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T-PVS (2005) 15

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Group of experts for the setting up of the Emerald Network of areas of special conservation interest

10th meeting Strasbourg, 10 October 2005

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Report

Document prepared by the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage

The 10th meeting of the Group of Experts for the Setting up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest was held in Strasbourg as part of a joint meeting with the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network, on 10 and 11 October 2005.

The Standing Committee is invited:

- 1. to take note of this report on the Group of Experts' meeting;
- 2. to take note of the progress report on the Emerald Network Pilot Projects Programme (T-PVS (2005) 02);
- 3. to examine document T-PVS (2005) 9 and exchange views on the Secretariat's proposals with a view to the adoption of a procedure for analysing and validating Emerald sites proposed by states.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIR

The Chair of the Group of Experts, Ms Marie-Christine Van Klaveren (Principality of Monaco), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants (listed in Appendix I).

The Secretariat added its own words of welcome and announced that Ms Elda Moreno had taken over as head of the Natural Heritage Division and that Mr Eladio Fernández-Galiano had been appointed Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE 10^{TH} MEETING AND OF THE REPORT OF THE 9^{TH} MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

Document for adoption

STRA-REP / Emerald (2005) 01 rev - revised draft agenda

Documents for information

T-PVS (2004) 14 – report of the 9th meeting, Krakow, 5 October 2004

The Group of Experts adopted the agenda (Appendix II) and formally adopted the report of its 9th meeting, held in Cracow (Poland) on 5 October 2004.

3. DECISIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE BERN CONVENTION

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 3 – Extract of the report of the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 30 November - 3 December 2004

The Secretariat presented an extract from the report of the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (1-4 December 2004) and pointed out that the Standing Committee had, among other things, agreed to the continued development of the Emerald Network and the idea of holding a colloquy in Tunisia on the development of the Emerald Network in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

4. Progress of the pilot projects programme in 2005

Documents for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 2 - Emerald Network Pilot Projects Programme for 2005 - Progress Report

T-PVS/Emerald (2004) 8 – Report of the pilot project in Georgia

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 1 – Report of the pilot project in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 4 – Report of the pilot project in Malta

The Secretariat reported on the progress of the pilot projects programme in 2004 and 2005 and informed the Group of Experts that the reports on two additional pilot projects carried out in 2004 in Georgia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" had been delivered according to contract and published on the Council of Europe website.

The Secretariat announced that a pilot project for Norway had been launched in late 2004, at a training workshop held in Trondheim on 16 and 17 November 2004.

Pilot projects had also been launched in 2005 in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, and the training workshops for these had been held in Baku on 26 and 27 July 2005, Sarajevo on 8 and 9 March 2005 and Podgorica on 26 and 27 April 2005 respectively. The training workshops had been attended in large numbers by officials from the relevant government departments in each of the four countries and representatives of scientific institutions and non-governmental organisations.

At the Chair's invitation, the delegates from Burkina Faso, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Malta, Norway, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro (Appendix III) and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" reported on the progress of pilot projects that were still under way or had been completed in their respective countries.

The Azerbaijani delegate reported on progress on the pilot project that had started in Azerbaijan in July 2005 and talked of the wealth of biological and landscape diversity in Azerbaijan. The sites identified during the pilot project would reflect this important natural heritage that was characteristic of the Caspian Sea region, in terms of both habitats and species.

The delegate from Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on the activities carried out as part of the pilot project. Eight sites had already been identified since the training workshop, and the work was set to continue and expand, particularly in the context of the complementary programme for developing the Emerald Network supported by the European Environment Agency. The representative of the Environment Agency was pleased to note this, with special emphasis on the introduction of the Agency's European Nature Information System (EUNIS).

The delegate from Burkina Faso said that the pilot project launched in May 2004 had progressed well and data had been collected and recorded at five sites frequented by many migratory species; data were being collected from five other sites and it was planned to prospect for other sites. In view of the results achieved and the difficulties encountered when implementing the pilot project, the delegate asked for an eight-month extension. He put particular emphasis on the question of the funding of work carried out in connection with the Emerald Network and launched an appeal for voluntary contributions for the implementation of the Emerald work programme in Burkina Faso. Lastly, he reiterated the proposal he had made at the previous meeting to the effect that the Group of Experts consider drawing up African lists or sub-lists of species and habitats as it was proving particularly difficult to apply Resolution No. 4 (1996).

The Georgian delegate announced that the additional pilot project launched in 2004 had been very useful for Georgia. Fifty to sixty percent of the Emerald sites had been identified to date. Most of these areas were protected but some did not have enough protection.

The delegate from Malta, where the pilot project had been completed in 2004, announced that additional sites would be named at the end of 2005 and among these would be a marine site. All the identified sites were protected areas. The sites identified in the course of the pilot project, which had placed particular emphasis on marine sites, were or would be included in the work on the European Union's Natura 2000 network, which Malta had joined in 2004.

The Norwegian delegate reported on the progress of the work carried out under the pilot project launched in Norway in November 2004. The pilot project would be completed as scheduled in 2005 and it would be followed by an implementation stage. The list of habitats in Resolution No. 4 (1996) was somewhat limited when it came to northern areas, and the Natura 2000 network's list of habitats was more compatible with Norwegian biodiversity. There was a need to add to the classification of habitats in the Arctic biogeographic region. The work carried out in connection with the pilot project had revealed certain unique Norwegian habitats.

The Senegalese delegate reported on the protected areas programme in Senegal and announced that some marine areas were now protected in his country. Incorporating these sites into the programmes of international conventions was a means of bolstering Senegal's protection policy and so it was planned to propose some of these sites as Emerald Network sites. A transfrontier biosphere reserve had also been set up in co-operation with Mauritania and there were plans to set up another with Guinea. One site, Lake Tanma, had already been designated an Emerald Network site and two others should shortly be added.

The delegate from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" presented the second stage of the pilot project carried out in her country to supplement the project launched in 2002 and as a result of which three new Emerald sites had been identified. A national biodiversity strategy, an action plan and special legislation had been adopted in 2004.

At the Chair's invitation, the Tunisian delegate gave details of the possibility of organising a pilot project in Tunisia. Tunisia was currently considering whether it was worth launching the programme; it had already made considerable progress on the issue of protected areas under the Barcelona Convention.

The Secretariat pointed out that the Barcelona Convention programmes were compatible with the Bern Convention's Emerald Network programmes and that co-ordination could be enhanced in the future. The Chair said that it would also be worth considering co-ordination with the Algiers Convention.

The Chair thanked the delegates for their presentations and, speaking on behalf of the whole Group, expressed satisfaction at the progress made on the pilot projects programme in 2005. It was to be hoped that, by the end of 2007, all the contracting parties to the Bern Convention or those invited to accede to it would have joined the Emerald Network and implemented a programme launching operations to identify potential Emerald sites.

5. CO-OPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

Presentation by the Secretariat

The Secretariat presented the programme financed by the European Environment Agency for the development of the Emerald Network in five south-east European countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The aim of the programme was to supplement the work already carried out in these countries as part of the pilot projects and identify 80% of the Emerald Network in the region.

On behalf of the Group of Experts, the Chair joined the Secretariat in thanking the European Commission and the European Environment Agency for their very substantial co-operation. It was to be hoped that this type of co-operation with the Agency – or, where appropriate, with other bodies – could be extended to other European regions in order to encourage the further work on the establishment of the Emerald Network beyond the pilot project stage.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMERALD NETWORK: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CALENDAR ADOPTED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE BERN CONVENTION

Presentation by national delegations of progress of work

The Secretariat pointed out that in 2002 the Group of Experts had drawn up a timetable for the establishment of the Emerald Network, which had been approved by the Standing Committee at its 22nd meeting from 2 to 5 December 2002.

The Chair invited the delegations concerned to describe developments in their countries in 2005.

The Albanian delegate said that two sites covering both sea and land had been identified in the context of the establishment of the Emerald Network. No entirely marine-based sites had yet been identified. She also provided information concerning the identification of a wetland area, for which an administrative authority and a management plan had been set up. A second wetland, Lake Shkoda, was in the process of being designated as an Emerald site. By the end of 2006, 80% of the sites could be expected to have been designated.

The Swiss delegate reported on progress on the Emerald Network in Switzerland. Files had been prepared for thirty or so sites and had been submitted to the cantons for approval. By the end of 2006, data on all of the sites should have been submitted. The sites covered middle-mountain areas located in the continental and Alpine biogeographic regions. Other sites to be identified in the future would cover high mountains, for which Switzerland had particular responsibility in the Alpine biogeographic region.

7. REGISTERING OF ASCIS BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE BERN CONVENTION

Document for adoption

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 9 - Proposal for a procedure of registering of the Emerald areas designated by the countries

The Group of Experts took note of the Secretariat's proposals concerning the procedure to be followed for the Standing Committee to validate the Emerald sites proposed by states. The procedure would abide by the general principles adopted by the European Commission, particularly with regard to the appraisal of sites in the context of biogeographic regions. A distinction would be made between sites located in biogeographic regions common to the Emerald Network and the Natura 2000 network (sites analysed while also taking account of Natura 2000 sites) and sites in biogeographic regions found only in the Emerald Network.

The delegate from Monaco insisted on the need for consistency with other international instruments applying to regions which were not covered by the Natura 2000 network.

The Senegalese delegate asked whether it would be possible to set up specific biogeographic regions for sub-Saharan Africa.

The French delegate argued that it was very useful to analyse data from sites in the context of biogeographic seminars as it made it possible to identify shortcomings and progress throughout the biogeographic area concerned. The Emerald Network should adopt this method for data analysis purposes and to ensure that there was a degree of consistency between the nodal areas of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

The Norwegian delegate talked about the co-ordination of the Natura 2000 and Emerald Networks and suggested that the Group of Experts should obtain detailed information on the evaluation criteria for sites proposed in the context of Natura 2000 during the biogeographic seminars held by the European Commission. The representative of the European Environment Agency suggested that an explanatory document should be prepared and distributed to the delegations for information.

In reply to a question from the Swiss delegate about the management of Natura 2000 sites, the representative of the European Commission explained that site management was the responsibility of member states. She also specified, in reply to comments by a number of delegates, that no new lists of species and habitats had yet been adopted by the European Commission.

The representative of the European Topic Centre on Nature Protection and Biodiversity said that the Topic Centre would be willing to help establish criteria for appropriate sites.

The Secretariat pointed out that the two networks, Emerald and Natura 2000, were intended to grow in parallel. The aim was to adopt the same approach in each biogeographic region and apply the same methods in all European countries, regardless of whether they were members of the European Union.

The Group of Experts approved the document that was to be submitted to the Standing Committee. The procedure would also have to be approved by the European Commission as it involved the analysis of sites located in biogeographic regions common to both networks.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 8 - Draft programme of a Workshop in Tunisia

The Secretariat presented the document on the implementation of the Emerald Network in Africa and the Mediterranean, which had been prepared following an offer by the Tunisian authorities to host a special meeting on the subject.

The delegations from Burkina Faso, Croatia, Monaco and Senegal expressed a desire for the meeting to be held in late 2006.

The Secretariat pointed out that no specific budget appropriation was available for the meeting and so it would not be possible to hold it in 2006. The delegate from Monaco said that the Principality of Monaco had already made a voluntary contribution of 4,000 euros to the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) to cover part of the cost of the meeting.

The Secretariat proposed that the meeting should be postponed until 2007 so that there would be time beforehand to decide on the main lines of the Council of Europe's and the Bern Convention's activities in the areas which could be addressed at the meeting, i.e. the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean area in the context of the Emerald Network and the development of the Emerald Network in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and in sub-Saharan Africa, including, if deemed appropriate, the consideration of specific lists of habitats and species.

Consequently, a thorough appraisal should be made of the Bern Convention's and the Emerald Network's contribution to existing programmes for the protection of habitats and species in the countries concerned in order to determine in which spheres of activity this contribution would complement activities already under way and enhance their effectiveness.

The Chair reiterated the Group of Experts' views and agreed to the preparatory work that would have to be done in 2006 in order to hold the meeting in Tunisia in 2007, in co-operation with such bodies as the RAC/SPA. As far as development of the Emerald Network in the Mediterranean region was concerned, she confirmed the Group of Experts' backing for the establishment of the Network on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and called to mind the interest that a number of delegations had shown in identifying marine and coastal sites and attempting to co-ordinate the various systems for the identification of marine and coastal sites.

9. Draft programme of activities for 2006

Document for adoption

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 5 – Draft Work Programme of the Emerald Network for 2006

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 7 – working programme of the Charitable Foundation Biodiversity Conservation Center contributing to the establishment of the PEEN and Emerald Network in Russian Federation

The Secretariat presented the draft Council of Europe budget for the development of the Emerald Network in 2006, focusing in particular on the pilot projects programme.

The delegate from the Russian Federation presented a draft programme drawn up by the Biodiversity Conservation Centre with a view to making a contribution to the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network and the Emerald Network in the Russian Federation.

The Group of Experts noted and approved the two documents submitted to it. It expressed particular support for the programme of activities presented by the delegate of the Russian Federation.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing to report.

11. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 6 – Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Group of experts of the Emerald Network

The Group of Experts voted on its new Chair and Vice-Chair. It elected Mrs Jasminka Radovic (Croatia) as Chair and Mr Jan Plesnik (Czech Republic) as Vice-Chair.

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APPENDIX 2

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair

2. Adoption of the agenda of the 10th meeting and of the report of the 9th meeting of the Group of experts

Document for adoption

STRA-REP / Emerald (2005) 01 rev - revised draft agenda

Documents for information

T-PVS (2004) 14 – report of the 9th meeting, Krakow, 5 October 2004

3. Decisions of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 3 – Extract of the report of the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 30 November - 3 December 2004

4. Progress of the pilot projects programme in 2005

Documents for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 2 - Emerald Network Pilot Projects Programme for 2005 - Progress Report

T-PVS/Emerald (2004) 8 – Report of the pilot project in Georgia

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 1 - Report of the pilot project in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 4 – Report of the pilot project in Malta

5. Co-operation with the European Environment Agency in South-East Europe

Presentation by the Secretariat

6. Development of the Emerald Network: implementation of the calendar adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Presentation by national delegations of progress of work

7. Registering of ASCIs by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Document for adoption

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 9 – Proposal for a procedure of registering of the Emerald areas designated by the countries

8. Development of the Emerald Network in African countries and in the Mediterranean area

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 8 - Draft programme of a Workshop in Tunisia

9. Draft programme of activities for 2006

Document for adoption

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 5 – Draft Work Programme of the Emerald Network for 2006

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 7 – working programme of the Charitable Foundation Biodiversity Conservation Center contributing to the establishment of the PEEN and Emerald Network in Russian Federation

10. Other business

11. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Document for information

T-PVS/Emerald (2005) 6 – Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Group of experts of the Emerald Network

APPENDIX 3

Report on progress of the Emerald network pilot project in Serbia and Montenegro

A Pilot Project has been launched in January 2005 in order to start the implementation of the Emerald Network in Serbia and Montenegro, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning Republic of Montenegro.

Serbia and Montenegro is in the process of ratification of the Bern Convention and has taken fully into consideration the provisions of the Convention and in particular Recommendation No. 16 (1989) and Resolution No. 3 (1996). The Emerald Pilot Project is intended to serve as a ground for accelerating the process of accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the Bern Convention and can be used to define more areas of national importance for nature conservation.

The national Emerald network team was formed after signing the project contract. The team is consisting of 20 experts (zoologist, botanist, environmental experts) from institutions in Serbia and Montenegro.

The workshop was held in 26-27 April 2005 in Podgorica, Republic of Montenegro in order to introduce the national team to the principle and technical aspects of the Emerald network and organize training for the team. The session was managed by working presidency: Ms. Ana Pajevic, project manager for Emerald network in Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Eladio Fernández-Galiano and Mr. Marc Roekaerts from the Council of Europe.

Mr. Eladio Fernández-Galiano presents a hole activities of Council of Europe and explain the legal framework of Emerald network, criteria for selection of ASCI and introduce the following relevant emerald documentation.

Mr. Marc Roekaerts, expert for Emerald software present final version of the Emerald network software and explain step by step introduction of data into the software by interactive work on specific task.

Also, representative from Ministry of science and environmental protection, Republic of Serbia and representative from Institute for nature protection, Republic of Montenegro give detailed overview of biodiversity condition and legislative framework in respective republics.

The software was installed one in Institute for nature protection in Republic of Montenegro and one in Institute for nature protection in Republic of Serbia.

Identification of the species and habitats within each biographical region

Members of the expert team have analyzed lists of Emerald species in Resolution No.6 (1998) and Emerald habitats in Resolution No.4 (1996) and identified species and habitats in a following table:

Emerald criteria	Number of species and habitat	Date collection
Plant species include in Resolution No. 6 (1998)		Yes
Animal species include in Resolution No. 6 (1998)	156*	No
Habitat include in Resolution No. 4	146*	Yes
Biogeographical region	4	Yes

^{*}Date for animals species and habitat is in process of identification in Republic of Montenegro.

Accordingly, the map of biogeographical regions was analyzed. Following biogeographical regions are present in Serbia and Montenegro:

- Pannonian
- Continental
- Alpine
- Mediterranean.

Selection of potential ASCIs

The selection of ASCIs is based on the criteria listed in Recommendation No. 16 (1998). National team prepare Preliminary list of Potential ASCIs and this list will be complete by the end of October 2005.

Building up of the data base of the Emerald designated site will be filling in November 2005.

Problems and constrains

- -The process of species listing was difficult due to
 - (i) lack of data bases and
 - (ii) lack of information and data (marine species)
- -Regarding limited budget and numerous work plane activities, we couldn't able to organize extensive collection of presence-selected species of animals in S&M.
- authorisation of collected species

Future activities

Serbia and Montenegro intends to participate on the second implementation phase as a country that has carried out the pilot project aiming to identify at least 30% of the potential ASCI-s. Respective Ministry will continue active cooperation with Council of Europe and European Environmental Agency.

Ana Pajevic Project Manager for Emerald network in Serbia and Montenegro Ministry of Environment protection and physical planning Republic of Montenegro