



Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 159 (2012) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 30 November 2012, on the effective implementation of guidance for Parties on biodiversity and climate change

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, in accordance with 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;

Bearing in mind that climate change mitigation has a key role in reducing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and the need for further adaptation measures;

Recalling the CBD Conference of the Parties Decision X/33 on Biodiversity and climate change and its guidance;

Recognising the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, namely the strategic objective aiming at a more climate resilient, low-carbon economy;

Recalling recommendations of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention: No. 122 (2006), on the conservation of biological diversity in the context of climate change; No. 135 (2008) and No. 143 (2009) on addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity; No. 145 (2010) on guidance for Parties on biodiversity and climate change in mountain regions; No. 146 (2010) on guidance for Parties on biodiversity and climate change in European islands, No. 147 (2010) on guidance for Parties on wildland fires, biodiversity and climate change; and No. 152 (2011) on Marine Biodiversity and Climate Change;

Welcoming and bearing in mind the conclusions of the monitoring assessment presented in 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 Resolution 10.19 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species Conservation in the light of climate change and Resolution 5.13 of the Meeting of the Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement on Climate change adaptation measures for waterbirds;

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 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;

Acknowledging that most Parties already recognise the need to take action in relation to the conservation of biodiversity in the face of climate change;

Noting that many Parties reported actions relating to the development of policies, strategies or legislative measures designed to address specifically the issue of biodiversity conservation in the face of climate change;

Welcoming in particular many excellent examples of good practice which were identified, especially those where the embedding of consideration of biodiversity issues cross-sectorally has already been achieved, where win-win solutions are being adopted for adaptation and/or mitigation, where the development of ecological networks is already underway, where the need to embed national actions in their international context has been recognised, where systematic evaluations of species' vulnerability to climate change have been made using species' distribution models, and where a national vision underpins a series of coherent actions aimed at addressing both the limitation of climate change and its inevitable impacts;

Concerned by the gaps identified with regards to those specific and practical actions most directly related to minimising the negative effects of climate change on biodiversity, and especially upon species and ecosystems already under threat from other pressures;

Recalling the desirability and benefits of adopting adaptive management practices;

Stressing that many of the actions recommended can almost certainly be commenced under existing conservation legislation in the Parties;

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

1. Urgently implement the practical conservation measures that have been recommended by the Group of Experts and encourage appropriate national bodies involved in nature conservation to adopt and use them as resources permit; urgent action should more particularly focus on implementing adaptive management practices and strategies, enhancing the adaptive capacity of vulnerable species (rare/endemic/threatened), minimising pressures and threats on species and habitats that are most vulnerable to climate change, and implementing monitoring of, *inter alia*; species' population trends, species behaviour, including phenology, and climate change impacts upon critical areas;
2. Take further steps to develop ecological networks, to promote and enhance the permeability of landscapes generally, and also enhance their protected areas networks, as appropriate, by increasing the extent of existing sites, designating new sites and establishing buffer zones, and ensuring they are sustainably and adaptively managed;
3. Take an appropriately long-term view, based on adaptive management methodologies, when formulating management plans and strategies for protected areas management;
4. Adopt, as appropriate, a more holistic approach when formulating strategies and plans for ecological networks or protected areas, and when developing conservation or recovery plans for individual species. In particular, encourage the general adoption of the examples of good practice reported, especially by Switzerland and Ukraine, with respect to taking into account their international context

when planning ecological networks, and to developing networks and protected areas in partnership with their neighbours;

5. Adopt measures that encourage biodiversity conservation to be embedded across other sectors and taken into account when formulating policies or strategies for those sectors, also by informing policy-makers across the Parties about the opportunities for win–win solutions, for instance through the development and use of ecosystem-based approaches, when developing strategies for adaptation to climate change by their sector as well as for mitigation measures;
6. Undertake knowledge transfer activities using existing mechanisms, to encourage awareness by other stakeholders and the general public of the challenges posed and opportunities presented by climate change when considering biodiversity conservation, including its links to other sectors and the opportunities for win–win solutions;
7. Take account of the potential increased risk of wildfires as a result of climate change and embed, as appropriate, mitigation measures for consideration of this risk into protected area management plans;
8. Adopt the good practice, identified in the case of the United Kingdom, of implementing measures for the assessment of introductions that include assessment of the impacts of projected climate changes on species' invasion potential;

Further instructs the Bern Convention Group of Experts on biodiversity and climate change to:

1. Take all necessary steps to ensure that the importance of the issue of climate change on biodiversity, and understanding the role of biodiversity in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change is well recognised by all Contracting Parties;
2. Promote awareness among Contracting Parties of the examples of good practice identified and urge their implementation;
3. Ensure that those persons preparing reports from Parties for the Group of Experts are fully informed about relevant activities, for example monitoring activities, being undertaken in their country, thus avoiding spurious identification of gaps in the activities of that Party or of priorities for new actions by the Party;
4. Assess the potential for introduced species already present in the national territory of Contracting Parties to become invasive under future climate conditions, in close co-operation with the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species, and using information and methodologies developed in other *fora*, where appropriate;
5. Inform the Standing Committee on the progress made in the implementation of this Recommendation.