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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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PROGRAMME OF WORK ON CLIMATIC CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

FINAL

*Document prepared by
Mr Brian HUNTLEY
on behalf of the Bern Convention*

PROGRAMME OF WORK ON CLIMATIC CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Contracting parties, with relevant observers and other stakeholders, should work to ensure that the actions listed below are implemented as soon as possible, with the assistance and under the supervision of the Group of Experts on biodiversity and climate change. These actions are essential in order to minimise the risks to biodiversity arising from climatic changes, both those that already have occurred since the late nineteenth century and those projected for the remainder of the present century. To be fully effective, actions not only must be implemented rapidly, but must also be completed as rapidly as is feasible.

a. Promote the implementation of agreed recommendations

As a first priority, and as a matter of urgency, the Group of Experts should work towards promoting the implementation by Parties of existing guidance at national level but in the context of a global perspective. Efforts should focus upon implementing Standing Committee Recommendation No. 159 (2012), especially those practical actions that will facilitate the ability of species to respond to climatic change. Of particular importance are those actions that are necessary to enable species to achieve the range shifts that are expected to be of fundamental importance and that are well-documented already to be taking place, albeit not at a sufficient rate to match the rate of climatic change and often severely hindered by habitat loss and/or by the impermeability of the wider landscape:

- Support the achievement of this first priority through the development and sharing by the Parties of appropriate procedures and tools, including the sharing amongst the Parties of best practice relating to successfully implemented actions.

b. Assess species' vulnerability

In order to ensure that actions relating to those species at greatest risk are prioritised, the Group should complete as a matter of urgency assessments or re-assessments of species' vulnerability to negative impacts of climatic change. Such assessments should take into account the overall range and population of each species. This will serve to ensure that an holistic rather than a parochial view is taken when establishing a species' vulnerability, and hence when prioritising resources, and is likely best to be achieved by co-operation amongst the Parties across whose territories the species' distribution extends. Species should be prioritised as follows:

- Seasonally migrant species, taking into account the potential impacts of climatic change in their breeding, non-breeding and staging/stopover areas, parts of which will in many cases lie outside Europe. Such assessments should be carried out in co-operation with the Convention on Migratory Species.
- Rare, endemic, range-restricted and biome-restricted species, including especially those listed in relation to the Bern Convention.
- Species identified as threatened as a consequence of other pressures.
- The remainder of widespread and more common species, because some of these are likely to become threatened in the near future by climatic change.

c. Establish and manage protected areas appropriately

The Group of Experts should work towards ensuring that adaptive management practices are implemented without delay for protected areas, and that the management plans for such areas take into account, and respond to, the expected consequences of climatic change and the need to facilitate the responses of species. Work with the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks to support implementation of this action by:

- Providing expertise and support that will ensure that management guidance for the Emerald Network, currently being prepared, incorporates appropriate actions related to the expected consequences of climatic change and the need to facilitate the responses of species.
- Adopting common definitions, particularly concerning habitats and climate change (quantitative and qualitative aspects).
- Undertaking a review of the extent to which the Emerald Network of protected sites is adequate to ensure that species, ecological processes and ecosystem services are able to meet the challenges posed by climatic change without loss of biodiversity, function or capacity, respectively.
- Ensuring that an holistic, network-wide view is taken when considering the appropriate role and management of individual protected areas, especially in relation to the expected consequences of climatic change and the need to facilitate the responses of species.
- Ensuring that climatic change is included amongst the factors to be assessed during the on-the-spot appraisals carried out prior to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA), and making the necessary recommendations to the managers of EDPA sites.

d. Monitor using common approaches

The Group of Experts should promote the adoption of common approaches: (i) to monitor the distribution and abundance of targeted species or species groups and to assess how climatic changes may be impacting them; and (ii) to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures, including protected area management:

- Encourage the uptake of established monitoring schemes (e.g. for birds and butterflies) by all Parties.
- Adopt common definitions in particular for habitats or climate change (quantitative and qualitative aspects).
- Promote the development of parallel schemes for other taxonomic groups, and their uptake by all Parties.
- Develop a common approach to assessing and attributing climatic change impacts upon species.
- Develop a common monitoring scheme to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures for targeted species, and urge its adoption by all Parties.
- Develop a common monitoring scheme to assess the effectiveness of protected area management, and urge its adoption by all Parties.
- Seek out, promote and, where appropriate, adopt best practice in relation to all of the above.

e. Assess the role of biodiversity in maintaining ecosystem function

The Group of Experts should undertake an assessment of the importance of biodiversity in relation to the capacity of European ecosystems to adapt to climatic change whilst at the same time maintaining delivery of the level of ecosystem services upon which human society in Europe depends.

f. Promote research required to advance the work of the Group

Pending the availability of the necessary resources, the Group of Experts should promote research to:

- Underpin the development of more permeable landscapes that will facilitate species' range shifts in response to climatic change.

- As a first step the Group should undertake or commission a review of published research on this topic, including research into the extent to which species' responses to climatic change are currently hindered by the limited permeability of many European landscapes.
- Assess and analyse the impacts of climatic change adaptation and mitigation measures on biodiversity and the scope for implementation of such measures (e.g. 'green infrastructure') in ways that are favourable for biodiversity (i.e. 'win-win' solutions).

g. Promote appropriate actions to conserve European Arctic species and habitats

Recognising that the territories of some Parties extend into the Arctic, that these areas support important Arctic species of European interest, and that Arctic biodiversity is experiencing particularly rapid climatic changes, the Group should:

- Support the work of the Arctic Council, and especially of its Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group, and, under the framework of the Convention, transpose necessary recommendations for its Contracting Parties.
- Evaluate Arctic species of European interest and, where relevant, propose to the Standing Committee their inclusion in the Appendices of the Convention.

h. Prepare and communicate guidance and toolkits

Given the importance of effective communication for the wider understanding of climatic change challenges and opportunities, the Group should prepare and disseminate guidance and toolkits, including 'recipes' and decision support frameworks, that will assist delegates of Contracting Parties in promoting appropriate national policies. Existing good practice amongst the Parties and beyond should be adopted and or exploited where appropriate. Priority targets should include:

- Effective development and implementation of national policies on climatic change:
 - Incorporating the Standing Committee's Recommendations on biodiversity conservation and climatic change.
 - Promoting the opportunities and benefits associated with participation in the Emerald Network of protected areas.

i. Co-operate with other institutions

Co-operate with other institutions and sectors to promote convergence with respect to recommendations relating to biodiversity and climatic change, and the implementation of these recommendations.

Explore the possibility of creating a joint working group for biodiversity and climatic change that would encourage such co-operation between the Convention and other institutions with related interests, including:

- UNEP Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), such as:
 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the agreements and memoranda of understanding of the CMS Family: AEWA, Eurobats, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS in particular.
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
 - Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)
- Arctic Council Working Groups, especially:
 - Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF).

- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP).
- European Union / European Commission.