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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

33rd meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2013

**STRATEGIC GOAL C, AICHI TARGETS 11 AND 12:
STATEMENT OF THE BERN CONVENTION TO THE 17TH
MEETING OF THE CBD SUBSIDIARY BODY ON
SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL
ADVICE, MONTREAL (CANADA) 14-18 OCTOBER 2013**

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prepared by
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STRATEGIC GOAL C, AICHI TARGETS 11 AND 12

This statement will concern Strategic Goal C, Aichi Targets 11 and 12, and is made to share information about the work carried out in Europe by the Bern Convention in these fields.

In 1996, Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, commonly known as the Bern Convention, engaged in the setting up of the Emerald Network, an ecological network made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, whose implementation was launched by the Council of Europe as one of the main tools for the Contracting Parties to comply with the obligations set under article 4 of the Convention.

Before being officially adopted as Emerald sites, all sites proposed to join the Network are thoroughly assessed at biogeographical level, according to scientifically robust criteria elaborated together with the European Environment Agency and its European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, in view of checking their sufficiency to achieve the ultimate objective of the Network. This is the long term survival of the species and habitats listed under two specific resolutions of the Bern Convention, and requiring specific protection measures. Once the areas proposed are officially adopted by the Committee as Emerald Network sites, they have to be designated and managed at national level.

A large number of European countries have worked towards the identification of potential Emerald sites, including Parties which, after their accession to the European Union, have been setting-up the EU Natura 2000 Network under EU Birds and Habitats Directives, like it is the case for instance for Croatia, the youngest EU member state.

These countries could benefit from the experience and the knowledge acquired towards the Emerald Network constitution process, as well as use the data collected under the Emerald projects, notably thanks to the synergies created between the Bern Convention and the European Union in view of harmonising the two networks, using the same principles and making them complementary to each other. The final aim of this joint work is to create a pan-European network based on the same ecological principles.

More recently, in 2011, the Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention adopted an ambitious calendar for the completion of the Emerald Network by 2020, with the aim of contributing to the achievement of Target 11 under the CBD.

In December 2012, for the first time since the activities towards the setting up of the Network started, the Standing Committee officially adopted 37 areas in Switzerland as the first Emerald sites. As explained, these sites have successfully passed the biogeographical assessment for their sufficiency, as foreseen in Phase II of the Network constitution process.

In addition, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention officially nominated as “Candidate Emerald sites” around 1,500 sites identified and proposed by 13 countries, notably from Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, the West Balkan countries and Morocco.

The work aimed at the identification of additional sites continues this year in seven Eastern European and South Caucasian countries, where biogeographic evaluation should follow in 2015.

Furthermore, Norway also proposed 633 sites which have already passed a biogeographical evaluation for their sufficiency and are eligible for nomination as candidate sites or sites to be adopted as official Emerald sites, as soon as the authorities will request so.

Management guidelines for Emerald sites are currently being developed in cooperation with the concerned countries and reporting formats are being discussed. Cooperation with the EEA and WCMC has now extended to the European and global databases on national designated areas and on other technical issues to ensure international coordination and harmonisation of instruments used.

Habitat protection is indeed an area on which the Bern Convention has worked constantly and thoroughly for the past 20 years. However, although site selection is an important first step to habitat and species and thus

natural life-supporting processes conservation, there are still numerous examples of continued habitat fragmentation, deterioration, destruction and loss in protected areas due to failure to manage protected sites properly or effectively. We are confident that the future work on defining clear criteria for the management of the selected areas, will definitely contribute to address the present challenges.

Concerning species conservation, the Bern Convention has joined, since the very beginning, the Friends of Target 12 Initiative, a partnership launched by the IUCN and with the support of the CBD following last CBD Conference of the Parties. This year, the Bern Convention has organised a series of scientific gatherings, through its Groups of Experts, namely for addressing species conservation issues. As a result of this work, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, at its 33rd meeting to be held in Strasbourg on 3-6 December, will examine for possible adoption a series of documents including:

- ✓ a Draft Charter on fungi gathering and biodiversity, particularly relevant because it aims at involving in biodiversity conservation a large number of individuals, and also because it addresses a group of species not listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, nor protected under EU legislation;
- ✓ a draft action plan to eradicate illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds by 2020, consisting of a logical framework which identifies concrete steps and measures, and the tools for implementing them, which the Parties can undertake to achieve the eradication goal;
- ✓ a draft recommendation "on the threats by neurotoxic insecticides to pollinators" which proposes to restrict in the whole territory of the Bern Convention Parties the use of 3 neonicotinoid pesticides and promotes research on their effects on honey bees and wild pollinators.

Moreover, the Committee will be requested to endorse 21 new or reviewed bird Species Recovery Plans in view of further implementation.

This statement is handed to the Secretariat in writing and we would be pleased to see it reflected in the conclusions.