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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

33rd meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2013

**PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS ON WAYS AND MEANS
TO ENSURE THE APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR THE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BERN CONVENTION**

**National reports and contributions /
Rapports nationaux et Contributions**

*Compilation prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*

CONTENTS / SOMMAIRE

Bulgaria / Bulgarie

Czech Republic / République tchèque

France / France

United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni

BULGARIA / BULGARIE

BULGARIAN OPINION CONCERNING FUTURE FINANCING OF THE BERN CONVENTION ACTIVITIES

Bulgaria expresses the following opinion regarding ensuring of the appropriate funding for the future development and implementation of the Bern Convention:

1. From its establishment until now, the Berne Convention is recognized as a regional agreement with great importance concerning the policy of nature conservation not only in the scope of its action, but also as an important partner of global and smaller international instruments in this area. In this regard, we believe that in the future the Convention should be retained and should use the established tools and approaches to achieve its objectives and priorities;
2. In order to provide relevant resources under the financial constraints emerged in recent years, it is necessary to optimize the priorities, also the means for their achievement, as well as to apply new approaches.
3. Simultaneously, through appropriate procedures within the Council of Europe, the issue for higher priority of the nature conservation which refers to the Bern Convention, should be tackled, given the current for European region priorities, related to the quality of life, resource efficiency and sustainable development.
4. In this regard, we believe that the Secretariat should continue to play an active role in coordinating and, together with the Advisory Group on Budgetary matters, develop concrete proposals to be discussed operational by Member States and submitted for consideration at the meeting of the Standing Committee in m December 2013
5. In laying down the guidelines for future work and cost optimization to be considered:
 - acquired positive experiences and the results achieved regarding specific problems for the region;
 - the established organization and forms of work (recommendations system, thematic groups of specialists, case-file system procedures, methodological documents, etc.);
 - new opportunities that provide modern communication technologies and tools for information sharing and distant working to reduce the direct financial costs;
 - Provide additional resources by expanding partnerships with other international instruments and NGO's in priority areas;
 - Expanding the participation of the countries on a voluntary basis by taking over the coordination on certain topics and work basically by electronic means;
6. We believe that for the moment the double funding should be maintained - through the budget of the Council of Europe for activities with higher priority and funding from the voluntary contributions of the parties for activities with a lower priority
7. The announced recommended contributions should have only indicative nature in order to stimulate the parties to provide additional resources and achieve sustainable financing, while maintaining the possibility of individual choice and judgment on their part.

We would like to express our desire to continue to participate in discussions on the issue related to the future funding for the Bern Convention activities.

CZECH REPUBLIC / RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE**FINANCING THE WORK OF THE BERN CONVENTION****CZECH REPUBLIC'S VIEW**

Recognizing the importance of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats in the field of the protection of the endangered natural habitats and endangered vulnerable fauna and flora species in Europe, the Czech Republic is ready to discuss possibilities and views how to ensure the effective Bern Convention continuation.

As for the proposed options included in the document T-PVS (2011) 10 we oppose the Option 2 suggesting "Elaboration of a Council of Europe "Partial Agreement" on the Convention" because we find very unhappy to lose the Council of Europe budgetary support which is still significant contribution even if decreasing. Bearing in mind difficult financial and economic situation there is a real risk that many Parties will not joint the Partial Agreement because of the cost of the Bern Convention and high contributions. We do not expect that Parties not currently contributing to the budget of the Convention on the voluntary basis would be in position to commit themselves to provision of contributions under a mandatory regime

Under given economic circumstances it would be also very difficult for our Government to commit itself whereas the national budget has been and will be continuously trimmed.

We are in favour of the Option 3 that means to maintain the present system of double funding by Council of Europe and voluntary contributions and reinforce voluntary contributions by the establishment of a "recommended voluntary" contribution by each Party.

or

We propose that the Bern Convention is financed from:

- Council of Europe's ordinary budget;
- Recommended voluntary contributions provided by Parties
- Extra voluntary contributions provided by Parties

Recommended voluntary contributions provided by Parties would cover essential activities (percentage/level of the Bern Convention budget should be discussed) and less important activities would be covered either by contributions received through a scheme of extra voluntary contributions or in any other way (savings from previous year, reserves). This could also mean structuring the work plan into more categories according to the priority of planned activities. Core activities would have to be covered by Council of Europe's ordinary budget and Recommended voluntary contributions. The rest of envisaged activities would be further divided into 2 or 3 categories reflecting their importance. The workplan would be revised and approved at each meeting of the Standing Committee - reflecting the current state of financial contributions received or pledged.

It might seem that this creates a great deal of uncertainty in securing the funds for implementation of the work programme in the given year, however, it gives each Party the flexibility to make contributions in line with its current budgetary possibilities.

FRANCE / FRANCE

[Translation]

POSITION OF FRANCE REGARDING THE FUTURE SYSTEM FOR FUNDING THE BERN CONVENTION

JUNE 2013

Following the announcement of a steady reduction in the Council of Europe's contribution (reduction of the Convention's total budget of 80% in 2008-2011 and 57% in 2012), the question of funding for the Bern Convention was raised, for the second consecutive year, at the 32nd Standing Committee meeting held in Strasbourg from 27 to 30 November 2012, without the Parties and the Secretariat managing to identify a viable system for funding the Convention. The three funding system options put forward by the Secretariat for examination by the Standing Committee included:

- option 1: maintaining the present system with a drastic cut in activities;
- option 2: switching to a system of compulsory contributions;
- option 3: voluntary contributions (in addition to the Council of Europe's contribution) in amounts recommended for each country;

None of these was approved by the Parties, and option 2 was rejected by a majority.

The French authorities are preoccupied by this situation. They thank the Secretariat for making arrangements, in keeping with the wishes of the Parties, to further consult them and convene an ad hoc advisory group on budgetary matters in September, whose discussions will be reported at the next Standing Committee meeting.

France expressed its opinion on the funding options as presented by the Secretariat at the 32nd Standing Committee meeting, including through the European dialogue organised in this connection. At the request of the Secretariat, the French authorities explain their views in greater detail below:

1. France reiterates its strong support for the Bern Convention and the important played by it among the international bodies in the field of biodiversity.
2. France stresses the importance of ensuring continuity, come what may. In particular, the Parties and the Secretariat might encourage the Council of Europe to consider the desirability of developing the theme of the "right to a healthy environment" (a theme discussed within UN bodies), which is an integral component of the human rights activities that are at the forefront of the Council of Europe's work.
3. France is in favour of option 3, namely maintaining the present system of dual funding by the Council of Europe and voluntary contributions and stepping up the voluntary contributions through the establishment of a "recommended voluntary contribution by each party", but adjusted in line with proposed cuts in the operating costs of the Convention.
4. To facilitate this system, the Secretariat will have to approach the Parties individually with regard to their voluntary contributions in the year preceding the adoption of the work programme, with a view to establishing a provisional budget and ascertaining their views on the form in which they prefer to receive funding requests, which might target certain activities for example rather than all the Convention's activities.
5. The Secretariat will prepare a working paper, geared to optimising the meeting of the ad hoc advisory group in September by establishing a hierarchy of convention activities, emphasising the key activities and those which are less fundamental to the Convention, with an indication of the budget headings where savings could be made on operating costs, considering the following possibilities among others:

- no longer subsidising the participation of experts from the EU, Norway and Switzerland in meetings of the groups of experts;
- where circumstances permit, dispensing with simultaneous interpretation at meetings of groups of experts;
- holding meetings of certain groups of experts less frequently and/or making them shorter by making use of prior electronic dialogue and doing away with excursions or making them optional and to be paid for;
- as far as possible, cutting the costs of international experts commissioned by the Secretariat;

On this basis, the Secretariat will prepare an initial provisional budget proposal for 2014 for examination by the Bureau, the ad hoc advisory group and, subsequently, the Standing Committee at its 33rd meeting.

6. Greater synergy should be developed with the other relevant international bodies, including through the organisation of "back to back" meetings on similar topics and avoiding duplication.
7. With the help of the Bureau and the advisory group, the Secretariat will devise a fund-raising strategy for 2014, in particular by exploring other sources of funding such as the private sector.

In conclusion, the French authorities urge their partners, the Parties to the Convention, to mobilise their efforts to ensure the continuity of Convention activities through diplomatic efforts, the promotion of the Convention at national and international levels and their financial backing. In this connection, France wishes to mark its appreciation of the funding support from the European Commission to the tune of 2 million euros from 2012 to 2016 and confirms its intention to carry on providing financial backing, within the limit of the budget funds available.

[Version originale adressée par la France]



POSITION DE LA FRANCE RELATIVE AU FUTUR SYSTÈME DE FINANCEMENT DE LA CONVENTION DE BERNE

JUIN 2013

Suite à l'annonce d'une réduction progressive de la contribution du Conseil de l'Europe (baisse de 80% en 2008-2011 et de 57% en 2012, du budget total de la Convention), la question du financement de la Convention de Berne a, pour la deuxième année consécutive, été soulevée lors du 32^{ème} Comité permanent qui s'est tenu à Strasbourg du 27 au 30 novembre 2012, sans que les Parties et le Secrétariat puissent définir ensemble un système viable de financement de la convention. Parmi les trois options de système de financement présentées par le Secrétariat pour examen par le Comité permanent figuraient:

- l'option 1 : maintien du système actuel avec réduction drastique des activités ;
- l'option 2 : passage à un système de contributions obligatoires ;
- l'option 3 : contributions volontaires (en plus de la contribution du Conseil de l'Europe) selon des niveaux recommandés par pays ;

aucune n'a été retenue par les Parties et l'option 2 majoritairement rejetée.

Les autorités françaises se préoccupent de cette situation. Elles remercient le Secrétariat pour les arrangements pris, conformément au souhait exprimé par les Parties, et ainsi à nouveau les consulter et convoquer un groupe consultatif ad hoc sur les affaires budgétaires en septembre dont les travaux seront présentés au prochain Comité permanent.

La France a exprimé son avis sur les options de financement telles que présentées par le Secrétariat, au 32^{ème} Comité permanent, notamment à travers le dialogue européen organisé à cette occasion. A la demande du Secrétariat, les autorités françaises précisent ci-dessous leurs positions :

8. La France réitère son soutien appuyé à la Convention de Berne et son rôle important parmi les instances internationales relatives à la biodiversité.
9. La France insiste sur l'importance d'assurer à tout prix la continuité. En particulier, les Parties et le Secrétariat pourraient intervenir auprès du Conseil de l'Europe pour réfléchir à l'opportunité de développer la thématique du « droit à un environnement sain » (thématique discutée dans les enceintes onusiennes), qui fait partie intégrante des droits de l'homme, action prioritaire du Conseil de l'Europe.
10. La France fait le choix de l'option 3, à savoir le maintien du système actuel de double financement par le Conseil de l'Europe et par des contributions volontaires, et renforcement des contributions volontaires par l'établissement d'une contribution « volontaire recommandée » à verser par chaque Partie », mais aménagée, à savoir tout en proposant des réductions des coûts de fonctionnement de la Convention.
11. Pour faciliter ce système, le Secrétariat devra approcher individuellement les Parties à propos de leurs contributions volontaires dans l'année précédant l'adoption du programme de travail afin d'établir un budget prévisionnel, et sur la forme qui leur semble la plus adaptée, pour les demandes de financement qui leur sont soumises, par exemple en ciblant des activités plutôt que l'ensemble des activités de la Convention.

12. Le Secrétariat préparera, de manière à optimiser la réunion du groupe consultatif ad hoc de septembre, un document de travail pour cette réunion hiérarchisant les activités de la Convention en soulignant les activités essentielles et celles qui sont moins fondamentales à la Convention et présentant les postes budgétaires où des économies de fonctionnement peuvent être faites, explorant notamment les possibilités suivantes :

- ne plus subventionner la participation des experts de l'UE, de la Norvège et de la Suisse pour les réunions des groupes d'experts ;
- lorsque les circonstances le permettent, supprimer la traduction simultanée lors des réunions des groupes d'experts ;
- espacer les réunions de certains groupes d'experts et/ou réduire leur durée grâce à des échanges électroniques préalables et supprimer les excursions ou les rendre optionnelles et payantes ;
- dans la mesure du possible, réduire les frais des experts internationaux mandatés par le Secrétariat ;

Sur cette base, le Secrétariat préparera une première proposition de budget prévisionnel pour 2014 pour examen par le Bureau, le groupe consultatif ad hoc et ultérieurement par le 33^{ème} Comité permanent.

13. Développer plus de synergies avec les autres instances internationales pertinentes, notamment en organisant des réunions « *back to back* » sur des sujets similaires et en évitant les doublons.

14. Avec l'aide du Bureau et du comité consultatif, le Secrétariat élaborera une stratégie de recherche de financements pour 2014, en particulier en explorant d'autres sources de financement comme le secteur privé.

En conclusion, les autorités françaises encouragent ses partenaires, les Parties à la Convention, à se mobiliser pour assurer la continuité des travaux de la Convention à travers leur action diplomatique, la promotion de la convention aux niveaux national et international et par leur appui financier. A ce propos, la France souhaite souligner avec appréciation le soutien financier de la Commission européenne de 2 millions d'euros de 2012 à 2016 et confirme son intention de perpétuer son soutien financier, dans la limite des disponibilités budgétaires.

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI



BERN CONVENTION – ADVISORY GROUP OF EXPERTS ON BUDGET: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS AND REQUEST FOR WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

1. I refer to your letter dated 25 January regarding the creation of an Advisory Group of Experts to explore options for improving the finance and efficiency of the Bern Convention (“the Convention”) and also seeking Contracting Parties views on the long-term financing of the Convention. You were also seeking suitable nominations for participants to join the Advisory Group.
2. It is indeed unfortunate that the reform process at the Council of Europe (CoE) has had budgetary consequences for the Convention resulting in further cuts to the amount the Convention receives from the CoE. We have taken into consideration the paper, “*Financing the Work of the Bern Convention*” which provides current financial trends, challenges for 2012-2013 and options for financing the Convention in the future, in providing this response.
3. The UK’s involvement with the Convention has, for many years and as a result of resource levels, had to be fairly selective. The value of the Convention to the UK is, in the main, via the various Groups of Experts (GoE). We are currently actively engaged in a number of the GoE, including those for: Biodiversity and Climate Change; Invasive Alien Species and European Islands Biological Diversity and our expertise is readily sought and, we think, gratefully received. The sharing of expertise and experiences; the open debate on issues of policy, legislation and implementation and the opportunities to influence each other’s thinking are obvious benefits from the Working Groups for all Parties. We would therefore be concerned about losing the value of the Working Groups disproportionately to cuts in other areas of the Convention’s work. That said we do feel that there may be some scope to run such groups more economically. For example, by having biennial instead of annual meetings and a smaller ‘work planning’ group in the intervening year where necessary - as is done with the Invasive Alien Species Group. There may also be more scope to operate the Groups through a more active “virtual” role in proactively managing discussion topics, webinars, information exchanges etc. Prioritisation of deliverables will clearly become even more essential than before.
4. We agree, because of the decreases in funding from the CoE and the variability of voluntary contributions from Parties (with the likelihood of these reducing rather than increasing in the future), that there needs to be a fundamental rethink of how the Convention is financed now and in coming years.
5. Given the current financial climate the **UK’s preferred option would be Option 1**, and we would be happy to feed into any rationalisation exercise regarding the Convention’s activities. Prioritising and scaling back is a recurrent theme in many areas in these times and we cannot presently see ourselves being able to provide the contribution of €156,000 that would be required under a legally binding agreement as suggested in Option 2. Similarly regarding Option 3, we are not currently in a position whereby we could make a standing commitment to the “recommended contribution” of €60,000. Having said that we are of course interested to hear the views of other Parties to the Convention in respect of binding contributions and, depending on the views of others, may be open to discussing Option 3 once the current financial climate improves.

6. One further point relating to the “*Financing the Work of the Bern Convention*” paper is that it would have been helpful if it had provided some detailed information about, and analysis of, the key benefits that the Convention has recently contributed to or indeed where it has been (and continues to be) a main player for specific biodiversity issues over the past few years.
7. Each Contracting Party will have its own Convention-related priorities for which its contribution will provide (or is perceived to provide) specific benefits to them (or indeed wider benefits such as those that act across the Bern’s agreement area e.g. on matters of a transboundary nature (of which, the latter is a strength of the Convention)). In responding and adapting to current pressures we think the Convention needs to draw together a well focussed analysis of where and how it will add value in the future. This would help Parties to decide on priorities and the level of commitment that is justified.
8. In terms of looking at other ways to mobilise additional funds, one potential avenue to explore may be (given the refocusing of CoE funding towards human rights and democracy and away from biodiversity-related activities) for the Convention’s Secretary General and the Standing Committee to explore the value and importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to the well-being of society and to enabling and empowering people to meet their needs in a sustainable way.
9. Equally relevant are the significant ecological and economic impacts of invasive alien species which are increasingly recognised globally. It might, therefore, be worth setting the biodiversity-related activities in this kind of context for exploration with the CoE’s Committee of Ministers and explaining how the work of the Convention contributes to this overarching CoE agenda/mandate as a way to argue the case/bid for continued or increased funding.
10. Similarly, we are not clear whether there are other CoE funding mechanisms that the Convention could access as a component of a future funding model given the role that biodiversity plays in terms of sustaining human rights and societal well-being. This may help alleviate the pressure on the Convention of reduced and variable contributions by Contracting Parties.
11. I hope you will find this contribution to the funding of the Bern Convention issue useful in your deliberations.
12. Unfortunately the UK is unable to nominate anyone to participate in the Advisory Group of Experts on Budget at this time.

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**BERN CONVENTION – MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP ON BUDGETARY MATTERS:
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS AND REQUEST FOR WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS**

1. I refer to your letter dated 11 March seeking views, proposals and suggestions on ways and means to ensure the appropriate funding for the strategic development and implementation of the Bern Convention. Your letter also refers to the meeting of the Advisory Group on Budgetary Matters taking place on 16 September.
2. I have already provided, in my letter of 30 March 2012, the UK's suggestions regarding the long term financing of the Convention but I can elaborate a little more. The UK's preference remains Option 1, maintaining the present system of voluntary contributions whilst looking to adapt activities to resources, but discussions have taken place regarding the possible acceptance of Option 3 and I can provide some additional thoughts in connection with this.
3. In terms of safeguards, to be able to accept Option 3, as a minimum the UK would need to be content that:
 - the wording of any resolution or decision did not suggest that the contribution was in any way binding (i.e. there was a reference to it being a “*voluntary contribution*”);
 - there is no suggestion of non-compliance for not making contributions or for not contributing in accordance with the agreed scale;
 - the scale is only provided to those Parties that request it – which would mean that those who ‘need’ a scale to be able to make contributions have something to refer to, but those who don't need, or don't want, a scale do not have it imposed upon them.
4. During the course of discussing these budgetary matters, and taking into account these safeguards, I have considered those budget decisions or resolutions under other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. I thought it may be helpful to direct you to two recently adopted resolutions, which have similarities to the situation of Bern. The references are:
 - i) **International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture - Resolution 1/2011** (*a copy is attached to the covering e-mail*)
This is a medium sized MEA with some of the budget coming through Countries' contributions to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), similar to Bern finance coming through CoE, and with similar 'issues' regarding the level of the FAO contribution;
 - ii) **Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas - Resolution 6/2012** (*a copy is attached to the covering e-mail*)
This is a small Agreement (like Bern) and regional in nature (also like Bern).
5. I have also taken the opportunity to provide comments on the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group on Budgetary Matters and these can be found in the attachment to the covering e-mail.
6. I hope you will find these further points helpful.

7. Unfortunately, as I have previously notified, the UK will not be able to designate a representative for the Advisory Group meeting in September.

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