

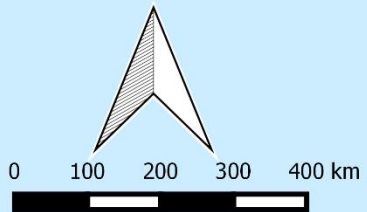
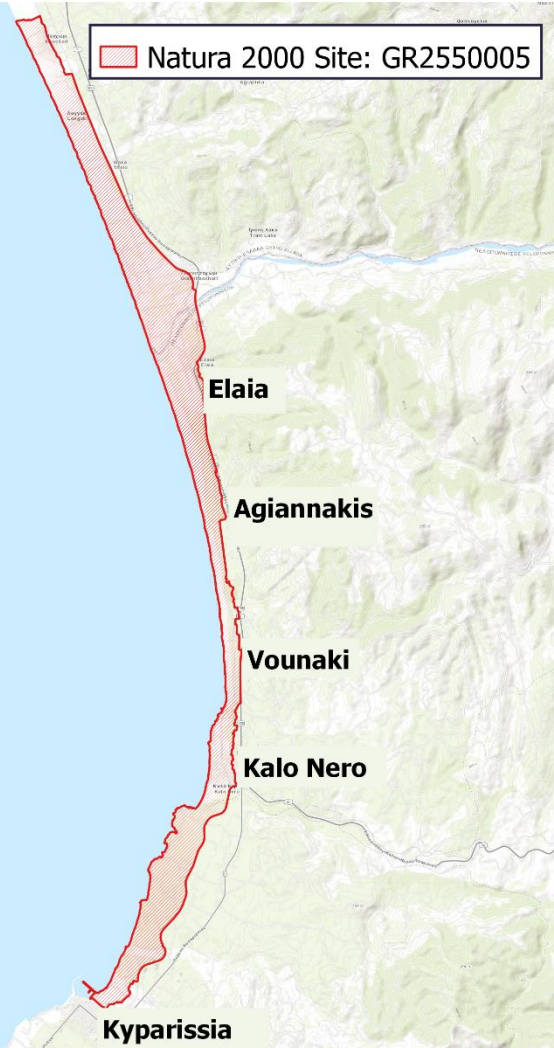


Agenda Item 6.1: Files opened

Greece: Threats to Marine Turtles in Thines Kiparissias

43rd Meeting of the Standing Committee
Bern Convention
27 November - 1 December 2023

Habitat Degradation due to Uncontrolled Development in a Protected Sea Turtle Nesting Area

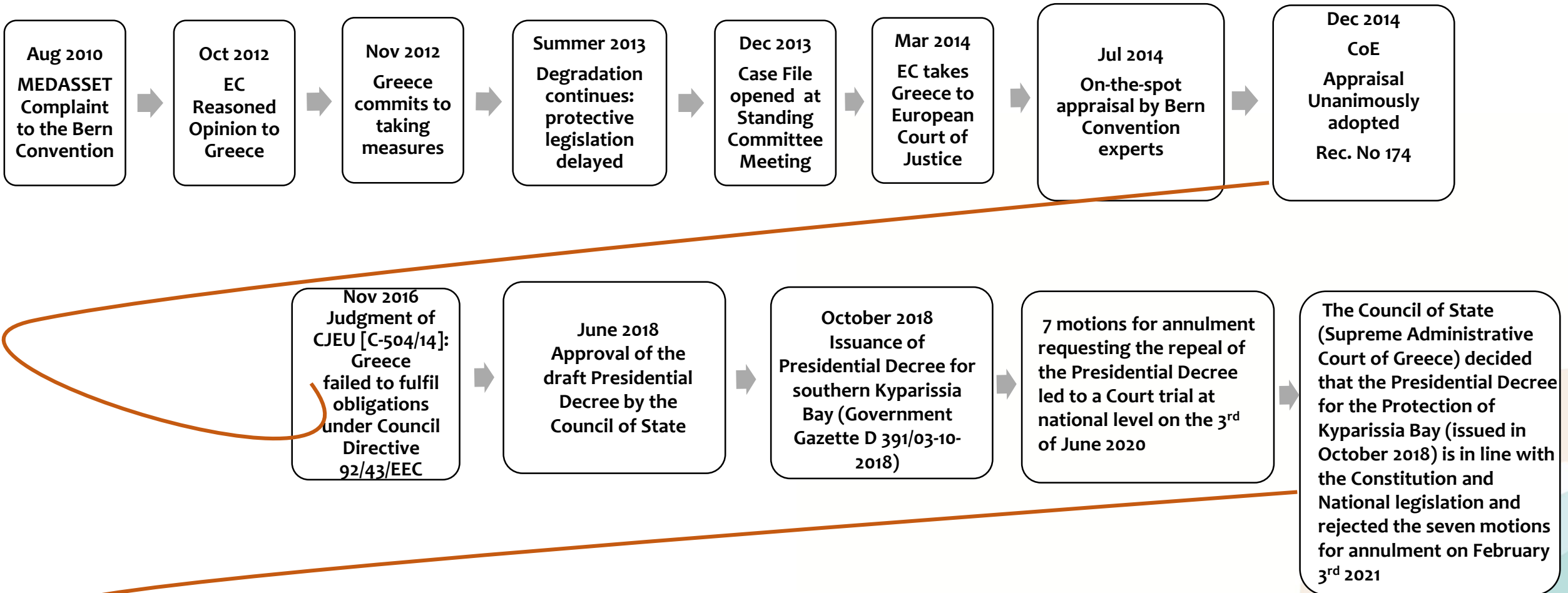


- A **NATURA 2000 site**: GR2550005 “Thines Kyparissias: Neochori – Kyparissia”
- Extensive sand **dunes** system with *Juniperus spp.*
- The **largest reproductive population across the Mediterranean** for the protected loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*). During the 2023 nesting season over 5.000* nests were recorded in the nesting core area (from Neda to Arkadikos River which spans 9,5 km)

*preliminary data given from ARCHELON

The issuance of the Presidential Decree

Overview



The Presidential Decree however does not address several conservation issues. These are expected to be resolved by the Management Plan which is however delayed for over 5 years

Rec. No 174. Measure No 2: Permanent Prohibition of Construction (buildings, roads, etc.)

Presidential Decree fails to adequately protect Kyparissia Bay from constructions



Core nesting area, Agiannakis to Elaia & Vounaki, 6th July 2023. The five illegal roads are not restored yet, in violation of the PD. Blockades placed by the Ministry of Environment and Energy fail to prevent vehicles accessing the beach. See top picture, vehicle has bypassed the blockades and is on the side of the beach

Rec. No 174. Measure No 3:

Prevent cars & caravans from reaching the proximity of the nesting beaches



Kalo Nero core nesting area 6th July 2023. No management measures exist to prevent cars and caravans (17 counted) parking in close proximity to the nesting beach, during the day and campsin overnight. Nests in red circles, caravans and cars behind them.



Vounaki core nesting area, 6th July 2023. Traces (in yellow line) of cars and vehicles driving on the nesting beach. Nests in red circles.

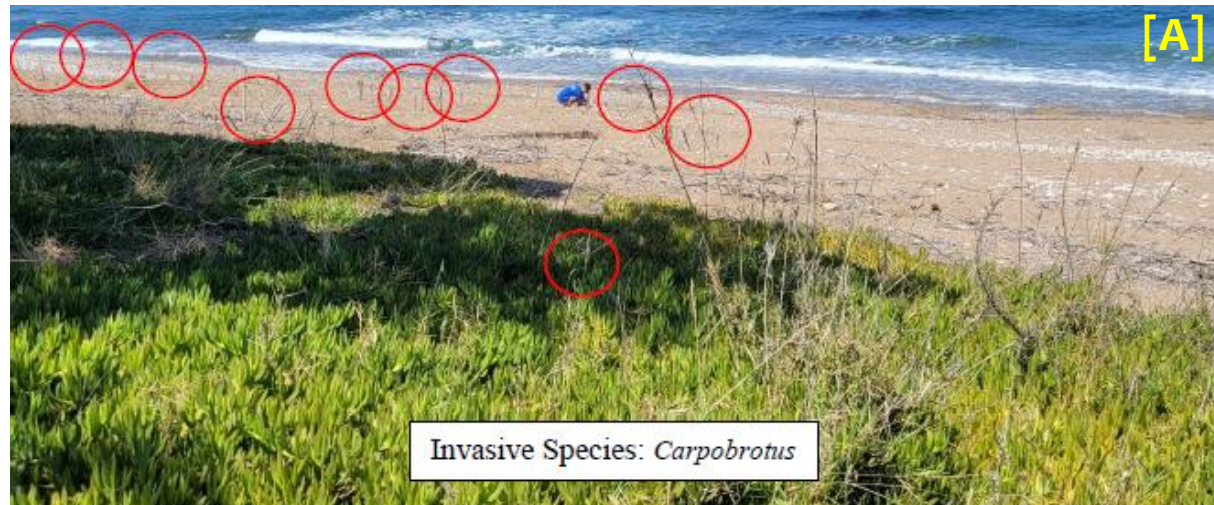


Core nesting area between Agiannakis and Elaia village, 6th July 2023. Camping directly behind the core nesting area in the protected forestry area and illegal roads. Presence of dogs as well (white circle). No action is taken by the authorities to prevent it.



Rec. No 174. Measure No 4:

Adjustments to existing buildings & Restoration of Original Dune and Forest Habitat



Agiannakis – August 2023 – The red circle indicates a beach-side villa, which severely alters and degrades the sand dune zone. The operating beach bar (yellow circle) apart from causing light pollution, attracts a significant number of vehicles which park in the sand dune zone.

Kalo Nero, 6th July 2023. Cultivation of invasive species *Carpobrotus* sp. encroaching onto the high density nesting area (Red circles, nests) of the beach from Kalo Nero to Vounaki [A]. Cultivation of non-indigenous species *Musa* sp. (red circle) behind a high density nesting area [B]



**Rec. No 174. Measure No 5:
No agriculture on public land & the dune area**



Exactly behind the core nesting areas of Vounaki and Agiannaki, 6th July 2023. Sand dune destruction due to agricultural use; ongoing watermelon (above red line) and zucchini (below red line) cultivation.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 6: Light Pollution reduction



Kalo Nero core nesting area, 5th July [A] & 26th June [B] 2023. Light pollution emitted from the beach bars/restaurants. Beach furniture not removed during the night, causing obstacles for nesting females & hatchlings and limiting the availability of nesting space. A nesting female [B] (red circle), is stuck under unstacked sunbeds.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 7: Beach Equipment management



Kalo Nero core nesting area 6th July 2023. Illegal wooden walkways placed by local businesses not removed and no enforcement of demolition protocols. Shower (yellow circle) runoff flows on the protected nesting beach, next to a nest. No beach management exists to provide a safe distance between visitors and sea turtle nests (red circles).



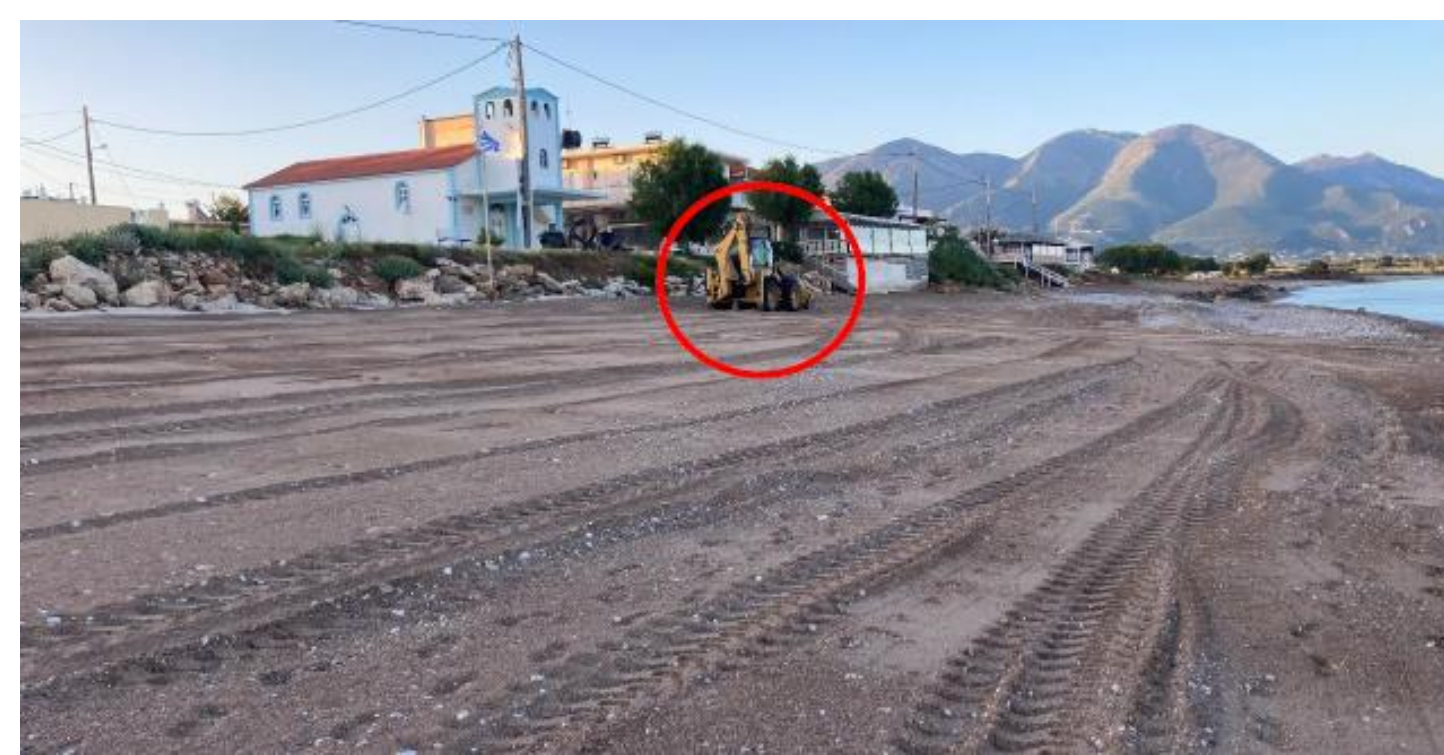
Kalo Nero, 8th August 2023, 6:00am. Local businesses do not stack beach furniture. Wooden pathways limit the nesting females and hatchlings.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 8:

Prohibits any sand & gravel extraction or any new structures near the sea



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Kalo Nero, 25th May 2023. Beach cleaning with heavy vehicles (red circle) drastically affects the beach profile.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 9:

Further construction outside the urban-planning areas

Disregard to the Presidential Decree's prohibition of the expansion of settlements and buildings in the Nature Protections Areas, newly constructed house as recorded during 2023 survey



Top Agiannakis & Bottom Vounaki core nesting areas, 6th July 2023. Two newly constructed houses completed in 2021 (red circles).





Kalo Nero, 20 June 2023. Fishing with nets at a very close distance from the shore is a constant threat to nesting females, as they may get entangled and injured in their attempt to reach the beach for nesting.

Fisheries regulations are not addressed by the Presidential Decree – Urgent need of a Management Plan

The Regulation of fishing activities are not considered in the Presidential Decree. This significant threat is supposed to be addressed in the Management Plan which is yet to be developed!

Urgent action is needed to reduce/ eliminate this threat. Regarding sea turtle strandings, 9 turtles were recorded by ARCHELON between early May and late September. Overall, according to the Coast Guard, 23 dead sea turtles were found in the whole of Kyparissia Bay (43.5km) since the beginning of the year.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



Kalo Nero, 5th August 2023. A festival with loud music and bright headlights was held a few meters behind the nesting beach. Red arrows indicate nests right below the festival.

Kalo Nero core nesting area, 5th & 6th July 2023. Top & Middle; 17 Caravans parked during the day and overnight for camping directly behind the core nesting area. Bottom; evidence of bonfires (in yellow – nests in red circles), in close proximity to sea turtle nests.

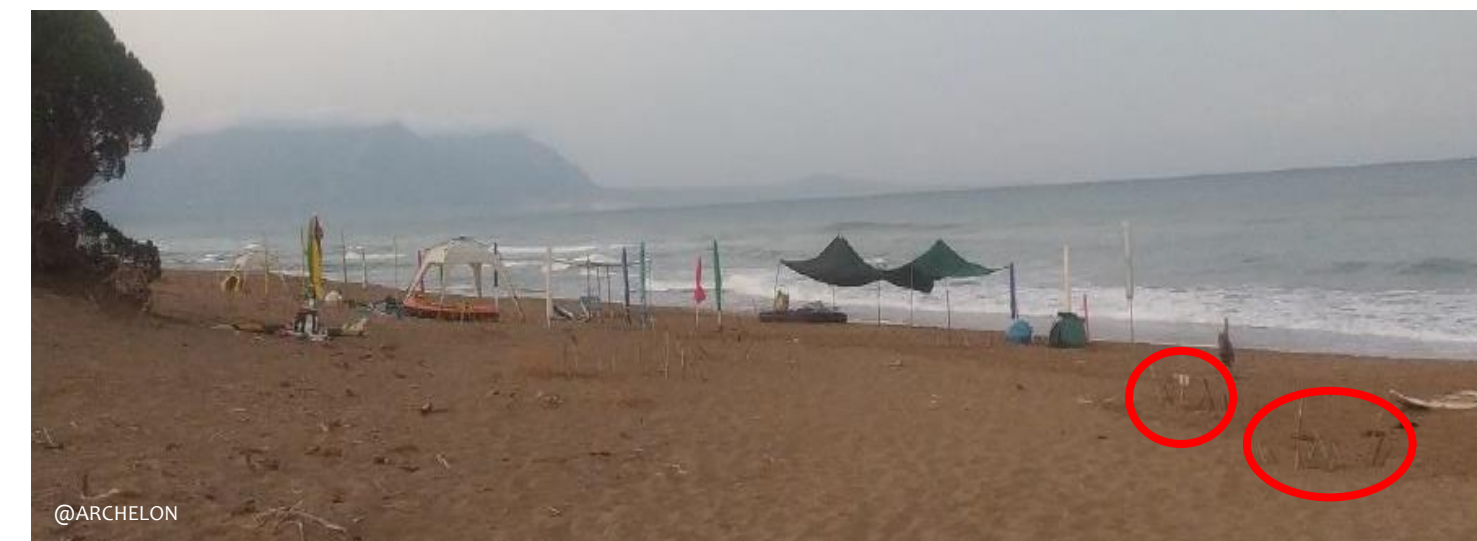
Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



Giannitsochori, 3rd August 2023. A festival with loud music & bright floodlights is taking place just behind the nesting beach.



Giannitsochori, 29th July 2023. Members of the public are engaging in a beach party with loud music and bright lights resulting in hatchling disorientation. Big umbrellas and a “bar” construction have been installed on the beach and the sand dune area, resulting in the trampling of the vegetation.



Giannitsochori, 8th August 2023. Freelance camping and semi-permanent constructions on the beach hinder the nesting process.

Human presence on the nesting beach



Kalo Nero core nesting area. A poster calling for horse riding at Elaia nesting beach 5th July 2023 (top), picture taken from the official Instagram account posted 2nd of June 2023 and horse droppings at Agiannakis high density nesting beach (down).

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11:

Control feral dogs as they have proved to attack and hurt many nesting sea turtles



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No feral dogs attacks were recorded this year.

Conclusions



Rec. No 174 has not been fully implemented

- The ongoing projects for carrying out Special Environmental Studies for the issuance of Presidential Decrees and Management Plans for all Natura 2000 sites in Greece is fraught with delays and implementation problems. There are serious concerns about the process and the expected outcomes
- Contracts signed for the exploration and potential extraction of hydrocarbons in the adjacent marine protected areas constitute a new significant additional threat

Calls upon the Authorities to:

- Safeguard and enforce implementation of the Presidential Decree (PD) regulations
- Urgently issue and implement a Management Plan in collaboration with the Protected Areas Management Unit, which will also cover unresolved issues not addressed in the PD (e.g. fishing activities and nighttime beach use and operation of beach bars)
- Impose fines and penalties in order to stop illegal activities and restore the habitat especially the sand dune habitats, which are degraded year by year
- Keep the Standing Committee informed about progress in the implementation of the above Recommendations

Calls upon the Bern Convention Standing Committee to:

- Encourage authorities to provide further information to the Standing Committee, as requested above
- Urge authorities to implement Recommendation No.174 (2014)
- Discuss the case file at the 43rd Meeting of the Standing Committee
- Bring the issue to the European Commission as part of the infringement process for noncompliance with CJEU's judgment C-504/14