



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 15 September 2005

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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

1. Adoption of the agenda

Ms Véronique Herrenschmidt, Chair of the Standing Committee of the Convention, opened the meeting on 15 September 2005 and welcomed the other Bureau members, Mr Jon Gunnar Ottosson, Vice-Chair, and Ms Ilona Jepsen, and the Secretariat representatives.

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

The participants are listed in Appendix 2.

2. General information

Mr Eladio Fernández-Galiano informed the Bureau that he had been appointed Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement and introduced Ms Elda Moreno, who would be replacing him as the head of the Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division.

He reported on the outcome of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe, held in Warsaw on 16 and 17 May 2005.

A plan of action had been drawn up, setting the Council of Europe's main priorities for the years ahead. Sustainable development was one of the activities proposed as a means of "strengthening the security of European citizens".

It was referred to in the following terms:

"7. Promoting sustainable development:

We are committed to improving the quality of life for citizens. The Council of Europe shall therefore, on the basis of the existing instruments, further develop and support integrated policies in the fields of environment, landscape, spatial planning and prevention and management of natural disasters, in a sustainable development perspective."

The result would be an increase in the resources earmarked for promoting sustainable development, particularly in the education field.

The Bureau took note of this information and expressed the view that the changes that had been made would provide an opportunity to establish a link between biodiversity-related activities and the partial agreement.

3. Progress of the 2005 programme of activities

The Secretariat outlined progress with the work programme for 2005.

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

The two-yearly reports for 2001-2002 and 2003-2004 would be presented at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

The reports on the implementation of the Convention in Hungary and the United Kingdom were available.

It had been impossible to begin on any other reports owing to a lack of funds.

b. Conservation of natural habitats – Emerald Network

Launch workshops had been held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Azerbaijan.

The Emerald Network was being developed in the Balkans in conjunction with the European Environment Agency in order to ensure consistency with Natura 2000.

Work on identifying sites should be completed by the end of 2006.

The next meeting of the Group of Experts on the Emerald Network would be held in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October 2005, in conjunction with the meeting of the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (STRA-REP).

The matters to be discussed would include:

- the possibility of setting in motion a debate on the introduction of the Emerald Network in sub-Saharan Africa;
- criteria for the validation of designated sites.

The Bureau welcomed the fact that the Emerald Network was active and expanding. It was in favour of the idea of promoting it at international level and proposing that it be applied to other continents.

While aware of the difficulties that the division was currently facing, operating as it was at such low staffing and funding levels, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to look into the possibility of organising a side event at the next meeting of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

c. Monitoring of species and encouragement of conservation

- *Invasive alien species*

The workshop on invasive plants in Mediterranean-type regions had been held in Montpellier from 25 to 27 May 2005.

The Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species had met in Palma de Mallorca from 9 to 11 June 2005.

A first report had been submitted on the implementation of the European Strategy. In view of the difficulties that some countries were having in devising their national strategy, it had been proposed that workshops be held to assist them.

The draft recommendation on the control of the grey squirrel and other alien squirrel species in Europe, which had been examined, would be presented to the Standing Committee.

The Bureau noted this information and emphasised how useful it was for different countries to share their experience, so that it was possible to gauge how well certain measures had worked and what mistakes should be avoided. It suggested that a model report on eradication programmes be prepared as a contribution to efforts to meet the Kyiv 2010 target, which was intended to halt the decline in biodiversity, and that a discussion should be held on Africa.

- *Conservation of invertebrates*

The Group of Specialists on Invertebrates had met in Strasbourg on 19 and 20 May 2005 to examine the document prepared by Mr John Haslett, containing proposals for a European Strategy on the Conservation of Invertebrates (not including marine species).

The consultant would prepare an initial draft of a strategy by December 2005. The Group of Specialists would meet in January 2006 to prepare a second draft, which would be communicated to the governments and examined by the Group of Experts on the Convention in June 2006. A third draft would be presented to the Standing Committee for possible adoption in November 2006.

- *Conservation of large carnivores*

A seminar on the transboundary management of large carnivore populations had been held in Osilnica, Slovenia, from 15 to 17 April 2005.

This meeting had highlighted the need, among other things:

- to adapt existing action plans to different populations;
- to step up co-operation between countries sharing populations of large carnivores.

It had resulted in a draft recommendation, which would be presented to the Standing Committee.

The Vice-Chair, Ms Ilona Jepsen, informed the Bureau that the European Commission would be preparing guidelines on the subject.

The study which the Standing Committee had requested at its previous meeting in response to Switzerland's proposal that the wolf be included in Appendix III to the Convention was now being compiled.

The two consultants who had been asked to prepare the legal and scientific parts of the study would shortly be submitting their reports.

The Bureau took note of this information and emphasised how important it was for this work to be completed as soon as possible as it would serve as the basis for the discussion to be held at the next Standing Committee meeting.

d. Conservation of sea turtles

The 2nd Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles had been held in Kemer, Antalya (Turkey), from 4 to 7 May 2005.

It was a joint initiative on the part of the Secretariats of the Barcelona , Bonn and Bern Conventions, and had been held in co-operation with the IUCN's Group of Specialists on Marine Turtles, with the support of the Turkish Ministry of Environment and WWF-Turkey.

The main theme had been the biology and conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean. The proceedings had been divided into five sessions: networking and social issues, turtles at sea, nesting populations, ecology and ecophysiology, and management and conservation.

The next conference was to be a world conference, to be held in Greece in 2007.

e. Wind power generation and wildlife

The ad hoc Group on wind power and nature conservation had met at the European Commission in Brussels on 31 May 2005.

The meeting had been organised by DG-XI in close co-operation with the Secretariat of the Bern Convention. The report would be presented to the Standing Committee for information.

A second meeting would be held in 2006.

The Bureau welcomed this key contribution to the implementation of Recommendation No. 109 (2004) on minimising adverse effects of wind power generation on wildlife, in which the Secretariat had been asked to prepare appropriate guidelines and set up a group of experts for the purpose.

f. Conservation of the European sturgeon

The two action plans drawn up by the relevant scientific organisations on the Danube sturgeon and the European sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) would be presented at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

A workshop had been held in Petronell, Austria, on 6 and 7 July 2005, to pool the information and data required to draw up the plan for the Danube sturgeon.

The plan should serve as a reference instrument, helping the countries concerned to co-ordinate their conservation activities.

g. Conservation of amphibians and reptiles

The action plans for the endangered amphibian species *Rana latastei* and species group *Triturus cristatus* would shortly be submitted by the consultant, Mr Anton Stumpel (Netherlands).

h. Tax incentives and other economic measures for habitat protection

A lack of funds had prevented the workshop on tax incentives and other economic measures for habitat protection from being held in 2005 and it had therefore been postponed until 2006.

4. Application of the Convention - Files

4.1. Specific sites – Open files

a. Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had informed the Secretariat that the proposals concerning the Akamas Peninsula announced by the Cypriot Government in 2004 had still not been published.

The Bureau decided to keep the file open.

b. The Danube-Black Sea canal project in the Bystroe Estuary (Danube delta, Ukraine)

Le Secretariat informed the Bureau that it had no new information on this file. It would seem that the project to build a new canal, which had been the subject of Recommendation No. 111 (2004), had been abandoned.

The international conference on the conservation and the sustainable development of the Danube delta, scheduled to take place in Odessa from 5 to 9 September 2005, had been postponed.

Pending receipt of further information, the Bureau decided to keep the file open.

c. Project to build a motorway through the Kresna Gorge (Bulgaria)

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Bulgarian Government and the NGOs had sent in their reports.

There had been no significant developments in the motorway construction project. The National Expert Council for Territorial Structure and Regional Policy of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (NECTSRP) had decided to prepare a new, more detailed environmental impact assessment (EIA).

As to the financing of the project, there were various possible sources of funding, including:

- the national budget;
- pre-accession funds;
- cohesion funds (once Bulgaria had joined the European Union).

The procedure to have the whole site declared a protected area was continuing. An agreement had been signed with the NGOs to carry out joint activities.

Pending the completion of the procedure, a decree had been issued by the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) banning certain activities liable to damage biodiversity in the area and calling for an assessment, with the assistance of the NGOs, of the Kresna Gorge's potential as a Natura 2002 site.

4.2. Possible new files

a. Protection of the Hermann tortoise in the *plaine des Maures* (France)

The Secretariat presented the main points of the report on the on-site visit. In view of the work done to date to protect the Hermann tortoise, what was known about the species' biology and the pressures to which it was still being subjected on the *plaine des Maures*, it was suggested that a new approach to the problem be adopted. The aim would be to enhance the protection in the central area of the *plaine des Maures* by establishing a new protected area based on a network of core habitats that were linked by areas subject to restrictions so as to make it possible to manage the requisite functions by fostering, among other things, a system of exchanges between the core habitats.

This new approach had been discussed with various interested parties during the visit and had aroused considerable interest as an efficient means of tackling problems linked to the protection of tortoises that actively involved those concerned.

b. Plans to turn an important site for bats into a museum (Netherlands)

This project, which involved converting some of The Hague's historic bunkers into a museum and visitor centre, had given rise to a complaint because of the importance of the site for pond bats and other species hibernating in these shelters.

The Secretariat had just been informed that The Hague's municipal authorities had decided to abandon the project in view of the site's importance and as a result of the pressure brought to bear by the Bern Convention Secretariat, the European Commission and the Secretariat of Eurobats.

The Bureau welcomed this wise decision and decided to take no further action on the complaint.

4.3. On-the-spot appraisals

a. Wind-farm construction project in Balchik (Bulgaria)

At the invitation of the Bulgarian authorities, an expert, Mr Guy Jarry (France), would be visiting the Balchik site along with a member of the Secretariat from 27 to 29 September 2005.

He would be asked to investigate the background to the construction of this first ever Bulgarian wind farm on a site located on an extremely important bird migration corridor, the Via Pontica. In particular, he would examine the procedure for the approval of the environmental impact assessment, the first stage of which had already been completed, and meet the various people concerned.

His report would be presented at the next Standing Committee meeting.

5. Follow-up to recommendations – Developments

5.1 Follow-up to recommendations

a. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 107 (2003) on the Odelouca dam (Portugal)

There was no new information about the implementation of the recommendation.

b. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 108 (2003) on the proposed construction of the “Via Baltica” (Poland)

The Secretariat had no recent information about the implementation of the recommendation.

c. Follow-up to Recommendation No. 90 (2001) on the catching, killing or trading of protected birds in Cyprus

The Bureau took note of the information sent in by NGOs, which had requested that this item should continue to appear on the Standing Committee’s agenda.

Despite the improvements ascertained, the problem was still serious as the people involved in these practices were using ever more cunning tactics and becoming increasingly organised.

As a result of effective co-operation between the British and Cypriot authorities, several awareness-raising campaigns had been organised and substantial progress had been made. Firmer action was, however, needed to try to win over Cyprus’s restaurant owners.

6. Proposed 2006 programme of activities

The Bureau made some slight changes to the programme of activities submitted by the Secretariat, which continued along the lines of the current work programme.

7. Draft agenda of the 25th Standing Committee meeting

The Bureau took note of the agenda.

8. Other business

None.



APPENDIX 1

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 29 August 2005

Standing Committee Bureau meeting

Strasbourg, 15 September 2005
(Room 6, opening : 9.30 am)

DRAFT AGENDA

1. **Adoption of the agenda**
2. **General information**
3. **Implementation of the 2005 Programme of activities**
4. **Implementation of the Convention : Files**
 - 4.1. **Specific Sites - Files open**
 - Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)
 - Ukraine: proposed navigable waterway in the Bystroye Stuary (Danube delta)
 - Bulgaria: motorway construction through the Kresna Gorge
 - 4.2. **Possible new files**
 - France: Conservation of the Hermann turtle in the plaine des Maures
 - Netherlands: Plans to turn an important site for bats into a museum
 - 4.3. **On-the-spot appraisal**
 - Bulgaria: Construction of the Balchik windfarm on the Via Pontica
5. **Follow-up of the Recommendations - Evolution of the situation in:**
 - Portugal: Odelouca dam [Recommendation No. 107 (2003)]
 - Poland: proposed construction of the 'Via Baltica' [Recommendation No. 108 (2003)]
 - Cyprus: illegal trapping, killing and trade of birds [Recommendation No. 90 (2001)]
6. **Proposals for programme of activities in 2006**
7. **Draft agenda of the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee**
8. **Other business**



APPENDIX 2

Strasbourg, 8 September 2005
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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 15 septembre 2005
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 6

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