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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, 10 September 2004

**MEETING REPORT**

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

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## **1. Adoption of the agenda**

Mrs Ilona Jepsen (Latvia), Chair of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, opened the meeting on 10 September 2004. She welcomed the other two members of the Bureau: Mrs Véronique Herrenschildt (France, Vice-Chair) and Mr Patrick Van Klaveren (Monaco), as well as the representatives of the Secretariat.

The agenda was adopted as it appears in appendix 1.

The participants are listed in appendix 2.

## **2. Preparation of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the convention**

The Secretariat presented the draft programme for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, which would take place on 30 November 2004. It would comprise two parts: a retrospective part and a look at future prospects, with a draft declaration.

In addition to the participants from the Standing Committee, personalities who had marked the work on the convention would be invited.

The City of Strasbourg and the Presidents of the General and Regional Councils had been contacted to take part in the event.

At the end of the day the Permanent Delegation of Switzerland would be giving a reception.

The Bureau approved the programme as it stood. As the presentation of the draft declaration was to be the highlight of the day's events, it thought it best to proceed with a written consultation in order to be able to validate the text before 30 November and distribute it to the participants and journalists.

It instructed the Secretariat to send it out for comment.

## **3. Progress of the 2004 programme of activities**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the progress of work.

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

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

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

The programme of pilot projects continued. To date, 25 pilot projects had been launched in Europe and Africa.

- A launch workshop had been organised in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) on 24 and 25 May 2004;
- Invitations had been sent to Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Tunisia to join the programme;
- The preparation of a pilot project in Belarus was well under way;
- Tunisia had confirmed its intention to hold a meeting on the development of the Network in Africa; it could take place in 2006;
- The European Environment Agency had proposed to contribute to the launching of the Network in 5 Balkan countries, to remain consistent with Natura 2000;
- The joint meeting of the ecological networks (Group of Experts of the Emerald Network and Committee of Experts of the PEEN) would be held in Krakow on 5 and 6 October 2004, at the invitation of the Polish authorities; discussion would focus on the development of the network.

The Bureau noted with interest the development of the Network and invited the countries which had not yet joined to do so. It wondered, in the case of the (Nordic) countries which could not yet join because of administrative constraints, if an intermediate stage, prior to official designation, might be envisaged.

It welcomed the co-operation with the European Environment Agency, and with the Paris theme Centre, which managed the data.

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

**- *Invasive alien species***

A meeting with the consultants had been held in Paris on 17 May 2004. Priority had been given in 2004 to defining means of publicising the European Strategy in the relevant circles and encouraging the countries to implement it. It would be presented at the Planta Europa meeting (September 2004) and the Krakow Seminar (October 2004). In 2005 a special effort would be made for the Mediterranean countries. The group of experts would meet in Majorca.

It was planned to organise a symposium in Italy in 2006.

The Bureau took note of the information presented and stressed that this was a transversal theme that required co-operation by the different ministries and co-ordination between the focal points of the different conventions.

**- *Conservation of invertebrates***

A European strategy for the conservation of invertebrates was in preparation. An initial draft would be examined in 2005. This activity was being carried out in co-operation with the *European Invertebrate Survey* (EIS).

**- *Conservation of large carnivores***

The brochure on large carnivores would be published in the Questions and Answers Series.

A meeting of the Select Group of the *Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe* (LCIE) had been held in Bavaria on 23 and 24 April 2004. It had been decided to extend the network towards Turkey.

The European Union would finance an important project aimed at reducing the conflicts between large carnivores and farm animals.

The next meeting of the SCALP Group would be held from 13 to 16 October 2004 in Tarvisio-Malborghetto (Italy).

Concerning the Iberian Lynx, the new Spanish Government had announced its intention not to change the orientations adopted by the previous government. A new visit would take place in October 2004, to study the application of the agreement concluded between the central Government and Andalusia concerning, inter alia, the implementation of the programme for the breeding of the Iberian Lynx in captivity.

A seminar on the cross-border management of large carnivore populations was to be held in Slovenia in 2005.

**- *Conservation of the hamster***

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

**- *Conservation of plants***

The next meeting of the Group of experts on plant conservation would be held in the context of the Planta Europa Seminar, which would be taking place from 17 to 20 September 2004 in Valencia (Spain), with the aim of discussing the implementation of the European Plant Conservation Strategy and the problems of conserving plant species in Europe, as well as the progress made.

The Group would also examine the progress made in the collection of information on the list of 50 species regarded as priorities in conservation terms, prepared by the Botanical Conservatory in Brest in collaboration with the European Environment Agency.

- **Conservation of amphibians and reptiles**

Contractual arrangements had been made to prepare action plans for:

➤ 3 threatened reptile species:

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

➤ 2 amphibian species:

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

The Conference on marine turtles, prepared in collaboration with the Bonn and Barcelona Conventions, the IUCN and the RAC/SPA, which was to take place in Turkey in October had been deferred until May 2005. The aims of the conference would be to examine implementation of ongoing action plans and propose suitable conservation measures.

- **Conservation of birds**

A study had been carried out by the *Il Nibbio* Foundation on the ecological impact of lead shot on land habitats and the accumulation of lead in non-aquatic birds.

The draft recommendation on minimising adverse effects of wind power generation on birds had been revised in line with the Standing Committee's decision, to include effects on chiroptera and sea mammals.

**d. Conservation of sea mammals**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS would be held in Palma de Majorca from 9 to 12 November 2004. The Secretariat of the convention would be represented.

**e. Conservation of the otter**

The Czech project for the conservation of the otter had been completed. It had been made possible by support from the Government of Luxembourg over a ten-year period.

**f. Biological diversity of forests**

The 5<sup>th</sup> international symposium of the Pan-European Ecological Network on “conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of forests”, organised in co-operation with the Polish Ministry of the Environment would be held from 7 to 9 October 2004 in Krakow. This activity was conducted in conjunction with the liaison office of the Ministerial Conference for the protection of forests in Europe (MCPFE) and specific proposals should be made concerning the conservation of biological diversity.

The symposium would consist of plenary sessions and several working groups on priority themes: protected forest zones, application of the legislation on forests, sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity, ecosystemic approach, guidelines for choosing sites for reforestation.

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

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

**a. Akamas Peninsula (Cyprus)**

The Cypriot authorities had informed the Secretariat that a proposal concerning the Akamas peninsula had been presented to the Council of Ministers. It would be discussed in September. A full report would be sent subsequently. The Bureau decided to keep the file open.

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

There was no new information to report. The Bureau decided to propose to the Standing Committee to close the file for the time being.

**4.2. Possible new files**

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

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Swiss Government had sent it the final text of the Wolf Management Concept prepared by the *Office Fédéral de l'Environnement, des Forêts et du Paysage* (OFEFP), which had been submitted, prior to its adoption, to the parties concerned (including the cantons, nature conservation associations, livestock farmers, hunters).

The concept contained principles governing the protection, killing and capture of the wolf, prevention, damage reporting and the payment of compensation for preventive measures. It should help the cantons – which were responsible for its application – to manage the natural return of the predator and, in particular, to minimise any problems of coexistence between human activities and needs and the natural return of the protected species. The Swiss authorities had also informed the Secretariat that they would soon be forwarding the official proposal to move the wolf from Annex II to Annex III of the convention, under article 17, for discussion by the Standing Committee,

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

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

The Bulgarian Ministry of the Environment had informed the Secretariat that there was no further information concerning the state of progress of the project or the procedure for establishing a new protected area around the gorge.

A full report on the matter, including the opinions of the other ministries concerned, as requested by the Bureau at its meeting in April 2004, would be forwarded to the Secretariat at the end of October.

A workshop on the theme “Biodiversity and EIA”, organised by the Environment and Water Ministry in co-operation with the “Enlargement” Directorate, bringing together representatives of the ministries concerned, experts and non-governmental organisations, had been held in Sofia on 26 and 27 April 2004.

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

**4.3. Pending complaints**

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

The Secretariat had written to the Turkish authorities again requesting additional information on the protection of the Koyunbaba and Kocakuyu caves and the findings of the on-the-spot appraisal visit to Dupnisa last spring. The reply had not yet been received.

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

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

Following a complaint from *France Nature Environnement* (FNE) concerning the serious repercussions for the wild west-European or common Sturgeon of the building of a very wide route for shipping Airbus A380 aircraft parts between the port of Bordeaux and Toulouse, information had been requested from the French Government.

Mrs Herrenschmidt informed the Bureau that a letter had been sent to the European Commission, to which the matter had also been referred, mentioning the compensation measures that had been taken. A copy of the letter would be sent to the Secretariat.

The Bureau decided to keep this question open as a pending complaint.

**c. Protection of the Hermann's Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in the Plaine des Maures (France)**

The Bureau had been informed at its previous meeting of the highly detailed reply of the French authorities concerning the protection of the Hermann's Tortoise in the Var. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the SNPN (*Société nationale de protection de la nature*) had sent a new letter commenting on the measures taken to halt the decline of the species and denouncing the lack of rigour of the French Government in this matter.

It invited the French Government to make a very firm commitment both on the dates of implementation of the protective measures and on the new threats (TGV high-speed train, rubbish tip, pressure of increasing development around the area).

The SNPN also deplored that the Natura 2000 zone covered only 60 % of the zones with high or average tortoise densities and that the process of establishing the nature reserve was progressing too slowly.

The Bureau decided to submit this file as a possible new file with a view to an on-site visit to look into these different matters more closely.

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

At the Bureau's request, the Secretariat had written to the European Commission for an opinion on this site, which was a special protection area. The reply had said that no violation of Community law had been found in the study of the compatibility of mining operations with habitat conservation. The Bureau decided to propose to the Standing Committee that the complaint be filed.

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

The Secretariat had written to the Bulgarian authorities asking for maps indicating the location of the chosen site and the Ramsar zones and a summary of the EIA report.

The Bulgarian Government had replied that it was difficult to define migration routes accurately and that no Ramsar site was concerned. In view of Bulgaria's geographical location, the government was aware of the importance of the choice of the future sites for the windmills and would appreciate any form of technical assistance in this respect.

The NGOs had sent a report challenging the acceptance procedure for the project, particularly the content of the impact study and the location of the proposed site.

Based on the information supplied by the NGOs, the Bureau invited the Bulgarian Government to let it have a full report on the question.

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

The Spanish authorities had dropped the national hydrology plan.

**g. The Breña dam (Spain)**

The Secretariat had received a complaint from an NGO called "*Ecologistas en acción*" concerning the building of a dam on the river Guadiato, which it alleged would have negative effects on the habitat of the Iberian Lynx in the Sierra Morena.

A request for information had been sent to the Spanish authorities, which had sent the Secretariat an opinion of the European Commission, to which the matter had also been referred.

The Commission acknowledged that the project might indeed somewhat impact the habitat of the Iberian Lynx.

An environmental impact assessment had been carried out and alternative solutions had been examined. The priority public interest dimension of the project nevertheless weighed in favour of going ahead with it, provided that the compensatory measures envisaged were taken.

The Bureau took note of this information and decided to file the complaint.

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

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

The Secretariat presented the findings of the on-the-spot appraisal carried out from 22 to 25 July 2004 by an expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat at the invitation of the Ukrainian Government. The aims had been:

- To examine the project to build a shipping canal in the Bystre estuary, located in the Ukrainian part of the Danube delta;
- To assess the possible impact on the fauna and flora and their habitats;
- To study the legal status of the area concerned, paying special attention to the cross-border context;
- To examine the funding arrangements;
- To exchange views with the authorities and with the interested NGOs;
- To make appropriate recommendations to the Standing Committee.

The visit had revealed that insufficient attention had been paid to the environmental aspects and that there had not been proper consultation with the neighbouring states concerned (Moldova, Romania). The project should be reconsidered in a long-term, sustainable development perspective, on the functional scale of the delta.

The expert had accordingly proposed various measures, including:

- Immediately suspending the work under way in the estuary of the Bystre canal and abandoning phase 2 of the project; providing detailed physical and biological monitoring of changes in the estuary and the Bystre canal;
- Conducting a fuller, more thorough environmental impact study, analysing and comparing the collective costs of the possible alternatives and the consequences of the work on a cross-border level;
- Organising an international ideas workshop, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, with a view to drawing up a strategic plan for the sustainable development of the region of Vilkoovo, and inviting the other two countries parties to the trilateral agreement on co-operation in the natural reserves of the Danube delta and the lower reaches of the Prut, namely Moldova and Romania, to this workshop;
- Requesting support with the preparation of this plan from the international organisations, and the backing of multilateral donors and lenders for its implementation;
- Strengthen the protection of the active part of the main delta.

A draft recommendation would be submitted to the next meeting of the Standing Committee for examination and approval.

The Bureau decided to include this item on the agenda of the Standing Committee's 24<sup>th</sup> meeting as a possible new file.

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

The Bureau was informed that, at the Icelandic Government's invitation, an expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat had visited the site from 18 to 21 July 2004, in order to:

- Examine the two hydro-electric dam construction projects (Kárahnjúkar and Nordlingaalda);
- Assess the likely threats to the flora and fauna (particularly the bird populations) and their habitats;
- Speak to all the authorities concerned and the NGO;
- Make appropriate recommendations to the government.

The appraisal visit had revealed that the authorisation to build the Kárahnjúkár dam had been granted subject to 20 conditions laid down by the Ministry of the Environment in the framework of the EIA procedure and accepted by the developer, including the creation of a national park.

The Nordlingaalda (Thjórsárver) project had been postponed because of the environmental interest of the site, a wetland zone of international importance under the Ramsar Convention which is home to the largest reproducing colony of pink-footed geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*).

These projects might impact the habitats of several species protected under the convention. The overall population of pink-footed geese present in the country would not be affected. The appraisal had nevertheless revealed the need to take into account all the projects of a similar nature that were envisaged and to carry out a full assessment, including analysis of the risk to the different species.

Measures aimed at guaranteeing the compatibility of these projects with biological diversity conservation objectives had been proposed. They were included in the draft recommendation that would be presented to the Standing Committee.

The Bureau decided to present this file to the Standing Committee, together with its opinion that no file should be opened.

### **c. Military antenna on the British sovereign base (Cyprus)**

At the invitation of the British authorities, an expert accompanied by a member of the Secretariat had visited the site on 6 and 7 September 2004 with the purpose of discussing monitoring of the impact of the Pluto II communication antenna on wildlife as well as mitigation and ecological compensation measures.

It appeared that the antenna had no significant impact on the wildlife.

The visit had revealed the heritage value of the Akrotiri wetland zone and the scale of the mitigation and compensation measures already taken: installation of reflectors, lighting, development of a management plan. It also revealed divergences of opinion concerning the methods used to collect and analyse data concerning mortality and electromagnetic radiation and the content of the EIA.

The expert would make several recommendations aimed, inter alia, at:

- Strengthening co-operation between the different parties;
- Continuing monitoring and research to minimise the effects;
- Applying the principle of precaution before installing any new antennas;
- Controlling the other pressures on the wetland zone.

The Bureau took note of this information and considered that there was no need to present this case as a possible new file.

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

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

The Secretariat had received no new information from the Moroccan government concerning the tourism development project in the Souss Massa national park in Morocco.

### **b. Follow-up to Recommendation n° 107 (2003) on the Odelouca dam (Portugal)**

The Portuguese Government had not yet sent its report on the implementation of the recommendation.



The Bureau considered that it was necessary to continue to monitor the situation closely and decided to maintain these two items on the Standing Committee's agenda.

## **7. Proposals for the 2005 programme of activities**

The Bureau approved the work programme presented by the Secretariat after making one or two slight changes.

## **8. Draft agenda of the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee**

The Bureau examined the draft agenda and proposed adding:

- Under item 4.3, a discussion of the draft declaration;
- Under "Items for information", the question of Zante and that of the illegal capture of birds in Cyprus;
- Under item 5.4, "Follow-up to Recommendations", the matter of the Via Baltica construction project (Poland), Recommendation n° 108 (2003).

## **9. Other business**

The Bureau exchanged views on:

- The question of the species listed in the annexes to other conventions, and the need for consistency between the international instruments. There was an Australian proposal to add the great white shark to annex II of the CITES convention; the species is listed in Annex II of the Bern Convention. The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to inform the contracting Parties. The same applied to trade involving the *Lithophaga lithophaga* which the CITES was currently examining and which was also the subject of a recommendation of the Standing Committee [Recommendation n° 85 (2001)].

The Bureau thought that the attention of the CITES authorities should be drawn to the work done under the Bern Convention.

- The consequences of climate changes for certain species which would have to move to other habitats.

The Bureau considered that this was a subject worth thinking about to determine what the future might hold in store.



## APPENDIX 1

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

Strasbourg, 9 March 2004

#### Standing Committee Bureau meeting

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

#### DRAFT AGENDA

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

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

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

**7. Other business**



## APPENDIX 2

Strasbourg, 10 March 2004  
[list part Bureau avril 2004.doc]

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

### CONVENTION RELATIVE A LA CONSERVATION DE LA VIE SAUVAGE ET DU MILIEU NATUREL

Standing Committee / Comité permanent

### Meeting of the Bureau / Réunion du Bureau

Strasbourg, le 16 avril 2004  
Palais de l'Europe, Salle 15

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