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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
20th meeting

Strasbourg, 27 November – 1 December 2000

Specific file

Conservation of the Akamas peninsula in Cyprus

Report by the Government

*Document established by
the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of Cyprus*

**Report of the Government of Cyprus on Recommendation No 63,
on the Akamas Peninsula
Standing Committee - Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
Strasbourg, November – December, 2000**

1. The Government's main goal for the Akamas Peninsula is its sustainable management.
2. The Council of Ministers recently took a decision incorporating a number of measures on the issue, aimed at providing policy guidance to a special committee established to carry out meetings with the local communities and other interested parties, concerning the most thorny issues in the Akamas dispute.

The measures can be classified as follows:

A. Policy measure

- a.* To continue the dialogue with all parties concerned in order to reach, if possible, a consensus decision.

This is fully in line with the essence of the EU policy for public participation, consultation and subsidiarity and it is fully within the spirit of Recommendation No 63.

B. Concrete measures immediately implementable

- b.* To take legal action against any illegal activities in the area.
- c.* To remove all illegal signs.
- d.* To carry out a clean-up campaign.
- e.* To prepare a programme to restore the area where military exercises used to take place.
- f.* To tackle overgrazing.
- g.* To control 'Safari-type' activities.
- h.* To exclude the area from the "Cyprus Rally" routes.

The above are fully in line with the protection concerns for the area and are fully within the spirit of Recommendation No 63.

C. Policy guidance for the dialogue

- i.* To acquire all non-coastal private properties that are enclaves within the State forest.
- j.* Not to allow tourist development in the 'Lara -Toxeftra' area, which is an important turtle habitat.

- k. To allow mild and rational development outside the state forests with sensitivity and respect to the environment.
- l. To tackle the issue of a large private property in the northern part of the area with land exchanges and extension of an existing tourist zone.

The first three of the above are fully in line with the protection concerns for the most sensitive parts of the area and fully within the spirit of Recommendation No 63.

The last one, is an indicative general guidance decision to be further examined and discussed. At this stage, it refers to the possible mode of tackling the issue and it has not become concrete or assessed for its full potentials and implications. Final decisions will be taken on the issue after the dialogue is completed and its implications/potentials are fully examined. In this process, the Government will most certainly take very seriously into consideration any obligations arising, not only from the Bern Convention and its Standing Committee, but also out of the EIA and the Habitats Directives of the European Union, as well as from the national legal system, other international obligations, as well as obligations to the people and environment of the country.

3. It should be pointed out that Cyprus implements most of the salient characteristics of the EU Environmental Impact Directive since 1991, under a Council of Ministers' decision. The bill for full transposition of the directive is expected to be passed into law by the end of this year. No decision has been taken, or is intended to be taken, to relax its provisions for any development in the Akamas area.

4. Cyprus aspires to be a member the European Union in the near future and it is the Government's commitment to meet the goals to its Habitats Directive, which is directly linked to the provisions of the Bern Convention. Cyprus is currently implementing a relevant LIFE-financed programme.

5. The "Limni" site is outside the Akamas area and is covered by the provisions of the Local Plan for Polis Chrysochou. The issue is dealt with through the procedures foreseen by the Town and Country Planning Legislation. This law provides for the appropriate body for changes to Local Plans, which is the Town and Country Planning Board. The Department of Town Planning and Housing has transmitted Recommendation 63 about the "Limni" area to the Board, for consideration. This will be done in parallel to the "objection" procedures, provided for in this law, against the published Local Plan.

6. The seagrass communities in the Akamas- Limni area are already well protected as trawling is prohibited in areas shallower than 55 metres, which is well beyond the depth where sea-grasses are found. Moreover, trawling is not possible on the west coast of Akamas due to the nature of the seabed, which is mainly rocky. There is no threat to sea grasses from

pollution as there is no such pollution in this area and the relevant legislation in Cyprus is strict and well enforced and does not allow for the disposal into the sea of any pollutants that may affect seagrasses. The Green Turtle in the Mediterranean feeds on *Cymodocea nodosa*, which is thriving in the area, as are other seagrasses, such as *Posidonia oceanica*.

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