COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Convention on the Conservation

of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 158 (2012) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 30 November 2012 on Conservation translocations under changing climatic conditions

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention;

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and its natural habitats;

Aware that the conservation of natural habitats is a vital component of the protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna;

Recalling that Article 2 of the Convention requires Parties to take requisite measures to maintain the populations of wild flora and fauna at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic requirements;

Recalling that Article 3 of the Convention requires Parties to undertake to have regard to the conservation of wild fauna and flora in their planning and development policies, and in their measures against pollution;

Recalling that Article 4 of the Convention requires Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of wild flora and fauna species as well as of endangered natural habitats; and give particular attention to the protection of areas of importance for migratory species;

Recognising that climate change affects biological diversity in the territory covered by the Convention, including species, habitats and the Areas of Special Conservation Interest of the Emerald Network;

Recognising the need to adapt conservation work to the challenges of climate change so as to minimise its impacts on the species and natural habitats protected under the Convention;

Noting that conservation action is becoming increasingly proactive in managing biodiversity wherever it occurs, particularly in a climate change context;

Welcoming the scientific progress which has allowed for an increase in the numbers of comprehensively designed and assessed, carefully implemented and monitored plant and animal reintroductions, with an associated increase in the understanding of scientific principles, ethics and practical issues associated with successful reintroductions;

Further noting that assisted colonisations are expected to be increasingly used in future biodiversity conservation though they remain largely untested;

Emphasising that any conservation introduction (outside indigenous range) brings additional risks, due to the record of species moved outside their indigenous ranges that have become invasive aliens, often with extreme adverse impacts on native biological diversity, ecological services or human livelihoods health and economic interests;

Aware that management solutions based on historical precedence may not always be adequate for future biodiversity conservation needs, particularly because of the lack of certainty over ecological relationships, inability to predict ecological outcomes, and the increasing complexity of global change;

Recalling Decision X/33 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Biodiversity and climate change which invites Parties and other Governments, according to national circumstances and priorities, as well as relevant organizations and processes, bearing in mind that under climate change, natural adaptation will be difficult and recognizing that *in situ* conservation actions are more effective, *to also consider ex situ measures, such as relocation, assisted migration and captive breeding, among others, that could contribute to maintaining the adaptive capacity and securing the survival of species at risk, taking into account the precautionary approach in order to avoid unintended ecological consequences including, for example, the spread of invasive alien species*;

Recalling the EU document "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020", and more particularly its Target 5 aimed at tighter controls on invasive alien species;

Recalling the AEWA "Guidelines for the Translocation of Waterbirds for Conservation Purposes: Complementing the IUCN Guidelines", and taking note of Resolution 5.13 of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA on Climate change adaptation measures for waterbirds and in particular the annexed guidance framework for climate change adaptation when considering species translocation and ex-situ conservation;

Further recalling ACCOBAMS Guidelines for the release of captive cetaceans into the wild;

Recalling Recommendations No. 122 (2006) of the Standing Committee, on the conservation of biological diversity in the context of climate change; No. 135 (2008) and No. 143 (2009) of the Standing Committee, on addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity;

Further recalling Recommendation No. 142 (2009) of the Standing Committee, recommending Parties and inviting Observers to the Convention to interpret the term "alien species" for the purpose of the implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species as not including native species naturally extending their range in response to climate change;

Welcoming Decision XI/21 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Other matters related to biodiversity and climate change;

Welcoming the report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 providing the indicative list of indicators to assess progress towards the achievement of the 20 Aichi Targets, as annexed to Decision XI/3 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Monitoring progress in implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in particular the operational indicators referring to Target 9 and Target 10;

Welcoming Resolution 10.19 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species on Migratory Species Conservation in the light of climate change that *inter alia urges Parties and the Scientific Council, and encourages conservation stakeholders and relevant organizations to: consider ex situ measures and assisted colonization, including translocation, as appropriate for those migratory species most severely threatened by climate change*;

Welcoming the report "An analysis of the implementation of recommendations made by the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change (2006-2010)", by Prof. Brian Huntley [doc T-PVS/Inf (2012) 11];

Welcoming and taking into account, for the purpose of the implementation of the present Recommendation, the IUCN guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations, developed by the IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group and IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group in 2012;

Noting the definitions used in the IUCN guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations and namely:

> Conservation translocation: the human-mediated movement of living organisms from one area, with release (applicable to individuals of any taxon) in another, where the primary objective is a conservation benefit; this covers:
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> 1. Population restorations: any conservation translocation to within indigenous range. This comprises two activities:
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> - Reinforcement: the intentional movement and release of an organism into an existing population of conspecifics;
> - Reintroduction: the intentional movement and release of an organism inside its indigenous range from which it has disappeared;
>
> 2. Conservation introduction: the intentional movement and release of an organism outside its indigenous range. Two types of conservation introduction are recognised:
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> - Assisted colonisation: the intentional movement and release of an organism outside its indigenous range to avoid extinction of any/all populations of the target species;
> - Ecological replacement: the intentional movement and release of an organism outside its indigenous range to perform a specific ecological function.

Recommends Contracting Parties to the Convention and invites Observer States to:

1. Undertake conservation translocations only if aimed to deliver a demonstrable conservation benefit in terms of species viability or ecological function. Translocation should therefore be justified, with development of clear objectives, a long-term or permanent management plan, identification and assessment of risks, and with the specification of clear measures of performance;

2. Consider alternative solutions before starting a conservation translocation. In particular, there should be confidence (e.g. via peer-reviewed evidence and in absence of this consideration of best available expert knowledge) that alternative solutions are not more appropriate, including in particular:

a. Increased habitat availability (area-based solutions);

b. Management of the species or its habitat (species-based solutions);

c. Social or indirect solutions, either in isolation or in combination with the above (e.g. habitat restoration and mitigation of pressures);

d. Doing nothing, which may carry lower risks of extinction compared to those of alternative solutions.

3. Carefully assess in advance the full range of possible hazards both during a translocation and after release of organisms, including any transboundary impact, taking into account that any translocation bears risks that it will not achieve its objectives and/or will cause unintended damage;

4. Combine proportional risk analysis with conclusions from a feasibility study before deciding whether a translocation should proceed or not. Where possible, formal methods for making decisions based on best evidence should be used. As a general principle, where there is inadequate information to assess that a translocation outside indigenous range bears low risks, the Precautionary Principle should be applied and such a translocation should not be carried out;

5. Consider particularly the ecological risks, including the risk of gene escape in any risk analysis;

6. Where relevant, prioritise the species or populations to be translocated, based on criteria such as their ecological role, their evolutionary distinctiveness or uniqueness, their role as flagship species, their threatened status, or potential as ecological replacements; where species are extinct, consequent changes in the ecosystem can indicate a need to restore the ecological function provided by the lost species, which can constitute justification for exploring an ecological replacement;

7. Follow the revised IUCN guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations, developed by the IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group and IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group when conducting translocations;

8. Inform the Standing Committee of measures taken to implement this recommendation.