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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

34<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 2-5 December 2014

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**Specific Site - File open**

**Akamas Peninsula  
(Cyprus)**

**REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT**

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



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
RURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT



ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT  
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17<sup>th</sup> November, 2014

**URGENT – VIA EMAIL**

Mrs. Ivana d'Alessandro  
Secretary of the Bern Convention  
Council of Europe  
Biological Diversity Unit  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Dear Mrs. d'Alessandro,

**COMPLAINT NO. 1995/6: CASE-FILE OPEN ON “CYPRUS: AKAMAS PENINSULA”**

I am referring to your letter dated 17.10.2014 regarding the aforementioned subject and would like to update you, following our letter dated 19.3.2014:

As far as the “Polis-Yialia” area, please be informed that the procedure for its declaration to SAC, according to the Habitats Directive, will be completed by the end of 2014 as foreseen. The relevant Ministerial decree, regarding the restrictions and permitted actions within the site, is expected to be ready within the first three months of 2015.

The Akamas Management Plan is at its final stages of completion pending the public consultation procedure which is expected to take place in January of 2015.

As you were formerly informed, the Government of Cyprus has designated a wider residential and rural area, around the Akamas Natura site, which will be managed via development regulations and restrictions, to ensure the highest possible protection of the peninsula. In addition, a Manager has been hired since 2012. A main part of her obligations has to do with preparing an action plan for sustainable and alternative projects in an effort to economically promote the communities of the Akamas area. Some examples of this is the establishment of cycling routes, restoration of cultural sites within the communities, camping areas, environmental awareness centers, small scale museums etc.

We take this opportunity to assure you of the tireless efforts undertaken by the Government of Cyprus to protect these areas and their habitats and species.

Sincerely,

Elena Stylianopoulou  
for Director

ΔΖ -04.05.003.001.001, 02.15.004.031.001 To Bern Convention for Akamas&Polis-Gialia via email 17/11/2014





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16<sup>th</sup> July, 2014

**URGENT – VIA EMAIL**

Mrs. Ivana d' Alessandro  
Secretary of the Bern Convention  
Council of Europe  
Biological Diversity Unit  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Dear Mrs. d' Alessandro,

**COMPLAINT NO. 1995/6: CASE-FILE OPEN ON “CYPRUS: AKAMAS PENINSULA”**

I am referring to your letter dated 29.4.2014 regarding the aforementioned subject and would like to make the following comments on the claims made by the NGO in their last Report:

1. With regards to the “watertight scientific evidence” that proves the insufficient designation of the Akamas Peninsula, please note the following:
  - a. This evidence was never presented to the Cyprus authorities and thus any effort to either remedy or counteract any possible inaccuracies was not possible
  - b. With regards to the claim regarding habitat types 6220\*, 5420 and 5330 we have provided the Commission with all the relevant scientific information to contradict the claim made by the NGO.
  - c. The Republic has contradicting evidence that the designated area is adequate.
  - d. As was mentioned in our previous letters, we will provide the Bureau with all relevant evidence when the infringement procedure comes to a close.
2. With regards to the development of a golf course within and adjacent to the “Polis-Gialia” Natura 2000 site, please note that an EU Pilot procedure exists and as such we cannot comment on this issue at the moment. We will keep the Bureau informed on the outcome of this procedure and further development on the issue in due course.
3. Regarding the claim that the Management Plans include “theoretical proposals and do not contain serious implementation actions”, please note the following:
  - a. The main purpose of the Management Plans was to provide the authorities with all the relevant information regarding the sites, including data on the habitat types (status, location, maps, etc) and species (status, locations, etc), identify the major threats and provide a general management framework for the sites. Thus, it was not considered that these MPs would provide any legal “power” to the authorities.

- b. According to the national Nature Law [No. 153(I)/2003], which constitutes the transposition of the Habitats Directive to national law, the legal tool for adequately protecting the Natura 2000 sites is a Ministerial Decree, issued according to article 15 of the law. This procedure has commenced and it is expected that the Ministerial Decrees will be completed for all 40 SCIs by mid-2015.
4. With regards to the claim that the designation of a wider residential and rural area, around the Akamas Natura site, which will be managed via development regulations and restrictions, to ensure the highest possible protection of the peninsula, “is not in response to the Government’s obligations to provide a management plan in accordance with the Habitats Directive”, please note the following:
  - a. The Republic has moved forward with this management plan as an additional measure to promote sustainable development of the area around the Natura 2000 site to ensure the protection of the site.
  - b. A management plan for the Natura 2000 site is under preparation and is now at the final stages of completion.
5. For the NGO claim that the monitoring of the Lara-Toxeftra Reserve area is not consistent, please note that the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR), due to its increasing obligations from EU Regulations and Directives, assigns the Turtle Monitoring Program every year to experts through a tendering procedure. The turtle experts have the responsibility of conducting the marine turtle conservation project which aims at: a) protecting and managing the important nesting beaches, b) protecting eggs and hatchlings from predation and from human activities, c) protecting adult turtles, d) monitoring the turtle population and nesting activity in Cyprus, and e) raising public awareness in turtle conservation. They also contact the Department for any relevant illegal activity.

The DFMR is responsible for fisheries control and as such compliance and patrolling is being implemented along the coastline, the coastal / marine waters, the reservoirs etc, within the available financial and economic resources (regular hours + overtimes). It should be noted that patrolling was never done on a 24-hour basis.
6. As far as the number of nests in front of the Thanos hotel, please refer to the attached map indicating the nests on the relevant beach.
7. With regards to the adoption of an early warning system against illegal damage, we maintain the belief that regular monitoring of the sites being implemented at the time is the most appropriate and effective way to detect and handle illegal damages. The implementation of legal measures against the perpetrator when an illegal act or damage is detected may be slow but that is the nature of the legal system globally. However, recognizing that the insertion of provisions allowing for extrajudicial following damages to sites, habitats and species in the Nature Law may act as preventive measure, the Republic is considering the option of amending the Nature accordingly.

We remain at your disposal.

Sincerely,

Elena Stylianopoulou  
for Director

ΔΖ -04.05.003.001.001, 02.15.004.031.001 To Bern Convention for Akamas&Polis-Gialia via email 16/07/2014





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19<sup>th</sup> March, 2014

**URGENT – VIA EMAIL**

Mrs. Ivana d’Alessandro  
Secretary of the Bern Convention  
Council of Europe  
Biological Diversity Unit  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Dear Mrs. d’Alessandro,

**COMPLAINT NO. 1995/6: CASE-FILE OPEN ON “CYPRUS: AKAMAS PENINSULA”**

I am referring to your letter dated 22.1.2014 regarding the aforementioned subject and would like to inform you on the following:

The areas proposed as Sites of Community Importance for Akamas and Limni are considered adequate for the protection of the species and habitats found on site. No construction of buildings is allowed on the beach and any construction proposed close to the beach undergoes impact assessment as required by EU and national legislation and appropriate measures with regards to lighting and access to the beach are enforced.

As we have informed you in the past, a Management Plan for the “Polis-Yialia” Natura 2000 site has been completed and is being implemented. Additionally, a Management Plan is being prepared for the Natura site of Akamas as well. The aim of these MPs is to ensure a sustainable favorable condition for both habitats and species and human presence in the area.

By the end of 2014, the vast majority of the SCIs are expected to be declared as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) according to the Habitats Directive and specific legal acts are to be implemented regarding the restrictions and permitted actions within the sites.

Additionally, the Government of Cyprus has designated a wider residential and rural area, around the Akamas Natura site, which will be managed via development regulations and restrictions, to ensure the highest possible protection of the peninsula. A Manager has been hired to manage this area and ensure sustainable development and protection of the environment.

With regards to points 7, 9 & 10 of Recommendation No. 63 (1997), we would like to inform you on the following:

According to the management regulations for Lara-Toxeftra Reserve area, as specified in the Fisheries Regulations, the presence of the public on the beaches at night and driving on the beaches is prohibited, *inter alia*, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June up to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September. Monitoring of the area is consistent.

In respect to the potential disturbance of turtle nesting by the Thanos hotel complex, please find attached the data concerning turtle nesting activity on the beach in question (Asprokremmos) from 2003 up to 2013 (Tables & Graphs). The data clearly shows that the nests of the Loggerhead turtles are increasing, while the nesting of Green turtles is consistent.

With regards to the protection of the seagrass communities, please note that the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research has completed, in 2013, the mapping of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows in all six marine Natura 2000 sites (Akamas and Polis-Yialia sites included), as well as, in the Limassol Bay. *Posidonia* mapping covered also the mapping of other protected habitats, such as reefs and *Cymodocea nodosa*. *Posidonia* meadows are protected from trawling, while, in general, protective measures are undertaken through environmental impact assessment procedures before any activity is carried out in the sea. Moreover, based on the monitoring program implemented under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) for the 4 Biological Quality Elements (BQEs), including the BQE - Angiosperms (*Posidonia oceanica*), the ecological status of Akamas is classified as high.

Lastly, with regards to your recommendation to adopt an early warning system against illegal damage, we consider the regular monitoring of the sites being implemented at the time is the appropriate and effective way to detect and handle illegal damages. When an illegal act or damage is detected, legal measures are taken against the perpetrator and immediate restoration measures are taken. However, we are open to evaluate any specific recommendations regarding the issue.

We take this opportunity to assure you of the tireless efforts undertaken by the Government of Cyprus to protect these areas and their habitats and species.

Sincerely,

Elena Stylianopoulou  
for Director

ΔΖ -04.05.003.001.001, 02.15.004.031.001 To Bern Convention for Akamas&Polis-Gialia via email 19/03/2014

