



Strasbourg, 27 October 2012
[PA17e_2012.doc]

T-PVS/PA (2012) 17

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Group of Experts on
Protected Areas and Ecological Networks**

4th meeting
18-19 September 2012
Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France

REPORT

*Document prepared by
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On 18 and 19 September 2012, the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks held its 2nd meeting in Strasbourg.

Following its conclusions, the Standing Committee is invited to:

- To take note of the report of the Group of Experts as well as of the activities proposed for 2013;
- To examine and, if appropriate, officially adopt as Emerald sites the 37 candidate Emerald sites submitted by Switzerland;
- To examine and, if appropriate, officially nominate as candidate Emerald sites the sites submitted by 7 Central and Eastern European and South Caucasus countries;
- To examine and, if appropriate, adopt the draft resolution concerning the national designation of adopted Emerald sites and the implementation of management, reporting and monitoring measures;
- To examine the draft Action Plan on the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) and decide on its follow-up;
- To express its gratitude to the European Environment Agency and its European Topic Centre for Biological Diversity for their cooperation and support in the setting-up of the Emerald Network during 2012 and encourage a strengthened cooperation in particular with regards to the Network constitution in Central and Eastern Europe.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks was chaired by Mr Jacques Stein. He welcomed the participants and stressed the heavy agenda of the meeting, calling for their cooperation for a successful achievement of the meeting objectives.

2. Adoption of the meeting agenda

The Secretariat introduced the draft agenda of the meeting, which was then adopted.

3. Introduction by the Secretariat: decisions of the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention on the protection of natural habitats

The Secretariat highlighted the progress achieved in the setting-up of the Emerald Network since the last meeting of the Group and introduced the relevant texts adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in 2011. These documents included, inter alia, a recommendation on the status of candidate Emerald sites, a revised annex 1 of Resolution 4 (1996) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention and a first list of officially nominated candidate Emerald sites from the West Balkans and Switzerland.

4. Short review of progress in the implementation of the “Emerald Calendar 2011-2020”

The Secretariat recalled that at the 2010 meeting, the Emerald Calendar (2011-2020) was adopted, providing milestones for each Contracting Party and observer state working on Emerald, in view of the completion of the Network by 2020. The calendar has been provides objectives not only regarding the work of the Secretariat on the strategic development of the Network, but also regarding work at national level. Parties to the Bern Convention can follow progress in the Calendar implementation, including for the fulfilment of their own commitments.

5. Activities on Phase I of the Emerald Network setting-up

5.1. Setting-up of the Emerald Network in the South Caucasus and in Central and Eastern Europe

The Secretariat reminded about the implementation of the Joint EU/CoE Programme (2009-2011) in seven Eastern and central European countries and the South Caucasus. It thus announced that the project resulted in the finalisation of phase 1 of the setting-up of the Emerald network in five out of the seven target countries. With respect to the two remaining countries, namely Belarus and the Russian Federation, the project achieved to identify approximately 50% of the possible Emerald sites there. A new project has been negotiated with the European Commission, targeting the same seven countries, and should start by the end of 2012. Accordingly, phase II of the constitution process of the Emerald Network will be initialised, focussing on the scientific assessment of the site proposals made in Phase I.

5.2. Setting-up of the Emerald Network in Morocco and Tunisia

The Secretariat reminded that the delegates from both Contracting Parties expressed their strong commitment to the setting-up of the Emerald Network at the last meeting of the Standing

Committee to the Bern Convention. When Morocco is concerned, cooperation was initiated with IUCN's Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation on the preparation a new habitats inventory for the country. The Secretariat is looking for possible ways and funding to continue the pilot project implemented in Morocco between 2008 and 2010 and to start a pilot project in Tunisia. These activities are also included in the programme of activities of the Convention for 2013, subject to available funds.

6. Activities on Phase II of the Emerald constitution process

6.1. Results of the first Emerald Biogeographical Seminar for 6 West Balkan countries (Bar, Montenegro, 2-4 November 2011)

In November 2011, with the support of the EEA and European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD), the Secretariat organised the first ever Emerald biogeographical seminar. The three days meeting took place in Bar (Montenegro) and proved to be a success. Thanks to the hard work of the ETC/BD, a considerable amount of conclusions were reached for the species and habitats present in each of the countries. As a result, the 6 Balkan countries can now concentrate their efforts on identifying new possible Emerald sites, for species and habitats for which their current proposals are insufficient. Importantly, collaboration between NGOs and national government representatives was very productive, as NGOs played a very active role during the meeting by supporting their national authorities with expertise. In addition, the Secretariat was informed about some countries' initiatives to solicit financial assistance from the EU IPA fund to further finance work on the Emerald Network at national level. Albania is one of the countries which requested financial assistance from IPA, while Serbia is currently streamlining work on Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks.

Mr Roekaerts, Council of Europe scientific consultant, reaffirmed the important work achieved in Bar. He underlined that no less than 3255 individual conclusions were agreed during the three days meeting. In addition, the ETC/BD prepared and sent draft conclusions to each participating country, to be used by the countries in their future work on the constitution process of the Network. The delegate from the Czech Republic thanked the ETC/BD, the parties involved as well as the Secretariat for the tremendous work achieved in only three days in Bar.

6.2. Results of the Emerald Biogeographical Seminar for Switzerland (Basel, 5 July 2012)

Following the experience of the biogeographical seminar for the West Balkan countries and thanks to the support of the ETC/BD, the Secretariat was able to organise a first exercise of this kind for Switzerland. The meeting took place in Basel and was also a very successful. The 37 candidate Emerald sites in Switzerland were assessed. Although these candidates were concluded as valid Emerald site, considerable work and effort remain to be done in order to complete the Emerald network in this country.

The delegate from Switzerland thanked the Secretariat for the work achieved during the meeting in Basel. She ensured that Switzerland was doing its utmost to achieve the aims of the Bern Convention with regards to the Emerald Network constitution process. She explained that although the 37 Emerald sites cover only a small percentage of their territory, difficulties arise as each Swiss canton experience different problems. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that the seminar was of significant importance and sends a strong signal to their partners at local level. She further thanked for the collaboration before and during the meeting.

The delegate of the Czech Republic congratulated his Swiss colleagues for the effort made despite the degrees of difficulties encountered at national, regional and local level in the country.

6.3. Results of the Second Technical Emerald Seminar in Norway (Trondheim, 29 May 2012)

With respect to Norway, the Secretariat announced that a second technical seminar was organised in 2012 on the demand of the country. The Norwegian delegate reported the current work undertaken by his country. In that respect, he specified that Norway was planning to officially submit its proposals for Emerald sites by the end of 2012. A first biogeographical Seminar for the country should therefore take place in 2013. Norway is currently working on the standard data forms for each of its site proposals, but is currently facing translation issues with regards to their national and EUNIS habitats' classification. The delegate was of the opinion that the national Emerald team may need additional guidance on how to proceed.

6.4. Presentation of sites to be proposed to the Bern Convention Standing Committee for official adoption as Emerald sites

Mr Roekaerts presented the current status of proposed Emerald sites and sites already nominated as “candidate Emerald sites” in different parts of Europe. He stated that no less than 17 countries already proposed Emerald sites.

The delegate from Norway expressed its concern regarding the status of “candidate Emerald site”, explaining that for his country the first set of Emerald sites delivered to the Secretariat was to be considered as a technical delivery. For the country, which is planning to deliver its final proposals for Emerald sites by the end of 2012, it is important to have the possibility to remove certain sites from the list of nominated candidate Emerald sites if necessary. The delegate of Croatia supported the comment made by Norway, explaining that her country was in a particular situation – working on both Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks.

The Secretariat reminded the Group that there are three different phases in the constitution process of the Emerald Network, which allow following the progress in the status of the Emerald sites:

1. Proposed Emerald sites - result of the scientific and technical exercise of identifying possible sites in **Phase I** of the Network constitution process;
2. Officially nominated “candidate Emerald sites” – first political recognition of the proposed Emerald sites at national level and at the level of the Bern Convention before the sites sufficiency is evaluated at biogeographical level (**Phase II**);
3. Adopted Emerald sites – official political endorsement Emerald sites which have passed the biogeographical assessment; national designation and management of the sites should be initiated (**Phase III**).

Switzerland expressed its willingness not to delay the submission of its already nominated candidate Emerald sites for official adoption by the Standing Committee as Emerald sites. The Secretariat proposed that two separate draft lists are moved to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in November:

- One listing proposed Emerald sites to be officially nominated as candidate Emerald sites – from the 7 Eastern and Central European countries and the South Caucasus from
- One listing the 37 candidate Emerald sites from Switzerland, to be officially adopted as Emerald sites by the Standing Committee
- The Group agreed that unless an objection was received by the Secretariat to these two lists before the 26 October, these two lists will be published as working documents for the Standing Committee.

7. National reports on the implementation of PEEN and the Emerald Network

The Secretariat reminded that it invited the parties, in June 2012, to submit a brief report about the activities, projects and other initiatives taking place in their countries in relation to the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN). It also deplored that only one report from Moldova reached the Secretariat.

The delegate from Norway explained that his country did not launch any activity in connection to the PEEN and that all their current efforts are linked to the setting-up of the Emerald Network. The delegate from Ukraine presented a number of regional programmes and initiatives implemented in his country. He thanked the Secretariat for the support provided for the setting-up the Emerald network there. In 2011, Ukraine identified six new Ramsar sites on its territory and created several new protected areas including two marine reserves. The delegate from the Czech Republic expressed his apologies for not submitting any report. He presented the progress of the Czech Republic in relation to the PEEN, indicating that his country has recently prepared new maps representing ecological corridors for wildlife movement.

The Secretariat further thanked Ukraine and the Czech Republic for their valuable contribution and invited other parties to send their written reports in order to complete the compilation of national reports on the establishment of the PEEN at national level.

8. Harmonisation of the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks

8.1 Interpretation manual on Resolution No. 4 (1996) using the EUNIS habitats classification

The Secretariat informed the delegates that the version of the Interpretation Manual presented to their attention was almost the same as the one presented at last year's meeting of the Group. The main reason is that although comments and suggestion from national habitats experts were expected, none were received. It also highlighted that the Interpretation Manual was a tool made available for parties working on the Emerald network setting-up process and unless more input from them is received there will be no need for further updating this document could then be considered as sufficient in its current version.

In its address, Switzerland asked for some clarifications with respect to some of the habitat units described in the manual, while Norway expressed its apologies for not reacting to the interpretation manual and indicated they would need to do some translation between their national habitats' classification and the EUNIS one before being able to give any reaction. The Group agreed to extend the deadline for the reception of written comments to the 1st draft version of the Manual to end of February 2013, before which all parties are invited to send their comments in written form.

8.2 Future development of EUNIS

Mr Douglas Evans from the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity explained that prior to 1995, there was no system of classification enough elaborated to cover Europe, the Pan-European continent, as well as its marine and the terrestrial environment. Although the Corinne biotope existed, it covered only a limited zone of Europe. Yet, it made no distinction between the various types of habitats. Following a workshop held in Paris in 1995, the classification system was improved and became the EUNIS habitats classification. The system now has a so-called governing body, in charge of its updating. In the future there may be a need to borrow certain unities from other systems in particular when it comes to the marine environment, but also to upgrade the classification system.

8.3 New species and habitats to be proposed for inclusion to the Bern Convention lists

Mr Roekaerts explained that when the 1st Joint Programme for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in 7 ENPI countries was launched, it quickly became clear that the list of species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention were not completely adapted to the ecology of these countries

and were too western European centred. The seven countries therefore worked on preparing a list of species and habitats which could be added to the Bern Convention lists (Resolutions No. 4(1996) and 6(1998) in order to address this issue. The list prepared by these countries contains no less than 640 new species, but these are not yet validated nor proposed for official inclusion by any of the seven Eastern Europe countries. Mr Roekaerts invited the parties to further contribute to the initiative. On this occasion, he recalled that in order to propose a new species or habitat to be included in the Bern Convention lists, an Information Form available on the Bern Convention website needs to be filled in, before being evaluated by the European Topic Centre and only then proposed to the Standing Committee for possible adoption.

8.4 Adaptation of the Emerald Sites Standard Data Form to the newly adopted Standard Data Form for Natura 2000

The Secretariat informed that as part of the current harmonisation exercise between the Emerald and N2000 Networks, Mr Roekaerts has been working on updating the Emerald Standard Data (SDF) form according to the newly adopted Natura 2000 SDF. Mr Roekaerts further presented the different features of the new Standard Data Form and explained that the form presented to the Group takes into account the specificities of Emerald.

The Group discussed the document presented and agreed that further to the comments made by the delegates of Switzerland and Norway, there is a need for clarifications on some of the new features in the SDF. More comments to the new SDF are welcome before the end of February 2013, while the Secretariat was requested to work in cooperation with the European Commission on clarifying the issues pointed out by the delegates present at the meeting.

8.5 Update on recent developments on reporting under Natura 2000 and Marine Natura 2000 areas

Ms Sylvia Barova from the Nature Unit of DG Environment in the European Commission briefly recalled the background of the Natura 2000 Network being the two EC directives on birds and habitats. According to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, Member States are required to produce a report on the national implementation of the Directive every 6 years. There are currently more than 26 000 Natura sites in place but considerable work remains to be done in order to protect the 90 % remaining marine spaces in Europe as well as to ensure that the management of the Natura 2000 sites already in place is fully operational. To achieve this aim, the European Commission is organising a new set of biogeographical seminars, aimed at helping neighbouring member states identify their strengths and weaknesses in the management of their sites and find common solutions.

Ms Barova further focused on the obligations of EU Member States under the Habitats and Birds Directives' Art.17 and 12 respectively. She stated that the EU Commission has recently developed new Natura 2000 software, to accompany the newly adopted revised Standard Data Form. She also confirmed that the forms for the next reporting exercise for Member States under the Directives would be ready by the beginning of 2013.

The Secretariat acknowledged that the changes in the Natura 2000 software and reporting formats are of great importance for the Emerald Network process too. In that respect, its cooperation with the European Commission has been strengthened in order to ensure the new Natura 2000 software could be adapted to the needs of Emerald in the near future.

Mr Roekaerts underlined the progress realised over the past decade and recalled the difficulties encountered with the previous software, still in use for the Emerald Network. He explained that for this reason it is very positive that new Software was developed by the Commission for Natura 2000 and that efforts will be done to facilitate the use of this new software for the Emerald Network. The efforts made for adapting the new Natura 2000 SDF to the needs of the Emerald Network go in the same direction (see point 8.4).

8.6 Harmonising the list of threatened habitats of the Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks – Doug Evans, ETC/BD

With respect to the harmonisation process currently taking place between Natura 2000 and Emerald Networks, the Secretariat reminded that the list of threatened species from Resolution No.6 (1998) of the Bern Convention was revised in 2011, in order to be aligned with the list of threatened species under both the Habitat and Birds Directives.

Mr Douglas Evans from the ETC/BD, in charge of conducting the comparison and harmonisation exercise for the threatened habitats, explained that he compared the list of threatened habitats from Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention and Annex I of the Habitats Directive. He also explained that this exercise was very difficult because the classifications used are different - Annex I of the Habitats Directive having its own classification and the Bern Convention now using EUNIS. Three types of scenarios have occurred: (1) a more or less identical habitat (simple scenario); (2) Annex 1 habitat with no equivalent in the Resolution 4 list (solution proposed: to add the habitat to the Resolution 4 list); (3) Annex 1 habitat covered by Resolution 4 but the habitat of resolution 4 is more important (most complex issue). He stressed that the third scenario was the most problematic and needed solutions on a case by case basis and therefore a thorough reflection from the parties involved in the setting-up of the Emerald Network.

The Swiss delegation indicated their concern about including meadows and grassland in the list of Resolution 4 (1996). Further to a long discussion in the Group, the Secretariat suggested that the topic is quite sensitive and that all delegations seem to need some additional time to discuss this various elements presented by Mr Evans with their national vegetation and habitat specialists. The Secretariat suggested that more time should be dedicated to the submission of comments and the deadline was set to end of February 2013.

9. State of protected areas in Europe

Mr Evans briefly presented the current status of protected areas in Europe, conclusions presented in a recent publication to be published in October by the European Environment Agency. To this end, he gave facts and figures and compared European protected areas with other regions in the world. He also showed overlapping cases (in 27 EU Member States) between Natura 2000 and nationally designated sites and stressed that Bern Convention Contracting Parties' work on the Emerald Network has also been recognised in this publication, where the Emerald Network current establishment status is presented.

10. Preparing for designating and managing the Emerald sites

10.1 Natura 2000: example of the French system of management, monitoring and reporting mechanisms

Mr Ludovic Le Maresquier from the Regional Environment Directorate from the Lorraine region in France (DREAL Lorraine) presented the work of his Directorate in relation to the implementation of Natura 2000 in France. It transpired from the presentation, that complex but effective procedures have been put in place in France to ensure better cohesion in the management and follow-up of Natura sites (viz. 1753 sites) at national level. The French system showed a high degree of decentralisation of responsibilities for the Natura 2000 site management and reporting towards lower administrative units, although the state - which is the one responsible before the European Commission for the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives - continues to keep control over the process by providing guidance to the various actors. The key feature of the management system is based on the volunteer participation by stakeholders and strong coordination among a wide range of partners.

During the question session, several parties showed their interests in the French management system. The Czech Republic delegate affirmed to be impressed by the implementation process put in place in the country. He asked several questions on issues such as financing, hunting but also conservation outside Natura 2000 sites.

On this occasion, Mr le Maresquier indicated that the system was currently supported by a specific budget line coupled with CAP funds. He also confirmed that conservation objectives were reached through the medium of other policies. Finally, regarding the hunting issue, he asserted that hunters' opinions were taken into consideration in every governmental decision affecting the hunting sector.

10.2 Draft Resolution concerning the national designation of adopted Emerald sites and the implementation of management, reporting and monitoring measures

Regarding this item, the Secretariat reminded that the draft resolution (T-PVS/PA (2012)08) aims at becoming a reference document for those Parties working on the Emerald Network setting-up. The idea behind its preparation was to present in one single document guidance on the national designation, management and reporting of the future Emerald sites. Such guidance currently exists in several Recommendations and Resolutions and is difficult for quick access. The text of the draft resolution was presented.

Mr Evans stressed on the need for an agreed reporting format. For his part, Mr Roekaerts explained that such a reporting form would be prepared to accompany the draft Resolution, based on the Natura 2000 reporting forms adopted so far.

Several delegations, including the European Commission pointed out the need for clarifying the objectives of the reporting, which should concern the conservation status of species and habitats not only within the protected Emerald sites, but overall in the countries.

Answering to the question of the Russian Federation on management plans, the Secretariat indicated that such plans were not mandatory and is presented in the text of the resolution as one of many options for Contracting Parties. It added that other measures could be taken to achieve similar ends regarding management. It also agreed with the comment of the Swiss delegate about to use only one term to name the Emerald sites in the Resolution as there is a certain degree of confusion created from the use of various terms such as candidate Emerald sites, adopted Emerald sites, ASCIs, etc. The Russian Federation further requested that an appreciation and acknowledgement of the work of Contracting Parties and Observer states to implement the Emerald network in their territory.

The Secretariat acknowledged the requests and ensured the delegates that a revised version of the draft proposal will be provided for further written comments, which should reach the Secretariat before the 26 October 2012.

10.3 Draft Guidelines on the management of Emerald sites with respect to climate change adaptation and mitigation

Ms Lyudmila Dimitrova and Ms Dobromira Petrova presented the 1st draft of a document aimed at providing guidance for the management of Emerald sites, including with respect to climate change. Their document presents a step-by-step approach to planning and deciding on the most suitable management measure to be put in place for each Emerald site, based also on current practice in Natura 2000 sites. The draft document further provides recommendations and practical advices on how climate change mitigation and adaptation can be integrated in the management of Emerald sites, already from the planning phase.

Several delegations praised the potential benefit of the draft guidelines presented. The delegate from the Czech Republic expressed his satisfaction and also agreed that strategies for climate change adaptation needed to be initialised at a very early stage in the planning of the management measures to be put in place in each Emerald site.

The Group agreed that some modifications to the text of the draft proposal were needed and agreed that more comments should be sent in written form to the Secretariat and the consultants in charge of the document, during 2013. A revised version of the Guidelines should be presented to the Group of Experts at its next meeting in 2013.

11. Information on recent European meetings and initiatives of interest for the Group

The Secretariat briefly introduced the delegates with the work done by other Groups of Experts working under the Convention, in particular in relation to the conservation of large carnivores and Invasive Alien Species. Several Recommendations were discussed in the frame of these Groups and will be presented for formal adoption at next meeting of the Standing Committee to the Convention. The Secretariat also informed that the Group of Experts on Climate Change and Biodiversity was currently working on the issue of marine biological diversity and climate change. A draft document on Guidance on marine biodiversity and climate change has been prepared by an external consultant and will be discussed by the Group at its next meeting taking place on 1-2 October 2012.

12. Examples of initiatives of interest for the PEEN

12.1 Crossing borders for nature: European examples of transboundary conservation, IUCN report

Mr Tomasz Pezold, IUNC Ecosystem Project Officer, gave to the group an overview of the different types of transboundary conservation initiatives existing up-to-date. He explained the objectives of these initiatives and presented the current works realised by IUCN, notably the publication of a practitioner guide aiming to support various actors in the implementation of different types of transboundary protected areas (e.g. world heritage sites).

12.2 Research on the Conservation of Natural Heritage through saving biodiversity in the landscape: reviewing the state of affairs of green infrastructure elements in the Visegrad Countries

Ms Agnes Zolyomi of the CEE Web for biodiversity addressed the issue of the impact of continental fragmentation on biodiversity in Europe and in particular, the results of a recent research project they implemented in the four countries of the Visegrad initiative: Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic. In that respect, she explained that grey infrastructure and improper land-use activities were amongst the main drivers to fragmentation. 30% of Europe's natural habitats being particularly fragmented, CEE web for biodiversity has developed recommendations on land use policies and green infrastructure initiatives, which are coherent with nature conservation objectives.

13. Action Plan on the future development of PEEN

The Secretariat remained that the issue of the future of the Pan-European Ecological Network was on the agenda of the Group of Experts for the past three years. Aside from facilitating the exchange of good practices between countries (through presentations from practitioners, experts and stakeholders made during the meeting), the need for a concrete action plan on the next steps to be undertaken by the Convention with respect to PEEN was clearly put on the table at last year's meeting. This is the reason why the Secretariat, on proposal of the Group itself, asked the European Centre for

Nature Conservation to prepare an Action Plan on the future development of the PEEN, with proposals for concrete initiatives, which could be taken on board by the Convention. This Action Plan will also have to be linked to the current discussions on the future strategic development of the Convention itself, to be debated at the annual meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

Dr Lawrence Jones-Walters, Deputy Executive Director of the ECNC presented the draft action plan he prepared, based on the discussions held at last years meeting of the Group of Experts. The main objective of the Action Plan is addressing the fragmentation issue in Europe – discussed as a key issue facing biodiversity today. He reminded that the issue of fragmentation was also identified as a key one by the representative from CEE Web for Biodiversity. He noted that past work on the establishment of PEEN at national level through national ecological networks proved to be very beneficial and that the political momentum for discussing further action at European level is very strong. In particular, he underlined the role of the Green Infrastructure initiative by the European Commission as the strongest initiative currently under preparation which might complement and guide future work on the PEEN. He concluded by presenting the targets and actions proposed in the Action Plan, among which the organisation of training courses for practitioners and stakeholders on the socio and economic benefits of ecological networks; the setting-up of a European science policy platform on landscape and biodiversity; a leaflet should on benefits of (re-) creating and maintaining ecological networks with protected areas (e.g. Emerald and Natura 2000) at their core, making the link to green infrastructure, etc. In conclusion, Mr Jones-Walters pointed out as crucial the need for refreshing the existing institutional framework of the PEEN and strengthening cooperation with other international organisations and biodiversity related Conventions.

The delegate from Switzerland informed that her country is currently working on translating the green infrastructure initiative by the European Union in their national context and that they appreciate the initiative taken by the Group to prepare an Action Plan on PEEN in close relation to current EU activities in the field of ecological networks. The Group debated the proposals made in the Action Plan and decided that it is of key importance that the Standing Committee, which is the decision-making body of the Convention, is made aware of this work. The Secretariat reminded that certain questions could only be addressed by the Standing Committee itself, notably the issue of the financial resources which could be devoted to the actions proposed in the document. Accordingly, the Group decided to invite Mr Jones-Walters to the November meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, to deliver a presentation on the proposals from the Action Plan and thus open the debate on the future to be given to the Action Plan itself.

14. Future work of the Group of Experts

14.1 Next steps and Programme of activities for 2013

Regarding the follow-up of the meeting, the Secretariat reminded the various conclusions and decision taken, in particular with relation to the upcoming meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee:

- To present the 37 candidate Emerald sites from Switzerland for official adoption;
- To present the proposed Emerald sites from the 7 countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and the Russian Federation for official nomination as candidate Emerald sites;
- To present a revised version of the draft Resolution on the national designation of adopted Emerald sites, management, reporting and monitoring measures for adoption;
- To present the draft Action Plan on the future development of the PEEN for discussion and decision.

The Secretariat further reminded that parties are welcome to send their comments on the documents, which will be moved to the Standing Committee before the 26 October 2012, deadline for the publication on-line of all working documents on the webpage of the Bern Convention.

As far as the Bern Convention Programme of Activities for 2013 is concerned, the Secretariat informed of its intention to propose to the Standing Committee to include the following activities:

- Organisation of a first biogeographical Seminar for Norway
- New project for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Tunisia and Morocco
- Further work on the draft guidelines on the management of Emerald sites
- Further work on the harmonization of the lists of threatened habitats under the Bern Convention and the EU Habitats Directive

Mr Jacques Stein, Chair of the Group of Experts, thanked the Secretariat and the interpreters for the perfect organisation of the meeting, thanked all the participants for their contributions and hard work during last two days and closed the 4th meeting of the Group of Experts.

Annex 1 – Agenda*Tuesday, 18th September***09:30 – 10:00 Welcome and opening**

1. **Opening of the meeting by the Chair, Mr Jacques Stein**
2. **Adoption of the agenda**
3. **Introduction by the Secretariat: decisions of the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on protection of natural habitats** – Iva Obretenova, Secretariat
T-PVS/PA(2012)06 and T-PVS/PA(2012)02

10:00 – 11:00 Progress in the setting-up of the Emerald Network and PEEN

4. **Short review of progress in the implementation of the “Emerald Calendar 2011-2020”**
T-PVS/PA (2010) 8 rev
5. **Activities on Phase I of the Emerald Network setting-up**
 - 5.1 Final results of the 2009-2011 Joint Council of Europe / European Union programme for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in South Caucasus and in Central and Eastern and beginning of a follow-up project – Marc Roekaerts, consultant and Iva Obretenova, Secretariat
T-PVS/PA(2012)04
 - 5.2 Setting-up of the Emerald Network in Morocco and Tunisia
6. **Activities on Phase II of the Emerald constitution process**
 - 6.1 Results of the First Biogeographical Seminar for 6 West Balkan countries (Bar, Montenegro, 2-4 November 2011) and work ahead
T-PVS/PA(2012)03
 - 6.2 Results of the Emerald Biogeographical Seminar for Switzerland, 5 July 2012
T-PVS/PA(2012)11
 - 6.3 Results of the Second Technical Emerald Seminar in Norway, 29 May 2012
T-PVS/PA(2012)07
 - 6.4 Presentation of sites to be proposed to the Bern Convention Standing Committee for official adoption as Emerald sites - Marc Roekaerts, consultant and Iva Obretenova, Secretariat
T-PVS/PA(2012)14
7. **National reports on the implementation of PEEN and the Emerald Network**
T-PVS/PA(2012)13

11:00 – 11:20 Coffee break**11:20 – 12:30 Enhancing Emerald and Natura 2000 compatibility**

8. **Harmonisation of the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks**
 - 8.1 Interpretation manual on Resolution No. 4 (1996) using the EUNIS habitats classification – Doug Evans, ETC/BD
T-PVS/PA(2011)08
 - 8.2 Future development of EUNIS – Doug Evans, ETC/BD and Marc Roekaerts, consultant

8.3 New species and habitats to be proposed for inclusion to the Bern Convention lists – Marc Roekaerts, consultant

8.4 Adaptation of the Emerald Sites Standard Data Form to the newly adopted Data Form for Natura 2000

T-PVS/PA(2011)15

8.5 Update on recent developments on reporting under Natura 2000 and marine Natura 2000 areas – Sylvia Barova, European Commission

8.6 Harmonising the lists of threatened habitats of the Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks - Doug Evans, ETC/BD

T-PVS/PA(2012)09

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 17:15 Enhancing Emerald and Natura 2000 compatibility

9. Preparing for designating and managing the Emerald sites

9.1 Natura 2000: example of the French system of management, monitoring and reporting mechanisms – Ludovic Le Maresquier, DREAL Lorraine

9.2 Presentation of the Draft Resolution concerning the national designation of adopted Emerald sites and the implementation of management, reporting and monitoring measures; discussion of the draft text

T-PVS/PA(2012)08

9.3 Draft Guidelines on the management of Emerald sites with respect to climate change adaptation and mitigation – Lyudmila Dimitrova and Dobromira Petrova, consultants

T-PVS/PA(2012)10

15:30 – 15:50 Coffee break

9.4 Presentation and discussion on the features of the reporting form for the Emerald sites and their national designation and management - Marc Roekaerts, consultant

9.5 Presentation of the Draft Recommendation on the Management of Emerald sites with respect to climate change adaptation and mitigation and discussion of the draft text

T-PVS/PA(2012)05

10. State of protected areas in Europe

10.1 Protected Areas in Europe, EEA report – Doug Evans, ETC/BD

17:15 – 17:30 Conclusions from the first meeting day

A dinner booking is made in an Alsatian restaurant (at 8pm) to help those wishing to get together in the evening. More information will be given during the meeting.

Please note that this is not an invitation from the Council of Europe.

Wednesday, 19th September

9:30 – 10:00 Implementing the Pan-European Ecological Network

11. Information on recent European meetings and initiatives of interest for the Group

11.1 Works of other related Council of Europe Groups of Experts under the Bern Convention

11.2 Works by the European Union on Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services – Sylvia Barova, European Commission

10:00 – 12:30 Implementing the Pan-European Ecological Network - continuation

12. Examples of initiatives of interest for the PEEN

12.1 Ardilla project: ecological connectivity of forests in Spain – Ricardo Fraile (excused)

12.2 Crossing borders for nature: European examples of transboundary conservation, IUCN report – Tomasz Pezold, Ecosystems Project Officer, IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe

11:00 – 11:20 Coffee break

12.3 Research on the Conservation of Natural Heritage through saving biodiversity in the landscape: reviewing the state of affairs of green infrastructure elements in the Visegrad countries - Agnes Zolyomi, CEE Web for biodiversity

12.4 Protected sites, Priority Habitats and Climate change, DEFRA research project – Dr Helen Pontier, DEFRA (excused)

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 17:00 Future strategic development of PEEN

13. Action Plan on the future development of PEEN

13.1 Presentation of the Draft Action Plan on the future of the PEEN - Dr Lawrence Jones-Walters, ECNC

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13.2 Discussion of the proposals

15:30 – 15:50 Coffee break

17:00 – 17:30 Next steps and future work

14. Future work of the Group of Experts

14.1 Next steps and next meeting of the Group of Experts

14.2 Programme of activities 2013

15. Any other business

16. Conclusions of the meeting

Annex 2- List of participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 2012 / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS 2012

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Groupe d'experts zones protégées et réseaux écologiques**

**Strasbourg, 18-19 September 2012
Room/salle G04**

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