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Strasbourg, 17 May 2004  
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

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**Meeting of the Bureau**

Strasbourg, 16 April 2004

**MEETING REPORT**

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

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## 1. Adoption of the agenda

Mrs Ilona Jepsen (Latvia), Chair of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, opened the meeting on 16 April 2004. She welcomed the other two members of the Bureau: Mrs Véronique Herrens Schmidt (France, Vice-Chair) and Mr Patrick Van Klaveren (Monaco), as well as the representatives of the Secretariat.

The agenda was adopted as it appears in appendix 1.

The participants are listed in appendix 2.

## 2. General information

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the changes made at the head of the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage and the main thrusts of its work.

Priority had been given to sustainable development following the Johannesburg Conference. Discussion ensued on the importance of highlighting the Environment sector's contribution to the other activities of the Council of Europe and on the Organisation's approach to sustainable development.

## 3. Progress of the Programme of activities 2004

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the progress of work.

### a. Monitoring of the implementation of the legal aspects of the Convention

A report would be prepared on the implementation of the convention in Hungary.

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

- Burkina Faso had agreed in principle to the official launch of the Emerald Network. A workshop was to be organised in Ouagadougou in May;
- Tunisia had confirmed its invitation to hold a specific meeting in 2005 on the development of the Network in Africa;
- Funding was currently being sought from the European Environment Agency to launch the Emerald Network in the countries of South-East Europe;
- Contractual arrangements had been made with Georgia and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" to launch a second designation phase;
- The joint meeting of the Group of experts of the Emerald Network and the Committee of experts of the PEEN would be held on 5 and 6 October 2004 in Krakow and followed up on 7 and 8 October by a symposium on the theme "Conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of forests" Three aspects would be covered: protection of habitats, forest species, good practices in sustainable silviculture.

The Bureau held an exchange of views on the convention's contribution to this event and on how positive support could be provided for the Ministerial Conference on forests.

### c. Monitoring of species and encouragement of conservation

#### - *Invasive alien species*

A meeting would be held in Paris on 17 May 2004 to decide on action to implement the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species.

A seminar might be organised in 2005.

#### - *Conservation of invertebrates*

A consultant had been commissioned to prepare a draft European strategy for conservation of invertebrates.

#### - *Conservation of large carnivores*

A brochure on large carnivores, to be published in the Questions and Answers Series, was being produced.

A meeting of the Select Group of the *Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe* (LCIE) would be held in Bavaria on 23 and 24 April 2004.

Thanks to the agreement between the *Junta de Andalucía* (regional government) and the central government of Spain, the programme for the breeding of the Iberian Lynx in captivity was making good progress.

Mrs Herrenschmidt informed the Bureau that an action plan for the wolf (2004-2008) had been prepared by the Ministries of Ecology and Agriculture; its purpose was to guarantee sustainable management of wolf populations.

The Bureau discussed bear and wolf hunting in Romania. The NGOs criticised the hunting plans which they believed were based on an over-estimate of numbers. Even if the reports received appeared overly alarmist, the Bureau thought it desirable that the Romanian Government explain its methods of estimating populations, to ensure sustainable management of the species.

- ***Conservation of the hamster***

The international Working Group on the European hamster was to hold a meeting at the Council of Europe on 16 and 17 October, funded partly by the convention. The Committee would be informed of its proceedings.

- ***Conservation of plants***

The next meeting of the Group of experts on plant conservation and also the Planta Europa Seminar would be held from 17 to 20 September 2004 in Valencia (Spain), with the aim of assessing development of the European Plant Conservation Strategy and the problems of conserving plant species in Europe.

The list of 50 species regarded as priorities in conservation terms, prepared by the Botanical Conservatory in Brest, would be finalised in collaboration with the European Environment Agency. A list of 590 species (extinct or critically endangered) was being drawn up.

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

Contractual arrangements had been made to prepare action plans for:

➤ 3 threatened reptile species:

- *Lacerta agilis*,
- *Elaphe longissima*,
- *Vipera ursinii complex*;

➤ 2 amphibian species:

- *Rana latastei*,
- *Triturus cristatus complex*.

The next Conference on marine turtles, which would be prepared in collaboration with the Bonn and Barcelona Conventions, the IUCN and the RAC/SPA, was to take place in Turkey in October. The Turkish authorities had not yet confirmed the holding of the conference, whose aims would be to examine implementation of ongoing action plans and propose suitable conservation measures.

- ***Conservation of birds***

A study was to be carried out by the *Il Nibbio* Foundation on the ecological impact of lead shot on land habitats and the accumulation of lead in birds other than wildfowl.

The draft recommendation on minimising adverse effects of wind power generation on birds would be revised in line with the Standing Committee's decision, with a view to including effects on chiroptera and sea mammals.

#### **d. Conservation of sea mammals**

The Bureau stressed the need to take account of the other international or regional programmes and agreements in this field and to cooperate with ACCOBAMS in particular regarding implementation of action plans for Black Sea cetaceans.

### **4. 25th Anniversary of the convention**

The Secretariat outlined plans for the celebration day to be held on 30 November, on the occasion of the next Standing Committee meeting.

It would focus on the past history of the convention, successes and failures, and future prospects.

At the end of the day, a reception would be hosted by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland.

Various items or activities were envisaged to mark the occasion: poster, photo exhibition, creation of a water course, installation of nesting boxes etc.

The Bureau thought that attendance should be enlarged by including local elected representatives and NGOs.

### **5. Application of the convention - Files**

#### **5.1. Specific sites – Open files**

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

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that no new information had been received concerning the development of the situation.

##### **b. Green turtle *Chelonia mydas* in Kazanli (Turkey)**

There was no new information to report.

#### **5.2. Possible new files**

##### **a. Wolf control and legal status of the species (Switzerland)**

The Bureau noted that the *Office fédéral de l'Environnement, des Forêts and du Paysage* (OFEFP) had adjusted the draft Wolf Management Concept for Switzerland to take the interests of traditional livestock farming into account and had submitted it to the parties concerned, who had been given until 22 March to submit their opinions.

The definitive text was therefore not yet available. The Bureau backed this move, made in a spirit of conflict resolution.

#### **5.3. Pending complaints**

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

The IUCN Chiroptera Specialist Group had drawn the Secretariat's attention to tourism development projects likely to harm the bat populations. The additional information requested by the Secretariat on the protection of the caves of Koyunbaba, Kiz and Kiyiköy had not yet been sent. Experts from the Ministry of Environment had made an on-the-spot appraisal in April which had not revealed any causes for worry, as the caves concerned had not yet been developed for tourism.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to ask the Turkish Government to send it a full report on:

- the recent on-the-spot appraisal;
- the findings of the surveys to be carried out at the end of the breeding season.

##### **b. Ajdorska jama prim Nemski Cave (Slovenia)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Slovenian Association for Bat Research and Conservation (SDPVN) had drawn its attention to a project for an exhibition of archaeological finds in the cave of Ajdorska jama prim Nemski considered as a major habitat for the Mediterranean horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus euryale*.

A request for information had been sent to the Ministry of Environment. In their reply the Slovenian authorities had recognised the importance of the cave, which harboured the largest known maternity colony of the Mediterranean horseshoe bat in Slovenia.

The cave had been included in the national list of proposals for Natura 2000.

A study had been undertaken to analyse the compatibility of conservation functions and public visits, and recommendations had been made.

The authorities considered that, thanks to ongoing dialogue with the municipality and other partners and through close monitoring, the problem could be resolved.

The Bureau thanked the Slovenian authorities for this information and decided to file the complaint. Nevertheless, it asked to be informed of the findings of the monitoring that would be carried out.

It asked the Secretariat to process all complaints concerning bat protection in collaboration with Eurobats.

**c. West European Sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in France**

Following a complaint from France Nature Environnement (FNE) concerning the serious repercussions for the wild West European Sturgeon of the building of a very wide route for shipping Airbus A380 aircraft parts between the ports of Bordeaux and Toulouse, information had been requested from the French Government in September 2003. No reply had been received.

A complaint had also been lodged with the European Union since the area concerned was a future "special conservation zone". Furthermore it had been proposed to draw up an international action plan mentioned in the conclusions of the last LIFE programme which could receive the support of the Bern Convention.

The Bureau asked the French authorities to reply to its request for information without delay.

It would resume examination of this question at its next meeting.

It also said that it was in favour of action to protect this species, which could be undertaken in cooperation with the European Commission.

**d. Conservation of the Hermann turtle (*Testudo hermanni*) in the plaine des Maures (France)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it had been approached again by the *Société nationale de protection de la nature* (SNPN), which deplored the failure to implement the public interest plan instituted in 1997 to ensure protection of this species as well as the various threats to it, in particular from the project to construct the Rouvede golf-course complex, which would include residential buildings.

Mrs Herrenschildt presented certain points from the reply which the Secretariat had just received: considerable efforts had been made to take the necessary protection measures; substantial funding had been made available following the fires which had destroyed 10% of the Hermann turtle population.

Where the Natura 2000 designation was concerned, the European Commission had validated the mapping of the plaine des Maures site, which covered 60% of the turtle area.

She pointed out that, thanks to the public interest plan, the Michelin road project had been halted and the land had been bought back by the Coastal conservation body. She said that this was a complex file and there was no justification for reopening it.

The Bureau decided to examine the reply at its next meeting.

**e. Exploitation of a quarry forming a major bat habitat in Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it had received a complaint from the "Bat Protection Rhineland-Palatinate" Working group concerning mining activities which threatened a major habitat for 15 species of bats.

A request for information had been sent to the German Government.

The German authorities had provided information on the status of the site; the entire area was a special protection area. Certain mining authorisations had been granted until 2011. However, according to the "Habitats" Directive, any operations had to be preceded by a study proving the compatibility of mining operations with habitat conservation.

The authorities considered that protection of the bats was guaranteed by those control measures.

The Bureau thanked the German Government for its reply. As the site concerned was a special protection area, it instructed the Bureau to obtain the European Commission's opinion on this matter.

**f. Building of a Danube-Black Sea shipping canal in the Bystroye estuary (Danube delta, Ukraine)**

The Bureau noted that the Secretariat had received a complaint from a group of NGOs, "Danube Environment Forum", concerning the ecological risks for the biodiversity of the entire Danube delta posed by the plan to build a shipping canal in the Bystroye estuary.

A request for information had been sent to the Ukrainian authorities together with a suggestion of a site visit.

Contact had been established with Unesco (MAB Programme) and the Ramsar Convention Bureau, which had visited the site in 2003 to analyse the three possible options for the digging of the canal and their foreseeable impact on the status and functioning of the Ukrainian Danube Biosphere Reserve.

By Presidential decree dated 2 February 2004 a new zoning scheme of the area concerned had been proposed, calling the limits of the biosphere reserve into question. The final decision would be taken by the end of May 2004.

The Bureau decided, given the urgency of the situation, to visit the site, subject to agreement on the part of the Ukrainian Government. The expert would be asked to study the area's legal status, the technical project and funding arrangements.

**g. Installation of a windfarm in the Balchik area– Via Pontica (Bulgaria)**

The Secretariat had received a complaint from BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria concerning the creation of the first windfarm in Bulgaria. The NGO was challenging the chosen site on the Black Sea coast located on the second largest migratory route for soaring birds in Europe.

The Secretariat had received the following information: an environmental impact assessment (EIA) had been drawn up; the assessment procedure had not found any infringements of the Bern Convention's provisions.

The Ministry of Environment and Water saw no grounds, therefore, for calling into question the decision taken by the Regional Directorate of Environment and Water in Varna.

The Bureau thought it necessary to have the maps indicating the location of the Ramsar sites and the EIA report. It believed that the situation had to be analysed with the draft recommendations on windfarm installations in mind.

**h. National Hydrology Plan (Spain)**

The Bureau noted that BirdLife-Spain and other organisations had submitted a complaint on the possible effects on biological diversity of a very extensive national hydrology plan (including a substantial number of engineering projects). The Spanish conservation authorities had presented a very complex environmental impact assessment (EIA), which lacked the necessary detail regarding impact on biological diversity. The new government had promised to drop the plan.

#### **4. On-the-spot appraisals**

##### **a. Hydro-electric dams at Kárahnjúkar and Nordlingaalda (Iceland)**

In keeping with the Standing Committee's decision to accept the Icelandic Government's invitation to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal, an expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat would visit Iceland in July to assess whether the dams and the development plans for hydro- and geothermal energy resources complied with the obligations arising under the Bern Convention.

##### **b. Military antenna on the British sovereign basis (Cyprus)**

The Standing Committee had decided, at its last meeting, to have an on-the-spot appraisal carried out with the purpose of discussing monitoring of the impact of the communication antenna (Pluto II) on wildlife as well as mitigation and ecological compensation measures. An expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat would visit the site.

#### **5. Follow-up to Recommendations**

##### **a. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 97 (2002) of the Standing Committee on the conservation of the Bald ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) and the tourism development project in Tifnit (Souss Massa, Morocco)**

No new information had been received by the Secretariat concerning the tourism development project in the Souss Massa national park in Morocco.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to write to the Moroccan authorities again.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that an action plan for the Bald ibis had been prepared as part of a workshop organised in collaboration with AEWA and SEO/BirdLife in Madrid on 10 and 11 January 2004. It would be presented at the Standing Committee's next meeting.

##### **b. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 98 (2002) on the project to build a motorway through the Kresna Gorge (Bulgaria)**

The Bulgarian Government had not provided any new information on the development of the situation.

The NGOs had again expressed their concern over:

- conformity of EU-financed trans-European transport projects with the Bern Convention;
- the delay in designating the Kresna Gorge and the surrounding territories as a protected area;
- the shortcomings of the consultation process;
- the finalisation of the EIA report, which was now in its 5th version;
- Other threats due to an accumulation of projects in the same region (small dams, coal production etc).

The NGOs reiterated their request that a file be opened on grounds of the Bulgarian Government's failure to implement Recommendation No. 98 (2002).

On the instructions of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat had written to the European Commission for clarification of the funding issue. The Commission had not received any request for financial aid from the Bulgarian authorities for the section including the Kresna gorge.

The Bureau was concerned over the funding of the project, which should be envisaged in global terms, so that the whole of Corridor no. 4 linking Sofia to Kulata (Greece) was covered, and not on an ad hoc basis. It pointed out that respect for environmental constraints and the community *acquis* had to be requisites for financial aid.

It instructed the Secretariat to ask the Bulgarian Government to submit a full report including an opinion from the Ministry of Regional Development and General Road Administration.

## **6. Proposals for the Programme of Activities for 2005**

The Secretariat and the Bureau proposed the following activities for 2005:

- Meeting of a select group drawn from the Group of experts on conservation of invertebrates to examine the draft European strategy for conservation of invertebrates;
- Meeting of the Group of experts on invasive alien species;
- Meeting of the Group of experts on strategic development;
- Study on freshwater fish;
- Conference on transfrontier management of large carnivore populations.

## **7. Date of the next meeting**

The Bureau's next meeting would be held from 6 to 10 September 2004.

## **8. Other business**

As no other matters were raised, the Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.





## APPENDIX 1

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

Strasbourg, 9 March 2004

#### Standing Committee Bureau meeting

Strasbourg, 16 April 2004  
(Room 15, opening : 9.30 am)

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#### DRAFT AGENDA

1. **Adoption of the agenda**
2. **General information**
3. **Implementation of the 2004 Programme of activities**
4. **Implementation of the Convention : Files**
  - 4.1. **Specific Sites - Files open**
    - Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)
    - Green turtle *Chelonia mydas* in Kazanlı(Turkey)
  - 4.2. **Possible new files**
    - Switzerland: wolf control and legal status of the species
  - 4.3. **Complaints in stand-by and other informations**
    - Turkey: caves in the Thrace region
    - Slovenia: Ajdorska jama prim Nemski Cave
    - France : Sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in the Gironde
    - France: Conservation of the Hermann turtle in the plaine des Maures
    - Germany: Exploitation of a quarry major bat habitat (Rhineland-Palatinate)
    - Ukraine: building of a canal in the Bystroye Stuary (Danube delta)
    - Spain: National Hydrologic Plan
  - 4.4. **On-the-spot appraisals**
    - Hydro-electric dams at Karahnjúkar and Nordlingaalda (Iceland)
    - Cyprus: military antenna on the British sovereign basis
5. **Follow-up of the Recommendations - Evolution of the situation in:**
  - Morocco: tourism development in the Souss Massa National Park [Recommendation No. 97 (2002)]

- Bulgaria: motorway construction through the Kresna Gorge [Recommendation No. 98 (2002)]
- Portugal: Odelouca dam [Recommendation No. 107 (2003)]

**6. Proposals for the 2005 programme of activities**

**7. Other business**



## APPENDIX 2

Strasbourg, 10 March 2004  
[list part Bureau avril 2004.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 2004  
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 15

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### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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**FRANCE / FRANCE** Mrs Véronique HERRENSCHMIDT, Responsable de la mission internationale, Direction de la nature et des paysages, Ministère de l'écologie et du développement durable., 20, avenue de Ségur, F-75302 PARIS 07 SP  
Tel : +33 1 42 19 19 48. Fax : +33 1 42 19 19 06  
E-mail : [veronique.herrenschmidt@environnement.gouv.fr](mailto:veronique.herrenschmidt@environnement.gouv.fr) (E) (F)

**LATVIA/LETTONIE** Ms Ilona JEPSEN, Deputy Director, Environmental Protection Dept, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Peldu 25, LV 1494 RIGA.  
Tel : +371 7 026 517 / +371 7 026 524. Fax : +371 7 820 442.  
E-mail : [daba@varam.gov.lv](mailto:daba@varam.gov.lv) (E)

**MONACO/MONACO** Mr Patrick VAN KLAVEREN, Délégué à l'Environnement International et Méditerranéen, Direction des Relations extérieures, Villa Girasole, 16 boulevard de Suisse, MC 98000 MONACO.  
Tel : +377 93 15 81 48. Fax : +377 93 50 95 91. E-mail : [pvanklaveren@gouv.mc](mailto:pvanklaveren@gouv.mc) (F)

**SECRETARIAT / SECRÉTARIAT**

**Council of Europe / Conseil de l'Europe, Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage / Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine culturel et naturel, F-67075 STRASBOURG CEDEX, France**

Tel : +33 3 88 41 20 00. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51

Mr Eladio FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO, Head of Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Chef de la Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique

Tel : +33 3 88 41 22 59. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : [eladio.fernandez-galiano@coe.int](mailto:eladio.fernandez-galiano@coe.int)

Mrs Françoise BAUER, Principal administrative assistant / Assistante administrative principale, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la diversité biologique

Tel : +33 3 88 41 22 61. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : [françoise.bauer@coe.int](mailto:françoise.bauer@coe.int)

Mrs Hélène BOUGUESSA, Principal administrative assistant / Assistante administrative principale, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la diversité biologique

Tel : +33 3 88 41 22 64. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : [helene.bouguessa@coe.int](mailto:helene.bouguessa@coe.int)

Ms Elisa RIVERA, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique

Tel : +33 3 88 41 50 72. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : [elisa.rivera@coe.int](mailto:elisa.rivera@coe.int)

Mrs Véronique de CUSSAC, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique

Tel : +33 3 88 41 34 76 Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : [veronique.decusac@coe.int](mailto:veronique.decusac@coe.int)