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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, 19 September 2003

**MEETING REPORT**

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

## 1. Adoption of the Agenda

In the absence of Ms Ilona Jepsen (Latvia), Chair of the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention, the Vice-Chair, Ms Véronique Herrenscheidt, opened the meeting held on 19 September 2003. She welcomed the other member of the Bureau, Mr Patrick Van Klaveren (Monaco) and 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 a report on the implementation of the convention in the United Kingdom is being prepared.

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

The Secretariat reported that Burkina Faso, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Tunisia, which had all expressed the intention of joining the network, had not done so. Armenia had shown interest in conducting a pilot project. Contacts would be established with Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Dubrovnik Conference.

The Secretariat pointed out that phase one of the network was about to be completed as most of the countries had set up pilot projects.

Consideration would now have to be given to:

- phase 2, and provision for network development incentive measures;
- bringing the network into line with Natura 2000;
- adapting the map of biogeographic regions.

The Secretariat explained that this was a map for administrative use, and that the European Commission would have to be consulted if it was to be changed.

These matters would be dealt with at the joint meeting of the two ecological networks – the Committee of Experts for the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network and the Group of Experts for the setting up of the Emerald Network – which would be held in Dubrovnik (Croatia) on 14 and 15 October 2003. This meeting would be followed on 16 and 17 October 2003 by the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of the Pan-European Ecological Network on “Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Protected Species”, the goal of which was to provide a forum for the exchange of information on existing schemes and programmes and dialogue aimed at improving co-ordination between the conventions and regional programmes. This event would provide a major contribution to the next Conference of Parties to the CBD in March 2004, which was to deal with protected areas.

The Bureau noted this information with interest.

As far as phase 2 of the Emerald Network was concerned, the Bureau suggested that bilateral co-operation should be revived.

It expressed its wish that a representative of the Black Sea takes part in the Dubrovnik Symposium and considered that this meeting would provide an excellent opportunity to take stock of marine biodiversity in regional seas.

### c. Species monitoring and conservation incentives

#### - *Invasive alien species*

The new Draft European Strategy on Invasive Alien species was presented by the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species which met in Strasbourg on 19 and 20 June 2003. The definitive text will be submitted to the next meeting of the Standing Committee as well as a draft recommendation.

The Secretariat announced that a seminar on invasive alien species would be held by the Moldovan authorities with the Council of Europe's support, in Chisinau on 16 and 17 October 2003.

- ***Conservation of invertebrates***

The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts took place in Cardiff (United Kingdom) on 6 and 7 September 2003. It was 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. Its aim had been to establish guidelines for the Group and propose activities that could be carried out by governments. Consideration had been given to the devising of a strategy for the conservation of invertebrates in Europe.

- ***Conservation of large carnivores***

The Secretariat reported that after the visit to Madrid and Seville (Spain) from 17 to 19 March 2003 focusing on the Iberian lynx, an agreement between the central government and the Andalusian government had been signed, which would enable, among other things, a programme for breeding in captivity to be implemented.

A second visit to Spain was planned for the end of October to monitor the application of the agreement.

The Bureau welcomed the progress made in this area and endorsed the second visit.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on the Status and Conservation of the Alpine Lynx Population (SCALP) had been held in Amden (Switzerland) from 7 to 9 May 2003. A draft recommendation had been prepared on the implementation of the Pan-Alpine Conservation Strategy for the Lynx.

The Workshop on the Conservation of Large Carnivores in the Carpathians had been held in Brasov (Romania) from 12 to 14 June 2003. The need for a coherent strategy for the conservation of carnivores in the Carpathians had been acknowledged.

A draft recommendation to this effect would be presented to the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat announced:

- that two side-events on the situation of carnivores in the Carpathians and the lynx in the Alps would be held during the meeting of the Standing Committee;
- that a question-and-answer booklet would be produced on the same subject.

The Bureau welcomed these results. It emphasised the importance of dealing with the "transfrontier management" aspect, particularly from the viewpoint of facilitating animal movement across borders and exchanging information.

Large carnivores conservation is mentioned in the Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, which had been opened for signature at the Ministerial Conference in Kyiv.

- ***Plant conservation***

The European list of 50 plants which could be the subject of action plans as part of implementation of the European Plant Conservation Strategy drawn up by the *Conservatoire botanique national de Brest* (France) will be presented to the Standing Committee.

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.

- ***Fungi***

The Bureau exchanged views on the reservations that the European Union might have regarding Sweden's proposal to include 33 species of fungi in Appendix 1 to the convention.

This proposal for an amendment, which would be discussed at the next meeting of the Standing Committee, raised the question of harmonising the Appendices to the Berne Convention with those to the Habitats Directive.

The Bureau considered:

- that contacts should be pursued with the European Commission with a view to resolving this problem;
- that the European Community system should not prevent other conventions from developing.

#### **d. Marine and coastal biological diversity**

This point had already been discussed under item 2.b.

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As regards the other activities, there was no particular information to be passed on.

In conclusion, the representative of the Secretariat said that no particular problems had been encountered when implementing the programme of activities. He noted nonetheless that there had been a decline in voluntary contributions.

Two activities had progressed particularly well in 2003, namely those on invasive alien species and large carnivores.

The Bureau was also informed that the Secretariat had taken part in the following two major events:

- the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Vienna from 28 to 30 April 2003. The Bureau's opinion was that the convention should establish more activities in the area of the conservation of the biological diversity of forests;
- the Ministerial Conference "An Environment for Europe", held in Kyiv from 21 to 23 May 2003. Various forms of interaction between the convention and the apparatus of ministerial conferences had been clearly highlighted at the conference.

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

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

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

The Government of Cyprus had informed the Secretariat of the measures taken pursuant to the Cabinet's decision of 3 July 2002 concerning the management of the area. The Ministerial Committee on Akamas would be charged with supervising the preparation and implementation of the new management plan. A co-ordinating committee would be set up, and an international campaign to promote the area would be launched.

Limni Beach should be granted protected status; the boundaries of the protected area would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval in late 2003.

The NGOs considered that the situation had improved somewhat as a result of the decision of July 2002; however, there were still many unresolved problems. They expected the new government elected in 2003 to take appropriate steps to ensure that activities in and around Akamas were devised and put into practice in accordance with sustainable development principles and that the Limni area, which was subject to numerous pressures, acquired the same protected status as Lara.

In view of all these considerations, the Bureau reiterated the need for a management plan and specific provisions to protect Limni Beach.

The undertakings given by the government were a step in the right direction.

It was decided nonetheless to keep the file open.

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

The Secretariat reported that it had received a report from the NGOs regarding Kazanli and other beaches which were important nesting sites for the green sea turtle.

As regards Kazanli, real progress had been observed in the functioning of the soda and chromium factory, particularly in the treating of liquid waste. On the other hand, the problem of the dangerous waste produced by the factory in the past, which was still polluting the beach, had not yet been solved.

As far as the implementation of Recommendation no. 95 (2002) was concerned, some activities had not yet been launched. They included the removal of the row of greenhouses, the relocation of the parking area and cleaning up the beach.

The Bureau noted that the situation was progressing well. It asked the government to continue its efforts to implement the recommendation fully.

It decided to close the file while asking the government to carry on reporting on the situation.

**3.2. Possible new files**

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

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that, at the Portuguese government's invitation, the site had been visited on 7 and 8 April 2003 with the aim of assessing the dam construction project and its impact on the habitat both of the Iberian lynx and of the other species protected by the Bern Convention that were represented in the river valley. On the basis of the report by the expert, Mr Hervé Lethier, the Secretariat had prepared a draft recommendation advocating various measures relating, among other things, to the scale of the work, the setting up of an ambitious programme to reduce the project's impact and the immediate launch of a national action plan for the conservation of the Iberian lynx.

The Bureau decided to keep the file as a possible new file and submit the draft recommendation to the Standing Committee.

**b. Wolf control (Switzerland)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Motion of Senator Maissen calling for the wolf withdrawal from the list of protected species, as well as the withdrawal of the "Swiss wolf concept" implemented on a trial basis which was adopted by the upper Chamber (*Conseil des Etats*) of the Federal Assembly, has been rejected by the Lower Chamber (National Council).

The Swiss Government considers that it has fulfilled its obligations under the Bern Convention.

The Bureau decided to keep the file as a possible new file.

**3.3. Complaints in stand-by**

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

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Turkish authorities have answered the request for information made by the Secretariat regarding the protection of the caves in the region. They provided explanations only concern the Dupnisa cave.

The Ministry of Environnement is aware of the importance and sensitivity of the Dupnisa cave and of its commitments under the Bern Convention and has referred this to the Ministry of Culture.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> degree of "Nature Protection Site" was awarded to the Dupnisa site and a series of measures have been defined in order to foresee the threats and to ensure that the construction activities are monitored.

Progress reports will be prepared regularly. The Ministry of Environment will organise an on-the-spot appraisal at the end of the breeding season.

The Bureau decided to keep this complaint in stand by.

It asked the Turkish authorities to send it the reports which were to be drawn up, particularly those to be prepared at the end of the breeding season, together with information on other caves in the region that might be affected by tourist development projects.

**b. West-European Sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in France**

Following 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, the French authorities had been requested to provide the Secretariat with information as soon as possible. The Bureau decided that the complaint should be left pending in the meantime.

**c. Bialowieza National Park (Poland)**

The Polish authorities have sent to the Secretariat information on the management of the Bialowieza forest (63,142 ha) which is carried out by the “State Forest” Enterprise according to the Forest Act. The purpose is to reconcile the conflicting functions : the use and the protection of forest resources.

The 10 Year Forest Management Plans must be approved by the Minister of Environment. Trees-felling is limited to the cases where maintenance and protection measures are indispensable. Some trees affected by the bark beetle may be cut.

Felling concerns only spruce. Oaks, ash-maples and elms – over 100 years old – cannot be subject to felling.

Commercial exploitation only involves a relatively small volume (145,700 m<sup>3</sup> per year).

The management carried out by both the Ministry and the State Forest Enterprise take the guidance and comments of the NGOs fully into account. The Government considers that these comments are unjustified and may mislead public opinion.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that, during the field visit in Poland on 14-15 October aimed to investigate the proposed “Via Baltica” motorway project, a discussion will be organised on the long-term management of the forest and on the extension of the National Park.

The Bureau proposed that no further action should be taken on this complaint. It considered that the theme of forest management in the centre and on the periphery of protected areas should be one of the major topics of discussion at the meeting of the ecological networks and the symposium to be held in Poland in 2004.

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

The Secretariat has written to the Icelandic Government to inform it of the position of the Bureau regarding the construction of the dam and to ask it if long-term projects are foreseen for the areas concerned.

The Secretariat pointed out that the authorities’ reply focused on the project impact evaluation procedure that was being implemented as part of Iceland’s Master Plan for Hydro- and Geothermal Energy Resources pending the application of the directive on strategic environmental assessment. It did not contain any specific material relating to the Karahnjukar dam.

In their latest report the NGOs had raised questions concerning the real status of the Master Plan and the consequences of the project to construct a second dam at Nordlingalda not far from a nature reserve, which was also a Ramsar site.

They asked the government to apply the precautionary principle and withdraw its support from the first project and review its support for the second if, after a full and thorough assessment of the project’s environmental impact, its consequences were found to be too harmful for habitats and species of European importance.

The Bureau decided to submit this issue to the Standing Committee as a possible file and asked the Icelandic authorities to provide it with a detailed report on the two dam construction projects.

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

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

Following the invitation of the Polish authorities, an expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat will carry out an on-the-spot appraisal on 14-15 October 2003. The purpose of the expertise is to:

- analyse the project of building of the motorway between Warsaw and Helsinki;
- assess the impacts on the national habitats, especially on the Biebrza National Park;
- study options for alternative routes;
- make appropriate recommendations to the Government.

The Bureau noted this information and would await the results of the appraisal.

### **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)**

No information was received from the Greek Government regarding the implementation of the Recommendation.

The Mayor and the Sub-Prefect of Milos have informed the Secretariat of their wish to implement a Local Agenca 21 on Milos.

They have expressed their concern regarding the consequences on local life and the future of the way the Government is managing the ecological value of the island. They query the Presidential Decree which foresees the creation of a natural Park and request that a concertation meeting be organised..

#### **b. Follow-up**

##### **- illegal killing of birds in Cyprus**

The Secretariat reported on the latest information provided by the NGOs. Surveillance had been stepped up, but poachers were now using a new sort of lime, making it possible for them to kill more birds and operate during the day and night.

The NGOs expressed their desire to present an updated report after the migration period and requested that the matter be discussed by the Standing Committee.

The Bureau congratulated the British and Cypriot authorities for their joint campaign against the illegal trapping and sale of birds.

It decided to present this matter to the Standing Committee as an item of information.

##### **- Bald ibis in Souss Massa (Morocco)**

No new information has been received by the Secretariat concerning the tourism development project in the Souss Massa national park in Morocco. The Moroccan authorities had not notified the Secretariat of their views on the new smaller-scale scheme proposed by *Club Méditerranée*, which might prove compatible with Recommendation no. 97 (2002).

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

##### **- Kresna Gorge (Bulgaria)**

The Government had not provided any new information. A new environmental-impact appraisal would be prepared.

The NGOs had reiterated their concerns regarding:

- the preparation of a new environmental-impact appraisal: choice of experts, lack of consultation and transparency, standard of content;

- the refusal by the Ministry of Regional Development and Civil Engineering and the Roads Agency to consider all the alternatives;
- the European Community funding system.

The procedure for granting the whole gorge protected status was continuing, together with the steps to incorporate it into the Emerald Network.

The Bureau considered that the situation should be monitored closely and decided to include the matter on the agenda for the next Standing Committee meeting.

**- Olympic-rowing center in Schinias-Marathon (Greece)**

No new information has been received by the Secretariat regarding the construction of the Olympic-rowing center in Schinias-Marathon.

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

The Bureau approved the draft 2004 programme of activities presented by the Secretariat.

## **6. Draft agenda of the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee**

The Secretariat announced that the Cyprus Government had requested that the question of the installation of a large communications antenna on the British sovereign bases at Akrotiri be included on the agenda of the next Standing Committee meeting.

At its previous meeting the Bureau had decided to take no further action on the complaint in view of the information provided by the British Government.

Although it had not received any new detailed information, the Bureau decided, having examined the request from Cyprus, to put the issue on the agenda for the next Standing Committee meeting under "points of information". It requested more detailed information from the Government of Cyprus.

The Bureau also approved the draft agenda submitted by the Secretariat.

It considered that, in view of recent events linked to the heatwave which had struck the whole of Europe, it would be a good idea to assess the ecological impact of the summer's fires on biodiversity and ask governments to provide information about measures taken to prevent forest fires.

## **7. Other business**

No other points were raised.





## 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)

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#### 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

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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