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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

33rd meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2013

**Implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002)
on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı beach
(Turkey)**

REPORT BY THE NGO

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET - The Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles*

INFORMATION NOTE
ON AGENDA ITEM 6.4:
FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATION No. 95 (2002)
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE TURTLES IN KAZANLI BEACH (TURKEY)

Submitted to:
the 33rd Meeting of the Standing Committee of the
Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern
Convention)

Green turtles, *Chelonia mydas*, are regarded as globally endangered. In the Mediterranean, researchers estimate that there are only 339-360 green adult female turtles nesting in the region, laying about 1,500 nests per year. The species is listed among the Bern Convention's Appendix II strictly protected fauna species for which Contracting Parties are required to take legislative and administrative measures to ensure the special protection of the species and their breeding sites.

Kazanli in southern Turkey is the second most important green turtle nesting beaches in the Mediterranean. The habitat had been subject to gradual degradation since the 1980's. Conservation problems at Kazanli were first reported to the Bern Convention in 1999 and have since been discussed by the annual Standing Committee Meetings. A brief background summary of the Kazanli case-file No. 2000/1 and the subsequent Recommendation No. 95 (2002) on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanli beach (Turkey) is annexed to this note.

Since 2009, no report has been submitted to the Standing Committee by the Turkish Authorities on progress implementing recommended measures as described in Recommendation No. 95 (2002). **Specifically, reporting is required on Measures No. 3-8,¹ that should be implemented on an ongoing basis. Reporting is also requested on Measures No. 1, 9, and 10-14 that have only partially been implemented to date.^{2,3} MEDASSET particularly reiterates its concern about implementation of Measure No. 10:** the 1.5 million tons of highly toxic solid waste located right next to Kazanli's green turtle nesting beach, is a severe hazard for the habitat, the sea turtle nesting population and human health. At the 30th Standing Committee Meeting in 2010, though Kazanli was not on the Meeting's agenda and following MEDASSET's intervention during the Meeting, the Turkish delegate briefly informed that the toxic waste neutralisation process had started and that the by-product was kept within the Factory's grounds, until a landfill site was established. No further information or details have been reported by the Turkish Authorities.

We urge the Turkish delegation to provide a full update on progress made since 2009 on implementing Recommendation No. 95 (2002), and the Standing Committee to consider if the reported progress is considered satisfactory. Should there be no reporting at this Meeting, we urge the Standing Committee to consider applying Rule 11 of the adopted Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee, and organise an on-the-spot assessment to obtain information on the implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) and especially of Measure No. 10.

¹ See Annex for measures proposed under Recommendation No. 95 (2002)

² *Id.*

³ T-PVS/Files (2009) 11 Report by the Government

ANNEX

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

ON THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE TURTLES IN KAZANLI BEACH

Green turtles, *Chelonia mydas*, are regarded as globally endangered.⁴ In the Mediterranean, researchers estimate that there are only 339-360 green adult female turtles nesting in the region, laying about 1,500 nests per year,⁵ and until recently were listed as a critically endangered regional subpopulation (the subpopulation was later de-listed due to changes in the IUCN Red List criteria).

The beach of Kazanli in southern Turkey forms one of the most important green turtle nesting areas in the Mediterranean. In 1988, it boasted the highest density of green turtle nesting in the Mediterranean.⁶ More recently, it was listed as the second most important green turtle nesting beach in the Mediterranean (nests/year ranged from 43 to 403 in 1988-2006).⁷ Part of Kazanli nesting beach is nationally designated as a 1st Degree Natural 'SIT' Protected Area. The total length of the beach is 4.5 km (see map at the end of this annex).

Surveys in the 1980's identified a number of serious threats, which increased in subsequent years and although confirmed and reported by numerous researchers and conservationists, the responsible authorities failed to take action for several years. As a result, the nesting beach is subject to serious deterioration. MEDASSET has been monitoring Kazanli nesting beach and reporting on conservation problems since 1999. Main threats identified are: erosion, wastewater and toxic waste pollution, litter, sand extraction, light pollution, agriculture (greenhouses) on the rim of the nesting beach, coastal fishing during the nesting season, disturbance to the species during nesting and lack of public awareness. To the rear of the beach, is a Soda Chrome Factory that has deposited 1.5 million tons of hazardous toxic waste, covered with plastic sheeting, directly next to the Kazanli nesting beach. The waste has a high concentration of toxic chromium (Cr 3+/6+) compounds, and is a by-product of the factory's activities in the 1990s. The removal of this hazardous waste from the beach is of high priority for environmental and human health. In 2000 and 2001, MEDASSET alerted about the release of toxic waste into the sea off the nesting beach from the beachside factory. Seawater samples, which MEDASSET analysed, were found to contain chromium concentration 13,500 times higher than natural levels. More than 23 green turtles were found dead. Discharges into the sea resulted in turtles emerging to nest with their body encrusted with white CaCO₃.

BERN CONVENTION & THE KAZANLI CASE

The situation at Kazanli has been reported several times in the Recommendations of the Bern Convention Standing Committee. In **1998** the Standing Committee adopted **Recommendation No. 66** *on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey*, and urged the Government of Turkey to “*take urgent measures to restore the beach, remove the adjacent greenhouses and the solid waste, particularly plastics; and resolve the pollution problem from the soda chrome factory*”.

To encourage conservation action, the Standing Committee opened a case file (No. 2000/1) at its 20th Meeting in **2000**. Further concerns about inadequate protection of the sea turtle population and discharge of toxic waste into the sea, finally led to an **on-the-spot appraisal mission in 2002**, following which the Standing Committee issued a specific **Recommendation No. 95 (2002)** *on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanli beach (Turkey)*, and re-opened the case file to monitor the implementation of the 14 recommended conservation measures:

1. *remove as a matter of urgency the row of greenhouses closest to the sea in beach section K3; remove, as soon as feasible, other greenhouses in beach section K3 through the appropriate legal and administrative procedures and restore that space to favour turtle nesting;*

⁴ IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, Version 2011.2. www.iucnredlist.org

⁵ Broderick *et al.* 2002, Casale & Margaritoulis 2010

⁶ Baran & Kasperek 1989, Yerli & Demiryak 1996

⁷ Kasperek *et al.* 2001, Casale & Margaritoulis 2010

2. *move the taxi parking area away from the beach as a matter of urgency;*
3. *periodically remove the plastic debris from the beach;*
4. *screen the lights of the municipality of Kazanli and the Soda-Chrome factory so as to avoid photopollution on the beach;*
5. *maintain monitoring of the chemical waste discharge into the sea by the chrome factory; establish a reliable and permanent monitoring of nesting activities in the beach and make an independent assessment of potential burden of the natural environment of Kazanli, with substances released by the soda-chrome factory; assess the potential risk of effluents of the soda-chromium factory to wildlife;*
6. *set in place a monitoring of beach erosion, so as to take remedial measures as needed;*
7. *promote public awareness on the presence and interest of marine turtle nesting in Kazanli, addressed in particular to local population;*
8. *fully implement the existing environment plan and assure the necessary financial and human resources to this end;*
9. *remove illegal building in beach section K1;*
10. *remove as appropriate the hazardous waste accumulated over the years close to the beach as a result of industrial activities;*
11. *consider the removal of the wedding hall of Kazanli from the beach, to be relocated elsewhere;*
12. *apply appropriate treatment to sewage waters from Kazanli, so as to free the back of the beach from pollution;*
13. *look for an appropriate solution to remove houses on the beach that were constructed legally;*
14. *reduce the impact of agrochemical products in the area around Kazanli.*

As some of the measures were implemented by the Turkish authorities, and considering that a better overall protection of the area had been achieved, despite MEDASSET's call to maintain the case file open, the Standing Committee at its 24th Meeting in **2004** provisionally closed the file, requesting that the Turkish Government continues to report on progress.

However, the Turkish Government did not report on the conservation status of Kazanli in 2005, and no delegation attended the **2005** Standing Committee Meeting. In **2006**, the Turkish Government submitted a brief report, but again did not send a delegate to the Standing Committee meeting. In **2007**, the issue was discussed at the Standing Committee, which decided not to re-open a file, but to request that the Turkish Authorities submit a report in 2008.

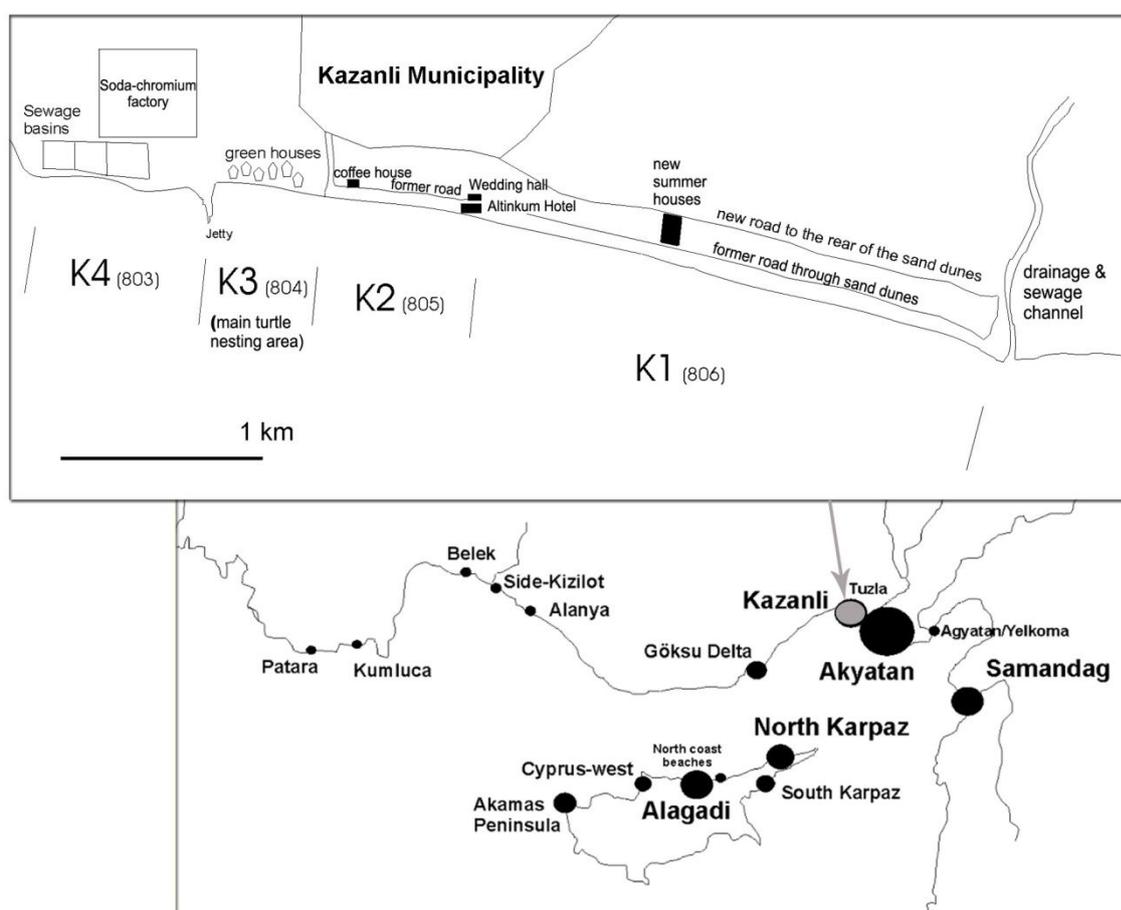
At the **2008** Standing Committee Meeting, the Turkish Government reported on progress to implement measures listed under Recommendation No. 95 and further informed that the Soda Chrome Factory's plan to set up a landfill site had been delayed, and that the solid waste treatment would commence in July 2009, while the operation of the landfill was set to begin in November 2009. MEDASSET called on the Government of Turkey, to start implementing without delay plans to put the hazardous waste in a safe location, far from the green turtle nesting beach and the sea.

According to the March **2009** Bureau Meeting Report, the Turkish authorities reaffirmed their intention to remove the hazardous waste from Kazanli Beach, but notified that "it would take some time". They confirmed that the construction of the waste neutralisation facility was underway and was expected to be completed as planned. EIA studies were being carried out for the waste storage site. According to the report submitted by the Government to the 2009 Standing Committee Meeting, the waste disposal facility was to be finished by October 2009. At the 2009 Meeting, the delegate of Turkey reported on progress on the implementation of Recommendation No. 95, and informed that the removal of the toxic waste was to start soon, an investment had been made to establish a neutralisation plant, and that waste removal will take eight or ten years. MEDASSET welcomed progress made, and highlighted that together with the toxic waste management several points remain unsolved, such as the severe coastal erosion which requires more drastic measures on behalf of the authorities.

During the 30th Standing Committee Meeting in **2010**, though Kazanli was not on the Meeting's agenda, and following MEDASSET's intervention during the Meeting, the Turkish delegate briefly

informed that the neutralisation facility was established within the factory's grounds and that the process has started.⁸ Two hundred thousand tons of chromium have been neutralised and were kept within the Factory's grounds, until they are transferred to a landfill site, which had not yet been defined. The Delegate also informed that nest monitoring continued in 2010. MEDASSET called upon the Turkish Government to continue reporting regularly to the Convention on all issues concerning Kazanlı, especially on the toxic waste management and erosion problems. The request was reiterated via email to the Secretariat in 2011, and through an intervention during the 2012 Standing Committee. To our knowledge, no report or update has been officially submitted since 2009.

KAZANLI NESTING BEACH MAP



REFERENCES

- Baran, I. & M. Kasparek. 1989. Marine turtles Turkey. Status survey 1988 and recommendations for conservation and management. WWF. Heidelberg. ISBN 3-925064-07-9
- Broderick, A.C., F. Glen, B.J. Godley BJ, G.C. Hays. 2002. Estimating the number of green and loggerhead turtles nesting annually in the Mediterranean. *Oryx* 36:227-235.
- Casale P. & D. Margaritoulis (Eds.) 2010. Sea Turtles in the Mediterranean: Distribution, Threats and Conservation Priorities. IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 294 pp.
- Kasparek, M., B. J. Godley & A. C. Broderick. 2001. Nesting of the Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, in the Mediterranean: a review of status and conservation needs. *Zoology in the Middle East* 24: 45-74.
- MEDASSET. 14 December 2010. Announcement: 'Bern Convention, Council of Europe: 6-9 December 2010. Sea turtle conservation problems in Cyprus and Turkey'

⁸ MEDASSET 2010

Yerli, S. and F. Demirayak. 1996. Marine turtles in Turkey: a survey on nesting site status. DHKD. CMS Report No. 96/4 133pp.

The following Recommendations of the Standing Committee are relevant to Kazanlı:

- No. 7 (1987) On the protection of marine turtles and their habitat;
- No. 8 (1987) On the protection of marine turtles in Dalyan and other important areas in Turkey;
- No. 12 (1988) Concerning the protection of important turtle nesting beaches in Turkey;
- No. 13 (1988) Concerning measures for the protection of critical biotopes of endangered amphibians and reptiles;
- No. 24 (1991) On the protection of some beaches in Turkey of particular importance to marine turtles;
- No. 66 (1998) On the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey;
- No. 95 (2002) On the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanlı beach (Turkey).

A number of documents describe the Kazanlı issue in detail. These include:

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| T-PVS (1999) 74 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS (2000) 56 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS (2000) 73 | Report from the Government |
| T-PVS (2001) 39 | Report by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention |
| T-PVS (2001) 70 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2002) 2 | Report by the Secretariat of on-the-spot appraisal undertaken for the Council of Europe by M. Kasperek |
| T-PVS/Files (2002) 17 | Report by Turkish Government |
| T-PVS/Files (2002) 20 | Report by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention |
| T-PVS/Files (2003) 14 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2004) 10 | Report of the Meeting of the Bureau |
| T-PVS/Files (2004) 11 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2004) 16 | Report by the Secretariat |
| T-PVS/Files (2005) 10 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2006) 3 | Report by the Government |
| T-PVS/Files (2006) 13 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2007) 29 | Report by the Government |
| T-PVS/Files (2007) 16 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |
| T-PVS/Files (2008) 10 | Report from the Government |
| No T-PVS reference (2008) | MEDASSET Update on Green Turtle (<i>Chelonia Mydas</i>) Conservation Monitoring in Kazanlı, Turkey |
| T-PVS (2009) 7 | 1 st Meeting of the Bureau |
| T-PVS/Files (2009) 11 | Report from the Government |
| No T-PVS reference (2009) | MEDASSET Update on Green Turtle (<i>Chelonia Mydas</i>) Conservation Monitoring in Kazanlı, Turkey |
| T-PVS (2010) 25 | Standing Committee Meeting Report |
| T-PVS (2012) 22 | Standing Committee Meeting Report |
| T-PVS/Files(2013) 09 | Report by the NGO: MEDASSET |