

Strasbourg, 31 August 2017
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T-PVS (2017) 19

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

37th meeting
Strasbourg, 5-8 December 2017

**1ST MEETING OF THE
RESTRICTED GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

14-15 June 2017
Council of Europe Office, Paris, France

- MEETING REPORT -

*Secretariat Memorandum
the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation*

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The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the 1st meeting of the Restricted Group of Experts on Climate Change and Biodiversity which took place on 14-15 June 2017 in Paris (France);
- Take note of the agreed terms of reference of the Restricted Group of Experts [document T-PVS (2017) 18];
- Take note of the following proposals of the Restricted Group of Experts:
 - to include financial provisions in the Programme of Work 2018-2019 for the development of European level species' vulnerability assessments,
 - to develop a reporting format on Parties' action in implementing the Convention standards in the field of climate change. The format should focus on outcomes, include both qualitative and quantitative information on progress at national level and enable learning between Parties as much as possible. The reporting should take place every two years.
 - to develop synergies between the Bern Convention and the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement,
 - to organise in 2018 a joint meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks and the Group of Experts on Climate Change and biodiversity, where issues such as adaptive management of protected areas can be discussed.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr Gianluca Silvestrini, Head of Major Hazards and Environment Division, opened the meeting and informed the participants that since the beginning of the year, the Bern Convention and the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA) are part of the same new Division. The Division “Major Hazards and Environment” is itself placed within a new Department called Directorate of Culture, Nature and Heritage, led by Mr Eladio Fernandez-Galiano.

Mr Silvestrini welcomed the national delegates from Contracting Parties and thanked them for their readiness to support planning the future work of the Convention in the field of climate change and biodiversity conservation. He further acknowledged the key support provided by experts, NGO representatives and consultants to the climate change agenda of the Convention and welcomed their representatives at the meeting.

After a *tour de table* allowing participants to introduce themselves, the meeting agenda was adopted (appendix 1). The participants’ list is available in appendix 2.

2. BERN CONVENTION PROGRAMME WORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention, presented the past work of the Convention in the field of climate change, initiated back in 2009. All actions currently being implemented in the field are guided by the recently adopted Programme of Work (PoW) on climate change of the Convention.

She reminded that the Restricted Group of Experts was created in an attempt to facilitate the selection of priority actions and to plan and guide their practical implementation. A prioritisation of activities is necessary taking into account the very large amount of competing priorities faced by the Convention and the scarcity of financial resources. Eventually, she reminded that the Restricted Group of Experts will meet in alternate years with the full government-designated Group of Experts.

Mr Silvestrini pointed out that the Council of Europe is moving towards a more result oriented planning and reporting and the Secretariat is now requested by the Committee of Ministers to assess how its work is concretely influencing national policies and practices in Member States. This would entail a more regular and result oriented monitoring of the implementation of recommendations adopted in the frame of the Convention.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE RESTRICTED GROUP OF EXPERTS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The Secretariat presented a Concept note [document [T-PVS/Inf \(2017\) 10](#)] provided to the participants ahead of the meeting, reminding of the past achievements of the Convention in the field of climate change and containing a proposal for the terms of reference of the Restricted Group of Experts.

The participants agreed that the Restricted Group should support the planning and carrying out of reporting by Parties, through the development of checklists, on-line reporting forms and guidance when possible. The Group should equally support establishing a clear link between reporting resulting from parties and future standards developed by the Convention in the form of Recommendations or Resolutions. The Group further agreed that reporting requests should be limited to a minimum, taking into account the ever increasing reporting burden on national authorities and the limited human resources.

The Restricted Group of Experts approved on the terms of reference proposed by the Secretariat [document T-PVS (2017 18)].

4. IDENTIFYING SYNERGIES AND POSSIBLE BERN CONVENTION/EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT JOINT INITIATIVES

Mr Silvestrini presented the work of the [EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement](#), a platform to promote co-operation between Member States in ensuring better prevention and protection against major natural or technological disasters. The technical and scientific work of the Agreement is

organised around the action of national specialised Centres working towards improving the public's awareness of and resilience to major risks.

He emphasised the opportunity provided by the meeting to brainstorm on the possible Bern/EUR-OPA synergies to be developed in the future. He proposed that topics such as nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction, ecosystem services' role in climate change mitigation and adaptation are considered for such future collaboration.

Mr Fabrice Renaud from the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security presented the work of the [Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction \(PEDRR\) Platform](#) on Ecosystems for adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction. The UN Institute for Environment and Human Security is one of the 22 partners of the Platform, together with the EUR-OPA Agreement. After presenting the different activities of the Platform and its members, he insisted on the strong recognition of the role of biodiversity and ecosystems restoration in disaster risk reduction today, leading to a very favourable policy environment for developing activities in the field.

He welcomed the idea of finding convergence of approaches and synergies between the biodiversity conservation agenda of the Bern Convention and that of the EUR-OPA Agreement and proposed the support of the PEDRR Platform for their realisation. He underlined that the CBD and the Ramsar Conventions are already active partners in the PEDRR Platform; in particular as ecosystem-based approaches have to consider changes in habitats, species diversity and distribution, etc.

In the following discussion the Restricted Group agreed that a first step in launching joint Bern/EUR-OPA activities should be:

- The collection of information on the actions by each of the Specialised EUR-OPA Centres in the field of ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions. This could eventually lead to mapping of the Centres able of doing work for the Bern Convention in the field;
- At a later step, this information can be made available on-line and even analysed to facilitate sharing of experiences and practices.

5. UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL IN RELATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

Representatives of Contracting Parties gave oral presentations of actions and initiatives implemented at national level on assessment of species vulnerability to climate change, adaptive protected areas management and communication.

In **Albania**, a draft Law on climate change has recently been prepared, including – for a first time - a dedicated Chapter on the relationship between biodiversity and climate change and the role of ecosystem services.

Various research projects are being implemented at national level, with relevance to climate change, namely a project on building the resilience of coastal areas in Albania through the assessment of coastal ecosystems vulnerability. However, the country reports of the lack of structure for the coordination of efforts and makes the case for the development of initiatives on capacity building and exchange of experiences.

In **France**, the [Second national plan on adaptation to climate change](#) is currently being implemented, with a strong focus on 1) identifying good practices and ways to up-scaling them, 2) improving the knowledge on the impacts of climate change on protected areas, 3) associating local actors into the management of protected areas and 4) improving cities' resilience. In 2016, the country equally adopted a new [Law for the reconquest of biodiversity, nature and the landscape](#). Toolboxes were prepared on the impacts of climate change and possible efficient actions to mitigate and adapt to the effects, in particular nature based-solutions.

In the **Slovak Republic**, no assessment is currently done on species vulnerability and neither are actions towards implementing adaptive management in protected areas. The issue of climate change has only recently started to be dealt with by a special department in the Ministry of Environment, working especially with UNFCCC. Unfortunately, the staff working there is mainly composed of engineers and therefore ecosystem based-approaches are not yet considered. Since recently, the State

Nature Conservancy equally has some responsibilities in relation to climate change and two persons are now working with the priorities and actions recommended by the various biodiversity related Conventions and the EU.

The State Nature Conservancy is interested in starting assessing the vulnerability of some species and habitats but the specialists there feel genuinely lost due to the existence of a multitude of approaches and methodologies. They need practical guidance on which methodologies to use.

In 2015, **Norway** finalised its newest Red List of species, where about 25,000 species were assessed. Climate change appears more often as an important pressure in particular for threatened species. The country works as well on the effects of climate change on species relevant for management, such as different Salmon species, even though they are not on the Red List. In addition, the country developed a “Norwegian nature index” with 300 indicators on the state of ecosystems.

Out of the 2,000 protected areas of the country, about 700 have a management plan. As various kinds of structures are responsible for their management, they tried to make the system simpler, using a web-based tool focussing only on the exact need for action in terms of management. The need for new protected areas is strongly felt as well, in particular for migratory species. Therefore, the country currently considers proposing new forest areas for the establishment of protected areas.

In **Italy**, as in the Slovak Republic, species vulnerability is assessed through the Habitats and Birds Directives. Their 3rd national report was submitted in December 2013 for the period 2007-2012 and they are now working on the 4th report which will cover the period 2013-2018.

Various manuals on species vulnerability are available (in Italian) on the [ISPRA](#) web page. A review of climate change impacts on natural ecosystems should be published this year as well and according to the preliminary conclusions on climate change scenarios, existing protected areas in the Natura 2000 Network may not have suitable habitats for 56% of the species. It is however difficult to answer the question when.

A knowledge platform is also accessible from the portal of the Ministry of Environment, addressing 8 thematic areas, including nature and biodiversity and climate change. Climate change and biodiversity are two separate areas for the moment and they are considering merging these.

6. STREAMLINING REPORTING FROM CONTRACTING PARTIES ON RELEVANT CLIMATE CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BERN CONVENTION

Prof. Brian Huntley, a long-term consultant to the Council of Europe and the Convention, recalled the past experiences in collecting information on action by Parties. He stressed the shortcomings of the methods used and presented a short guidance document [document [T-PVS/Inf \(2015\) 13](#)] outlining the main aspects of how the future reporting should be organised. He stressed that it is extremely difficult to have a synthesis of how the Convention Recommendations are implemented if there is no standard reporting form available.

Participants debated on the proposed guidance and agreed that it is necessary to organise the reporting in a structured way, to facilitate the subsequent analysis. However, any questionnaire developed for the purposes of reporting should include key words and definitions in order to facilitate data collection by Parties. A proposal was made that any new reporting format is pre-tested by a few voluntary parties and comments are taken into account before the format is sent out for general reporting.

Some participants mentioned the possibility of developing a traffic-light system scoring of countries' efforts (or possibly results if a baseline is clearly identified) in achieving certain objectives, although other underlined that the development of such tool could reveal extremely time consuming and complex to agree by all.

The Group of Experts concluded that the future reporting:

- should take place every two years;
- should be organised around the headings included in the guidance document [document T-PVS/Inf (2015) 13];

- A draft reporting form should be developed with the support of external consultants (possibly Prof. Huntley);
- The Restricted Group should be invited to comment on the draft reporting form and possibly test it with voluntary countries, ahead of its sending out to all Parties;
- Focus on outcomes, include both qualitative and quantitative information on progress at national level and enable learning between Parties as much as possible;
- Should include an introductory part to explain the reasons behind the reporting request;
- Include guidance on how questions can be answered and terms interpreted, when necessary.

7. SUPPORTING CONTRACTING PARTIES IN IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS AND ACTIONS

7.1 Assessment of Bern Convention species vulnerability

Mr Christopher Wheatley provided a detailed presentation of his recent analysis of the most widely used methods for assessing the vulnerability of species to climate change. Mr Wheatley has been comparing not less than 12 different methods; both trait- and trend-based ones. His research is in the process of being published in a peer-reviewed specialised journal. Mr Wheatley advised the Convention and its Parties in the possession of good background data on the species under consideration to privilege the use of trend-based approaches, which would be most useful if undertaken at regular basis, as an iterative process.

The Restricted Group held extensive discussions on how the results of any vulnerability assessment are going to be used, as well as on the adaptability of the currently available models for the assessment of habitat vulnerability.

The Restricted Group of Experts agreed that:

- It should encourage Parties to do their national vulnerability assessments using trend-based methods when in possession of good background information on the species groups under consideration and use the trait-based approach only in exceptional cases when background information is not sufficient;
- Request that Parties already working on such assessments report to the Convention, in an attempt to avoid duplication of work and resources; Link this point with the future reporting form to be developed (see conclusions under point 6 of this report);
- The Convention should seek support from scientists such as Mr Wheatley for the production of different taxa vulnerability assessments at European level;
- The European level assessments should have as a starting point the Bern Convention appendices lists;
- Cooperation with IUCN SSC Specialist Group on Climate Change should be sought for the production of the European level assessments, including to open an invitation to the Group of Experts to a member of the IUCN SSC Specialists Group;
- Seek cooperation with the Arctic CAF, EEA and EU led and funded projects and initiatives, such as the EU MAES initiative on mapping ecosystem services;
- The Convention to consider including funds for the development of vulnerability assessments for species listed in the Convention Appendices in its Work Programme for 2018-2019.

7.2 Supporting adaptive management of protected areas

Mr Simon Duffield, from Natural England, made a presentation on the work of the Governmental advisory institution on their work in support of the development of the adaptive management of protected areas. He further clarified the difference in the definition of adaptation and adaptive management.

The key in the development of adaptive managements is the regular monitoring (possibly every 5 years) of the conservation status of species and habitats and the successful inclusion of climate change in the monitoring system.

In a discussion after the presentation, participants presented the various difficulties they encounter at national level when (trying to) implementing adaptive management: 1) identifying the reason behind any change in a conservation status, 2) defining favourable condition and whether it should embrace any change, 3) involving relevant social-economic sectors, etc.

The Restricted Group agreed on the need to:

- Organise a joint meeting of the full Group of Experts on Climate Change and the one on Protected Areas of the Bern Convention, possibly in 2018;
- Contribute to the setting-up of the agenda for the joint meeting;
- Advise on possible ways to include cooperation with EUR-OPA on ecosystem based solutions for DRR in the agenda of that joint meeting;
- Call on the Standing Committee of the Convention to consider including funds for the organisation of the Joint Group of Experts' meeting in its Programme of work for 2018-2019.

8. COMMUNICATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

Mr Olly Watts from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) introduced the topic by providing a background for the discussions as well as some questions for consideration by the Group on ways to improve communication on climate change and biodiversity for the sake of nature conservation.

The Restricted Group of Experts held a debate in particular communicating on the role of biodiversity in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Some participants stressed that it is extremely important to focus communication on practical solutions to climate change negative impacts, with communicate together with actors from various socio-economic sectors concerned. Communication on ecosystem-based support to mitigate the impact of climate change revealed to be quite successful in the recent past.

Some participants underlined the importance of raise the awareness of local actors and the general public. Others mentioned the various obstacles to communicating scientific information on the importance of ecosystem based approaches, namely the impermeable governmental communication agencies to scientists and the lack of support for moving from science to evidence.

After a long discussion, the Group agreed that:

- Any communication on the issue of biodiversity and climate change should use carefully chosen words and messages, but also stories revealing how climate change is a nature issue and it impacts on people's quality of life;
- Important to target opinion makers and the media who can disseminate the information through story making;
- Target the larger public with stories on how climate change impacts them but also what they can do about it;
- Target urban populations, disconnected with nature and tell them how urban environment can become a biodiversity hot spot;
- To hold any campaign next to a big event, such as COPs and MOPs of other biodiversity and environment related Conventions.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

Appendix 1



1st meeting of the Restricted Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change

14-15 June 2017
Council of Europe Office in Paris,
55 Avenue Kléber (Metro station : Boissière)

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, 14TH JUNE 2017

TIME	AGENDA ITEM	RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS
9H00- 9H15	1. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA Welcome by Gianluca Silvestrini, Head of Major Hazards and Environment Division, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe.	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed of the objectives of the meeting. - Participants get to know each other.
9H15- 9H30	2. QUICK REMINDER ON THE BERN CONVENTION PROGRAMME OF WORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND RELEVANT ADOPTED RECOMMENDATIONS Presentation by Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention.	Relevant document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bern Convention PoW on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation - T-PVS/Inf(2015)25E Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed about the work of the Bern Convention on climate change.
9H30-9H45	3. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE RESTRICTED GROUP OF EXPERTS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING Presentation by Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention.	Relevant document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept note on the expected results of the meeting - T-PVS/Inf(2017)10 Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed about the expected results of the meeting. - The terms of reference of the group are finalised. - The expected results of the meeting are agreed on.

9H45-10H45	<p>4. IDENTIFYING SYNERGIES AND POSSIBLE BERN CONVENTION/EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT JOINT INITIATIVES</p> <p>Presentation of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement by Gianluca Silvestrini.</p> <p>Presentation by Fabrice Renaud, United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, member of the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR).</p> <p>Discussion on possible synergies and joint initiatives between the Bern Convention and EUR-OPA.</p>	<p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and its work on climate change & disaster risk reduction. - Participants are informed of the PEDRR initiatives. - Possible synergies and joint Bern/EUR-OPA initiatives are identified.
10H45-11H00	COFFEE BREAK	
11H00-11H45	<p>5. UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL IN RELATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY</p> <p>Oral presentations by Parties to the Bern Convention on actions and initiatives at national level on assessment of species vulnerability to climate change, adaptive protected areas management and communication.</p> <p>Questions and answers session.</p>	<p>Relevant document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bern Convention PoW on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation - T-PVS/Inf(2015)25E <p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed on recent initiatives and actions implemented at national level in other Bern Convention Contracting Parties in the three priority areas of the PoW.
11H45-12H30	<p>6. STREAMLINING REPORTING FROM CONTRACTING PARTIES ON RELEVANT CLIMATE CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BERN CONVENTION</p> <p>Reminder of Bern Convention practices and tools in monitoring action by Parties, by Iva Obretenova</p> <p>Guidelines for reporting by Parties on climate change and biodiversity, by Prof. Brian Huntley</p>	<p>Relevant document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed Guidelines for reporting by Parties - T-PVS/Inf(2015)13E <p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed on the past experiences with reporting by Parties and the proposed new ways of organising this exercise
12H30-14H00	LUNCH BREAK	
14H00-15H00	<p>6. STREAMLINING REPORTING FROM CONTRACTING PARTIES ON RELEVANT CLIMATE CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BERN CONVENTION (CONT.)</p> <p>Discussion on the ways and means to organise action-oriented reporting on the implementation of relevant Bern Convention Recommendations</p>	<p>Relevant document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed Guidelines for reporting by Parties - T-PVS/Inf(2015)13E <p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next reporting round on the implementation of Bern Recommendations is planned. - Methodology and tools to be used for the reporting are agreed on. - Possible synergies with EUR-OPA are taken into account in the reporting exercise.
15H00-15H30	<p>7. SUPPORTING CONTRACTING PARTIES IN IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS AND ACTIONS</p> <p>7.1 Assessment of Bern Convention species vulnerability</p> <p>Analysis of the most widely used methods for assessing the vulnerability of species to climate change, by Christopher Wheatley</p>	<p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed on the existing methods for the vulnerability assessment of species and on the results obtained from their use.

15H30-15H50	COFFEE BREAK	
15H50-16H50	7. SUPPORTING CONTRACTING PARTIES IN IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS AND ACTIONS (CONT.) 7.1 Assessment of Bern Convention species vulnerability (cont.) Discussion on the pros and cons of the different vulnerability assessment methods and on the most appropriate one to be used by the Bern Convention	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The methodology to be used for the assessment of the Bern species vulnerability is identified. - The next reporting round on the Bern Recommendations is planned.
16H50-17H30	7. SUPPORTING CONTRACTING PARTIES IN IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS AND ACTIONS 7.2 Supporting adaptive management of protected areas Review of existing tools, initiatives and cooperation opportunities by Simon Duffield	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed on existing tools and initiatives in other fora.

THURSDAY, 15TH JUNE 2017

9H00-10H00	7. SUPPORTING CONTRACTING PARTIES IN IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS AND ACTIONS (CONT.) 7.2 Supporting adaptive management of protected areas (cont.) Discussion on the future work of the Convention in the field.	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The core elements of protected areas' adaptive management are identified. - Cooperation opportunities with partner organisations are identified. - Eventual joint ventures with other Bern Convention Groups of experts and other partner organisations are planned. - Possible synergies with EUR-OPA are taken into account.
10H00-10H30	8. COMMUNICATING ON CLIMATE CHANGES AND BIODIVERSITY Reminder of Bern Convention activities and tools, by Olly Watts. Oral presentations by Parties on recent actions in communicating on climate change and main obstacles encountered.	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants are informed on the past work of the Convention in improving communication on the link between climate change and biodiversity and on recent relevant initiatives at national level.
10H30-10H50	COFFEE BREAK	
10H50-11H30	9. COMMUNICATING ON CLIMATE CHANGES AND BIODIVERSITY (CONT.) Discussion on possible new communication strategies, messages and actions at both national and European levels.	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most relevant audiences and messages are identified. - Future work of the Convention in the field is planned.
11H30-12H15	10. PROPOSALS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE BERN CONVENTION Discussion on the conclusions of the meeting, proposals to the Standing Committee and next steps.	Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actions for implementing the three main priorities of the PoW are planned and responsibilities identified. - Main messages from the Group to the Standing Committee are agreed upon.
12H15-12H30	11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	NA
12H30	CLOSURE OF THE MEETING	

Appendix 2



Strasbourg, 13 June 2017
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

1st meeting of the Restricted Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change

14-15 June 2017
Council of Europe Office in Paris,
55 Avenue Kléber (Metro station : Boissière)

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[Apologised for absence / Excusé]

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