Bureau may recommend to the Standing Committee that this case file be closed.

- **Bulgaria: Wind farms in Balchik and Kaliakra – Via Pontica**

In 2006, the Standing Committee decided to open a new case file on this issue. An on-the-spot visit was carried out in 2007 and, on the basis of the expert's conclusions, the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee adopted Recommendation No. 130 (2007) "on the windfarms planned near Balchik and Kaliakra, and other wind farm developments on the Via Pontica route (Bulgaria)".

The Secretariat wrote to the Bulgarian authorities in January 2008 asking for information on progress concerning the implementation of this Recommendation but no information has been received.

The Secretariat received a communication from Birdlife International stating that "the situation has not improved" and that "construction at Kaliakra is continuing". The NGO and its Bulgarian partner, BPSP, stress that "there is no evidence that the Bulgarian authorities are undertaking any actions to implement stronger planning procedures for wind farm developments – either at strategic or individual project level". This organisation further informed that they have submitted a formal complaint to the European Commission, in February 2008, "on the lack of proper protection of Kaliakra and damage being caused to the site by developments, particularly wind farms".

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to the Bulgarian authorities again and ask for all relevant information to be received before the next Bureau meeting. It further asked the Secretariat to contact the European Commission to find out the status of progress in developing guidance on wind farms currently under preparation by an external consultant. Depending on progress made in 2008, the Bureau also considered the possibility of exploring the creation of a working group to address this issue in 2009.

- **France: Habitats for the survival of the Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) in Alsace**

At the 27th meeting, the Standing Committee decided to open a case file on this issue, not calling into question the efforts already made by the authorities for the protection of this species, but wanting to highlight the urgent need for action on the ground.

The Secretariat wrote to the French authorities in January 2008 and a report with updated information was received, including: actions on the identification of priority action zones; contracts with farmers; definition of the "specific environment" for the Common hamster; breeding in captivity and strengthening of populations; and consideration of the Common hamster in land use planning documents (the report from the French government is accessible as document T-PVS/Files (2008) 3).

The Bureau welcomed the informations from France and asked the Secretariat to contact the French authorities again to receive an updated report, after the summer and the cultivation season, for the Standing Committee in November 2008.

3.2 Possible file s

- **Norway: Windfarms in Smøla Archipelago**

At the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee, in November 2007, the Norwegian delegation informed that a new research project will be conducted until 2010-2011 in order to improve information on wind turbines and their impacts on birds and coastal birds population dynamics concerning both pre- and post-construction phases. The Standing Committee decided to keep this issue as possible case file and asked the government of Norway to submit annual reports to the Standing Committee, with the possibility of undertaking an on-the-spot appraisal in 2009, which had the agreement of the Norwegian delegation.

The Secretariat wrote to the Norwegian authorities in January 2008 but no new information was received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to remind the Norwegian government about the need to submit an annual report before the next Standing Committee meeting in 2008.

3.3 On-the-spot appraisals

- **Italy: Implementation of Recommendation No. 123 (2007) of the Standing Committee, on limiting the dispersal of the Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) in Italy and other Contracting Parties**

At its 27th meeting, in November 2007, the Standing Committee asked the bureau to examine the possibility of opening a file for a possible breach of the Convention by Italy on this case. The Standing Committee also proposed that an on-the-spot appraisal be carried out in collaboration with central and regional conservation authorities, which was agreed by the Italian authorities.

The Secretariat informed that an independent experts has been engaged and that dates have been agreed with the national and regional authorities to visit the Ticino and Montevécchia Regional Parks on 13-14 May 2008.

The Bureau welcomed these informations and will make further recommendations on this case after examination of the expert report after the on-the-spot appraisal.

3.4 Complaints in stand-by

- **France : Conservation of the European Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*) in Alsace**

At its 27th meeting, in November 2007, the French delegation confirmed to the Standing Committee that the national authorities had taken the action needed to protect existing populations. An action plan was being prepared for the Green toad (*Bufo viridis*) and for the Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*). The Standing Committee acknowledged the efforts made by the French Government to preserve the species, but asked for more information next year, confirming progress. The Standing Committee decided to take no further action on this matter.

The Secretariat wrote to the French authorities in January 2008 and updated information was received on 17th March 2008. The French Ministry of Ecology has reported that a restoration plan for the Common Spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*) and the Green toad (*Bufo viridis*) is under development, at the initiative of the regional authorities (DIREN Lorraine), and will be operational in 2009. This plan will associate the Centre, Corsica and Alsace regions, and will be co-ordinated by the regional authorities of DIREN Lorraine.

The Bureau welcomed these informations and asked the Secretariat to write to the French government and ask them for an updated report on this issue before the next meeting of the Standing Committee in November 2008 so that it can be distributed to Parties.

- **Sweden: Natterjack (*Bufo calamita*) population on the coastal island of Smögen**

In December 2007, the Secretariat received informations from the Chair of the Bern Convention's Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles concerning the threat presented by a residential housing project in Hasselösund Väster, Smögen, to the northernmost population of the worldwide distribution of the Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), a species listed in Appendix II of the Bern Convention.

The Secretariat contacted the Swedish authorities asking for information on this issue, including the measures that would be taken to protect this population of *Bufo calamita*. The Secretariat received a reply from Swedish government informing us that they had consulted the local authorities and received relevant information, including the fact that the formal plan for the area had been adopted on 13th December 2007. The Secretariat received the following documents: Environmental Impact Assessment; formal plan for the exploitation area; Inventory Report on Natural values; Hydrogeological investigation; and map.

The Swedish authorities informed us that an inventory report on natural values had been conducted, clearly showing that the area has very high values in its western part, where the breeding pools of the Natterjack are situated. Strong advice is given in the report to refrain from building houses on this part with regard to the loss of the Natterjack population. The report concludes that if houses are to be built in other parts of the area, then compensatory and restoration measures should be implemented. The Swedish government reported that the advice from the inventory report was acknowledged in the EIA and the development of the adopted formal plan so that houses will not be

built in the western part of the area and that the suggested compensatory and restoration measures have been implemented in the plan for the area. In conclusion, and after reviewing the available documents, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency considers that the appropriate measures have been taken in order to secure the survival of the Natterjack population and that the residential housing project, as presented in the final plan, will not have a negative effect on the population.

The Secretariat sent these informations to the Chair of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles and no further communication has been received.

The Bureau welcomed these positive developments and asked the Secretariat to get the views of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles. Upon condition that this feedback is positive, the Bureau would not pursue this issue any further.

4. Conservation of habitats: Setting up of ecological networks

4.1 Progress on the Emerald Network

The Secretariat gave a brief progress report on the implementation of the Emerald Network, including a small technical meeting held the previous day on the process to assess national lists of Areas of Special Conservation Interest. On this issue, and given the volume and importance of the work that needs to be carried out, the Bureau agreed that the meeting of the Group of Experts in October 2008 could propose to the Standing Committee the following process: a meeting of a smaller sub-group in 2009 to evaluate the sites and agree on the criteria that would then be submitted to next year's meeting of the Group of Experts and then to the Standing Committee.

The Emerald Network has carried out thirty pilot projects in the last ten years. New pilot projects are planned in Armenia, Morocco and Turkey. The CARDS/Emerald programme for the development of the Emerald Network in six Western-Balkan countries will be completed in 2008, with funding from the European Environment Agency (EEA), to identify the remainder 20% of sites to be designated. A visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina will be carried out in April 2008 to evaluate the process and assist in the implementation of the CARDS/Emerald programme. Finally, a 3-year project proposal to extend the Emerald Network in the Caucasus is pending at the European Commission, with a decision expected in summer 2008.

The Bureau welcomed these informations and asked the Secretariat to liaise with the European Commission on two important issues: the harmonisation of the Annexes of the Habitats Directive and the Resolutions of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention concerning the Emerald Network.; and providing the Council of Europe with the data on the Natura 2000 sites for EU countries.

4.2 Update on the organisation of international conference

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that a first meeting of the "Advisory group on the preparation of the conference" had been held in Strasbourg on 13 December 2007 (the full meeting report was distributed ahead of the Bureau meeting: document STRA REP (2008) 01, of 24 January 2008). The Secretariat informed that so far it had received no invitations from possible host countries for such an "European conference on the development of ecological networks" and that the issue would be revisited at the next meeting of the advisory group, to be held in Strasbourg on 30 June 2008. The conference aims at assessing progress in Europe concerning the implementation of the CBD programme of work on protected areas.

5. Follow-up of previous recommendations:

- Recommendation No. 95 (2002) on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı beach (Turkey)

This file was provisionally closed at the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee meeting, although the Committee asked the Turkish government to continue to report on the situation concerning this issue

At the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee, in November 2007, the Turkish delegation informed the Committee that the situation had improved significantly in many of the 14 points included in Recommendation No. 95(2002) and that more research and monitoring on marine turtles is

being carried out. They added that the underwater part of the jetty had been removed to reduce beach erosion; that greenhouses had been moved five metres inland from the beach; that plastic rubbish had been removed; and that a solution had been found to deal with the toxic waste. An important amount of financial resources will be spent to treat the waste and put it in a safe place away from the sea, a process which will take approximately eight years to achieve and which includes the very important step of establishing a non-hazardous waste land filling facility.

In November 2007, the Standing Committee decided not to open a file and requested Turkey to submit a report on progress in the implementation of the 2002 Recommendation to its next meeting in 2008.

The Secretariat wrote to the Turkish authorities in January 2008 but no reply was received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to send a reminder letter asking for the report before the next meeting of the Standing Committee in 2008.

- **Recommendation No. 96 (2002) on conservation of birds in afforestation of lowland in Iceland**

At the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee, in November 2007, the delegation of Iceland confirmed that no SEA of afforestation policy in Iceland had been conducted and that no single afforestation programme in Iceland had ever been subject to EIA, as the law had been adopted in spring 2006. At the same meeting, BirdLife International highlighted that Iceland is the most important country in Europe for breeding waders and that afforestation had rapidly accelerated since the Recommendation was adopted in 2002. The NGO warned that unless better regulated, the policy of subsidising the planting of non-native trees in the lowlands will have severe impacts on the wader population.

The Icelandic delegation reminded the Committee that the implementation of this Recommendation is a long-term task and that the country has the will to implement it as best as possible.

The Standing Committee agreed to ask Iceland for a report in 2008, which is to be examined by the Bureau in order to determine whether to include this issue in the agenda of the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat wrote to the Icelandic authorities in January 2008 but no reply was received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to the Icelandic authorities again asking them to send their report in advance of the next Bureau meeting.

- **Recommendation No. 108 (2003) on the proposed construction of the "Via Baltica" (Poland)**

At the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee, the Polish delegation informed the Committee that the SEA for this project had been completed in mid-November 2007 and that they were preparing public consultation through various hearings. They stressed that the results of the SEA would decide the final route of this trans-European transport corridor and that no choice had been made yet, as this depended on the results of the public consultation. The Committee was informed that there was no timetable for construction works and that any change on the original route would have to be accepted by the European Conference of Transport Ministers. The Polish government informed that the SEA would cover three sections of Via Baltica and that only one of them presented problems with protected areas and Natura 2000 sites. In this area between Bialystok and Suwalki, no works were taking place, just rehabilitation of the existing national road for safety reasons.

The Standing Committee agreed to follow-up the situation with a report from Poland in 2008.

The Secretariat wrote to the Polish authorities in January 2008. A reply was received from the Department of Forestry, Nature and Landscape Conservation of the Ministry of the Environment, on behalf of the General Directorate of National Roads and Motorways, and including the following information:

- the work to determine the course of Transport Corridor I is underway and has not been concluded to date;
- the draft final document “The strategy for the development of the 1st Pan-European Transport Corridor (Budzisko-Warsaw). Part I: The Road Corridor” needs verification of its functional and traffic sections, and additional analyses designed to estimate the impact of the implementation of the selected alternative routes on the other elements of the road network, as well as that of the chosen methodologies;
- public consultations and the procedure relating to the transboundary impact can be carried out after complete materials have been prepared;
- the website www.viabaltica.scottwilson.com.pl has made available to the public opinion the materials which have been collected to date as well as a communiqué on the state of progress of the work.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to contact the Polish authorities again asking for more information before its next meeting in September 2008.

- **Recommendation No. 113 (2004) on the installation of a new antenna (Pluto II) in the Sovereign Base Areas (Akrotiri, Cyprus)**

The Standing Committee regretted the absence of a delegation from a United Kingdom at its 27th meeting, in November 2007, and further regretted that the UK report on this issue had been received shortly before the meeting and therefore its distribution to Parties had been materially impossible. BirdLife International further regretted the limited progress made on the SPA designation, which they reported as having been unjustifiably delayed, as well as the continued poaching of birds, and problems for monitoring the mortality of the antenna due to the lack of access to the area.

The Standing Committee wished a more complete report from the UK in 2008. The Secretariat wrote to the UK authorities in January 2008 and a report was received, informing about progress on each of the paragraphs of Recommendation 113 (2004) (document T-PVS/Files (2008) 2).

The Bureau welcomed this report and asked the Secretariat to write again to the UK authorities asking them for updated information before the next meeting of the Bureau in September 2008.

- **Recommendation No. 118 (2005) on the protection of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Massif des Maures and Plaine des Maures localities (Var), France**

In 2007, the French authorities informed the Secretariat of a global strategy for the conservation of this species in the French PACA region (Provence, Côte d’Azur) and in Corsica. This global strategy – which is not an action plan – includes a restoration plan for the specie and its habitats.

The Standing Committee re-examined this issue at its 27th meeting, in November 2007, and deemed positive the information supplied by the French authorities. The Committee agreed that the French delegation should make a further statement at its 28th meeting, both to report on the implementation of Recommendation No. 118 (2005) and on the matters raised in the 2007 meeting (LGV, Balançon waste storage centre, ecological corridors linking the reserve with other populated areas outside it, state of progress of the restoration scheme), and also to take stock of the progress achieved and the results of the projects presented.

The Secretariat wrote to the French government in January 2008. It received updated information on the following issues:

- **The classification of the Maures plaine as a national nature reserve:** the public consultation and local procedure were completed in 2007 and the case has been examined by the committee on protected areas of the National Council for Nature Protection (*conseil national de protection de la nature*, CNPN). The committee will take a decision, to be followed by an inter-ministerial consultation and a request for the advice of the *Conseil d’Etat*. The authorities estimate that the procedure for the creation of a national nature reserve will be completed in the first half of 2009.

- **The national restoration plan for the Hermann tortoise:** The “restoration plan for the tortoise in the PACA region and Corsica” was developed in 2006 and 2007 and goes beyond Recommendation 118 as it includes the distribution zone of the species also outside the Maures area. The document was submitted to the CNPN, for advice, in December 2007, in particular the element on “guidance and objectives”. The national plan for the restoration of the Hermann tortoise integrates the concept of ecological corridors linking the various population nodes.

The provisional timetable includes the following stages for this year:

- the examination of the element on “actions and operational measures” by the wildlife committee of the CNPN, in April 2008.
- The consultation of relevant Ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, at the initiative of the Ministry of Ecology.
- Approval of the national plan by the Ministry of Ecology in 2008, and dissemination of the document among local and regional authorities so that it can be used as a reference at the local level.

The Bureau welcomed this information and asked the Secretariat to write to the French authorities again asking them for updated information before the next meeting of the Bureau in September 2008.

- **Recommendation No. 129 (2007) on the construction of a dam and hydro-electric power station in Lesce on the Dobra River (Croatia)**

In 2006, a complaint was filed by the NGO Friends of the Earth Croatia, highlighting the negative effects of two projects (a dam and a road) on local biodiversity and criticising the content of the environmental impact studies. The decision to build the hydro-electric power station had been taken in 1988 and work was already well under way in 2006, although the last phase of the project, which posed the greatest threat to nature conservation, was still not under construction and the permit had not been issued.

An on-the-spot visit was carried out in 2007 and Recommendation 129 (2007) was agreed on the basis of the report and recommendations proposed by the independent expert (see document T-PVS/Files (2007) 28).

The Secretariat wrote to the Croatian authorities in January 2008 asking for information on the implementation of this Recommendation but no information was received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to the Croatian authorities again asking them to send their report in advance of the next Bureau meeting.

- **Recommendation No 131 (2007) on the Planned Motorway Vc across the Drava Marshlands in Slavonia (Croatia)**

In 2006, a complaint was filed by the NGO Friends of the Earth Croatia, highlighting the foreseeable negative effects of two projects (a dam and a road) on local biodiversity and criticising the content of the relevant environmental impact studies. Work on the motorway which would form part of the corridor linking the Baltic to the Adriatic had started in the south and was supposed to continue in the North in 2008.

An on-the-spot visit was carried out in 2007 and Recommendation 131 (2007) was agreed on the basis of the report and recommendations proposed by the independent expert (see document T-PVS/Files (2007) 10 revised).

The Secretariat wrote to the Croatian authorities in January 2008 asking for information on the implementation of this Recommendation but no information was received.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to the Croatian authorities again asking them to send their report in advance of the next Bureau meeting.

6. Illegal killings of birds

The issues of the illegal killing of birds in Cyprus and more widely, the illegal capture of birds in Mediterranean Parties, were discussed at the Standing Committee meeting in 2007, at the initiative of some Contracting Parties. The Secretariat wrote to relevant Parties in January 2008 asking them for reports on their implementation of Recommendation No. 5 (1986) “on the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or trading in protected birds” and Recommendation No. 90 (2000) on the illegal killing of birds in Cyprus. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that no reply had been received from the Cyprus government on Recommendation 5 (1986) and that only Turkey had sent a brief reply to the call for reports concerning Recommendation 90 (2000). The Bureau members had also received copies of the comments sent by Birdlife International and Terra Cypria.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to relevant Parties again (including questions about the age of the populations who catch the birds, the income that this activity generates, and the costs of monitoring) and prepare a report for the September meeting. The Bureau agreed to discuss this issue at its next meeting and decide the message to be sent to the Standing Committee on this issue.

7. Strategic development of the Convention

7.1 Enhanced MoC with the CBD Secretariat and CBD COP-9

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that plans were under way to sign the enhanced Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC) with the Executive Secretary of the CBD during the side-event of the Bern Convention scheduled for 22nd May 2008, international day on biodiversity, at the CBD’s 9th Conference of the Parties (COP-9) in Bonn.

7.2 Closer co-operation with other Conventions and organisations

The Bureau also discussed the preparation of a Memorandum of Co-operation between the Secretariats of the Bern Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) following on a meeting held in July 2007.

The Secretariat informed that talks were also under way to prepare a Memorandum of Co-operation in the framework of the existing 1962 agreement between the Council of Europe and the IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature).

The Chair mentioned that the CBD Secretariat was also preparing a MoC with the Arctic Council and that such an initiative could also be developed by the Bern Convention.

8. European Diploma of Protected Areas

The Secretariat informed of the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma held in Strasbourg on 17-18 March 2008. The main outcome of the meeting was the agreement on 18 draft resolutions for renewals of European Diplomas, some on the basis of expert visits and other on the basis of the previous visit report as well as annual reports. The Secretariat further informed that one new candidate site had been received in 2007, for the Balkan Park in Bulgaria. Concerning the site in Romania discussed last year, the Group of Specialists was satisfied with the progress showed since the last meeting, and decided to award the European Diploma. The Group of Specialists also re-examined the non-renewals for Belarus and Poland considered last year, and regretted the lack of significant progress concerning the development of a management plan.

The Bureau decided to inform countries about the draft resolutions agreed by the Group of Specialists and submit them to the Committee of Ministers for final adoption of the awards and renewals of the European Diploma. The Bureau further agreed to send the Belarus and Poland cases to the Standing Committee, for further discussion.

9. Procedure for electing the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee: Possible changes?

The Secretariat recalled that in 2007 the Standing Committee had decided that the Bureau would discuss the issue raised by the delegation of Norway concerning the elections of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and the need to revise the rules of procedure to include a set deadline to request nominations so that they can be circulated ahead of the meeting of the Standing Committee.

The Bureau held an exchange of views on this issue and recalled that the existing rules of procedure of the Standing Committee request an election of Chair and Vice-Chair at every meeting of the Committee, but they establish no particular way to proceed with the elections so customary Council of Europe rules have been applied. The Bureau saw no reason to modify the existing flexible procedure.

10. Any other business

The Secretariat called the Bureau's attention to the complaint received from WWF Switzerland regarding the development of the Emerald Network in that country. The Bureau discussed the possibility of getting the advice of the Group of Experts on the Emerald Network but it was agreed to wait first for the views of the Swiss government.

Upon request by Bureau members and with the agreement of the Chair, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to send the meeting's report to all Bureau members, for their information and possible comments.

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The next meeting will be held in Strasbourg on 5 September 2008.

The Chair thanked the participants and interpreters and declared the meeting closed.



A P P E N D I X 1

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 9 January 2008

Standing Committee **Bureau meeting**

Strasbourg, 28 March 2008
(Room 17, opening: 9.30 am)

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5. **Follow-up of previous Recommendations:**
 - Recommendation No. 95 (2002) on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı beach (Turkey);
 - Recommendation No. 96 (2002) on conservation of natural habitats and wildlife, specially birds, in afforestation of lowland (Iceland)

- Recommendation No. 108 (2003) on the proposed construction of the “Via Baltica” (Poland)
 - Recommendation No.113 (2004) on military antenna in the Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri (Cyprus)
 - Recommendation No. 118 (2005) on the protection of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Massif des Maures and Plaine des Maures localities (Var), France
 - Recommendation No. 129 (2007) on the construction of a dam and hydro-electric power station in Lesce on the Dobra River (Croatia)
 - Recommendation No 131 (2007) on the Planned Motorway Vc across the Drava Marshlands in Slavonia (Croatia)
- 6. Illegal killing of birds**
- 6.1 Cyprus: Possible case file or point for information?
 - 6.2 Implementation of Recommendation No. 5 (1986) on the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or trading in protected birds;
- 7. Strategic development of the Convention**
- a. Enhanced MoC with the CBD Secretariat and CBD COP-9
 - b. Closer co-operation with other Conventions and organisations
- 8. European Diploma of Protected Areas**
- 8.1 Report from meeting of Group of Specialists
 - 8.2 Draft renewals in 2008 (to be presented to the Committee of Ministers)
 - 8.3 Outcome of discussions concerning the three contested cases in 2007 (Belarus, Poland, Romania)
- 9. Procedure for electing the Chair and Vice -Chair of the Standing Committee: Possible changes?**
- 10. Any Other Business**

APPENDIX 2

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 22 mars 2006
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 16

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