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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

36th meeting
Strasbourg, 15-18 November 2016

Specific Sites - Files open

**Akamas Peninsula
(Cyprus)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus*

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UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2016)

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**COMPLAINT NO. 1995/6: CASE-FILE OPEN ON CYPRUS: AKAMAS PENINSULA
GOVERNMENT REPORT**

The Republic of Cyprus:

- fully understands the purpose of the Case-file system and the role of the Standing Committee (SC), as it is carried out according to its Rules of Procedures,
- fully recognizes the need to protect and manage species and habitats to ensure their conservation,
- considers that the detailed report submitted by the Government of Cyprus to the SC in May of this year is still valid and should be considered as an essential document for the overall assessment of the case-file,
- takes note of the Report prepared by Dr. Paolo Casale [document T-PVS/Files (2016) 44],
- takes note of the new draft recommendation prepared by the SC [document T-PVS/Files (2016) 26E]
- assures the SC that the goal is to reach the best possible solution in the area of Akamas, to allow for the protection of nature and its co-existence with human activity, and
- assures the SC that all efforts will be made for closing this case-file as soon as possible.

INTRODUCTION

This file was opened in 1996 and the issues that arise, primarily concern the need for the management, protection and conservation of the marine turtles, *Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*, and their nesting sites in the Akamas peninsula and “Limni” area.

Since the opening of the file, Cyprus has joined the European Union, thus being obligated to fully implement EU legislation, including the Habitats and Birds Directives, two pieces of legislation that comprise the cornerstone for the effort of the EU to protect and conserve nature and wildlife.

A significant part of the Akamas peninsula, as well as the full 10km shoreline (incl. marine areas) from Polis Chrysochous to Gialia (including “Limni” beach) have been designated as Sites of Community Interest (SCI) [Chersonisos Akama-CY4000010 & Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001]. A significant part of the Akamas peninsula has also been designated as a Special Protection Area (Zoni Eidikis Prostasias Chersonisos Akama-CY4000023), for the protection of avian fauna.

NEW DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

The Republic of Cyprus welcomes the new draft Recommendation, to replace Recommendation No.63 (1997), which needed to be re-evaluated taking into account the progress made over the years in maintaining and improving the conservation status of Akamas peninsula and Chrysochou Bay.

The draft recommendation, as modified by the Republic of Cyprus, can be seen in **Annex I** of this Report. An electronic version, with track-changes, is also provided with this Report.

Akamas

The Republic of Cyprus recognizes the importance of the study carried out by the World Bank in 1995 and its outcomes and recommendations, many of which have served as a baseline for the decisions implemented over the years in the area of Akamas peninsula. However, taking into consideration all the developments and changes that have taken place in the last 20 years, including the status of Cyprus as a full member of the EU, the socio-economic factors of the particular area of Akamas, the cascading changes regarding the management of the area over the years, it is considered crucial to move forward from this study and support the new and updated outcomes of more recent work.

In 2014 the study for the formulation of a management plan (MP) for the Natura 2000 area “Chersonisos Akama” started and the whole project was finalized in mid-2016.

The main purpose of this study was to provide the authorities with all the relevant information regarding the site, including data on the habitat types (status, location, maps, etc) and species (status, locations, etc), identify the major threats and provide a general management framework.

The result of the study was a MP that included a thorough analysis of the needs of the area and valuable suggestions for actions including the protection of habitats and species both terrestrial and marine, the increase of public awareness for the value of the area, as well as actions for integrated management of the forest and the non-forest part.

Additionally, as was previously reported to the SC, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus has designated a wider residential and rural area, around the Akamas Natura site, which is managed via development regulations and restrictions, to ensure the highest possible protection of the peninsula. The “Project Manager for Akamas”, who has been hired since 2012, is working towards this goal and the main part of her obligations has to do with preparing an action plan for sustainable and alternative projects in an effort to economically promote the communities of the Akamas area. Some examples of this is the establishment of cycling routes, restoration of cultural sites within the communities, camping areas, environmental awareness centers, small scale museums and other similar projects. Hence, the management of the Natura 2000 site guided by the current MP coupled with the work conducted by the “Manager of Akamas” appointed by the Government to facilitate and design the development of the neighbouring villages consists the way forward for the management of the whole peninsula in sustainable manner.

Additionally, the latest Ministerial Council Decision on the Natura 2000 area “Chersonisos Akama” resulted in the immediate commencement of the implementation of the protection and promoting actions proposed in the MP, as well as the formulation of a local development plan for the whole area, to establish distinct development zones.

In the same Decision, the Ministerial Council opted for the declaration of the forest and state land (consisting of almost 80% of the Natura 2000 area) within the Natura 2000 site as a National Forest Park.

The National Forest Park has been declared and the actions for its protection and promotion have already been designed and their implementation is expected to begin immediately (within this month).

Turtle Nesting Sites - Lara/Toxeftra and Limni

It is widely accepted that nowadays the most serious threats to marine turtles are not direct threats, like poaching, predation or lack of support for their protection, but indirect, due to population growth and socio-economic approaches that lead to habitat loss and degradation. In this context, marine turtle conservation should not be dealt with as a being apart from society. Marine turtles can thrive only when their ecosystems are healthy and this can be achieved only if the local communities thrive, as well.

The most important nesting beaches in the Mediterranean are located in Greece, Turkey, Libya and Cyprus (Casale et al., 2010). Especially in Greece, Zakynthos and Kyparissia are the two major nesting areas of *Caretta caretta*, with the Gulf of Laganas, presenting one of the highest densities of nests in the world (Margaritoulis et al., 2010). The beaches in the Akamas Peninsula, as well as the

ones in Chrysochou Bay, are considered as important nesting beaches of the Mediterranean, contributing to the conservation of the marine turtles in the area, however it must be noted that their importance does not exceed that of the beaches in Greece and Turkey.

The nesting habitats of Lara and Toxeftra are pristine, well-preserved and adequately monitored and the anthropogenic threats in these areas are insignificant, mainly due to the strong legislative framework enforced on the spot. Predation on nests is also handled effectively via direct protection of the nests and this method will continue to be implemented, as it is highly effective.

The nesting habitat in Limni is in good condition and actions are taken by the competent authorities to improve its status, especially in the last two years, via habitat restoration and elimination of threats, such as predation, use of the beach, vehicle use and other illegal activities, with really high success.

With regards to the need for a coordinated conservation management and protection of nesting beaches, it is emphasized that such an approach has been implemented on all nesting beaches in the areas of the Republic of Cyprus under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus since 1978. More specifically, the yearly Turtle Conservation Project is being implemented in all nesting beaches and aims at:

- a) protecting and managing turtle nesting beaches,
- b) protecting eggs and hatchlings from predation - and human activities,
- c) protecting adult turtles,
- d) monitoring the turtle population and nesting activity in Cyprus and
- e) raising public awareness on turtle conservation.

The Republic of Cyprus fully acknowledges the importance of the Akamas peninsula and Chrysochou Bay nesting beaches in the overall conservation efforts made in the Mediterranean for the protection of sea turtles. It is also fully recognized that efforts and concrete conservation measures and actions must continue to be implemented and revised as to ensure that these beaches maintain their high value for conserving the species.

Limni golf project

Regarding the impacts of the golf project on SCI «Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001», and particularly on Limni beach, the SC has been informed of the on-going legal procedures taken by the European Commission (EC), regarding this site. The SC has also been informed that the Republic was in the process of re-assessing the project, under the scope of the appropriate assessment (AA) provisions of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), by evaluating detailed data and information provided by the project's consultants, local experts brought in by the Environmental Authority (EA), experts from NGOs and last, but not least, the expertise of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research.

During the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and AA procedures, all elements, factors and parameters have been examined thoroughly, including all cumulative effects of the various elements of the project, taking into consideration simultaneously all developments in the area east and west of the project, as well as the zoning provisions of the area. The cumulative effects examined included direct lighting, sky-glow, noise, the existing conditions on and around the nesting beach (Limni), visitation factors, etc.

At this point the Republic would like to emphasize again that the overall assessment was carried out by the EA and that it is indisputably independent. It is a complete misconception that the use of data contained in the EIA and AA studies, carried out by the project's beneficiary, implies that the assessment and final decision of the EA is not independent.

The above mentioned independent assessment produced the Environmental Opinion (EO), which contains strict conditions and prerequisites as to the proper implementation of the project and the enforceability of these conditions to ensure protection of the Natura 2000 site. Some of the conditions for the safeguarding of the nesting beach included are:

- A lighting plan for each residential unit and of each common building of the project will be submitted to the EA for approval, prior to the issuance of a building permit.
- Qualified personnel, employed by the EA specifically for this project, will oversee the proper and full implementation of all the conditions imposed by the EO, until the whole project is completed.
- Although the nearest housing units are at a distance of approx. 200 meters from the nesting beach, a green zone of 20 meters width is required to be created at the edge of each plot, to ensure that there will be no effects from direct lighting.
- The hotel will be low-height, built at a distance of approx. 280 meters from the nesting beach and the three rows of bungalows that were proposed in front of the main building of the hotel were omitted.
- Re-routing of the existing primary road that runs parallel to the coastal line more than 450 inland and in the form of a tunnel to diminish light pollution from this source. Also, re-routing of the existing perpendicular road which ends up in the middle of the nesting beach, to the most eastern boundary of the project, away from the heart of the nesting beach. This new secondary road will be submerged to diminish light pollution from this source as well.
- No organized public beach will be allowed on Limni beach. The EA will ensure that appropriate pathways leading to the beach will be constructed to avoid uncontrolled access to people and vehicles. Additionally, a warden will be employed to strictly supervise and manage the access, especially in the months of May to October, when turtle nesting occurs.

The EO will be an integral part of the authorization of the project issued by the Development Authority and as such will be legally binding for the project's beneficiary.

Given all of the above, it is considered, and conveyed to the EC, that the Republic has fully implemented the provisions of article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, regarding the AA of the project's implications for the site, keeping in mind its conservation objectives, and has agreed to the project after establishing, via modifications, strict conditions and management measures, that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

Given that:

- the status of the case-file is directly related to the implementation of the new Recommendation,
- the Republic has presented the SC with crucial and substantiated modifications to the draft recommendation,
- many points of this draft recommendation deal with the establishment of a management system that will ensure the protection of habitats and species in Akamas,
- developments regarding the management and protection of the Akamas peninsula are currently underway, and
- the procedures regarding the authorization of the golf project adjacent to SCI "Periochi Polis-Gialia" are under evaluation by the EC,

the Republic of Cyprus kindly requests that:

- the SC accepts the proposed modifications presented in Annex I of this Report,
- the SC takes into consideration the recent developments in the Akamas issue,
- the SC acknowledges that there are socio-economic implications arising from the management and protection of the Akamas peninsula
- the SC acknowledges progress made over the years in improving

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESEARCH
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT
NOVEMBER 2016**

- APRIL 2016 -



COMPLAINT NO. 1995/6: CASE-FILE OPEN ON CYPRUS: AKAMAS PENINSULA
GOVERNMENT REPORT

1. SCOPE

The Republic of Cyprus:

- fully understands the purpose of the Case-file system and the role of the Standing Committee (SC), as it is carried out according to its Rules of Procedures,
- fully recognizes the need to protect and manage species and habitats to ensure their conservation,
- recognizes the fact that in recent years no detailed reports have been submitted to the SC, resulting in limited information to allow for the appropriate assessment of the matter by the SC,
- assures the SC that the goal is to reach the best possible solution in the area of Akamas, to allow for the protection of nature and its co-existence with human activity, and
- assures the SC that all efforts will be made for closing this case-file as soon as possible.

The purpose of this Report is to give as much information as possible to the Standing Committee on the progress made in implementing Recommendation No.63 (1997), as well as to provide clarifications for the claims made by the complainant.

2. BACKGROUND

This file was opened in 1996 and the progress made by the Republic of Cyprus in implementing the provisions of Recommendation No. 63 (1997) adopted by the Standing Committee (SC), has been monitored by the SC. The issues that arise, primarily concern the need for the management, protection and conservation of the marine turtles, *Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*, and their nesting sites in the Akamas peninsula and “Limni” area.

Since the opening of the file, Cyprus has joined the European Union, thus being obligated to fully implement EU legislation, including the Habitats and Birds Directives, two pieces of legislation that comprise the cornerstone for the effort of the EU to protect and conserve nature and wildlife.

A significant part of the Akamas peninsula, as well as the full 10km shoreline (incl. marine areas) from Polis Chrisochous to Gialia (including “Limni” beach) have been designated as Sites of Community Interest (SCI) [Chersonisos Akama-CY4000010 & Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001]. A significant part of the Akamas peninsula has also been designated as a Special Protection Area (Zoni Eidikis Prostasias Chersonisos Akama-CY4000023), for the protection of avian fauna.

3. RECOMMENDATION No. 63 (1997)

It is clear to the Republic that the status of the case-file is directly related to the progress made in the implementation of Recommendation No.63 (1997). However, the content of this recommendation

may need to be re-evaluated as some issues may be deemed as obsolete or no longer relevant in light of the EU member-state status of Cyprus.

That said, the ten points included in the Recommendation are quoted and the actions taken (or not) towards their implementation is stated in this section.

1. *«Declare the Akamas peninsula a national park, comprising a marine and a terrestrial part following as far as possible the suggestions of the World Bank study and giving to the beach of Limni and its surrounding land a similar status to the Akamas core area»* - The World Bank Study, although an important work, is now considered outdated. The state forest area of the Akamas peninsula, along with most of the state land, will be declared as a National Park according to the recent decision of the Council of Ministers regarding this issue (January 2016). Following the criteria set by the Habitats Directive a wide area of the peninsula has also been designated as a Natura 2000 site. The area of "Limni" has also been designated as a Natura 2000 site. Both sites are protected under the Directive and relevant national law.
2. *«Freeze planning permission in the whole area covered by the World Bank study (and the area around the Limni beach) - except the villages - till the appropriate conservation measures have been decided, this to avoid the further degradation of the area which is intended to become a national park»* - Within the designated Natura 2000 area of Akamas the zoning that is currently in force includes 95,7% protection zones (no development), 3,6% agricultural zones, 0,5% farming zones and a very small percentage (0,2%) are tourist zones.
3. *«Reinforce the littoral and other relevant laws so as to avoid the establishment of buildings close to the sea line in any part of Akamas and giving priority to development near the villages and "in depth", at suitable distances from the sea in the areas where some development is foreseen by the World Bank report»* - The current legislative regime is considered adequate for the protection of the Natura 2000 area of Akamas. The issuance of a Ministerial Decree will clearly define the conservation measures and actions for the area, as well as set the restrictions and prohibitions for the protection of both the terrestrial and the marine area. This Decree will reinforce all other laws and regulations valid for the area.
4. *«Give, as a matter of urgency, protection status to the beach of Limni and its surroundings by giving it a similar protection as to the Lara-Toxeftra Reserve and the Akamas core area»* - The designation of the Limni area as a Natura 2000 site, is considered as a sufficient regime of protection for the area. The site is closely monitored and the nesting trends are closely recorded. The protection of the site will be completed with the Ministerial Decree expected within 2016.
5. *«Avoid the construction of any new building, road, parking or other facilities in the neighbourhood of the beaches of Lara, Toxeftra or Limni»* - Relevant EU legislation, as well as national legislation and the constitution do not allow for any a priori restrictions for the development of private land. If a project is expected to affect a Natura 2000 site then it must undergo an assessment and then if it is harmful to the site the permit will not be issued. Authorization of roads, buildings and other facilities has been closely monitored and has been restricted in these areas. Illegal activities of this sort are dealt with.
6. *«Abolish the tourist zone near Toxeftra, including it in the neighbouring conservation area, so as to avoid its likely damaging impacts on this area of extraordinary value for green turtle nesting»* - As it is clear on the map attached as Annex I, no tourist zones are affecting the beaches of Lara or Toxeftra. Activities on these beaches are strictly regulated and strict restrictions are in force via the Fisheries Regulations.
7. *«Regulate access of people and vehicles to the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra, avoiding in particular the disturbance caused by mass tourism through "Safari" tours»* - According to the management regulations for Lara-Toxeftra Reserve area, as specified in the Fisheries Regulations, the presence of the public on the beaches at night and driving on the beaches, is prohibited, inter alia, from the 1st of June up to the 30th of September. Monitoring of the area is consistent, however some illegal activity may be present but is being tackled. The matter is expected to improve with the implementation of the Management Plan for Akamas.

8. «Close down illegal restaurants in the neighbourhood of the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra (including Aspros river restaurant)» - There are still some illegal establishments within the designated Natura 2000 area of Akamas, however efforts are ongoing to resolve this issue. The new management regime and local plan are expected to provide new ways to tackle the problem.
9. «Ensure that lights at the recently built Thanos hotel complex avoid photopollution of the beach; ensure that no chairs or parasols are set in the beach which may disturb turtle nesting; avoid water sports and mechanical cleaning of the beach» In respect to the potential disturbance of turtle nesting by the Thanos hotel complex, this was addressed in our letter dated 19.3.2014. The data clearly shows that the nests of the Loggerhead turtles are increasing, while the nesting of Green turtles is consistent. The beach is monitored by the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research and the wider area is also closely monitored by the Department of Environment.
10. «Give protection to the seagrass communities in the Akamas-Limni area on which *Chelonia mydas* feeds» - The *Posidonia* sea beds of the island have been mapped and the areas designated for their protection are considered adequate. The EC evaluation considers the habitat as sufficient and in excellent condition. *Posidonia* meadows are protected from trawling, while, in general, protective measures are undertaken through environmental impact assessment procedures before any activity is carried out in the sea. Moreover, based on the monitoring program implemented under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) for the 4 Biological Quality Elements (BQEs), including the BQE - Angiosperms (*Posidonia oceanica*), the ecological status of Akamas is classified as high.

4. CLARIFICATIONS FOR CLAIMS MADE BY COMPLAINANT

The Republic of Cyprus fully respects the right of the NGOs to express their views freely in all forums; however that does not mean that those views should be or are accepted. That said this chapter of the report aims at clarifying some points made by the complainants.

4.1 Lack of management and protection regime in Akamas and Polis-Gialia

According to EU Habitats Directive (and relevant national law), “once a Site of Community importance has been adopted [...], the Member State concerned shall designate that site as a special area of conservation [...], establishing priorities in the light of the importance of the sites for the maintenance or restoration, [...], and in the light of the threats of degradation or destruction.” The SCIs for Chersonisos Akama and Polis-Gialia are in the process of being designated as SACs within the next 3 months. This time is needed since a relevant Ministerial Decree needs to be prepared, undergo legal vetting, approval by the Minister and publication.

Akamas

The Management Plan (MP) for the Akamas SCI has identified the importance of the area for both habitats and species as well as the main threats and has proposed conservation, protection and management measures.

Measures proposed include, among others:

- Fencing of sand dunes and other important habitats and plant species
- Blocking vehicle access to beaches
- Closing of access roads
- Turtle protection program
- Setting up nature trails, info points, parking lots
- Setting up anchoring places
- Controlling access points by setting up entrances
- Specific waste management measures
- Promotion of organic agriculture and farming

- Promotion of “Akamas” identity for local products

Additionally, the MP proposes a series of studies to be conducted which will allow for better management of the site, such as a visitor carrying capacity study and a grazing capacity study (this study is already underway).

A MP for the Special Protection Area (SPA) for the protection of avian fauna is also underway. All data have been collected and all the preparatory work has been completed. The public consultation of the Draft MP is planned for May 2016 and the final MP is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.

As you may know, in January 2016 a new Ministerial Decision for the area of Akamas has been issued.

The Decision includes the following:

- Immediate implementation of two aspects of the MP, relating to habitat and species conservation and promotion and visitor management (total of 31 measures).
- Forest and part of the state land to be declared as a national park (directly protected under forest law). This part of the decision also calls for an expert to be commissioned to design the management and operation of the Park.
- Mandate to Town Planning Department to prepare a new zoning plan for the peninsula within 18 months.
- Reevaluation by a Committee of all previous Ministerial Decisions, mainly on land acquisition and or compensation of private landowners issues.

This Decision is considered as a positive step forward in resolving the long-standing issue of Akamas and indicates that there is political will to reach a final resolution. The immediate implementation of management and conservation measures, as well as the re-visiting of the landownership issue, are considered as important steps for the protection of the area. The new local plan for the establishment of zones will also resolve many outstanding issues with regards to ownership and compensation rights and will set a clear development regime for the area. The local plan will undergo all relevant environmental assessments before its approval and implementation (i.e. SEA, Appropriate Assessment).

Polis-Gialia

As was mentioned above, an area of 10km shoreline (incl. marine areas) from Polis Chrisochous to Gialia (including “Limni” beach) has been designated as Site of Community Interest (SCI) [Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001].

The area is closely monitored by the relevant authorities and any issues that arise are handled accordingly. The declaration of the SCI as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will conclude the protection regime covering the area and allow for the issuance of a Ministerial Decree, clearly defining the conservation measures and actions for the area, as well as setting the rules and regulation for the protection of both the beach and the marine area.

4.2 Insufficiency of Natura 2000 designated area for Akamas

As far as the insufficiency of the Natura 2000 designated area for Akamas, the SC has been informed that due to an ongoing legal procedure between the European Commission and the Republic, detailed information cannot be conveyed to the SC.

However, in the spirit of good cooperation we would like to inform you on the following:

- The area is approximately 10,220 ha (2,500 ha of private land) and the zoning
- The main issue of disagreement between NGOs and the authorities focuses on habitat type 6220*.
- Habitat type 6220* is widely distributed in warm and dry areas of Cyprus, mainly where there is disturbance or human activity, which help with its conservation and dispersal. It is an “umbrella” habitat that compiles of different plant communities with different configurations.

- This habitat type is particularly difficult to manage, due to its dependence on dryness and human activities that can affect its evolution, according to their intensity and frequency. This makes the setting and implementing of conservation measures even more complicated.
- According to 2012 data, the Akamas SCI covers 45% of the total area covered by this habitat in the wider Akamas area.
- This habitat type has a wide distribution in Cyprus both within and outside the Natura 2000 Network; however there is no detailed mapping of its distribution up to now.

Based on the above, the Republic cannot accept the claims of the NGOs, since there is no evidence that a larger area for the conservation of this habitat type is needed.

As such, in an effort to resolve this issue, the Republic has commissioned a mapping exercise to record the presence of this habitat type in Cyprus (government controlled areas). The study is expected to conclude by the end of 2016. The results of the mapping exercise are expected to resolve this issue. The SC will be informed on the results of this exercise in due course.

The complainant also provides a list of species and habitats claimed to be insufficiently protected if the area of the Akamas Natura 2000 site is not extended. However, this is not so since, according to the Biogeographical Seminar, which is the tool used by the EC to identify insufficiencies in habitats and species protection by Member-states, has communicated the insufficiencies for Cyprus, most of which have been completed via the designation of the Akamas Natura site, the designation of a couple of new sites and the merging of the 4 areas designated as SCIs in Paphos Forest.

More details as follows:

5330 - Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub (*Genista fasselata*) – mapping of the Akamas SCI shows sufficient designation

5420- *Sarcopoterium spinosum* phryganas – mapping of the Akamas SCI shows sufficient designation

9320 - *Olea* and *Ceratonia* forests – mapping of the Akamas SCI shows sufficient designation

Miniopterus schreibersii – no insufficiencies identified

Myotis blythii – no insufficiencies identified

Crocidura cypria – no insufficiencies identified

Rousettus aegyptiacus – the species is well represented in SCIs and efforts need to focus on the existing nesting sites and their management and conservation.

Myotis emarginatus – approximately 20% of its colonies are within SCIs and a new site is under investigation to increase this percentage.

Caretta caretta & *Chelonia mydas* - with the designation of Akamas, the inclusion of all the important nesting sites of the marine turtles has been achieved. In addition, the marine turtle conservation project covers all other beaches where nesting might occur.

4.3 Impacts of projects on SCI «Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001» and priority species *Caretta caretta*

As far as the impacts of projects on SCI «Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001», the SC has been informed that due to an ongoing legal procedure between the European Commission (EC) and the Republic, detailed information cannot be conveyed to the SC.

However, in the spirit of good cooperation we would like to inform you on the following:

- The Republic has provided the EC with its arguments on several issues raised in the “reasoned opinion” received in April 2015. However, taking into consideration the concerns expressed by the EC and the need for re-visiting some issues, such as the cumulative impacts and the potential increase in visitors on the nesting beach, the Republic has requested the preparation of a revised Study for the Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the impacts of the Limni Resort project on the SCI.

- The revised study has been discussed in the ad-hoc Committee, established to allow for scientific consultation of the Environmental Authority (EA) under the AA procedures (*NB: The role of this committee is to consult the EA, but its decisions are not legally binding. The outcome of the AA procedure is the AA Report, which is legally binding for the approval of plans or projects*). Experts from the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, Terra Cypria and an independent turtle expert took part in this meeting and expressed concerns regarding issues of lighting, visitor pressure and alternative solutions.
- Taking note of the concerns expressed it was considered important to further explore the above issues. As such a common meeting of the ad-hoc Committee and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Committee took place on March 1st, 2016 where the lighting experts that have prepared the relevant Lighting Masterplan for the project presented and explained the outcomes of the study and the models described within. The authorities also had their own lighting expert present to ensure proper evaluation of the study.
- The results of the new permitting procedure will be communicated to the SC in due course.

5. REQUEST FOR AN ON-SPOT APPRAISAL

The SC has requested an on-spot appraisal for the Akamas peninsula to be carried out within 2016.

Although the Republic is more than willing to agree with such a visit, it is considered crucial, following this Report and the timeline provided herein, that the SC allows for the commencement of the implementation of the latest ministerial decisions and the provisions of the Management Plan for Akamas, as well as the outcome of the assessment of the Limni Resort project. This will allow for new information and a re-assessment of the matter by the SC.

If following this Report and the actions taken by the Republic within this year, the SC still considers that an on-spot appraisal within 2016 is necessary, the issue can be discussed further.

6. ACTION RECOMMENDED

Given the fact that the status of the case-file is directly related to the implementation of Recommendation No.63 (1997) and given the fact that many points of this recommendation deal with the establishment of a management system that will ensure the protection of habitats and species, the Republic kindly asks for the SC's patience in the light of the recent developments in the Akamas issue.

The Republic also kindly requests that the SC acknowledges the progress made over the years and the efforts towards achieving the protection of Akamas.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
APRIL 2016**