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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Working Group on the
Elaboration of a European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity**

Strasbourg, 11 September 2006

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REPORT

*Document
prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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1. Opening of the meeting

Mr Øystein Størkersen (Norway), Chair of the Working Group, opened the meeting welcoming all participants (list in appendix 1). He thanked those members who had sent contributions to the consultant, following the discussions at the first meeting of the Working Group held on 10th March 2006. He outlined his main comments to the draft document - regarding hunting tourism, sustainable hunting and ethics - and the need for a common platform to continue this process into 2007.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as it figures in appendix 2.

3. Introduction by the Secretariat (background and previous meeting of the Working Group)

The representative of the Secretariat summarised the main elements that provide the background for this initiative under the Bern Convention, such as Recommendation 1689 of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on hunting and Europe's environmental balance, adopted in November 2004 and which forms the basis for the development of a European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity. In November 2005, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention decided to set up a group of experts to prepare the European Charter on hunting and biodiversity, taking account of existing initiatives, both at Community level and under other international legal instruments.

At its first meeting on 10th March 2006, the Working Group was presented with an overview of relevant initiatives at the international and regional level, including the EU's Sustainable Hunting Initiative and the agreement on the EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC, signed by BirdLife International and the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE) in October 2004.

The Working Group discussed a set of draft terms of reference for its work and agreed that certain key issues that are not covered by any other existing instrument, such as the training of hunters, hunting tourism, and ethical hunting, should be the focus of the European Charter, as well as habitats, and include other important topics such as education and awareness, and safety concerns.

4. Presentation of the first draft of the European Charter by the consultant

The consultant thanked the members of the Working Group for the input and materials received. He highlighted the nature and principles to be included in a "Charter". Mr Marracci presented the structure and main sections of his preliminary document (annexed to this report as Appendix 3), including its context, objectives, principles and the proposal to develop some guidelines on "tourism hunting", an issue where further information is needed.

5. Discussion of the different topics raised

Before starting the discussions, the representative of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) gave a presentation about their Sustainable Hunting Tourism Programme, the first global approach to this issue. The presentation focused on the links between hunting and tourism, including international processes and initiatives on this issue and the hunting tourism "market". The main elements of this Programme are: (i) the evaluation of game use criteria and indicators; (ii) the possible use of a "certificate"; and (iii) the evaluation of tourist use. The programme aims to develop criteria for sustainable hunting tourism and indicators for ecological, social and economic interests related to hunting. The CIC representative expressed its organisation's interest in co-operating with the Bern Convention on this issue, as part of addressing North-South cultural differences regarding hunting.

A second brief presentation was given by the representative of BirdLife International on the AEWA/BirdLife Workshop on the Sustainable Hunting of Migratory Birds in MTC (Mediterranean Third Countries) held in Tunisia on 2-3 September 2006. The meeting aimed at discussing migratory birds hunting management experiences in these countries; as well as agreeing on draft Regional Guidelines for Sustainable Migratory Bird Hunting and a Regional Code of Best Practice for

migratory bird hunting. This project will run until October-November 2007 and it could provide a good opportunity to learn from initiatives outside Europe and to enable a dialogue with Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East, especially as the project includes two Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention: Tunisia and Morocco. The Chair of the Working Group stressed the need to refer to this initiative in the future draft European Charter and to cover the issue of sustainable hunting tourism, as a matter of priority.

The representative of FACE referred to the need to ensure that there is no duplication with other initiatives and give the highest added value to the Charter by focusing it on sustainable hunting tourism. He referred to the Guidelines on Sustainable Hunting in Europe, prepared by IUCN's Wild Species Resources Working Group (WISPER) of the IUCN-SSC European Sustainable Use Specialist Group. The aim of these guidelines is to apply wider international principles and guidelines for the sustainable use of wild living resources at the European regional level, focusing on recreational hunting involving the shooting of birds and mammals. The representative of FACE raised a number of important elements such as the need to agree on terminology (such as "hunting tourism"); the complexity of developing a certification system for sustainable hunting and the need to explore other options like a 'label' awarded to specific sites for their sustainable hunting practices, maybe following the model of the European Diploma of Protected Areas; as well as the need for the scope of the Charter to cover both hunting in Europe and European hunters abroad.

Delegates from Bern Convention Parties raised the following issues:

- The need to put sustainable hunting guidelines in the context of species and their habitats, therefore placing hunting in a biodiversity context, and especially in the framework of the Bern Convention, its objectives and protected species, highlighting the compatibility of hunting with the protection of certain species and the management of habitats;
- There are good examples of the compatibility of hunting and nature conservation but certain issues need to be considered, such as feeding leading to excessive game populations, fencing and land degradation;
- the possibility of using a quality label or certification for sustainable hunting should be included in the Charter. A relevant issue would then be the need to take account of all aspects linked to the ecology of the species as well as habitats;
- support for a Code of Conduct on sustainable hunting, which could be the next step after the Charter, but without replacing the need for hunting licenses;
- the need to take account of resident and non-resident hunters in European countries;
- the need to establish links between hunting and territory, taking account of different land uses, such as the integrated management of huntable species together with agricultural and fisheries species;
- the need to use precise definitions and terminology in the Charter;
- A Code of Good Hunting Practices adopted by France's Economic and Social Council
- the 'sustainability' of hunting through the recruitment of new hunters, an issue linked to the image of hunting;
- the Code of Conduct and the ethics related to hunting need to come from the sector concerned, but some Northern countries already have experience on hunter education and ethics. The Charter should focus on standards for a code on humane and ethical hunting, promoting ethical hunters in Europe (and Europeans abroad);
- the Code of Conduct needs to be based on the Bern Convention and address good practice guidelines on hunting and tourism; and
- the need for good and reliable data, including biological and harvested data.

Participants agreed that the draft document needed to be sharpened and focused, targeting hunters and their role as custodians of biodiversity, and linking them with other stakeholders. The Working Group agreed on the need to focus on the key elements needed for the Charter and move forward

through a small drafting committee that will prepare a draft Charter to be presented to the full Working Group in 2007. The representatives of Norway and FACE expressed their interest to take part in the drafting committee. The Chair indicated that the Government of Norway would consider the possibility of making a voluntary contribution to support this initiative. The representative of the Secretariat explained that one further meeting of the full Working Group had been included in the Bern Convention's draft programme of activities for 2007 which will be submitted to the Standing Committee meeting in November 2006. However, next year's budget will be closely linked to the outcome of current discussions on the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe for next year.

The representative of Norway presented to the Working Group a revised outline of the draft European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity, which is annexed to this report as Appendix 4. The revised outline includes the following sections: Introduction; goals and objectives; review of principles, concepts and challenges; Charter guidelines; and implementation.

The Working Group decided that the Secretariat would circulate the Norwegian proposal by e-mail, giving a deadline for sending written comments up until the end of September 2006. A small drafting committee including relevant stakeholders will work on the basis of the revised outline to prepare a draft charter by early 2007.

The European Commission is planning an event in 2007 concerning their Sustainable Hunting Initiative. The Working Group intends to collaborate with the European Commission and interact with that event, pending confirmation from the Commission services.

6. Next steps

The revised outline of the Charter will be circulated by e-mail shortly after the meeting and members of the Working Group were requested to send their comments to the Secretariat by the end of September 2006. The date of the next meeting of the Working Group will be communicated after adoption of the 2007 Programme of Activities by the Standing Committee.



Appendix 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

EXPERTS / EXPERTS

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Mr Patrick DE WOLF, Ingénieur attaché à la Direction de la Nature, Division de la Nature et des Forêts, Ministère de la Région wallonne, 15, avenue Prince de Liège, B-5100 JAMBES (NAMUR).
Tel : +32 81 33 58 16. Fax : +32 81 33 58 22. E-mail : P.Dewolf@mrw.wallonie.be (F)

CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE

Mr Jaroslav KOSTECKA, Specialist of the Game Management, Forestry and Fishing in the National Park of the Czech Republic, Department of Specially Protected Areas, Ministry of the Environment, Vrsoviccka 65, CZ-100 10 PRAGUE 10.
Tel: +420 608 178 581. Fax: +420 267 12 6871. E-mail: jaroslav.Kostecka@env.cz

Mr Martin ZIZKA, Department of Fisheries, Game Management and Beekeeping, Ministry of Agriculture, Tesnov 17, CZ-117 05 PRAGUE 1.
Tel: +420 221 812 826. Fax : +420 221 812 980. E-mail: martin.zizka@mze.cz or zizkam@mze.cz

FRANCE / FRANCE

Mr Paul HAVET, Conseiller technique auprès du Directeur général, Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, 5, rue Saint-Thibault, Saint-Benoist, BP 20, F-78610 AUFFARGIS.
Tel : +33 130 46 60 41. Fax : +33 130 46 60 60. E-mail: paul.havet@oncfs.gouv.fr

GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE

Mr Frank TOTTEWITZ, Bundesforschungsanstalt für Forst- und Holzwirtschaft, Institut für Waldökologie und Waldinventuren, Alfred-Möller-Straße 1, D-16225 EBERSWALDE
Tel. +49 3334-65 314 . Fax : +49 3334 65 354. E-mail: ftottewitz@bfh-inst7.fh-eberswalde.de

ICELAND / ISLANDE

Mr Áki ÁRMANN JONSSON, Director of Wildlife Management Division, Environment and Food Agency, Umhverfisstofnun, Borgir v. Norðurslóð, 600 AKUREYRI.
Tel: +354 460 7900. Fax: +354 460 7901. E-mail: aki@ust.is. Web : www.ust.is

LIECHTENSTEIN / LIECHTENSTEIN

Mr Michael FASEL, Amt für Wald, Natur und Landschaft, Abteilungsleiter Natur und Landschaft , Leiter Naturkundliche Sammlung, Dr. Grass Strasse 10, FL 9490 VADUZ
Tel +423 - 236 64 05. Fax +423 - 236 64 11. E-mail michael.fasel@awnl.llv.li
web Landesverwaltung: www.llv.li.

NORWAY / NORVÈGE

Mr Øystein STØRKERSEN, Seniorrådgiver/Senior Advisor, Direktoratet for naturforvaltning, Directorate for Nature Management , N-7485 TRONDHEIM
Tel. +47-7358 0500. Fax: +47-7358 0501 or 7358 0505. E-mail: oystein.storkersen@dirnat.no.
Web: www.dirnat.no

Mr Scott BRAINERD, Ph.D., Advisor on Wildlife Management and International Cooperation, NJFF/Norwegian Association of Hunters & Anglers, Box 94, N-1378 NESBRU
Tel.: +47 66 79 22 39. Fax: +47 66 90 15 87. E-mail: scott.brainerd@njff.no

OBSERVERS / OBSERVATEURS

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

Ms Nicola J CROCKFORD, European Wildlife Treaties Adviser, The RSPB - BirdLife in the UK, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1767 680551 or +44 (0)1767 683355 extension 2072. Fax: +44 (0)1767 685192
(or +44 (0)1767 692365)? E-mail: nicola.crockford@rspb.org.uk. web: www.rspb.org.uk

CIC - INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR GAME AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Mr. Christoph SCHÜLE, CIC International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, Aweiler Steige 9, D-72660 BEUREN, Germany.
Tel.: +49 172 841 44 48. Fax: +49 702 584 05 07. E-Mail: christoph.schuele@gmx.de.

FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING AND CONSERVATION OF THE EU (FACE)

Mr Yves LECOCQ, Secretary General FACE, Rue F. Pelletier 82, B-1030 BRUXELLES, Belgique.
Tel : +32 2 732 69 00. Fax : +32 2 732 70 72. E-mail : ylecocq@face-europe.org

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY & CONSERVATION OF BIRDS OF PREY / ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FAUCONNERIE ET DE LA CONSERVATION DES OISEAUX DE PROIE

Mr Christian de COUNE, Expert, Le Cochetay, Thier des Forges, 85, B-4140 GOMZE ANDOUMONT, Belgium.
Tel : +32 476 46 14 24. Fax: +32 4368 40 15. E-mail: christian.decoune@belgacom.net

CONSULTANT / CONSULTANT

Mr Massimo MARRACCI, ANUU Migratoristi, Via Baschenis 11/c I-124122 BERGAMO / Italy.
Tel:+39 02 774 048 75. E-mail: m.marracci@provincia.milano.it

INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES

Mme Sylvie BOUX

Mr William VALK, 2, rue des Jardins, Duntzenheim, F-67270 HOCHFELDEN, France.
Tel: +33 3 88 70 59 02. Fax: +33 3 88 70 50 98. E-mail: william.valk@wanadoo.fr

Mrs Jennifer GRIFFITH, 2, rue des Jardins, Duntzenheim, F-67270 HOCHFELDEN, France.
Tel: +33 3 88 70 59 02. Fax: +33 3 88 70 50 98. E-mail: ...

SECRETARIAT / SECRÉTARIAT

**Council of Europe / Conseil de l'Europe, Directorate of Culture and Cultural and
Natural Heritage / Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine culturel et naturel,
F-67075 STRASBOURG CEDEX, France**
Tel : +33 3 88 41 20 00. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51

Ms Carolina LASÉN DÍAZ, Administrator of the Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division /
Administrateur de la Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique
Tel : +33 390 21 56 79. Fax : +33 388 41 37 51. E-mail : carolina.lasen-diaz@coe.int

Mrs Françoise BAUER, Principal administrative assistant / Assistante administrative principale, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique
Tel : +33 3 88 41 22 61. Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : francoise.bauer@coe.int

Mrs Véronique de CUSSAC, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division / Division du Patrimoine naturel et de la Diversité biologique
Tel : +33 3 88 41 34 76 Fax : +33 3 88 41 37 51. E-mail : veronique.decusac@coe.int



Appendix 2

Working Group on the elaboration of a Chart on Hunting and Biodiversity

Strasbourg, Room 8 (11 September 2006)

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Introduction by the Secretariat (background and previous meeting of the Working Group)
4. Presentation of the first draft of the European Charter by the consultant
5. Discussion of the different topics raised
6. Next steps
7. Any other business

Appendix 3



Strasbourg, 25 August 2006
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

26th meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2006

**PRELIMINARY DRAFT
EUROPEAN CHARTER
ON HUNTING AND BIODIVERSITY**

*Document prepared by
Mr Massimo MARRACCI
ANUU Migratoristi, Via Baschenis 11/c I-124122 BERGAMO / Italy*

1. BACKGROUND

In December 2005 the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe decided to set up a group of experts consisting of specialists in nature conservation and hunting and representatives of NGOs competent in this field. The Standing Committee adopted that decision pursuant to Recommendation 1689 on hunting and Europe's environmental balance of 23 November 2004 by the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, recommending that the Committee of Ministers "draw up a European charter on hunting, as a guide setting out common principles and good practices for hunting, particularly for the organisation of hunting tourism on the continent".

For that purpose, the Committee set up a working group whose participants contributed their ideas and experiences in the sectors of nature conservation, rural socio-economic activities and sustainable hunting. The outcome is the present report forming the preliminary draft of a Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity.

1.1 The context of the Bern Convention

It is important to recall at this point the principles and obligations relating to wildlife conservation set out in the Bern Convention and binding its 45 Contracting Parties. These principles and obligations affirm the necessity of preserving all occurrences of wildlife, but also the human activities compatible, or to be made compatible, with this protection requirement. In particular, reference should be made to the following provisions:

- Preamble to the Convention: "*wild flora and fauna constitute a natural heritage of aesthetic, scientific, cultural, recreational, economic and intrinsic value that needs to be preserved and handed on to future generations*"
- Preamble: "*conservation of natural habitats is a vital component of the protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna*"
- Article 1.1: "*The aims of this Convention are to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those species and habitats whose conservation requires the co-operation of several States, and to promote such co-operation*"
- Article 2: "*The Contracting Parties shall take requisite measures to maintain the population of wild flora and fauna at, or adapt it to, a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements and the needs of sub-species, varieties or forms at risk locally*"
- Article 3.3: "*Each Contracting Party shall promote education and disseminate general information on the need to conserve species of wild flora and fauna and their habitats*"
- Article 4.1: "*Each Contracting Party shall take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of the wild flora and fauna species, especially those specified in Appendices I and II, and the conservation of endangered natural habitats*"
- Articles 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.a), b) and c) (exploitation of the wild fauna species listed in Appendix III)
- Articles 8 and 9.1 and 9.2 (exceptions relating to the wild fauna species in Appendices II and III)
- Article 10.1 and 10.2 (special provisions for the protection of migratory species)
- Article 11.1.a and 11.1.b (co-operation between the Contracting Parties to enhance the effectiveness of measures taken under other articles of the Convention); 11.2.a) and b) (concerning the reintroduction of native species and strict control over the introduction of non-native species).

These principles and obligations under the Bern Convention must invariably be taken into consideration in the management of any wild fauna species whatsoever and in physical planning generally and in respect of habitats.

1.2 The regional context: the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU)

The Council of Europe has already concerned itself with hunting in the past, both as such and in terms of its relationship with other human activities in a socio-cultural framework. Reference is made especially to the following policy statements (in chronological order):

1. *Recommendation No. R (85) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the training of hunters* – adopted on 23 September 1985;
2. *Resolution 882 (1987) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the importance of shooting for Europe's rural regions* – adopted on 1 July 1987;
3. *Recommendation No. R (94) 7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a general policy for sustainable and environment-friendly tourism development* – adopted on 5 September 1994;
4. *Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe Core Group position statement on the use of hunting, and lethal control, as means of managing large carnivore populations* – prepared for the 22nd meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee, 2-5 December 2002;
5. *Recommendation 1689 (2004) of the Parliamentary Assembly on hunting and Europe's environmental balance* – adopted on 23 November 2004.

As to the EU, the following initiatives should be emphasised:

- EU/DG Environment: *Guidance document on hunting under Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds – with BirdLife International and FACE* – March 2004;
- *Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC – with the “Forum des Utilisateurs de la Nature”*;
- Agreement between BirdLife International and FACE on Directive 79/409/EE – in the context of the SHI/Sustainable Hunting Initiative – October 2004.

1.3 The global context

As regards the governing principles of rational use, sustainability of human activities in the wild and conservation of biodiversity, the fundamental references are found in the following texts :

Ramsar Convention: *Recommendation 4.10 on guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept* – adopted by the 4th Conference of Contracting Parties, 1990

Resolution 5.6 on the wise use of wetlands – adopted by the 5th Conference of Contracting Parties, 1993;

World Conservation Union/IUCN: *IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources*, adopted at the World Conservation Congress in Amman in 2000;

Convention on Biological Diversity/CBD: Article 6 *General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use* – Article 10 *Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity*;

The 14 Addis Ababa principles and guidelines for the sustainable use of biodiversity – adopted by the Conference of the Parties by Decision VII/12 – 2004 (see below);;

Convention on Migratory Species/CMS: document - *CMS and the 2010 Biodiversity Targets – Background*, presented at the 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties, 20-25 November 2005;

Document *Application to the Convention on Migratory Species of the Addis Ababa principles and guidelines for the sustainable use of biodiversity* – presented at the 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties, 20-25 November 2005;

Resolution on Sustainable Use – adopted by the 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties, 20-25 November 2005;

Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds/AEWA.

It is expedient to include in the proposed Charter these 14 Principles fundamental to the international actions and programmes aimed at averting loss of biodiversity:

- Practical principle 1: Supportive policies, laws, and institutions are in place at all levels of governance and there are effective linkages between these levels.
- Practical principle 2: Recognising the need for a governing framework consistent with international and national laws, local users of biodiversity components should be sufficiently empowered and supported by rights to be responsible and accountable for use of the resources concerned.
- Practical principle 3: International, national policies, laws and regulations that distort markets, which contribute to habitat degradation or otherwise generate perverse incentives that undermine conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, should be identified and removed or mitigated.
- Practical principle 4: Adaptive management should be practiced, based on:
a) Science and traditional and local knowledge;
b) Iterative, timely and transparent feedback derived from monitoring the use, environmental, socio-economic impacts, and the status of the resource being used; and
c) Adjusting management based on timely feedback from the monitoring procedures.
- Practical principle 5: Sustainable use management goals and practices should avoid or minimise adverse impacts on ecosystem services, structure and functions as well as other components of ecosystems.
- Practical principle 6: Interdisciplinary research into all aspects of the use and conservation of biological diversity should be promoted and supported.
- Practical principle 7: The spatial and temporal scale of management should be compatible with the ecological and socio-economic scales of the use and its impact.
- Practical principle 8: There should be arrangements for international co-operation where multinational decision-making and co-ordination are needed.
- Practical principle 9: An interdisciplinary, participatory approach should be applied at the appropriate levels of management and governance related to use.
- Practical principle 10: International, national policies should take into account:
(a) Current and potential values derived from the use of biological diversity;
(b) Intrinsic and other non-economic values of biological diversity and
(c) Market forces affecting the values and use.
- Practical principle 11: Users of biodiversity components should seek to minimise waste and adverse environmental impact and optimise benefits from use.

Practical principle 12: The needs of indigenous and local communities who live with and are affected by the use and conservation of biological diversity, along with their contributions to its conservation and sustainable use, should be reflected in the equitable distribution of the benefits from the use of those resources.

Practical principle 13: The costs of management and conservation of biological diversity should be internalised within the area of management and reflected in the distribution of the benefits from use.

Practical principle 14: Education and public awareness programmes on conservation and sustainable use should be implemented and more effective methods of communication should be developed between and among stakeholders and managers.

2. OBJECTIVES

In the framework of the common principles for sustainable hunting, the good practices and the codes of conduct for hunting and organisation of game tourism in Europe, this Charter pursues the following objectives:

- **1st objective:** to organise hunting more and more as an instrument for the preservation of biodiversity, since it is already a basic factor of rural socio-economic development in several European regions;
- **2nd objective:** to promote, establish and disseminate the principle of “*sustainable hunting*” at all levels;
- **3rd objective:** to induce the various categories of European citizens (“*nature users*”) to work together towards goals of public benefit, for example hunters with ornithologists to create a mixed pan-European network with the task of monitoring migratory bird populations along the major migration routes;
- **4th objective:** to encourage bilateral agreements between member countries for mutual recognition of national hunting permits, so that it is possible to “harmonise” these with each other;
- **5th objective:** to commend the Charter and its principles to the competent authorities, the hunting associations and hunters generally, the tourist industry and all those active at whatever level in the sustainable use of natural resources.

NB each addressee, particularly those identified under the 5th objective, should, in relation to this Charter, perform certain actions to assist in tangibly applying the stated principles at different levels – which signifies that the governments will need to take charge, from the legislative and/or regulatory standpoint if possible or necessary, of the practical implementation of objectives 1, 2 and 4. Biodiversity managers (broadly speaking, hunters, conservationists, farmers, foresters, falconers and anglers) would be made responsible for implementing objectives 1 and 3, with a supporting role in objective 2 as regards the communication sector; landowners and foresters will be able to interact for the purposes of objectives 1 and 3; the players in all other sectors concerned – tourism, industry, etc. – should if possible contribute to the implementation of objectives 1 and 2.

3. CONSIDERATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

In this context it seems appropriate to work from a few factual observations in order to establish the links between hunting and conservation of biodiversity in Europe.

Indeed, if we begin with the general considerations that hunting is part of the history of mankind, a widespread human activity in all countries and an important aspect of rural traditions and cultures, it may be asserted that hunting can contribute to physical planning generally and in respect of natural habitats and to the management of wildlife as a whole and not just game species, that historically it has prompted a vast amount of scientific and technical endeavour, research and studies relating to

knowledge, monitoring, management and conservation of wild fauna, and lastly that it provides direct employment for over 120 000 persons in Europe.

Nor should we forget the nutritional aspect, in the sense that the *product* of hunting, perhaps the best illustration of the *rational use* side of it, is indeed game-derived meat (in Germany alone, more than 35 000 tonnes per year) – of high quality and “biologically” produced.

3.1 “Management-oriented hunting”

This, then, is a complex field, and above all an especially real-life one in the non-urbanised areas of the continent, that is in the very areas where action is needed to avert the loss of biodiversity between now and 2010 and beyond. In that sense, the interest and worth of the approach that typifies “management-oriented hunting” are no doubt greatest in meeting this challenge: suffice it to recall that this style of hunting entails the sustainable use of natural resources – harvesting the interest and leaving the capital intact – which was defined by IUCN in its Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources (adopted in October 2000 in Amman, Jordan) as “*an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them*”, if it is genuinely sustainable.

This is a most important assertion which moreover follows from plain common sense because it is in the best interests of those holding any asset whatsoever to preserve it in order to continue deriving benefits from it over time. In this instance, the most significant argument is constituted by the fact that to continue benefiting from natural resources, habitats and wild fauna alike, they must be managed with balance and care. This fundamental principle can be applied to the direct utilisation through hunting of all game species, from small to large game animals, from waterfowl to large carnivores, and moreover to all programmes for the physical planning of rural and natural environments carried out with a view to the practice of hunting (upkeep and improvement of wetlands, game crops and wildlife setasides, to mention but a few of the commonest examples), which become very useful indeed even for protected species. These practical applications occur in several European countries, from west to east and from north to south of the continent, at different levels of development and financing according to their environmental, wildlife, rural, socio-economic and tax-related characteristics.

The application of this management principle to populations of species is furthermore observed in specialised hunting methods such as falconry. As has been frequently asserted and demonstrated by the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, the paramount interest of falconers is to keep populations of quarry species at a favourable conservation level, and thus to use them in a sustainable way – a sustainable use which is almost assured by the fact that this type of hunting unfolds like the natural challenge between the bird of prey and its quarry. A close concomitant of the sustainable use of wild fauna is the upkeep of the natural habitats of predators and prey alike, as the basis for continuing the activity. Falconers’ contribution to the defence of biodiversity – carried on even through husbandry and breeding in captivity of falcons and eagles – is thus clear and unarguable enough to be mentioned in this context.

Another meaningful example at the national level is provided by the involvement of hunters in biodiversity management in Norway. As the Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers cogently explains, from its inception in 1871 this organisation has based its activities on the principle of rational use of wildlife and fish. Hunters in particular have a very long record of involvement in managing biodiversity because on the whole they are aware that “harvesting” natural resources is a privilege carrying considerable responsibilities as “stewards” of species and habitats.

Furthermore, hunting distinguishes itself as a necessary instrument for suitable population management of the various species, cervidae in particular, to keep them at a proper level in relation to ecological requirements – protection of flora and of certain habitats, and social needs – preservation of crops, tree plantations and properties. The same doctrine of preserving ecological balance concerns the control of non-native predators, which invariably (not only in Norway but everywhere) bring about sometimes significant imbalances whose reduction or removal is one of a serious, responsible manager’s duties.

3.2 “Tourist hunting”

While the foregoing considerations relate to the positive effects of “management-oriented hunting”, there is another interpretation of hunting activity which gives local populations advantages connected directly with the benefits for wildlife and habitats: “tourist hunting”. The concept is indeed somewhat relative as almost every European hunter can become a “hunting tourist”, even inside his own country: there are those hunting in their own territory who are invited to hunt in another, those hunting in their own territory who are invited to hunt in another region of their own country, and lastly those going to hunt in a different country from their own who personify the hunting tourist in the broadest sense.

It is irrefutable that for many countries whose economy is undergoing transition, hunting, in particular the hunting engaged in by foreign hunters, constitutes a source of income that can help co-finance rural development as well as wildlife conservation programmes. This principle of the role of hunting for the rural development of different European countries was introduced for the first time by Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 882 on the importance of shooting for Europe's rural regions, adopted on 1 July 1987. Seventeen years later, it was taken up in the aforementioned Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1689. One of the notable lines of argument in this text is: *“For some time, there has been a shift in the behaviour of hunters towards practices that are more respectful of nature, game and habitats, which also contributes to the preservation of rural lifestyles, particularly where farming and forestry are concerned”*.

But while this positive feature has been officially recognised, it is also incontestable besides that hunting tourism, especially the type carried on abroad, must comply with certain major principles of sustainable use and good governance and, before all else, with the hunting laws and regulations in the country or region of destination, as well as with the international rules introduced by conventions (Bern Convention, CITES, CMS, CBD, etc.) and the agreements, while bearing in mind the country's or region's characteristic hunting practices and traditions. With regard to this imperative, it is further observed in the aforesaid Recommendation 1689 that *“hunting may serve to regulate ecosystems but may also harm them if badly managed. For that reason the Assembly considers that, from the environmental point of view, it is important to control the impact of hunting on natural resources, in keeping with the principle of sustainable development ...”*.

3.3 “Educated hunting”

The concept that wildlife and natural habitats are a common heritage and a shared responsibility is today well-propagated in European public opinion and above all well-accepted by the organisations and associations of “nature users”. It therefore rests with the competent authorities - whether national, regional or local - to create and maintain in consultation and collaboration with the organisations representing hunters an appropriate legal and administrative framework to ensure that sustainability is characterises the use of biological resources by hunting. It would accordingly be proper, where there are none, to provide for measures to inform, train, educate and raise the awareness of all players concerned, viz. hunting associations, managers of land, farming associations and travel agencies.

In the light of this need, a telling message sent out by the Council of Europe as early as the 1980s was Recommendation No. R (85) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the training of hunters. In this text, the Committee of Ministers recommended that governments of member states consider the desirability (where it was not already the case) of subjecting the issue of a game licence to the passing of an examination taking into account the suggestions appended to the recommendation itself and encouraging hunters to perfect their knowledge of management of fauna and its habitats. The Committee of Ministers further recommended that member states assign to hunting associations the task of setting up a code of conduct for hunters, on the basis of the suggestions given in Appendix II to the recommendation.

Now, it must be said that in the great majority of European countries the issuance of the hunting permit is subject to an examination - sometimes purely theoretical but in most cases theoretical and practical. And, in the few countries where no compulsory examination is prescribed, like the United Kingdom, other machinery has been established to ensure adequate training of hunters. Normally there is no risk of hunters being ill-prepared, but doubtless any move to better the position is welcome with

due regard to the assessments made by the competent public authorities and the organisations representing hunters. Concerning the behaviour code, which would have positive effects, particularly on the maintenance and enhancement of the “sustainability” dimension of hunting, there are of course rules of conduct that hold good for all European hunters. Most of these rules or criteria are elementary, like compliance with the regulations in force, correct identification of game and non-game species and application of safety rules. Others would be worth encouraging more, such as hunters’ involvement in management of species and their habitats, participation in scientific research and study programmes, and acceptance of a dialogue with society, the nature conservation movement, etc. All these aspects should obviously take into account the sometimes very different attitudes and traditions stemming from each country’s characteristic socio-cultural attributes. At the time, Recommendation No. R (85) 17 set out in Appendix II a whole series of quite detailed guidelines that remain valid even today.

Reference should be made here to the specific example of the Code of Conduct adopted as early as 1972 by the Nordic Congress of Hunters, set out in 12 points which each hunter should know and practice while engaged in hunting. The Code provides hunters with rules of “good behaviour” to follow: updated knowledge of applicable rules and legislation; huntable wildlife species and their habitats; recognition of protected species; functioning and limitations of sporting guns and ammunition; fauna management; importance of regular coaching in the handling of firearms and observance of safety rules; observance of the rules for sparing the game any suffering; refusal of hunting evaluated by the number of kills; proper processing and storage of game meat; communication of hunting bag figures to the competent authorities; respect for other hunters and for the dogs used; development of good relations with other users; respect for landowners and their demands; respect for the non-hunting public; participation in physical planning and management activities. On balance, it is an application, in a clearly defined bio-geographical region, of the principles introduced by the aforesaid Recommendation of 1985.

3.4 “Shared hunting”

During its last 20 years of activity, the Council of Europe has responded to considerable pressure to put into actual practice the principle of “sustainable hunting” in the European countries – or else to support it where already practiced by hunters. More recently, initiatives with the same aim have been adopted by other European institutions: for example, the European Union’s SHI/Sustainable Hunting Initiative which reached its fifth anniversary with remarkable results, one of the most significant being the signature in October 2004 of the Agreement on Directive 79/409/EEC between BirdLife International and FACE – in the context of the SHI/Sustainable Hunting Initiative (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU), under the aegis of the then Environment Commissioner, Ms Margot Wallström.

In the Agreement, the parties contemplate a series of objectives to consolidate the principle of “sustainable hunting”, in particular dialogue and co-operation between the two organisations in order to work together for the conservation of biodiversity and for the rational use of natural resources. Finally the spirit of this Agreement can be detected in Resolution 882 (1987), in which the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly invited the governments of member states (paragraph 6.c): “*to promote dialogue among those who go shooting, farmers, foresters, holiday-makers and environmentalists, so that each group realises the benefits to be had from the closest possible co-operation*”.

3.5 “Scientific hunting”

Still other actions can and must bring about this commitment to dialogue at the European level and of course at the level of each member country. One of the principal matters on which hunters, conservation organisations and European institutions can work together is the collection and analysis of hunting bag figures, particularly for migratory birds.

At the start of June 2006, following a conference held in Athens in the framework of the EU’s SHI with the participation of the European Commissioner for the Environment Mr Stavros Dimas, FACE, BirdLife International and several governmental and non-governmental representatives, the ARTEMIS programme was officially launched. The objectives of this database are to centralise and analyse in a co-ordinated way the quantitative and qualitative information on hunting bags already

collected in many European countries (for example Iceland and Norway but also Greece, Italy and France), to be completed by new data from other countries wishing to be associated with this programme. The ARTEMIS stock of data, gathered and analysed according to a common methodology, will be a very useful source of important elements for rational, sustainable wildlife management in Europe. A collection of hunting bag data has already been made.

This commitment closely matches one of the possible responses to the Parliamentary Assembly's call in its Recommendation 1689, asking the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to "*set up a mixed pan-European network, made up of hunters and ornithologists, with the task of monitoring migratory bird populations along the major migration routes*".

It is fitting to point out here that today several forms of hunting are already subject to a *predictive* scientific management approach (fixing of the number of specimens to be taken and of their respective gender if possible, on the basis of counts that establish the density and composition of each population over a given area): selective shooting of large game (stag, roe deer, chamois, fallow deer, boar, mountain sheep) in the countries of Eastern Europe or the Alpine countries (France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Slovenia) as well as in Italy's Apennines; hunting of black grouse, Greek partridge and red grouse in the Alps, and hunting of other small sedentary game species (common partridge, hare) locally in the countries of Central and Western Europe.

The other scientific approach, *retrospective* in this case, precisely corresponds to the analysis of hunting bag data discussed in Athens in June 2006. In Iceland for example, after each hunting season closes, the Environment and Food Agency (Wildlife Management Division) directly stores all data on kills in a digitalised database. The bulk of the correspondence between this Division and the 19 200 or so Icelandic hunters is carried on via its web site with automatic message formats. Each hunter has a password for accessing the system not only to send in his bag figures but also for any procedure concerning the hunting permit. This electronic "hunting chart" system was introduced in 1999 and is now used by most of the country's hunters. Concerning bag data, they are gathered for all huntable species in Iceland, also recording the days of hunting employed, in order to evaluate the "hunting effort" in the six different game regions on the national territory. Submission of data is anonymous, as a result of which it has been possible to observe a high degree of transparency and honesty among hunters in the transmission of information. Although this system would be harder to manage at the level of a larger country with more hunters than Iceland, it is at all events a good standardised method for speedy, effective gathering of data useful in assessing the impact of hunting on wildlife populations and planning their management.

4. PROPOSAL

The pillar in which the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity should be founded is rational and sustainable use of the renewable "wild fauna" resource, to encourage its dissemination and application in all European countries, which could involve the following aspects or segments:

1. Training and informing hunters as regards "sustainable hunting";
2. Hunters' involvement in physical planning generally and in respect of natural habitats, also benefiting the rural economies concerned;
3. Hunters' involvement in management of game species, also benefiting non-game species;
4. Hunters' collaboration with farmers, foresters and anglers to fulfil the actions under items 2 and 3 above;
5. Hunters' collaboration with researchers and nature conservationists to improve wildlife studies and monitoring, particularly concerning migratory birds;
6. Development of each action under the umbrella of the principles set out in the Community Directives and the international conventions on sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, and having regard to the other initiatives mounted in this field, such as the SHI/Sustainable Hunting Initiative launched by the European Commission.

The guidelines given in this Charter and intended to order all action by representatives of nature users for the conservation of biodiversity in accordance with the six requirements above and in co-operation with the governments of the European countries, might be as follows:

- **Hunters, environmentalists, farmers, foresters, falconers and anglers (hereinafter referred to as *biodiversity managers*) recognise the value of a combined effort to promote the strategic priorities of conservation, such as working together towards the goal of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and for the protection of sites;**
- *The biodiversity managers* stress the need to advance spatial planning and management through their own fundamental contribution and that of their representatives at the national, regional and local levels. They also support the establishment of the Emerald/Natura 2000 Network and recognise the importance of effective protection and active management of habitats for the conservation of biodiversity. Hunters, environmentalists, farmers and foresters emphasise that in principle the designation of Emerald/Natura 2000 sites is not incompatible with hunting and acknowledge that properly managed hunting within Emerald/Natura 2000 sites can be carried on or introduced in so far as compatible with the objectives of preservation of the site;
- *The biodiversity managers* agree as to the desirability of concluding local, regional or national agreements on hunting practices in order to open constructive dialogue between local players, and of making a rational assessment of the risks and requisite measures. The partners or their national members are free to pursue more ambitious objectives for biodiversity, sustainable hunting and conservation of wild fauna species;
- *The biodiversity managers* consider that rational assessment of the risks and requisite measures, including those to be adopted through legislation or other rules on hunting, should be based on the latest and most reliable data, especially regarding the level of populations of the various wild fauna species and hunting activity. Collection of hunting bag statistics, and their scientific interpretation and proper use, are necessary;
- *The biodiversity managers* issue an appeal to the competent authorities to draw up, adopt and bring into force management plans for species whose conservation status is considered unfavourable;
- *The biodiversity managers* issue an appeal to the competent authorities to make the appropriate moves to ensure compliance with the entire system of regulations on conservation of wild fauna species, particularly through proper enforcement but also by means of initiatives to educate and raise the awareness of the categories of citizens concerned. They offer their assistance for this purpose;
- *The biodiversity managers* request that lead shot for hunting be banned from all wetlands throughout Europe as soon as possible. They also stress the risks arising from the release into the natural environment of non-native species and sub-species of wild animals;
- *The biodiversity managers* agree to carry on a regular dialogue for bilateral consensus-finding and to meet for this purpose whenever such a meeting is deemed useful or necessary to deal with a specific matter. They will also exchange information, publications, etc. and promote this dialogue among their national members;
- *The biodiversity managers* also agree to open a dialogue in order to introduce programmes and initiatives for the training of hunters in accordance with the principle of sustainable hunting;
- *The biodiversity managers* agree to work together to further, in conjunction with the operators in this sector, hunting tourism practices complying with the principles of sustainable use and good governance of habitats and species.

5. CONCLUSION

Today the necessity of preserving biodiversity has been understood and is shared almost universally in Europe. There is certainly no lack of legal instruments, either at international or at European level. Furthermore, since the rural environment is Europe's most important, the traditional activities that typify it – hunting included – must be preserved or, preferably, rural management

strategies should be put in place, such as can rely on their accumulated experience and professionalism, using them to further the practical application of the idea of “sustainability” of human action. The Council of Europe has often stressed this need and wishes once again to advocate the emergence of a partnership among nature users so that they may give the governments the benefit of their combined readiness to help and, finally, work together for nature.

Appendix 4

Proposal for a revised Outline of the Charter

Scott Brainerd, Norway

1. INTRODUCTION

- Why is there a need for a Charter?
- What is its intent? Scope? Target group?
- What is the primary emphasis – hunting as an activity or management of biodiversity?
- What elements of this topic NEED to be addressed, and why?
- What elements of this topic have been addressed previously in other documents?
- How will this document be used? What should be accomplished?

2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Main goals:

Goal 1: The Charter will serve as a set of guidelines for ensuring the sustainability of hunting in Europe. (*The main aim of Bern Convention is the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats. Hunting must be considered in this context.*)

Goal 2: The Charter will recommend guidelines for sustainable hunting tourism in Europe (and perhaps relative to Europeans hunting in developing countries?).

Goal 3: The Charter will suggest ways of coordinating the requirements for hunting within member states (i.e. standards for hunter training, education and licensing) with focus on sustainability, ethics and skills.

Objectives associated with Goals:

A. “Sustainable hunting” -

Definition: “IUCN Sustainable Use Specialist Group definition : « Using renewable natural resources sustainably means doing so in such a way that does not threaten a species by over-use, yet it will optimise benefits to both the environment and human needs. Sustainably using natural resources, including plants, forests, fish, and other wildlife, is an important conservation tool when addressing the increasing pressures on nature by people”.

The Charter should:

1. give guidelines for sustainable hunting practices;
2. encourage hunter involvement in monitoring and research efforts;
3. promote cooperation between stakeholders in biodiversity management (landowners, conservationists, government agencies, hunter’s organisations);

B. “Hunting tourism”

Definition: Hunting tourism should be defined as incorporating the defining elements of tourism, including: 1) travel to and from a particular destination; 2) the presence of a tourist service industry (outfitters, guides, game farms, etc.); 3) the exchange of money for services; and 4) aspects of leisure and recreation.

The Charter should:

1. ensure that hunting tourism is conducted in a sustainable manner;

2. promote forms of hunting tourism that provide local communities with economic incentives to conserve wildlife and biodiversity;
3. recommend a code of conduct for tour operators and European hunters that engage their services;

C. On standards for European hunters

The Charter should:

1. encourage hunter education and information measures;
2. promote safe and sound hunting practices;
3. promote measures which increase proficiency in the use of firearms and traps;
4. emphasize the need for hunters to be knowledge about wildlife (including non-game) species and their requirements, as well as the basic principles regarding biodiversity conservation;
5. stimulate measures which allow for free movement of hunters between countries (?).

3. REVIEW OF PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS AND CHALLENGES

This section should closely parallel the objectives. Relevant policies and principles should be referred and expounded upon in their proper context relative to the above points, and not merely listed. References to documents and literature should be given in appendices, preferably with links to online documents.

1. Sustainable hunting
2. Hunting tourism
3. Standards for European hunters

4. CHARTER GUIDELINES.

1. Sustainable hunting
2. Hunting tourism
3. Standards for European hunters

5. IMPLEMENTATION

How the document will be used in practice.