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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

Bureau meeting

Strasbourg, 4 September 2001

REPORT OF THE MEETING

*Secrétariat Memorandum
Prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and of Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

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

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

2. Progress of the 2001 work programme and decisions

2.1. Progress of activities

The Secretariat reported on recent developments connected with the Convention and the progress of activities.

a. New Contracting Party to the Convention

On 1 August 2001, Morocco had become the 45th Contracting Party to the Convention.

Georgia had begun the procedure for accession to the Convention.

The Bureau welcomed the new Contracting Party.

b. Monitoring of the legal application of the Convention

A report was being drawn up on the implementation of the Convention in Ireland.

c. Emerald Network of areas of special conservation interest

- Pilot projects

Pilot projects launching the site designation process had begun in spring and summer or would begin in the coming months in Ukraine, Lithuania, Cyprus, Hungary and Malta. Workshops had also been organised.

The process would continue in 2002 in Albania, Croatia, Georgia and Tunisia.

The Bureau noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in developing the network.

- Group of Experts for the setting up of the Emerald Network

A joint meeting of the Group and the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (STRA-REP) was to be held in Istanbul on 4 and 5 October 2001. The objective was to encourage coherency and complementarity between the two networks.

d. 1st Mediterranean Conference on marine turtles

The conference, which was being prepared in conjunction with the secretariats of the Barcelona Convention (CAR/ASP Centre) and the Bonn Convention on migratory species and also with the Italian Government, would take place in Rome from 24 to 28 October 2001.

Its objectives were to present and share the latest scientific and technical knowledge and management experience.

e. Planta Europa Conference

The 3rd European Conference on the conservation of wild plants had taken place from 23 to 28 June 2001 in Pruhonice (Czech Republic). It had resulted in a draft European strategy for plant conservation, thanks to the partnership between the Council of Europe and Planta Europa. This would be the Convention's contribution to the Global strategy for plant conservation to be discussed at the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SBSTTA-7) in Montreal (Canada) from 12 to 16 November 2001.

f. Large carnivores

- *Large carnivores in the Baltic States*

A consultant had been commissioned to prepare a report on the status of large carnivores in the Baltic States, with special emphasis on management and action plans. The report would be completed shortly and sent to the States concerned.

In addition, a meeting of the experts of the Baltic Large Carnivore Initiative (BLCI) and a symposium entitled "The human dimension of large carnivores in Baltic countries" had been held on 27-29 April 2001. A record of the proceedings would be distributed to the countries concerned.

- *Conservation of the lynx in the Alps*

The group on the lynx in the Alps had prepared a pan-Alpine strategy for lynx conservation.

The Secretariat would prepare a draft recommendation.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to transmit this strategy to the Alpine Network of Protected Areas and to forge links with the network, which dealt with the same kind of problems.

g. Action plan for endangered birds

Several action plans had been identified by BirdLife on the basis of the plans prepared by the European Commission.

They would be set out in a draft recommendation.

The following species were concerned:

- Mediterranean shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*);
- Purple gallinule (*Porphyrio porphyrio*);
- Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*);
- Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*);
- Little bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*).

Action plans on species covered by the AEWa Protocol were being prepared (in collaboration with the Government of the Netherlands and the AEWa Secretariat), including one on the White-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), funded by the Bern Convention.

h. Preservation of biological diversity in agricultural landscapes

The Pan-European Conference on Agriculture and Biodiversity would be held in France in 2002 (in June or September).

The contribution of the Bern Convention would be a report on conflicts of culture, livestock farming and wild fauna.

i. Awareness and visibility

Work on adding to and updating the website had resumed.

2.2. Preparation of the SBSTTA-7 meeting

The next meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity would be devoted to forest biodiversity.

The Bern Convention's contribution would focus on the Emerald Network and action plans for birds, carnivores and saproxylic invertebrates.

2.3. Signing of the memorandum of co-operation with the European Environment Agency (EEA)

A memorandum of co-operation was signed between the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency (EEA) on 3 July 2001 in Copenhagen.

In particular the agreement was aimed at developing co-operation in the gathering and processing of data on species, habitats and protected areas.

2.4. Preparation of memoranda of co-operation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Memoranda of co-operation with the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE), the European Invertebrate Survey (EIS), Planta Europa, the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) and BirdLife International were being prepared.

The Bureau welcomed the signing of these agreements, which would foster closer ties with other institutions, other conventions or NGOs, and generated stronger synergy in efforts to conserve species and habitats.

The Bureau asked that the text of the agreements be amended so that the Bern Convention featured more strongly.

3. Implementation of Convention case files

3.1. Specific sites

a. Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Patara (Turkey)

The Secretariat said that, following the steps taken by the Turkish Government to comply with Recommendations nos. 54 (1996) and 66 (1998), the Bureau had deemed the situation satisfactory at its previous meeting.

The Bureau decided to propose that the Standing Committee close the file.

b. Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)

At the request of the Bureau the Secretariat had contacted the Cypriot authorities to suggest that a on-the-spot appraisal be organised.

The Bureau expressed its concern over the lack of progress on this file.

As Cyprus was in the pre-accession phase as regards European Union membership, the Bureau thought it expedient to solicit support from the European Commission and to act in tandem with it, for example by organising a joint visit.

c. Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) in Turkey

At its previous meeting the Bureau had noted with satisfaction the very positive development of the situation of Kazanlı beach and welcomed the extremely proactive attitude of the Turkish authorities.

MEDASSET had subsequently sent the Secretariat press cuttings concerning toxic effluent discharged from the Soda Chrome factory.

While reiterating the efforts made by the Turkish Government, the Bureau noted that pollution was still a problem.

The Chair proposed seeking support from the Barcelona Convention (Regional activity centre for specially protected areas - RAC/SPA) and discussing the issue at the next meeting of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) to be held in Athens.

The Bureau thought it advisable to dissociate the beach and pollution issues. It decided to propose that the Standing Committee close the file concerning protection of the beach and open a file on the question of toxic effluent.

d. Exploitation of and trade in the European date mussel (*Lithophaga lithophaga*) (Spain)

The Bureau had considered at its previous meeting that Spain had honoured its obligations as regards the protection of this species. The Secretariat had drawn up a draft recommendation at the Bureau's request.

Nevertheless, the Bureau noted that the problem subsisted owing to the importing of specimens from Morocco. It considered that special attention should be devoted to this species in all the States Parties to the Convention in order to avoid any trade. Listing it in Appendix I of the Washington Convention would help put an end to trade in the species.

As the species was also protected under the Barcelona Convention, it was proposed that that convention be mentioned in the draft recommendation.

3.2. Possible new case files

a. Management of wolves in Norway

As two members of the Bureau had expressed the wish that this file be re-examined, the Secretariat had placed this item on the agenda.

Following discussion, the Bureau held that the exceptions entered by Norway under Article 9 fell within the Convention's legal framework and that there were no grounds for opening a file, particularly since the Standing Committee had adopted a recommendation on the matter (Recommendation no. 82 (2000)) covering *inter alia* the situation of the wolf in the south of Fennoscandia. It was sufficient to notify the Standing Committee of the measures taken by the Norwegian authorities to maintain a population of the species on its territory.

The Bureau decided to place the item on the agenda of the Standing Committee in the following form: "Item for information: question discussed at the express request of Sweden".

b. Plan to build an Olympic rowing complex on the Schinias-Marathon site (Greece)

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Greek authorities had sent a report on the plan to build an Olympic rowing and canoeing complex on the Schinias site. The project was supposed to help restore the original hydrological conditions and encourage site use that was more respectful of the environment.

In addition, the area concerned had been designated a national park by presidential decree.

The Secretariat said that the European Commission was already negotiating the conditions for installing the sports complex with the Greek authorities.

The Bureau decided to present this file to the Standing Committee together with an opinion; it would not open the file but leave the matter in the hands of the Committee and, since a wetland was concerned, consult the Ramsar Convention.

c. Plan to install a wind farm on the Smøla archipelago (Norway)

The Norwegian authorities had provided the Secretariat with information on the progress of the project as regards the different stages of the procedure and the standpoints of the different ministries involved.

The Bureau expressed a number of reservations over the opening of this file, since the White-tailed eagle population in this region was substantial and it was difficult to evaluate the consequences of such a project for the birds. It acknowledged, however, that the White-tailed eagle population in other countries depended on this surplus of specimens and that it would be important for the Standing Committee to discuss and hear the views of non-governmental organisations. The key issue was whether the foreseeable impact on White-tailed eagle populations was significant or not.

It would be interesting to have the results of impact studies on bird-life carried out to date, particularly by BirdLife-Germany.

The Bureau thought that this theme of the impact of alternative technologies should be a feature of the Standing Committee's work programme so that guidelines on the building of wind farms could be presented.

It thought that the stance of the Ministry of the Environment, which was proposing to implement the first phase and evaluate the consequences, was reasonable.

The Bureau decided to submit the file to the Standing Committee as a possible file.

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

The Secretariat told the Bureau that it had not received a reply to its request for information on this project, planned since 1997, which might have highly damaging effects on Kresna gorge.

The Bureau decided to submit the file as a possible file.

e. Exotic tree plantations in low-altitude areas of biological importance (Iceland)

The Secretariat had received no reply to its letter to the Icelandic authorities as regards the afforestation policy pursued in the lowlands as a means of sequestering carbon with the adverse effects that this had on bird populations.

The Bureau decided that the file should be submitted to the Standing Committee as a possible file.

f. Illegal killing and capture of protected birds in Cyprus

The Cypriot authorities (Ministry of the Interior) had replied to the Secretariat's request for information.

A new law laying down stricter regulations was being drafted.

Since some areas were British Sovereign Bases, Cypriot non-governmental organisations had requested the co-operation of the British authorities in the application of the relevant legislation. The Chair believes it would be appropriate to approach the United Kingdom authorities on this issue, so as to make them aware of its implications in an area under their sovereignty.

The Bureau decided to submit the file as a possible file; it suggested adopting the draft recommendation and asking the Cypriot Government to report on the situation in two years' time.

g. Building of a Club Méditerranée holiday centre (Morocco)

The Secretariat had been notified of a plan to create a holiday centre in Tifnit, in the Souss Massa national park. The scheme, which would provide 7,000 beds, might well have serious consequences for the globally endangered Bald ibis (*Geronticus emerita*).

The Secretariat stressed that the park contained the last remaining Bald ibis population in the wild.

The Moroccan authorities had provided information on the project, emphasising that this tourism development scheme was justified by the need to improve the living conditions of the local community and that everything would be done to reconcile economic imperatives with preservation of the local environment and protection of species.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to inform the Moroccan Government of its very grave concern over this scheme, which did not appear to constitute tourism development respectful of nature and to reiterate in this connection the obligations incumbent upon Morocco as regards this species and its habitat. The Bureau believes the Club Méditerranée should be approached so as to raise its awareness on the risks of the project on the bald ibis.

The Bureau decided that the file should be submitted to the Standing Committee as a possible file.

4. Other issues

After completing its discussion of the files, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to prepare a document on the files which had yielded favourable results thanks to the Bern Convention, for possible presentation at the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, to be held in Kyiv in 2003.

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

After making several amendments, the Bureau approved the draft agenda.

Proposals for the 2002 programme of activities

Subject to certain amendments, the Bureau approved the draft programme of activities.

It placed special emphasis on the preparation of a document on climatic change and biodiversity, which would inventory the information sources, and on the preparation of a list of indicator species influenced by climatic change. It would be advisable to start as soon as possible the preparation of reports on marine and coastal biological diversity.

6. Other business

As no other business was raised, the Chair thanked the participants and the meeting rose.



APPENDIX 1

Strasbourg, le 30 août 2001
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS
CONVENTION RELATIVE A LA CONSERVATION DE LA VIE SAUVAGE
ET DU MILIEU NATUREL

Standing Committee / Comité permanent

Meeting of the Bureau / Réunion du Bureau

Strasbourg, le 4 septembre 2001
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 16

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

NETHERLANDS/PAYS-BAS Dr Gerard C. BOERE, International Programme Co-ordinator, Wetlands International-ICU, P.O. Box 471, NL-6700 AL WAGENINGEN.
Tel : +31 317 47 88 87. Fax : +31 317 47 88 50. E-mail : boere@wetlands.agro.nl (E)

MONACO/MONACO Mr Patrick VAN KLAVEREN, Conseiller technique du ministre Plénipotentiaire, Chargé de la coopération internationale pour l'Environnement et le Développement, 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 (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 (E)

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 Division / Chef de la Division du Patrimoine naturel

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

Mrs Françoise BAUER, Principal administrative assistant / Assistante administrative principale, Natural Heritage Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel

Tel : +33 3 88 41 22 61. Fa : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : francoise.bauer@coe.int

Mrs Hélène BOUGUessa, Principal administrative assistant / Assistante administrative principale, Natural Heritage Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel

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

Ms Laetitia ANTONI, Trainee / Stagiaire, Natural Heritage Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel



APPENDIX 2

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 11 July 2001

Standing Committee **Bureau meeting**

Strasbourg, 4 September 2001
Palais de l'Europe, Room 16
(opening: 9.30)

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Progress of the 2001 work programme and decisions
 - 2.1. Progress of activities
 - 2.2. Input into SBSTTA-7
 - 2.3. Signature of Memorandum with EEA
 - 2.4. Preparation of memoranda of co-operation with NGOs
3. Implementation of the Convention: Files
 - 3.1. Specific sites
 - *Caretta caretta* in Patara (Turkey)
 - Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)
 - *Chelonia mydas* (Turkey)
 - Exploitation and trade of *Lithophaga lithophaga* (Espagne)
 - 3.2. Possible new files and other information files
 - Wolf management in Norway
 - Olympic rowing Centre in Marathon (Greece)
 - Windfarms in Smøla Archipelago (Norway)
 - Motorway construction project at Struma (Bulgaria)
 - Exotic forest plantations in areas of bird importance in Iceland
 - Illegal killing and trading of birds in Cyprus
4. – Draft agenda for the 21st meeting
– Proposals for the programme of activities for the year 2002
5. Other business