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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL
HABITATS

Standing Committee

Meeting of the Bureau

Strasbourg, 22 March 2007

MEETING REPORT

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

1. Adoption of the agenda

Ms Véronique Herrenschildt, Chair of the Standing Committee of the Convention, opened the meeting on 22 March 2007 and welcomed the other Bureau members, Mr Jón Gunnar Ottosson, Vice-Chair, Ms Ilona Jepsena, and the representatives of the Secretariat.

The draft agenda was adopted, as set out in Appendix 1, after adding a point under agenda item 3.4 (Brown bears in Slovenia); a new item 3.5 (Other information, about three new complaints); item 6 (meeting held with the European Commission); and item 7 (brief presentation by stagiaire Maribel Rodriguez about the report she is preparing on the Convention's case file system). It was decided to add a general discussion after lunch on the future of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) and possible implications for the Bern Convention, as well as preparations for the Belgrade "Environment for Europe" conference and the linking of the European Diploma on Protected Areas with the Bern Convention.

The participants are listed in Appendix 2.

2. Implementation of the 2007 programme of activities

The representative of the Secretariat informed of latest changes in the Council of Europe, including the removal of the CODBP - which leaves the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention as the only Council of Europe committee dealing with biodiversity issues - and the new Unit on Biological Diversity which replaces the former Natural Heritage Division.

The representative of the Secretariat outlined progress on the work programme and the planned meetings for the first half of 2007, including the working group on the elaboration of a European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity (20th April); the Group of Experts on invasive alien species (22-24 May); the working group for the elaboration of an action plan for the European sturgeon (30 May-1 June), the new Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change (14-15 June) and two on-the-spot visits, on Croatia and Bulgaria. In addition, the Secretariat informed about finalisation and planned publication of 2006 activities such as species action plans and the European Strategy on Invertebrates. The report of the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, for information, in May 2007.

The Secretariat gave a progress report on the implementation of the Emerald Network, including pilot projects under preparation in Russia and Armenia; a study on criteria for assessing national lists of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, which will be submitted to the next Bureau meeting, for information, and then for discussion and possible adoption by the Group of Experts and Standing Committee this year. A list of all sites that have been proposed for the Emerald Network in the framework of pilot projects will also be submitted to the Group of Experts in October. Finally, the CARDS/Emerald programme for the development of the Emerald Network in six Western-Balkan countries, which ended in December 2006, may be completed in 2007, with funding from the European Environment Agency (EEA) to identify the remainder 20% of sites to be designated.

The secretariat reported about the meeting that the Chair of the Standing Committee and the secretariat held with the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 12-13 March 2007, which was very constructive. An information note [document T-PVS (2007) 3] was submitted to the bureau regarding the preparation of an enhanced Memorandum of Co-operation reviewing the one signed in 2001, which is planned to be signed with the CBD Executive Secretary at the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. This draft document will focus on the promotion of joint activities on issues such as protected areas, invasive alien species, climate change, plant conservation and important outreach activities such as public communication and awareness.

A report on the legal implementation of the convention in Morocco is being prepared. Furthermore, the report "Analysis of the nature conservation legislation of the Russian Federation versus provisions of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention)" is being translated into Russian with a view to holding discussions in the second half of 2007 about the possible accession of the Russian Federation to 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

The Secretariat proposed to fix strict deadlines for the consideration of documents by the Bureau, given the significant increase in the number of reports arriving just before Bureau meetings and which need to be transmitted and studied by Bureau members. It was agreed that documents arriving after Monday 3rd September 2007 will not be considered by the Bureau at its next meeting on 11th September 2007. This information will be communicated to all relevant Parties and observers.

The Secretariat further proposed to draw up a list of general criteria for dealing with complaints and carrying out a first screening before Bureau meetings. The Bureau noted that this was already done informally and asked the Secretariat to continue screening complaints as usual and, in the future, submit to the bureau a list of all complaints received including those that are not to be processed further.

3.1 Specific sites – Files open

a. Proposed navigable waterway in the Bystroe Estuary (Danube delta, Ukraine)

At the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee Ukraine was asked to call for a meeting of the states signatories of the Trilateral Agreement signed under the auspices of the Council of Europe by Moldova, Romania and Ukraine on 5 June 2000, on co-operation in the zone of the Danube Delta and Lower Prut River nature-protected areas. It was also asked to provide to the Committee the EIA finished in April 2006, including the compensatory measures foreseen. The Committee decided to leave the file open and examine at its next meeting a new draft recommendation prepared by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat contacted the Ukrainian authorities in December 2006 and January 2007. No information has been received to date.

The Secretariat received information from Romanian authorities about their hosting of the first meeting under the trilateral agreement in Tulcea in May 2007. They further informed about the unavailability of the EIA and the importance of funding issues regarding this project. They further sent unofficial translations of newspaper articles reporting on current works at the canal and Ukraine's plans to complete the project.

The Bureau welcomed news from Romania about the May meeting in Tulcea, at which the Bern Convention will be represented. It asked the Secretariat to contact the Ukrainian authorities again and ask them for all relevant information needed to be received before the next Bureau meeting.

b. Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)

At its 26th meeting in November 2006, the Standing Committee urged Cyprus to fully implement Recommendation No. 63 (1997) on the conservation of the Akamas peninsula, Cyprus and, in particular, of the nesting beaches of the Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and Green turtle *Chelonia mydas*, and decided to leave the file open.

The Secretariat contacted the Cyprus authorities in January 2007 but no response was received before the Bureau meeting.

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

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

At the last Standing Committee meeting, the Bulgarian Delegate informed the committee that a new EIA had been initiated in 2006 in consultation with all the partners concerned; that all variants would be studied, including the NGOs' proposal; and that specific requirements had been formulated and information on the potential sites for Natura 2000 had been placed at the investor's disposal.

A letter on this issue has been lodged with the Commission.

The Standing Committee welcomed the positive advances that had been made on this file, which it decided to keep open.

The Secretariat contacted the Bulgarian authorities in January 2007. A note was received in March 2007 informing the Bureau that the EIA report is being prepared and will be publicly discussed, including consideration by Bulgaria's High Ecological Expert Council.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to recontact the Bulgarian authorities for updated information before its next meeting in September 2007.

d. Wind farms in Balchik and Kaliakra – Via Pontica (Bulgaria)

At its 26th meeting in November 2006, the Standing Committee decided to open a new file and proposed that a meeting be organised between the parties involved under the auspices of the convention and other relevant agreements.

The Secretariat contacted the Bulgarian authorities about the proposed on-the-spot visit with other international conventions and institutions. The Bulgarian authorities have agreed to the visit on 21-22 June 2007. An independent expert has already been engaged for this visit.

The Bureau stressed the need to carry out dialogue with local as well as national authorities as part of this important visit.

3.2. Possible files

a. Conservation of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Massif and Plaine des Maures (France)

Recommendation No. 118 (2005) on the protection of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Massif des Maures and Plaine des Maures localities asked the French government to apply a global management concept for the landscape areas concerned by the presence of the Hermann tortoise and to reject the new application for extension of the Balançan waste storage centre as it stood.

At the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee in November 2006, the delegate from France stated that a detailed map with the boundaries of the reserve, Natura 2000 and the order for the protection of the biotope showing the real commitment to protection would be sent to the secretariat. The Standing Committee reserved the right to open a new file in the light of the information that would be presented, including the examination of detailed maps.

As no information was received before the meeting, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to send a reminder letter asking for all that information before the next Bureau meeting.

b. Protection of the Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) in Alsace (France)

In 2006, the Secretariat of the Bern Convention received a complaint from the Association "Sauvegarde Faune Sauvage" expressing its concern over the insufficient measures aimed at ensuring the maintenance of the habitats needed for the survival of the Common Hamster.

The Standing Committee, at its meeting in November 2006, instructed the Bureau to treat this item in relation with the informations that would be provided by France.

The Secretariat contacted the French authorities in January 2007 but it received the reply too close to the Bureau meeting date so its members could not consider the information received. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to include this issue in the agenda of the next Bureau meeting in September and to inform the French authorities accordingly, asking them to submit all new relevant information, including concrete actions taken during the summer, by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007 (in both paper and electronic formats).

c. Protection of the European Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*) in Alsace (France)

Following a complaint from the Association BUFO (*Association pour l'étude et la protection des amphibiens et reptiles d'Alsace*) concerning the insufficiencies of the impact assessment carried out in the framework of the projects for a by-pass around the municipalities of Oberschaeffolsheim and

Wolfisheim and for the construction of the Zenith, the Secretariat wrote to the French authorities in 2006 to get their views on these projects.

At the 2006 Standing Committee meeting, the representative of the NGO *Sauvegarde Faune Sauvage* asked for the greatest possible consideration to be given to the situation of the remaining habitats of the green toad in Alsace, drawing attention to urban development projects in the vicinity of Molsheim. The French delegate informed the Standing Committee that they were prepared to send further information.

Information was sent to the Secretariat by fax the day before the Bureau meeting so its members could not consider it. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to include this issue in the agenda of the next Bureau meeting in September and inform the French authorities accordingly, asking them to submit all relevant and updated information by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007 (in both paper and electronic formats).

d. Wind farm project in Volovja Reber (Slovenia)

In 2006, the Secretariat received a joint complaint from 24 NGOs concerning the construction of a group of 43 wind turbines in southern Slovenia, in the Alpine and Dinaric region. The chosen site was of vital importance for various species protected under the Bern Convention (Eurasian lynx, wildcat, brown bear, etc) and also acted as a corridor.

At the last Standing Committee meeting in November 2006, the Slovenian delegate informed the Committee that he had not been able to respond to the request for information as this project was the subject of a number of judicial proceedings, announcing that they would send a report before the Bureau meeting.

Information was sent to the Secretariat the day before the Bureau meeting so its members could not consider it. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to include this issue in the agenda of its next meeting in September and inform the Slovenian authorities accordingly, asking them to submit all relevant and updated information by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007.

3.3. On-the-spot appraisals

a. Croatia: Planned motorway across the Drava marshlands and hydro-electric power station in Lesce, across the Dobra river

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau that the Standing Committee had agreed to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal at its meeting in November 2006. Arrangements are being made to engage one or two independent experts and liaise with the Croatian authorities to fix suitable dates (probably some time in early May 2007).

b. Bulgaria: Wind farms in Balchik and Kaliakra –Via Pontica

The agreed dates for the in-the-spot visit are 21-22 June 2007. The Secretariats of CMS/AEWA/Eurobats will send one representative. The European Commission has also been invited to join the visit. A draft programme will be prepared together with the Bulgarian authorities, covering meetings in Sophia and Varna.

3.4 Complaints in stand-by

a. Invasive zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) in the Ebro river (Spain)

The Secretariat received a complaint from the Spanish Association *Ebro Vivo-Coagret* concerning the introduction of the zebra mussel in the Ebro River. This situation started in 2001 in an area located close to the mouth of the river and in 2006 the species had spread to several areas. The Association expressed its concern over the lack of sufficient measures taken by the competent authorities given the seriousness of the problem. The *Dreissena polymorpha* is an IAS, characterised by the fact that alters the entire ecosystem around it, affecting all fauna and flora.

Following the complaint, the Secretariat wrote to the Spanish Ministry of Environment as well as to the Regional Government of Aragón, requesting information on this issue. According to the response received from the regional government of Aragón, a number of measures have been implemented, such as monitoring, information gathering and surveillance (Monitoring Network and

Early Warning System); 2005 Action Plan in Aragón; measures in their General Fisheries Plan including the prohibition to use the zebra mussel as live bait as well as recommendations to clean fishing gear; awareness-raising campaigns; a National Strategic Action under preparation and a regional emergency plan for the conservation of *Margaritifera auricularia*.

The Bureau welcomed these positive informations and instructed the Secretariat to thank the government of Spain and ask them to report on this issue at the next meeting of the Group of Experts on invasive alien species as a good demonstration case for action taken on IAS.

b. Planned capture of Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) (Turkey)

At the 26th Standing Committee meeting, the delegate of Monaco informed the Committee of a complaint received by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), in its capacity of depositary of the ACCOBAMS Agreement. WDCS had approached the Secretariat of the ACCOBAMS Agreement to denounce a project envisaged by Turkey whereby 30 bottlenose dolphins would be captured in the Black and Mediterranean Sea. Bottlenose dolphins are protected not only by the Bern Convention, but also by the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) and the Habitats Directive and the ACCOBAMS Agreement.

The Standing Committee took note of the information at its meeting in November 2006 and considered that such captures were not justified, asking the Secretariat to contact the Turkish authorities accordingly.

The Secretariat contacted the Turkish authorities in January 2007 and it received a brief note on the general situation about the bottlenose dolphin in Turkey in March 2007, prepared by Turkey's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, according to which:

- The catching of dolphins in Turkey has been “totally prohibited” since 1983, and from that time there have been no dolphin catching.
- However, they indicate that “in the last years there have been major investments in our country for using dolphins in the therapy of mentally or physically handicapped or in marina parks”.
- Such dolphins have been “imported temporarily from Ukraine and Russia in accordance with the rules of CITES” for both purposes: rehabilitation and shows.
- The Turkish authorities admit that “difficulties have been encountered” in the transport of the “imported living organisms”. Those transportation difficulties led six companies to apply to the Turkish authorities for permission to capture dolphins.
- The Turkish authorities have allowed the six private firms to catch 30 dolphins under certain conditions. The authorities have based their decision on *Article 9* of the Bern Convention and *paragraph 39* of the “Explanatory Report”, as they consider that “the use of dolphins for the rehabilitation of the physically and mentally handicapped and for show purposes can be regarded as a general exception”.

The conditions required for the captures were:

- ✓ the exclusive use of the animals for show or therapy purposes and only in centers belonging to the licensed firms,
- ✓ the captures had to be done under the control of the Ministry's Provincial Directorate,
- ✓ the animals need a certificate of origin and may only be transferred with this certificate and with the consent of the Ministry, and
- ✓ necessary precautions must be taken for the comfort of the animal at the facilities where they are kept.

The Secretariat received further information from WDCS regarding “at least one capture involving two bottlenose dolphins” at Iskenderun Bay, while “further captures are reportedly planned”. The Secretariat received information on this issue from the Institute of Marine Science and Technology of the Dokuz Eylul University from Turkey, reporting that “one of the captured juvenile bottlenose dolphins died in Iskenderun”.

The Bureau expressed their concern about the status of the population in the Mediterranean and Black seas and the impact of the authorised captures, which are conditions established in Article 9.1 of the Convention. It further noted that there was not information about the status of the Black Sea population and that little information is available about Mediterranean populations.

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to write to the Turkish authorities asking for information on the status of the populations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and the scientific studies on the impacts of the captures on those populations that justify the application of exceptions under Article 9.1 of the Bern Convention. Further discussion with the ACCOBAMS secretariat should be also developed on this issue.

c. Conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı (Turkey)

At the 24th Standing Committee meeting, it was agreed that this file should be provisionally closed. However, the Committee asked the government to continue to report on the situation.

At its 26th meeting in 2006, the Standing Committee took note of the information presented by the NGO as to the existence of several outstanding problems that remained undealt with (such as marine pollution from the existing stockpile of toxic waste located on the nesting beach very close to the seashore) and instructed the Bureau to consider the possibility of reopening the file and engage the Barcelona convention.

The Secretariat wrote to the Turkish authorities in January 2007 asking them for full and updated information addressing the status of implementation of each of the 14 points included in Recommendation No. 95 (2002).

Information was sent to the Secretariat the day before the Bureau meeting so its members could not consider it. The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to include this issue in the agenda of its next meeting for consideration as a “possible case file” in September and inform the Turkish authorities accordingly, asking them to submit all relevant and updated information by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007, including the timeframe envisaged for implementing the specific actions of Recommendation No.95 (2002) that remain outstanding.

d. Wind farms in Smøla Archipelago (Norway)

At its 21st meeting, the Standing Committee decided not to open a file on this case, but asked Norway not to authorise the second phase of the wind farm (48 turbines) before assessing the results of the first one (20 turbines).

This case was raised again during discussions on wind energy and nature conservation at the 26th Standing Committee meeting in November 2006. The Norwegian delegate stated at the meeting that information on the implementation of the Standing Committee recommendation in 2001 would be transmitted for discussion at the Bureau in 2007.

The Secretariat received an update report from Birdlife International, where they argue that according to the original recommendations of the EIA, this wind farm should never have received a licence for operation on the site. They further informed that post-construction studies on the wind farm were carried out only during one year for Stage 1 before starting the construction of Stage 2 (which was completed in August 2005). The NGO asks for a review of the legality of the continuing operation of the wind farm, as well as for the removal or at least comprehensive mitigation and compensatory measures, as the site now offers the opportunity to study the effectiveness of mitigation and any residual impacts and lessons must be learned to ensure that no further wind farms that have the potential to cause damaging impacts on White-tailed Eagle populations are consented. They request that the Standing Committee considers this report, opens a case file and carries out an on-the-spot appraisal, leading to a recommendation to the Government of Norway.

The Secretariat contacted the Norwegian authorities in January 2007 but no reply was received.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to contact again the Norwegian authorities informing them that the case will be treated as a “possible case file” at its next meeting in September 2007 and asking them to send any relevant information by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007.

e. Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) population in Slovenia

The Secretariat was contacted by several voluntary organisations in late 2006 regarding the proposed 2007 quotas for the cull of brown bears in Slovenia. The Standing Committee to the Bern Convention already discussed this matter in 2002, when the Committee received the assurance that Slovenian populations would be managed in agreement with its obligation under the Convention. At this time, the Committee encouraged Slovenia to keep a healthy bear population that would permit a genetic and population flow into the Alps, and it instructed the Secretariat to follow the evolution of Slovenian bear population in collaboration with Slovenian authorities and in partnership with the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe.

The Secretariat wrote to the government of Slovenia in February 2007 asking about the evolution of bear populations in the last ten years and the biological reasons beyond the sharp increase in cull numbers. It received a report on the status of brown bear population in Slovenia whereby Slovenian authorities confirmed to the Bureau that the Slovenian brown bear population “is in a favourable conservation status, stable and vital, spatially expanding”.

The Bureau took note of the report and thanked the Slovenian authorities, noting that they had issued a reservation on the brown bear when they signed the Bern Convention. The European Commission has also received a letter on this issue which they are addressing at the level of population management, with a meeting planned next month on this issue.

3.5 Other information

The Bureau took note of the information presented on the three complaints: housing development projects in “El Aljibe” (Spain); classification of *Siluris glanis* as a dangerous species in Mayenne (France); and construction of a stormwater storage basin in Alsace (France), and decided not to further process them.

4. Follow-up to the recommendations – Evolution of the situation

a. Recommendation No. 79 (1999) on protection of the common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) in Europe

The Secretariat received a report from the Walloon region of Belgium about their implementation of this Recommendation, including the preparation of an action plan and the proposal to designate the site of the last population of great hamster in this region as a Site of Great Biological Interest.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to contact the other countries to which this recommendation is addressed (France, Germany and The Netherlands) asking them for information on their implementation.

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

The Secretariat received a report from BirdLife International on the implementation of Recommendation 96 (2002) on the conservation of birds in afforestation of lowland in Iceland, asking the Bureau to include it in the agenda of this year’s Standing Committee as a possible case file as they claim that the Government of Iceland has failed to ensure the satisfactory implementation of any of the seven points of Recommendation 96 (2002) in the past five years.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to write to the Government of Iceland asking for a report by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007 so that it can be considered at the next Bureau meeting.

c. Recommendation No. 104 (2003) on the conservation of the Spur-thighed tortoise *Testudo graeca graeca* in Spain

As no information was received, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to contact Spain again asking them to submit the necessary information by the deadline set before its September meeting.

d. Recommendation No. 107 (2003) on the Odeoluca Dam (Portugal)

The Secretariat received an annual report on the implementation of Recommendation 107 (2003) concerning activities carried out in 2006 by the Portuguese authorities. After the decision to reactivate the Odeluca Dam project in February 2005, Portugal and the European Commission had several contacts with respect to the infringement procedure related to the case. It was requested to guarantee the implementation of an *ex-situ* breeding centre for the species, implying the existence of a breeding stock made available by the Spanish Authorities. Based on this information, the European Commission decided to file the infringement procedure in December 2006.

Other conservation actions for the Iberian Lynx were taken in the framework of the EU-co-funded project "Management of Habitats and Species of Serra da Malcata" (2003-2008) which included land acquisition, the recovery of natural vegetation areas, paths and dirt roads, as well as habitat recovery and restocking of rabbit populations and the monitoring of Iberian Lynx habitats.

A Lynx conservation programme has been started in the South of Portugal by LPN, a national NGO (*Liga para a Protecção da Natureza*) in partnership with FFI (Fauna and Flora International). The programme is a Life Nature Project starting at the end of 2006 and running until September 2009, aimed at identifying priority areas for the management of Iberian Lynx habitats, developing agreements with associations and land owners, enhancing rabbit populations in identified areas, contributing to the preservation of Lynx habitats in identified areas; and increasing awareness at the local and national level on Lynx preservation.

The Bureau took note of the information provided and instructed the Secretariat to contact the Portuguese authorities to ask for any updated information on activities carried out in 2007 to be submitted to the Standing Committee in November 2007.

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

The 'Via Baltica' - part of the EU-funded TINA ('Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment') transport network in Central and Eastern Europe - will be an expressway running from Warsaw to Helsinki. It will pass through Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. The "Via Baltica" project raised several problems regarding the protection of natural areas, according to the report of the independent expert prepared after the "on-the-spot" visit in 2003 (T-PVS (2003)26), which included consideration of the Knyszynska Forest and the Raspuda Valley.

At the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee, the Polish delegate informed the Committee that the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was due to be finalised by the end of 2006. NGOs had been involved in the competitive tendering process and the report itself. The results would make it possible to take a decision on the ultimate route. The Committee took note of this information and asked the Polish Government to provide the decision on the choice of route, the relevant SEA and all other relevant information regarding this case.

In December 2006 the European Commission officially opened legal infringements procedures against the Polish Government based on the Augustow and Wasilkow bypasses. The Commission is treating this matter with urgency and it has referred this matter to the European Court of Justice in March 2007. As work has started on these two construction projects, the Commission is also asking the Court of Justice for interim measures to ask Poland to suspend the works immediately.

The Secretariat contacted the Polish authorities in January and March 2007 but no reply has been received to date.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to contact the Polish authorities again and address this issue at its meeting in September 2007.

f. Recommendation No. 112 (2004) on hydro-electric dams in Kárahnjúkar and Nordlingalda (Iceland)

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to write to the Government of Iceland asking for a report by the set deadline of 3rd September 2007 so that it can be considered at the next Bureau meeting.

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

A written report has been received from the UK authorities, covering the following issues:

- Pluto Health Study
- Pluto Bird Flight Diverters
- Pluto Bird Studies
- Hydrology Study
- Environmental Management Systems
- Akrotiri Peninsula Environmental Management Plan
- On-island Environmental Support

The Bureau noted the information with interest. An update report will be provided before the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

5. Draft comments to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1776 (2006) on seal hunting

The Secretariat presented the background of this issue, included in document T-PVS (2007) 2. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted its Recommendation 1776 (2006) on Seal Hunting which recommends that the Committee of Ministers instructs the Bern Convention Group on the drafting of a European Hunting and Biodiversity charter to include seals and other marine mammals in its work. At its 981st meeting on 29 November 2006 the Committee of Ministers examined Recommendation 1776 (2006) and decided to communicate it to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention for information and possible comments by 1st April 2007.

The Bureau examined the draft comments prepared and adopt them with a small change in paragraph 6 (Appendix III).

6. Meetings held with the European Commission

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the meetings held, together with the Chair of the Standing Committee, with European Commission officials.

Areas of particular interest discussed with the European Commission were similar to those also covered with the Executive Secretary of the CBD, such as: protected areas; invasive alien species, climate change and biodiversity, plant conservation and communication and awareness. They were also particularly interested in our case file system and the species action plans produced under the Bern Convention. Regarding wind energy and nature conservation, the European Commission informed us that it could be better to include the finalisation of the guidelines in the draft programme of activities of the Bern Convention for 2008. The Director of Biodiversity at the European Commission also expressed an interest in attending the next meeting of the Standing Committee in November 2007.

On protected areas, the Secretariat presented the idea of the possible organisation of regular European conferences (Bern/EU), every two years, about the regional implementation of the CBD's programme of work on protected areas. This issue will be further discussed in light of developments within the PEBLDS and the possible evolution of the Group of Experts on the Emerald Network to include work on the pan-European ecological network and the European Diploma.

7. Report on the case file system under the Bern Convention

Stagiaire Maribel Rodriguez gave a brief presentation about the report she is preparing to provide an overview of the case-file system, including a numerical registration system, some conclusions and recommendations. The complete report will be submitted to the next Bureau meeting for information.

8. Any other business

✓ **The Belgrade “Environment for Europe” conference (10-12 October 2007)**

The Chair of the Standing Committee informed the Bureau about the preparatory process for the Environment for Europe conference to be held in Belgrade, Serbia, on 10-12 October 2007, including the difficulties to include biodiversity in the draft ministerial declaration. The Bureau discussed next week’s meeting of the Council of the PEBLDS and the possibility to limit that process to the organisation of the biannual “Biodiversity for Europe” conferences to prepare for Conference of the Parties to the CBD and to the organisation some thematic workshops.

The Bureau expressed its support for the possible expansion of Bern Convention activities but requested the Secretariat to prepare draft decisions for consideration by the Standing Committee regarding the promotion of the pan-European ecological network and the management of the European Diploma as activities dealt with by the Standing Committee, taking account of the outcome of discussions within PEBLDS and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe respectively. The Bureau asked for this issue to be discussed again at its September meeting and asked the Secretariat to prepare a document.

✓ **New national park in Iceland**

The Bureau was informed of the adoption of a new national park in Iceland last week. The new protected area, of 13,000 square kilometres, will be the bigger national park in Europe.

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The next meeting will be held on 11 September 2006.

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



APPENDIX 1

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Strasbourg, 22 January 2007

Standing Committee Bureau meeting

Strasbourg, 22 March 2007
(Room 16, opening: 9.30 am)

AGENDA

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- 2. Implementation of the 2007 Programme of activities**
- 3. Implementation of the Convention: Files**
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 - Cyprus: Akamas peninsula
 - Bulgaria: Project to build a motorway through the Kresna Gorge
 - Bulgaria: Wind farms in Balchik and Kaliakra –Via Pontica
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 - France: Conservation of the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni hermanni*) in the plaine des Maures
 - France: Habitats for the survival of the common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*)
 - France: Conservation of the Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*)
 - Slovenia: Wind farm project in Volovja Reber
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 - Croatia: Planned motorway across the Drava marshlands and hydro-electric power station in Lesce, across the Dobra river
 - Bulgaria: Wind farms in Balchik and Kaliakra –Via Pontica
 - 3.4 Complaints in stand-by**
 - Spain: Invasive Zebra mussels in the Ebro river
 - Turkey: Planned capture of Bottlenose dolphins
 - Turkey: Conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı
 - Norway: Windfarms in Smøla Archipelago
- 4. Follow-up of the Recommendations - Evolution of the situation in:**
 - Recommendation No. 79 (1999) on protection of the common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) in Europe

- Recommendation No. 96 (2002) on conservation of natural habitats and wildlife, specially birds, in afforestation of lowland (Iceland)
- Recommendation No. 104 (2003) on the conservation of the Spur-thighed tortoise *Testudo graeca graeca* (Spain)
- Recommendation No. 107 (2003) on the Odelouca Dam (Portugal)
- Recommendation No. 108 (2003) on the proposed construction of the “Via Baltica” (Poland)
- Recommendation No. 112 (2004) on hydro-electric dams (Iceland)
- Recommendation No.113 (2004) on military antenna in the Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri (Cyprus)

5. Draft comments to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1776 (2006) on seal hunting (Document T-PVS (2007) 2)

6. Feedback from the meetings held with the European Commission and the Executive Secretary of the CBD

7. 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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APPENDIX 3**COMMENTS OF THE BERN CONVENTION BUREAU
ON RECOMMENDATION 1776 (2006) OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ON SEAL HUNTING**

The Bern Convention Bureau:

1. Welcomes the interest of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the conservation of the harp seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) and the hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*), both species listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention as “protected fauna species”.
2. Notes that exploitation of species listed in Appendix III of the Convention is not prohibited, but subject to certain conditions aimed to ensure their conservation.
3. Notes that, under Article 7.3 of the Bern Convention, Parties are requested to regulate any exploitation of wild fauna species specified in Appendix III so as to keep populations out of danger and that measures to be taken shall include:
 - a. closed seasons and/or other procedures regulating the exploitation;
 - b. the temporary or local prohibition of exploitation, as appropriate, in order to restore satisfactory population levels;
 - c. the regulation as appropriate of sale, keeping for sale, transport or offering for sale of live and dead wild animals.
4. Encourages all states to take a precautionary approach to the conservation of marine mammals taking into account that, even if at present none of the two seal species are threatened, climate change is likely to have a long-term negative impact on their survival.
5. Shares the concern of the Parliamentary Assembly that animals subject to exploitation have to be culled humanely avoiding cruel hunting methods.
6. Encourages all Member States and observers states to the Council of Europe to collaborate in promoting policies that ensure the conservation of seals and other marine mammals in the appropriate international framework, including the Bern Convention and other relevant international instruments.
7. Encourages all Member States and Observer States of the Council of Europe to support scientific research on seal conservation, on the impact of culling and on their role in marine ecosystems, furthermore recommends to improve monitoring of seal populations and states their vulnerability to climate change.
8. Notes that the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention decided not to include marine species in the drafting of the European Hunting and Biodiversity Charter, in the understanding that other appropriate fora exist for the regulation of the exploitation of those species.
9. Invites the Russia Federation and other Member States that are not already Parties to the Bern Convention to consider its signature and ratification.
10. Invites Canada to establish appropriate mechanisms of co-operation with other States sharing populations of hooded seals and harp seals and with the Bern Convention, aiming at ensuring that both species maintain their populations in a favourable conservation status.