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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

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**European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds**

Larnaca (Cyprus), 6-8 July 2011

**MEETING REPORT**



*Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by  
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The issue of illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds in Contracting Parties has been regularly on the Agenda of the meetings of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in the recent past.

At its 30th meeting, in December 2010, the Standing Committee concluded that illegal killing of wild birds is still carried out, and in some Contracting Parties it is a growing phenomenon. The Standing Committee found that the implementation of national legislation is sometimes still weak; that the issue also involves other transversal questions like the transit of the killed and captured birds through third countries; the difficulty to identify the illegally killed species; the capture of endangered species; the need for countries to co-operate and to work with nature conservation NGOs; the need for proper enforcement with appropriate penalties at all levels.

Expressing its deep concern on the extent and negative trends of illegal taking and trade of wild birds in the European continent, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention promoted the organisation of a "European Conference on the illegal killing of birds", held in Larnaca, Cyprus, on 6-8 July 2011.

**OBJECTIVES:** The conference should contribute to:

- Clearly identifying the extent of the problem in Contracting Parties, including by analysing the trend and nature of the illegal activities, as well as their legal, social (attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, as well as willingness to accept different management options) and biological dimension;
- Providing an overview of law enforcement mechanisms in Contracting Parties;
- Examining options for supporting national authorities to enforce their legislation and improve compliance with obligations;
- Taking stock of national experiences and put forward examples of good practices as well as of preventive measures;
- Identifying priorities on a conservation point of view, to make suggestions to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the steps forward.

**SCOPE:** "Illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds" was defined for the purpose of the European conference as:

- *Activities which are illegal under national or regional law, and which are aimed at marketing birds, or deliberately killing or catching them alive, thus not covering indirect or side effects (like for example accidental bird poisoning due to the use of pesticides). Such activities include: shooting/trapping in closed period, shooting/trapping in areas with shooting prohibition, shooting/trapping by unauthorized persons, killing of protected species, use of prohibited means, non respect of bag limits, deliberate poisoning...*

The Conference should have a "positive" focus, aiming at suggesting practical measures, options and/or strategies to be implemented to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds in Contracting Parties.

## 1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr Jan Plesnik, Chair of the Standing Committee to the Convention, opened the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011 and welcomed the participants, representing various stakeholders, including Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention, international organizations, national and local authorities, enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs (including hunting associations), scientific and research bodies, tourism industry, police authorities.

The Chair introduced the Draft Agenda of the meeting, which was adopted without changes (see Appendix 1 to this report).

The Minister of Interior of Cyprus, Minister Neoklis Sylikiotis, recognised that the problem of illegal killing of wild birds still exists in Cyprus, despite considerable efforts by the concerned state authorities to stop it. He added that Cyprus has set the goal to achieve considerable progress and minimise this particular problem, during the country's Presidency of the EU Council in 2012.

Moreover, the Minister noted that Cyprus is granting particular importance to the implementation of the relevant legislation, noting that the competent authorities are taking measures against numerous poaching cases every year. He said that the profit from the illegal trade of wild birds "is probably one of the sources of the problem".

The Minister confirmed that the government has the political will to move forward, pledging to crack down any form of wildlife crime.

He concluded by thanking the Council of Europe for organising the Conference in Cyprus.

The permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Petros Kareklas said that the illegal killing of birds needs to be stamped out but noted that it would not be easy as millions of Euros are involved in these illegal activities. He stressed that illegal killing of birds is an ancient practice which today is not anymore a survival-supporting activity, "it is an illegal act for profit and it has to be stopped in the framework of the law, especially in Europe".

He recognised the important contribution of the NGOs in combating and denouncing illegal activities, and welcomed the work of the Anti-Poaching Task Force of the Mobile Immediate Action Unit of the Police which, since its inception in September 2007, has dealt with over 200 cases and conducted several successful anti-bird poaching operations.

He concluded by thanking the Council of Europe and the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention for the support in increasing public awareness against this illegal phenomenon which is not a practice exclusively found in Cyprus and other Mediterranean countries.

Mr Pantelis Hadjigerou, Head of the Game Fund, apologised Dr. Lazaros Savvides, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, for absence and read Dr. Savvides' welcoming remarks.

Ms Ivana d'Alessandro, Secretary of the Bern Convention, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Council of Europe and expressed her warmest thanks to the Cyprus authorities for the invitation to hold the Conference in their country, as a clear sign of their commitment to take a leading role in combating illegal killing of birds in Europe.

Ms d'Alessandro briefly recalled the main Bern Convention's recommendations on this topic, as well as the mission of the Council of Europe, which consists in developing continent-wide agreements, standardising member countries' social and legal practices, as well as promoting awareness of a European identity based on shared values and cutting across different cultures. In this respect, she stressed that the Council of Europe can only but condemn practices like "*Ambelopulia*" which, although often presented as being culturally relevant, are not respectful of human rights.

Furthermore, Ms d'Alessandro introduced the Conference's background as well as its agenda, stressing the need to analyse enforcement at all levels, as well as to collect information on the biological and cultural aspects. She said that the Conference should encourage an open and constructive dialogue between all concerned stakeholders, with a "positive" and practical focus to be able to achieve concrete results and suggest to the Standing Committee options and measures to be implemented to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds in Europe.

## 2. ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS IN EUROPE: FACTS AND FIGURES

This section was foreseen to set the scene by providing the participants with information and data collected by different stakeholders on illegal killing of birds in the European Continent.

Mr Joseph van der Stegen, Nature Unit, DG Environment, European Commission, presented the Birds Directive, the oldest piece of EU nature legislation, creating a comprehensive scheme of protection for all wild bird species naturally occurring in the Union. The Birds Directive bans activities that directly threaten birds, such as the deliberate killing or capture of birds, the destruction of their nests and taking of their eggs, and associated activities such as trading in live or dead birds, with a few exceptions. The Directive recognises hunting as a legitimate activity and provides a comprehensive system for its management to ensure that this practice is sustainable. This includes a requirement to ensure that birds are not hunted during the periods of their greatest vulnerability, such as the return migration to the nesting areas, reproduction and the raising of chicks. It requires Member States to outlaw all forms of non-selective and large scale killing of birds; it promotes research to underpin the protection, management and use of all species of birds covered by the Directive.

Regarding enforcement, Mr van der Stegen stressed that this is primarily a responsibility of each Member State to which the European Commission attach much importance. Enforcement is in fact crucial both to achieve the objectives of the Birds Directive as well as to build trust between stakeholders. The European Commission has therefore launched a study on law enforcement mechanisms in Member States to better characterise the extent of the problem while identifying actions where co-operation at the level of the European Union could have an added value. The study should be ready in November 2011.

Mr Boris Barov, BirdLife International introduced the perspective of the NGOs by presenting the results of a survey gathering information provided by 40 BirdLife partners in their respective countries on illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds.

One of the main conclusions of BirdLife report is that illegal killing of birds is a widespread practice affecting over 80 strictly protected bird species which are reported as victims of deliberate wildlife crime.

The report takes stock of a large variety of illegal means and motivations behind this offence, poisoning being the most worrying as it is indiscriminate, thus equally dangerous for wildlife and for people.

According to Mr. Barov solutions often require cultural sensitivity and understanding of the human dimensions, but the full implementation of the law is the indispensable first step of this process. In its presentation BirdLife presented some recommendations to governments, including the need to set-up effective institutions as well as to guarantee the adequate funds to enable the police, customs and courts to apply the law; the need for both Governments and NGOs to improve information collection about wildlife crime so to develop a common grasp of the issue; the need for better co-operation between the European Union member states and their neighbours to prevent wildlife crime to be exported.

Dr. Yves Lecocq, FACE Secretary-General, presented the European Hunters' perspective, making a clear delineation between legitimate hunting and the various criminal activities which negatively affect birds, including illegal trade and smuggling, persecution (for competition or commercial reasons), and indirect killing of birds through poisoned baits.

Dr. Lecocq stressed that the unfortunate association between illegal killing of wild birds and legal hunting jeopardises the reputation of all sustainable hunters who, through their rural roots and conservation ethics, are in fact in a unique position to assist the relevant authorities in reducing the practice of illegal bird hunting. He recalled that the FACE has a long-standing policy of zero tolerance towards illegal killing, and renewed FACE's commitment to scale up efforts against illegal killing of birds and other wildlife to a European level.

As a contribution to the European Conference, the FACE has released a resolution with conclusions and recommendations which, among others, condemn the illegal killing of wildlife and

call on all hunting organisations to further apply systems to exclude from their membership people who break the law or conduct themselves outside local hunting tradition.

The session concluded with the presentation by Mr Pantelis Hadjiyerou, Head of the Game and Fauna Service, Cyprus, offering a national perspective. Mr Hadjiyerou provided an overview of the most common illegal methods of killing and trapping of birds in Cyprus, explaining how these are linked to culture and traditions dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The historical background makes it more difficult to enforce the legislation due to lack of support from the public opinion, despite the fact that Cyprus legislation is one of the strongest in the European Union. Another challenge is represented by the presence in Cyprus of occupied areas, buffer zones under the responsibility of the United Nations and British Sovereign Base Areas, which requires many efforts in co-ordinating actions and harmonising legislation.

Mr Hadjiyerou concluded by presenting the Game and Fauna Service targets for the near future, including the organisation of an awareness campaign by 2013.

### 3. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

This session was devoted to presenting good practices as well as challenges from both the NGOs and the governmental bodies, including enforcement agencies. A short summary of the main conclusions follows<sup>1</sup>.

- **Among the major challenges to stop illegal taking and trade of wild birds, participants have identified historical and cultural barriers, which impede the majority society to consider the illegal killing of birds as a crime (see LPO). This has a direct impact on both the enforcement of the legislation, on investigation, and on sentencing.**

A shift in attitude of the decision makers, the courts and the wider public is needed to show that illegal killing of birds is not a minor crime and needs to be adequately sanctioned. Among other similar examples, the presentation of the successful experience to stop the poaching of Honey Buzzards and other migrating raptors in South Italy (see LIPU) proved that the enforcement of the legislation and the restoration of the rule of law were possible only once both local authorities, local police forces and local public realised that illegal killing of birds is a crime.

Education of the wider public, with a special focus on young generations, seems crucial and has to be combined with dedicated awareness raising campaign, involving all concerned actors including as much as possible those groups who find these illegal practices socially and culturally acceptable, as well as the indifferent public. This comprises working to remove the political barriers coming from those politicians who show support toward illegal actions or criticism against conservationists (see BirdLife Cyprus). A way through can be to persuade the society, including touristic operators, that their image and reputation is negatively impacted by the illegal killing of birds (see Terra Cypria).

- **Legislation appeared not to be a solution alone; still, it's fundamental to set a framework (see DEFRA/RSPB).**

It was noticed that the problem is more acute in those countries (particularly in the non EU member states) with weak or inadequate legislation, especially when the latter does not sufficiently regulate the hunting activities (e.g. no hunting bans to protect resting sites or important habitats; hunting seasons too long impacting birds during the breeding season; etc.) and /or does not foresee appropriate penalties as deterrent for particularly serious crimes (e.g. killing/trapping in closed periods; use of prohibited means of capture and substances; breach of bag limits; illegal killing in protected areas) (see Euronatur).

Legislation should be strong but at the same time the rationale behind it should be clear enough and take into account the stakeholder concerns and expectations so to make it understandable, respected and shared by the majority population (see FACE).

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<sup>1</sup> The presentations by each of the speakers are available at the following website :  
[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/Bern/News/Cyprus/Cyprus\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/Bern/News/Cyprus/Cyprus_en.asp)

The creation of a network of prosecutors, the setting-up of national working groups on bird crime and the establishment of special Police Units for collecting evidence on environmental crime appeared to be common key elements of several examples of good practices (e.g. see Slovakia), both for adapting the existing legislation to the extent of the problem as well as for achieving a correct application of the law and of its sanctions.

In addition, specific training for judges focusing, *inter alia*, on guidelines for evaluating wildlife crime should be put in place. The possibility of shifting the burden of proof in relation to certain offences and focus to end-use activities has also been discussed.

A particular attention should be paid to the issue of wildlife poisoning, which appears as the major threat posed by illegal activities.

➤ **An additional challenge is represented by the economic gain delivered by the illegal trading of birds as well as by the organised structure of the poachers, which sometimes involves organized crime (see Sovereign Base Area in Cyprus).**

Good progress in investigating organised crime and targeting the economic drivers has been achieved in countries where the co-operation between the concerned authorities and other stakeholders has focussed on exchanging both the results of monitoring activities and the good practices.

Capacity and competence building of all the relevant national authorities (police, customs, judiciary), as well as increased communication and cooperation between the concerned enforcement bodies should be helpful to enforce nature protection legislation, to prevent wildlife crime, to promote a better investigation based on precise data and statistics and to target the key offenders (see BirdLife Malta).

More in particular, adequate financial resources should be allocated both to strengthen the capacity of enforcement agencies (especially at key times of the year) as well as to public awareness campaigns.

International cooperation should be enhanced to be able to evaluate the transboundary impact of the phenomenon, as well as to improve the control over international illegal hunting and to reduce the risk of exporting the problem to third countries.

In this respect, it was suggested to encourage the exchange of experience and information between key stakeholders at European level: this could be done through the setting-up of a joint database where European countries could report and consult data on activities linked to illegal killing/taking of birds. Such a database would allow for a systematic monitoring of illegal activities, using standardised methods, and enabling to keep records so to increase knowledge.

The involvement of the hunters in monitoring the illegal practices on the ground (see Hellenic Hunters' Confederation) is an example of good practices which should be enlarged to all Contracting parties and which could contribute to promote a positive image of legal hunting as respectful of the principles of wise and sustainable use of natural resources.

#### 4. WORKING GROUPS

Three working groups were organised on three different aspects:

1. How to make legislation and enforcement more effective, moderated by Ms Clare Shine, Institute for European Environmental Policy; Rapporteur: Ms Marta Kaczynska, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG ENV Bio-diversity Unit;
2. Biological Aspects, moderated by Dr. Fernando Spina, Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research; Rapporteur: Mr Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager, BirdLife International;
3. How to understand and involve people in bird conservation, moderated by Ms Beatrice Frank, Department of Geography, Memorial University, Canada; Rapporteur: Mr John Swift – British Association of Shooting and Conservation;

The conclusions of the working groups are appended to this report (see Appendix 4, 5 and 6 to this report).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The Conference marked a turn-over in tackling the issue of illegal taking and trapping of birds: it launched a long-term process aiming at enhancing national and international cooperation and coordination in this field, fostering adequate enforcement of existing legislation, sharing good practices and setting the basis for an appropriate monitoring process. It encouraged Contracting Parties to report on illegal killing of birds and already produced 17 National reports (by the concerned responsible Ministries) on the implementation of the Bern Convention's related recommendations (see Appendix 3 to this report); moreover, it encouraged the preparation of an NGO survey targeting 40 Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention and supported a survey by the European Commission on enforcement mechanisms in EU member states.

The participants called on responsible stakeholders for “a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, and a full and proactive role in fighting against this illegal activity, which represents a serious threat to biodiversity, damaging nature as well as human society”.

A declaration, the “Larnaca Declaration” (see Appendix 7 to this report), was adopted and presented to the Press. Contracting Parties and Observers to the Convention are encouraged to disseminate it at national level.

Furthermore, the working groups produced a Draft Recommendation which will be submitted to the Standing Committee for possible adoption (see Appendix 8 to this report). Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention can submit their comments/amendments until 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

In addition, participants proposed to organise, in 2013, a second meeting under the Bern Convention to monitor progress made. This meeting could be the occasion for further sharing experience and knowledge on combating illegal killing of birds so as to produce guidelines on different techniques (from data collection, through enforcement to communication).

Finally, the concrete results produced by the Conference proved once more that the Bern Convention is a unique instrument to deal with sensitive and complex issues at pan-European level.



## **Appendix 1**

# **EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS**

**6-8 July 2011**

09:30 – 16:30

Lordos Beach Hotel, Larnaca, Cyprus

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## **AGENDA**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The issue of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds in Mediterranean Parties has been on the Agenda of the meetings of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention for over 15 years.

In 2007, following the interventions from a number of Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee considered that illegal trapping should be examined on a pan-Mediterranean basis, and decided to revisit its Recommendation No. 5 (1986) “on the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or trading in protected birds”.

In 2008, the Secretariat informed the Standing Committee that there had not been a good response from Parties to report on this issue, and therefore no conclusions could be drawn, except that the illegal killing of birds is still carried out in some parts of the Mediterranean where implementation of national legislation is weak. The Committee took note of information presented and expressed its concern of the apparent lack of progress in Cyprus and many other Mediterranean states.

At the 29<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting, a presentation by Mr. Joe Sultana (Malta) reported that the illegal killing of birds still takes place in numerous European countries, including Malta, Italy, Cyprus, UK, the Czech Republic, France, Romania, Greece, the Netherlands, and Spain, and in some countries this illegal activity has increased enormously.

The delegates of Slovenia, Serbia, Sweden, France, Croatia, Norway, Germany, Albania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine all shared this concern and supported action by the Bern Convention on this issue, which should not be limited to the Mediterranean. Some delegates referred not only to illegal killing activities but to the transit of the killed and captured birds through other countries between the country of origin of the authors of the illegal activity and the country where they carried it out, which requires stronger border controls. Other related issues raised were the difficulty to identify the illegally killed species in many cases; the capture of endangered species; the need for countries to co-operate and to work with nature protection NGOs; as well as the need for strong laws and good enforcement to decrease such demands for bird killing. Condemnation to non-sustainable taking of wild species and even more so when such taking is illegal under the applicable legislation was expressed by the representative of the International Association for Falconry & Conservation of Birds of Prey, speaking on behalf of the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the European Union (FACE). FACE called for proper enforcement with appropriate penalties at all levels, including traders of such birds, and restaurants, while stressing the need for good information and awareness raising campaigns, targeting all stakeholders (the general public, politicians, police authorities, hunters, etc.).

The Committee requested the Bureau to organise a discussion on this issue. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to prepare a European Conference on illegal killing of birds, to be held in July 2011.

## **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE**

### ***Objectives:* The conference should contribute to:**

- Clearly identifying the extent of the problem in Contracting Parties, including by analysing the trend and nature of the illegal activities, as well as their legal, social (attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, as well as willingness to accept different management options) and biological dimension;
- Providing an overview of law enforcement mechanisms in Contracting Parties;
- Examining options for supporting national authorities to enforce their legislation and improve compliance with obligations;
- Taking stock of national experiences and put forward examples of good practices as well as of preventive measures;
- Identifying priorities on a conservation point of view, to make suggestions to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the steps forward.

### ***Scope:* "Illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds" is defined for the purpose of this conference as:**

Activities which are illegal under national or regional law, and which are aimed at marketing birds, or deliberately killing or catching them alive, thus not covering indirect or side effects (like for example accidental bird poisoning due to the use of pesticides). Such activities include: shooting/trapping in closed period, shooting/trapping in areas with shooting prohibition, shooting/trapping by unauthorized persons, killing of protected species, use of prohibited means, non-respect of bag limits, deliberate poisoning...

The Conference has a “positive” focus, aiming at suggesting practical measures, options and/or strategies to be implemented to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds in Contracting Parties.

## **WORKING LANGUAGE**

English

## **ORGANISERS**

The Council of Europe, in co-operation with the Game Fund of Cyprus (Ministry of Interior). A “Preparatory Group” counted with the additional participation of the European Commission, BirdLife and FACE.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Officials from Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, the European Commission, International Conventions, Cyprus National authorities, nature protection NGOs, experts and other relevant stakeholders.

## DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011

**9:00 – 9:30** Registration at the Conference site (Lordos Beach Hotel, Larnaca, Cyprus)

### PLENARY SESSION I

**Chair:** Mr. Jan Plesnik, Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention

- 9:30 – 10:00 Welcoming remarks and introduction to the Conference**  
*Mr Neoklis Sylikiotis, Minister of the Interior of Cyprus*  
*Dr. Petros M. Kareklas, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order*  
*Dr. Lazaros Savvides, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and President of the Game Fund*  
*Ms Ivana d'Alessandro, Secretary of the Bern Convention*
- 10.00 – 11.15 Illegal Killing of Birds in Europe: Facts and Figures**
- **Overview of law enforcement mechanisms in EU member states: Legal obligations under the Birds Directive and state of implementation**  
*Mr Joseph van der Stegen and Mr Fotios Papoulias, European Commission - DG Environment*
  - **Illegal killing of birds in Bern Convention's Contracting Parties: the NGO perspective**  
*Mr Boris Barov, BirdLife International*
  - **Illegal bird killing: a European hunters' perspective**  
*Dr. Yves Lecocq, Secretary General of FACE*
  - **Illegal killing of birds in Cyprus: a national perspective**  
*Mr Pantelis Hadjigerou, Head of the Game Fund*
  - **Discussion**
- 11:15 – 11:30 Coffee break**
- 11:30 - 12:45 Challenges and solutions: the experience from the field**
- **Illegal killing of birds in the Adriatic Flyway**  
*Mr Martin Schneider-Jacoby, Euronatur*
  - **The trapping situation in Cyprus**  
*Mr Martin Hellicar, Campaign Manager, BirdLife Cyprus*
  - **Collateral impacts of trapping on tourism and proposals to overcome them**  
*Dr Artemis Yiordamli, Executive Director, Terra Cypria*
  - **Stopping the poaching of Honey Buzzards and other migrating raptors in South Italy: a success story**  
*Mr Claudio Celada (LIPU)*
  - **The role of the hunters in Cyprus**  
*Mr Antonis Kakoullis, President of the Federation of Hunting and Wildlife Conservation in Cyprus*
  - **Discussion**

**12:45 – 14:00      Lunch break**

**14:00 - 16:30      Challenges and solutions: the experience from the field (cont.)**

- ***How do hunting associations in Greece effectively confront and control poaching***  
*Mr Nicolas Papadodimas, President of the Hellenic Hunters' Confederation*
- ***Illegal killing of birds of prey in the UK: Conservation impacts and possible solutions***  
*Ms Elaine Kendall (DEFRA) and Mr Jeff Knott (RSPB)*
- ***The enforcement of the legislation to eliminate bird crime – The Slovak experience since 2000***  
*Mr Mario Kern, Police Presidium, criminal police of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and Mr Rastislav Rybanič, Director General, Division of Nature Protection and Landscape Development, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic*
- ***Trapping in the Sovereign British Areas in Cyprus***  
*Mr Jim Guy, SBA Chief Superintendent*
- ***Discussion***

**15:15 – 15:30      Coffee break**

- ***Illegal killing of birds in Malta***  
*Mr Paul Debono, Executive Director of BirdLife Malta*
- ***Ortolan bunting trapping in South West France***  
*Mr Olivier Le Gall, President of LPO Aquitaine*
- ***Communications by National Delegations***
- ***Discussion***

**16:30 - 17:00      Introduction to the working groups**

- ***How to make legislation and enforcement more effective***  
*Ms Clare Shine, Institute for European Environmental Policy*
- ***Biological Aspects (provisional title)***  
*Dr. Fernando Spina, Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research*
- ***How to understand and involve people in bird conservation***  
*Ms Beatrice Frank, Department of Geography, Memorial University, Canada*

**17:00                      End of the first day (Registration to the working groups)**

## DAY 2 - THURSDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011

### PLENARY SESSION II

**Chair:** Mr Pantelis Hadjigerou, Head of the Game Fund

**9:00 – 9:15**      **Introduction to the Working Groups**

**9:15 - 12:30**      **WORKING GROUPS**

#### *Working Group 1: Legal Aspects*

#### *How to make legislation and enforcement more effective*

**Aim:** To agree on definitions; to clarify the scope of legislation and what actions are excluded; to analyse enforcement mechanisms, including investigation methods, judicial proceedings and the adequacy of sanctions or other measures to deter offenders and improve compliance; to elaborate recommendations and identify priority actions.

#### **Questions:**

1. What are the key constraints under existing legislation (e.g. gaps, overlaps, legal uncertainty)?
2. What are the key barriers to enforcement (e.g. weak administrative powers or capacity, inconsistency with other instruments, lack of awareness)?
3. What improvements should be targeted (e.g. definitions, full coverage of chain of actions)?
4. What practical steps would strengthen investigation and enforcement (e.g. in-country and transboundary coordination, cooperation with hunting bodies and NGOs, scientific support, information exchange, training)?
5. What type and level of sanctions are needed to provide a meaningful deterrent to offenders?

**Location:** ROOM NUMBER

**Moderator:** Ms Clare Shine, Institute for European Environmental Policy

**Rapporteur:** Ms Marta Kaczynska, Policy Officer, European Commission, DG ENV Bio-diversity Unit

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#### *Working Group 2: Biological Aspects*

**Aim:** To set the context for decision makers; to identify the expected as well as the unexpected impact of illegal activities; to analyse the data collection process, in order to provide evidence which is credible and useful for the concerned authorities, to elaborate recommendations and identify priority actions.

#### **Questions:**

##### **1. When?**

- Are there differences in the demographic/conservation consequences on bird populations of deliberate illegal killing during different phases of the annual cycle?

Return migration: migrants

Breeding: residents and migrants

Autumn migration: migrants

Winter: resident and migrants

- Do we know enough on how mortality caused by deliberate illegal killing affects populations during the different phases of the annual cycle? Could we know more/better?
2. **Who?** What birds are affected by illegal killing?
- Residents  
Migrants
- In case of migrants: who are the migrants illegally killed and trapped in different parts of Europe? Do we know? Could we know better?
  - Could we know more of species- and population-specific migratory routes of birds across Europe?
  - What are the methods to collect, to analyse and to report on such information? Is there a system in place?
3. **Large-scale conservation effects** of local situations of illegal killing of birds: problems related to local concentrations of migrants:
- Do we know enough about the role of bottleneck areas for migrants?
  - Why are birds concentrating in specific sites/areas?
  - Functional role of bottleneck areas for migrants: do we know enough? Could we know more?
  - Conservation effects of the widely practiced use of artificially created features to attract birds on migration by offering a limited resource (e.g. trapping sites, water bodies) as well as the use of electronic sound devices to lure birds to specific sites.
4. **Connectivity:** connecting birds and human perspectives on birds:
- The biological concept of connectivity. Need for connectivity analyses. Do we know enough in terms of connectivity between breeding and wintering areas as well as along flyways? Could we know more/better?
6. **Illegal killing:** a spare time activity?
- Is illegal killing only practiced as a spare-time activity?
  - What about professional “bird deterrent” products and services and are they sufficiently selective?”
7. **Biological consequences of the use of:**
- Widespread artificial feeding in wetlands
  - Widespread use of artificial luring
  - Night shooting in wetlands
  - Lead poisoning in and around wetlands and accumulation up the food chain
8. **Biological consequences of habitat loss** (with special emphasis on protected species):
- Biological consequences of habitat loss (with special emphasis on protected areas), caused by illegal hunting in protected areas where hunting is not permitted (i.e. poaching).
  - Biological consequences of habitat loss (with special emphasis on disturbance)
9. **The use of poisons** to control predators in e.g. intensive hunting estates:
- How to deal with it? How to control it?
  - Is there a useful way to address this through the hunter community?

**Location:** ROOM NUMBER

**Moderator:** Dr. Fernando Spina, Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research

**Rapporteur:** *Mr Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager, BirdLife International*

***Working Group 3: Social/Educational/Cultural aspects  
Human dimensions as a tool for bird conservation***

**Aim:** To identify and analyse the reasons behind this phenomenon; to suggest preventive and alternative measures, including information campaigns, education, training and capacity building, awareness-raising, to elaborate recommendations and identify priority actions.

1. Which are the key obstacles to stopping illegal killing of birds?
2. Which would be the key area(s) for successful bird conservation?
3. How to target key weaknesses in knowledge that influence attitudes and behaviour?
4. How to better understand motivations and cultural values behind illegal killing of birds?
5. How to communicate on the costs and benefits of the issue?
6. How to raise public opinion trust in the work of public authorities?

**Location:** ROOM NUMBER  
**Moderator:** Ms Beatrice Frank, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada  
**Rapporteur:** Mr John Swift - British Association of Shooting and Conservation

**12:30 – 14:00**      **Lunch break**

**PLENARY SESSION II (CONT.)**

**Chair:** Mr Pantelis Hadjigerou, Head of the Game Fund (t.b.c.)

**14:00 – 15:30**      ***Working Groups reporting session***

- *Ms Marta Kaczynska (WG 1)*
- *Mr Boris Barov (WG 2)*
- *Mr John Swift (WG 3)*
- ***Discussion***

**15:30**                **Findings and conclusions**  
*Council of Europe*  
*Game Fund*  
*Adoption of the main findings and conclusions*

**16:30**                **Press conference** (Lordos Beach Hotel, Larnaca, Cyprus)

**DAY 3 - FRIDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011**

**Field trip: early bird watching and sight-seeing**  
Departure at        6:30 a.m. – 17:00 p.m. (including lunch)  
Meeting point at   Lordos Beach Hotel



## Appendix 2

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**Appendix 3**  
**COMPILATION OF NATIONAL REPORTS ON ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS**

Available for downloading at the following website:

<https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.intranet.InstraServlet?command=com.intranet.CmdBlobGet&IntranetImage=1883293&SecMode=1&DocId=1756656&Usage=2>

**Appendix 4:**  
**WORKING GROUP 1**  
**“How to make legislation and enforcement more effective”**

**Conclusions**

**1. AIMS OF THE WORKING GROUP**

- To agree on definitions;
- To clarify scope of legislation and excluded actions;
- To analyse enforcement mechanisms > adequacy of sanctions and incentives to deter offenders and improve compliance;
- To elaborate workable recommendations (with priority actions).

**2. WORKING DEFINITION: SCOPE OF ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS**

Participants proposed clarifications to the draft definition in the background document. The purpose was to promote a common approach covering each stage of the chain of activities related to illegal killing, taking or trapping, including end-use of illegally obtained specimens and activities related to prohibited means and substances. The proposed definition may provide guidance on the application and/or development of national/subnational legislation.

“Activities which are illegal under national or regional law/**regulations** and **involve** the deliberate **pursuit**, killing, injuring or catching alive of wild birds or are aimed at marketing live or dead **specimens of wild birds, including their parts and derivatives**.

Such activities include **but are not limited to: killing**/trapping in closed periods, in areas with prohibitions in force, by unauthorized persons and/or involving protected species; breach of bag limits; possession, donation, use, movement, transfer, offer for sale, advertisement, consumption, import, introduction from the sea, transit or export, of specimens and/or of prohibited means and substances.

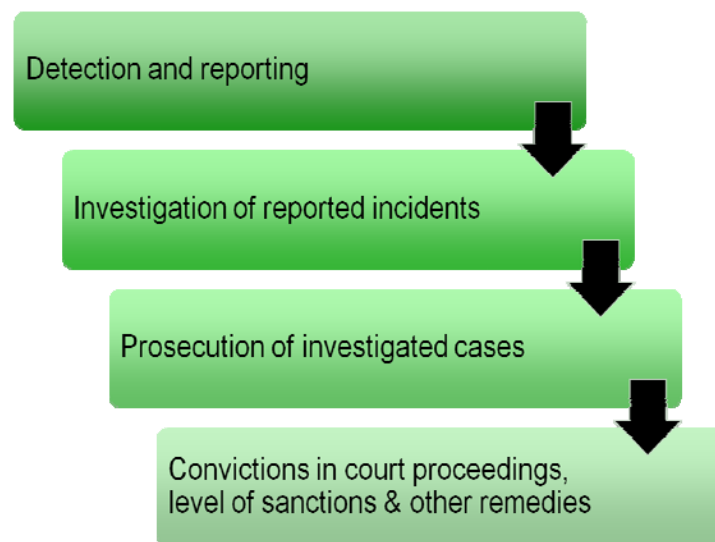
**3. SCOPE OF LEGISLATION AND EXCLUDED ACTIONS**

Several participants expressed serious concern about widespread misuse of derogation provisions e.g. where issued on a standing basis without due compliance with the reasons/guidance laid down under the Convention; without biological justification; and/or inconsistently between neighbouring subnational administrations. Judicial review of derogation provisions was often impractical or impossible if provisions were announced very shortly before taking effect. To strengthen transparency and compliance with the Convention, derogations issued for non-emergency reasons should be announced well in advance to enable proper examination of each proposal and, where necessary, effective judicial scrutiny before the derogation took effect.

Participants were informed that the Standing Committee was currently considering all aspects of derogation practice under the Convention and that draft guidance and clarification would be further considered at its meeting in December 2011.

**4. PRACTICAL STEPS TO MORE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT**

Participants identified constraints and exchanged best practices related to each stage of the enforcement sequence.



#### 4.1. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT: DETECTION AND REPORTING

- **Baseline:** prohibited or regulated activities (in the field; in-country; at borders; in transit; beyond borders) need to be clearly defined and publicised. Respective responsibilities of administrative authorities, landowners and holders of hunting rights may need to be clarified;
- **Maximise resources:** target efforts at hotspots (by location, suspected persons/groups, seasons, selected restaurants); covert surveillance (unmarked vehicles etc.) may be effective;
- **Pool information:** strengthen police-NGO liaison; hotline to report information (in-field activities; restaurants/shops selling prohibited specimens / prohibited means and substances);
- **Develop positive messaging/media strategy to deter offences and promote partnerships:** e.g. communicate the contribution of NGOs to in-field and end-use detection; provide information packs on tourist hunting sites and leaflets at Customs;
- **Share/develop practical tools and training, including for Customs officials at borders:** e.g. species identification guides to support detection of illegally obtained specimens being smuggled out of the country; targeted scrutiny of foreign hunting tourists upon arrival (gun licences, hunting permits, contract with national guide/hunting concessionaire) and departure (record of specimens taken, export permit for trophies etc.). It may be difficult to ban certain means/substances that can also have legal applications;
- **Coordinate bird crime detection with enforcement teams in relevant sectors:** Recognise constraints of evidence-gathering in the field (see 4.2) and leverage resources to detect end-use crime (trophies, restaurants, organised leisure...) e.g. health and safety legislation for restaurants (environmental health services); CITES and animal health and welfare legislation for pet shops, internet trade and at borders (CITES unit, veterinarians, Customs). There may be scope to extend CITES-type legislation and reporting mechanisms to cover trade-related offences involving protected birds/prohibited means and substances.

#### 4.2. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT: INVESTIGATION ON REPORTED INCIDENTS

- **Evidence in the field:** Rural police are the first point of contact; the first hours are critical. Best practices include targeted training for better evidence-gathering at crime scene; manuals for wildlife crime investigation (including e.g. an information protocol); seizure powers essential to collect evidence (e.g. prohibited nets) which should be retained securely;

- **Burden of proof (in-field offences):** Proving who placed traps etc. can be extremely difficult; reversing the burden of proof is more feasible in closed areas (e.g. Sovereign Base Areas) than in open areas with free access;
- **Burden of proof (other offences):** strict liability (shifting burden of proof to suspected offender) is feasible for offences related to possession, transport, trade, restaurants and all elements of end-use (may require changes to e.g. health and safety legislation). To facilitate investigation and close possible loopholes, trade and marketing prohibitions also need to be applied to specimens taken under derogations;
- **National coordination and efficient use of resources:** At least four countries have dedicated environment/wildlife crime units (police/prosecutors/environment/vet service/other key stakeholders). Can be police- or prosecutor-led but government-funded; establish priorities; set annual targets; build partnerships with hunting federations and NGOs in data gathering, monitoring and public information; act with limited resources (secondments funded from other agencies/NGOs). Examples of specific activities include anti-poaching intelligence units and monitoring internet trade of illegally taken specimens.
- **Transboundary coordination:** maximise use of existing electronic networks for tracking suspected offenders and consignments, data collection and information exchange (scope to expand EU TWIX network to support CITES/Wildlife Trade Regulation enforcement?).

#### 4.3. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT: PROSECUTION OF INVESTIGATED CASES

- **Need for zero tolerance** (some countries do not prosecute offences under a certain threshold);
- **Dedicated focal points** with technical expertise can be contacted 24/7 via mobile phone to ensure the right evidence is collected and guide preparations for successful prosecutions;
- **Practical tools** can help reduce long procedures and delays in judicial process e.g. administrative fines for minor offences, police 'statements on conservation impact and adverse ecological impact' to assist judges
- **Specialised environmental courts and/or procedures** have been found valuable, including networks and training programmes for prosecutors and judges;
- **Organised hunting crime** should be investigated in cooperation with relevant authorities for possible links to other criminal activities e.g. drugs, money laundering.

#### 4.4. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT: CRIMINAL PENALTIES AND OTHER SANCTIONS

- **Use publicity effectively:** 'name and shame' offenders (including landowners, restaurants etc.); include information on compliance on relevant websites (hunting federations, hunting tourism companies, NGOs); share success stories and examples of convictions, including internationally;
- **Level of penalties:** make use of stricter penalties available under other legislation; address bird crime through implementation of EU Environmental Crime Directive;
- **Target economic driver:** provide for confiscation of the proceeds of crime at each stage of the supply chain and suppress black market; use powers under health & safety legislation for restaurant closures); provide for confiscation and destruction of seized equipment (including means of travel);
- **Fines & multiplier fines** can set values per protected species and be increased if serious environmental damage etc.); some countries provide for environmental fines in addition to criminal penalties per se;
- **Custodial sentences** can be longer for 'professionals' than non-professionals;
- **Administrative/hunting rights penalties** can be applied via vicarious liability e.g. to landowners who allow poisoning on their land;

- **Agri-environment payments:** better integrate bird protection measures into EU CAP frameworks; this can be positive (targeted incentives to conserve habitat) or negative (using cross-compliance rules to cut payments to farmers/landowners that carry out/authorise illegal activities on land under their control). Penalties available through CAP payment reductions are much higher than fines available under most wildlife legislation i.e. can provide a meaningful deterrent. Current practice varies between countries. Some require a court conviction before transmitting details of offenders to the agricultural department administering the CAP. Others do not.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

### 5.1. RECOMMENDATION N°1

Birds are a European heritage and a valuable resource. A zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, trapping and trade should be applied to support a shift of culture and promote active stewardship.

PRIORITY ACTIONS
Determine legislation affecting hunting (calendar, practices, derogations for non-emergency reasons) at least 1 year before entry into force, supported by biological knowledge;
Where necessary, extend legislation to cover the chain of activities in the definition, including the production, ownership, trade and transfer of prohibited means or substances to catch or kill birds;
Consider shifting the ‘burden of proof’ for offences e.g. possession of specimens/means in closed premises & transport;
Combine and scale up criminal and administrative sanctions to ensure meaningful deterrents and coordinate with incentive programmes for maximum effect (e.g. via cross-compliance).

### 5.2. RECOMMENDATION N°2

Enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain should be strengthened through appropriate targeting, technical support and cooperation and include a concerted focus on end-users.

PRIORITY ACTIONS
Investigation at crime scene: hotline, specialist expert contact point, NGO-police coordination;
In-field training, sharing of best practices & information;
Environmental/wildlife crime units, prosecutors, courts; ....
Training & networking for enforcement agents & judiciary.

### 5.3. RECOMMENDATION N°3

Partnership and coordination between government agencies and stakeholders is critical to streamline enforcement at local, national and international level and target awareness-raising.

PRIORITY ACTIONS
Positive media strategy – NGOs as partners;
Messages and awareness raising (politicians, information to general public);
Communicate successes (e.g. convictions) – name and shame.

## Appendix 5

### WORKING GROUP 2

#### “Biological aspects”

#### Conclusions

Illegal bird killing (IBK)

Illegal taking and trading (ITT)

The working group examined the following questions as regards the biological aspects of illegal *taking* and *trading* of birds. It defined the scope of the discussion, in accordance to the Conference objectives. The question about illegal *vs.* unsustainable killing is a question about biology & conservation (conservation biology).

Questions examined	Solutions identified
Can illegal killing be sustainable? Can legal killing be unsustainable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No -&gt; illegality</li> <li>• Yes -&gt; management</li> <li>• Sustainability possible only in the framework of the law</li> </ul>
FOR ALL QUESTIONS BELOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better data collection and data management systems are needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By major taxonomic group</li> <li>○ Standardized methods of collection (protocol)</li> <li>○ Common reporting format</li> <li>○ Adjusted to flyways</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maximising synergies between Governments, Scientific institutions and NGOs in data collection and resources.</li> </ul>
WHEN?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IKB can take place at any time</li> <li>• Recognise the particular vulnerability of populations during their reproductive and pre-nuptial periods.</li> </ul>
WHICH species and populations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European migration atlas for the better knowledge of migratory flyways and seasonality of movements at the species and population level</li> <li>• Movbank, Satellite, Critical site network tool, etc</li> <li>• Overlay with data on IBK</li> <li>• Connectivity analysis to identify key areas along flyways.</li> </ul>
WHERE? (to focus conservation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotspots of IKB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bottle necks and stepping stones</li> <li>○ Diffuse IKB – where areas of conflict</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Key importance of islands as stepping stones</li> <li>• Importance of key staging habitats and the ecological conditions they provide to migrants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Synthesis of the available information is needed (Passerines)</li> <li>○ Information already good (soaring birds)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
What is the impact of...	
...luring/artificial attraction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known to maximise success of IKB (legal measures!)</li> <li>• General impact on migratory birds (lower priority to know)</li> </ul>
... bird deterrent products?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not well studied from conservation point of view</li> <li>• Poisoning not considered here</li> <li>• Not considered as high priority</li> </ul>
... collection of eggs/chicks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of issues involved, but mostly related to trade.</li> <li>• Monitoring of internal trade – knowledge gap</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic marking is an important tool to be promoted regarding keeping birds as pets/collections/breeding, etc</li> <li>• Need to improve use of technology for surveillance</li> </ul>
... illegal methods of killing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal requirements are clear, compliance is the issue</li> <li>• Impact of lead ammunition goes beyond waterbirds</li> </ul>
... functional loss of habitats? (e.g. disturbance, alteration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protected areas work in the wider context of landscapes</li> <li>• Is mainly an issue of improving protected area management, planning and enforcement</li> <li>• Need to plug in important gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Conservation of EMERALD sites</li> <li>◦ Call to examine this issue with priority in the CoE countries in the West Balkans, Ukraine, Caucasus</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
... poisons?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reason for IBK in the following situations:</li> <li>• <b>Conflict man-carnivores.</b> Solutions needed to minimise the causes of the conflict, not to penalize the sides in it.</li> <li>• Competition for a resource: Solutions needed to strengthen the control</li> </ul> <p>Needs for action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve toxicological knowledge and analytical capacity</li> <li>• Improve investigative and judicial procedures</li> <li>• Support training, experience exchange and specific legislation</li> <li>• In EU MS, obligations for strict control over biocides</li> </ul>
What data and knowledge is needed to support enforcement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The knowledge for targeting enforcement actions was examined in the questions above.</li> </ul> <p>Aspects that were missed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge for forensic investigations</li> <li>• Criminal analysis</li> <li>• Juridical analysis and case law</li> <li>• Opportunities available to benefit from cooperation with Interpol</li> </ul>

### **Main message:**

Recognize the significance of the illegal taking and trade of birds as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favourable status of bird populations and damage to the conservation actions undertaken by the Parties. In view of the need for more effective enforcement, improving knowledge is needed to evaluate, target and reverse the impact of IKB. However, it was recognised that significant amount of knowledge already exists and in no way the lack of it should prevent from taking effective action in view of the evidence that certain types of illegal activities are increasing in some countries.

### **Recommendations:**

(1) Contracting parties and the relevant institutions should improve the knowledge base needed to support the solutions to the problem of IKB/ITT of birds, such as in terms of priorities, a European bird migration atlas for the better knowledge of flyways of species and populations, seasonality of movements and connectivity among key areas for migratory birds.

(2) Establish systematic monitoring and reporting systems for illegal activities using standardised methods for data collection, covering the major taxonomic groups, providing for common reporting format and taking into account population flyways. Such monitoring system would benefit from



maximising the synergies among governments, scientific institutions and NGOs in data collection and use of resources.

(3) Prioritised actions should be taken in hotspots of bird concentration and illegal killing activities in order to facilitate best practice approach across countries along flyways. The break down of the links between the demand for birds and the supply through illegal activities should be dealt with priority by the relevant countries and institutions.

(4) As a matter of priority governments should ensure the effective management of protected areas with the aim of maintaining and improving the connectivity of habitats in the wider landscapes thus ensuring the functionality of flyways.

(5) To CMS COP10: to take forward the issue of poisoning of migratory species in a global context including lead poisoning.

**Appendix 6:**  
**WORKING GROUP 3**  
**“How to understand and involve people in bird conservation”**  
**Conclusions**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds has been recognized and largely discussed as a major issue for bird conservation in Bern Convention’s Contracting Parties during the opening day of the European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds held from the 6-8 July 2011 in Larnaca, Cyprus. This issue has been further addressed by participants during the second day of the conference in three facilitated workshops, each focusing on one of the following themes: legal, biological and socio-cultural aspects of illegal bird killing.

The aim of the workshops was to identify and suggest three specific recommendations to be submitted to the Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats for possible adoption on December 2011. Below are reported the outcomes and recommendations of working group 3: “Social, Educational and Cultural aspects: Human dimensions as a tool for bird conservation”.

The group participating at this workshop was composed of a moderator (Beatrice Frank), a Rapporteur (Dr. John A Swift) and 16 participants. Results of the sequential and interactive facilitation process applied by the moderator during the workshop is reported in this document to highlight how the three consensual and supported recommendations reported at the end of this document were obtained by the working group.

## **2. SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS: HUMAN DIMENSIONS AS A TOOL FOR BIRD CONSERVATION WORKSHOP**

To start understanding the underlying problems behind illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, participants were asked to respond to the following question: “In the battle to address and understand the key issues of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, we are losing, losing ground, gaining the upper hand or winning?” and explain the reason behind their answer.

The majority of participants believed that we were between losing ground (n=8) and gaining the upper hand (n=6) in the battle to address and understand the key issues of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds (Tab. 1 and Fig. 1). Weak economy, high profits generated by illegal killing of birds, lack of enforcement and political willingness to address the problem were identified by participants as the main reasons behind losing ground. Participants supporting the answer “gaining the upper hand” identified the increase in awareness about this phenomenon in many member parties and the enforcement of EU standards and laws as a first step toward winning the battle.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Supporting participants</b>	<b>Reasons given</b>
Losing	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressed economy</li> <li>• Lack of support from the EU</li> </ul>
Losing ground	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of incidents of illegal killing is rising in Malta and Cyprus</li> <li>• Economical crisis and job losses are driving people into illegal activities</li> <li>• Illegal hunting tourism generates good business</li> <li>• Lack of political willingness to address the problem</li> <li>• To avoid losing votes, some politicians supporting illegality</li> <li>• “Poachers” have become more organised and are using sophisticated equipment that allows them to work more effectively</li> <li>• High profits of illegal killing, since returns are divided between fewer people and “tax free”</li> <li>• Sanctions are weak</li> <li>• Limited resources to tackle the problem and for enforcement</li> </ul>

Gaining the upper hand	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding has and is improving, though action has yet to follow</li> <li>• EU legislation is putting pressure on Member States and resulting in national actions</li> <li>• (Application for) EU membership is driving up standards in the courts, policing and governance</li> <li>• Living standards have been rising and reducing the need to hunt traditionally in some member parties</li> <li>• There is now a better definition of illegal practices</li> <li>• Member States' property and land law is improving</li> <li>• Education standards and awareness among people is improving</li> <li>• Cyprus, for example, has seen big improvements in certain aspects of illegality such as poisoning and raptor shooting – if not in illegal indiscriminate trapping</li> <li>• Ecotourism is slowly increasing and generating revenue</li> </ul>
Winning	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It takes a long time and is a generational problem, but we are on the right path toward success</li> <li>• In Malta local people are now taking part in bird camps and conservation activities</li> </ul>

*Table 1. Answers and explanations given by participants to the question “In the battle to address and understand the key issues of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds we are losing, losing ground, gaining the upper hand or winning?”.*

After having discussed with the entire group the underlying problems behind illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, participants were divided into groups of 4 people and asked to identify which were the 5 key obstacles to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds today. The key obstacles identified by each group through consensus were set out and grouped in main themes to be discussed by all participants of the workshop together.

The main themes identified by participants as obstacles were: lack of public awareness, lack of resources, weak penalties and lack of juridical will, lack of political will, socio-cultural traditions, money and lack of ability of hunters' organizations to exclude illegal hunters from their groups (Tab.2 and Fig. 1). After discussing in depth these 7 obstacles with all participants, money and lack of ability of hunters' organizations to exclude illegal hunters from their groups were recognized as not priority obstacles to focus on in the workshop. Thus, no further discussion was carried out over these two topics during the workshop.

Obstacle	Comments
Lack of public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness about what is going on and the adverse impact on nature</li> <li>• Lack of awareness on benefits generated from stopping illegal activity (e.g. long term benefits of ecotourism not visible and obscured by “poaching”)</li> </ul>
Lack of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources, equipment and manpower, expertise and training</li> <li>• Lack of specialist on wildlife crimes in police units</li> </ul>
Weak penalties and lack of juridical will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penalties are not strict enough to deter wrongdoers</li> <li>• Juridical lack of awareness leads to small penalties and fines</li> <li>• No willingness to hand down tough sentences</li> </ul>
Lack of political will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of political will from local leaders</li> <li>• Political will follows public opinion and votes</li> <li>• Politician afraid to push law implementation and enforcement</li> </ul>
Social and cultural traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwillingness to change</li> <li>• Tradition/culture makes it difficult to get support from public</li> <li>• Public against law enforcement</li> </ul>
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to address money drivers such as the restaurant trade</li> <li>• Who does illegal activities has a lot of money</li> </ul>
Hunters not doing enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organised hunting bodies are not doing enough to exclude illegal hunters from their groups</li> </ul>

*Table 2. Main obstacle identified by participants to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds.*



Figure 1. Answers and explanations given by participants to the question “In the battle to address and understand the key issues of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds we are losing, losing ground, gaining the upper hand or winning?” and main obstacle identified by participants to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds.

Once agreed through consensus on the 5 key obstacles to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, participants were divided into smaller groups to focus on one of the obstacles identified and explore 5 reasons why such obstacles represented a problem to address and stop bird illegal killing. In table 3 and figure 2 are reported the responses to the 5 time why exercise and the comments added from the whole group on the reasons behind each specific obstacle.

Obstacle	Reason
Lack of public awareness	<p><u>Why 1:</u> People do not realise that illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds is a problem</p> <p><u>Why 2:</u> People do not have the background knowledge about this issue</p> <p><u>Why 3:</u> Information about the topic is not accessible and always reliable</p> <p><u>Why4:</u> Material is not distributed through enough channels</p> <p><u>Why 5:</u> limitation on strategies to raise awareness</p> <p><u>Comments from the bigger group:</u> the term “awareness raising” suggest people “being told what to think and do by outsiders” whereas the goal is “enlightenment”; working with people and public involvement needed to address this issue.</p>
Lack of resources	<p><u>Why 1:</u> No budget or insufficient budget is allocated</p> <p><u>Why 2:</u> Decision makers do not think illegal killing and taking of birds is a high priority in the face of competing priority needs</p> <p><u>Why 3:</u> Not enough pressure is put on the decision makers by the general public</p> <p><u>Why4:</u> Society at large is not aware or does not care about this issue</p> <p><u>Why 5:</u> There is no relevant information and value system</p>
Weak penalties and lack of juridical will	<p><u>Why 1:</u> Judges are unwilling to hand down the maximum penalties (e.g. loss of licences, fines, prison)</p> <p><u>Why 2:</u> Judges lack knowledge and understanding of the real impacts</p> <p><u>Why 3:</u> The system does not allow for judges and prosecutors to develop knowledge or focus just on this type of issue</p> <p><u>Why4:</u> Lack of resources available for specialist on wildlife crimes</p> <p><u>Why 5:</u> Lack of priority given to wildlife crime for allocation of resources</p> <p><u>Comments from the bigger group:</u> lack of political will and public interest</p>
Lack of political will	<p><u>Why 1:</u> Politicians need local votes</p> <p><u>Why 2:</u> Politicians embrace the background culture of their voters</p> <p><u>Why 3:</u> Illegal killing and taking is low on the politicians’ agendas</p> <p><u>Why4:</u> Politicians lack awareness about the topic</p> <p><u>Why 5:</u> There is a lack of national and international pressure</p> <p><u>Comments from the bigger group:</u> the cost of failure for a politician are absent; there has been no discrimination made between illegal activity and legal hunting; attacking illegal activity is confused with an attack on legal hunting</p>
Social and	<p><u>Why 1:</u> Tradition and culture give a sense of national/regional identity that people want to</p>

Obstacle	Reason
cultural traditions	<p>hang on to</p> <p><u>Why 2:</u> Hang on to identity to resist globalisation and Europeanization</p> <p><u>Why 3:</u> Tradition and culture emphasise uniqueness and personal identity which are attractive</p> <p><u>Why 4:</u> People are resistant to change</p> <p><u>Why 5:</u> Because it is illegal, migratory bird hunting becomes attractive and marks you as being socially different</p> <p><u>Comments from the bigger group:</u> not all traditions are good; many traditions have changed over time like slavery; it is not clear to people when legal hunting becomes illegal; nobody explained convincingly why the law was changed; lack of awareness;</p>

Table 3. Responses to 5 reasons why the obstacles identified represent a problem to address and stop bird illegal killing.

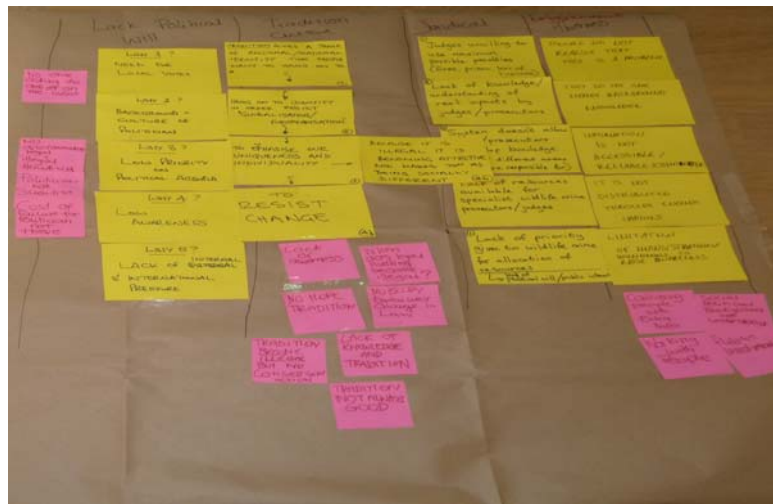


Figure 2. Responses to 5 reasons why the obstacles identified represent a problem to address and stop bird illegal killing.

After the whole group had discussed in more detail the reasons behind each obstacle, participants were invited to go back into their smaller group and state the obstacle they were focusing on as a specific, measurable, action-based, realistic and time-bound (i.e. smart) objective (Tab. 4). The objectives reported in Table 4 represent the framework on which working group 3 based and developed the recommendations reported at the end of this document.

Obstacle	Resulting Objective
Lack of public awareness	<p>Create a framework for awareness raising by identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- target groups (e.g., politicians, hunters, farmers, general public, children)</li> <li>- means of communication (e.g., campaigns, material, etc.)</li> <li>- key principles</li> <li>- key arguments and information (e.g., economic and environmental impacts)</li> </ul>
Lack of resources	The contracting parties should strengthen the capacity, budget and competency of the relevant enforcement and juridical authorities to effectively prevent and punish wildlife crime
Weak penalties and lack of juridical will	Specialist training on wildlife crime for judges and prosecutors and ensure all relevant cases assigned to them
Lack of political will	Pressure and funding from the EU to support enforcement of anti-poaching/trapping strategies in affected member states.
Social and cultural traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breeding for eating tradition</li> <li>- Traditional hunting museum</li> <li>- Promote the benefits of globalisation/Europeanization</li> <li>- Find other ways to validate regional/national identities</li> </ul>

Table 4. Obstacles to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds rephrased by small groups into objectives.

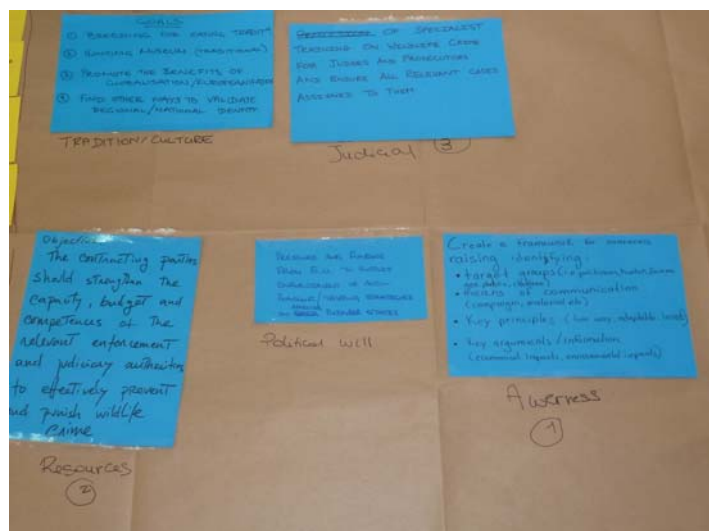


Figure 3. Obstacles to stop illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds rephrased by small groups into objectives.

Despite all the above objectives being recognized as important to stop the illegal killing of birds, the limited time of the workshop allowed the rephrasing of only three of the five objectives as recommendations. Specifically, the working group agreed through consensus to focus on 1) lack of public awareness, 2) lack of resources and 3) weak penalties and lack of political will, as priorities on which to build the recommendations to present for the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The three objectives identified through consensus were transformed in recommendations along the following lines:

**Objective 1:** lack of public awareness. Need to build a broad-based dialogue and partnership of all those with shared interest. It was evident that this required signing up to certain core principles on which all could agree, namely:

- a) This is about illegal killing of birds, not legal hunting;
- b) Zero tolerance of illegal killing of birds;
- c) Recognition of legal hunting.

The recommendation was therefore to follow the line of developing strategies for promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups based on the foregoing principles. In regards of tradition and culture associated to bird illegal killing, trapping and trade, the working group discussed the merits of noting traditions and culture as the first step to understand and foster changes in people behaviours related to these practices, seeking alternatives to illegal activities where possible and identifying better ways to reinforce regional identity.

**Recommendation 1:** Develop and support national communication strategies, promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups, and noting traditions, cultures and values. These strategies should be based on the following principles: (i.) this is about illegal killing of birds, not legal hunting; (ii.) zero tolerance of illegal killing of birds; (iii.) recognition of legal hunting.

**Objective 2:** lack of resources. The working group agreed to call for strengthened capacity, budget and competency in relevant enforcement agencies and judiciary so as to effectively prevent and punish wildlife crimes.

**Recommendation 2:** Strengthen the capacity, budget and competency of the relevant enforcement and judicial authorities to effectively prevent and punish wildlife crimes.

**Objective 3:** weak penalties and lack of political will. The working group agreed to highlight the need for the provision of specialist training for wildlife crime officers, prosecution services and judges.

**Recommendation 3:** Adapt judicial systems by the creation of special units of judges and prosecutors, provided with specialist training on wildlife crime, and ensure all relevant cases are assigned to them.

## Appendix 7



### LARNACA DECLARATION

The European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Game Fund of Cyprus (Ministry of Interior) in the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern, 1979), was held in Larnaca, Cyprus from 6 to 8 July 2011. The event was attended by 100 participants representing various stakeholders, including Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention, international organisations, national and local authorities, enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations, scientific and research bodies, tourism industry, police authorities and mass-media.

Recognising that many birds species in Europe and worldwide are declining rapidly and that, for this reason, governments have adopted various measures to help birds, the Conference participants agreed that measures to tackle illegal killing are urgently required.

Despite efforts by many governmental authorities, illegal taking and trading in wild birds is still a serious pan-European problem with clear regional patterns, having a considerable negative impact on biodiversity across the continent. In some European countries, the driver for such activities is mainly direct or indirect financial profit for individuals or organised crime, generating illegal (untaxed) benefits not related to basic survival needs. Considering the multiple dimensions of illegal killing, trapping and trading of birds in Europe, such as the ecological/environmental, legal, economic, social and political aspects, a combination of measures, policies and strategies is necessary to solve the problem. These measures should sensitively combine law enforcement (including advocacy and judicial processes, effective investigative agencies, exemplary punishment and adequate court judgments), education and awareness of the general public and of specific target groups (e.g.: hunters, farmers, children and youth, etc.) and securing political support mostly by strengthening the operational capacity of law enforcement agencies or bodies.

The participants in the European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds call therefore on responsible stakeholders, governments, local communities, law enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations to unequivocally condemn all forms of illegal taking and trading in wild birds, to pledge a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, and a full and proactive role in fighting against these illegal activities, which represents a serious threat to biodiversity, damaging nature as well as human society. More detailed recommendations will be submitted to the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to be held in Strasbourg on 29 November – 2 December 2011 for possible adoption.

They include, inter alia: i. the need to strengthen enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain through appropriate targeting, scientific and technical support and co-operation; ii. the need to recognise the significance of the illegal taking and trade of birds as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favorable status of bird populations and a damage to the conservation actions undertaken by the Parties with adverse impacts on the conservation, legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors; and iii. the need to develop, finance and support national communication strategies promoting dialogue between relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

At the same time, the participants in the Larnaca Conference express their warm thanks to the Cyprus authorities for their generous hospitality.

*Done in Larnaca, Cyprus, 7th July 2011*



## Appendix 8



### Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

#### **Draft Recommendation No. ... (2011) of the Standing Committee, adopted on ... December 2011 on the illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds**

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention;

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild fauna and its natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Convention requires Parties to give particular emphasis to the conservation of endangered and vulnerable species, including endangered and vulnerable migratory species;

Recalling that Article 6 compels Parties to take the necessary and administrative measures to ensure the special protection of the wild fauna species specified in Appendix II, prohibiting in particular all forms of deliberate capture and keeping, and deliberate killing, as well as the possession and internal trade in these animals, alive or dead;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 5 (1986) on the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or trading in protected birds, which encouraged Parties to ensure the prosecution of persons illegally catching and keeping or killing birds or establishments commercialising live or protected birds;

Further recalling its Recommendation No. 90 (2001) on the catching, killing or trading of protected birds in Cyprus, which encouraged Cyprus to properly implement the actions suggested in Recommendation No. 5 (1986);

Noting with satisfaction that since the recommendations were adopted by the Standing Committee, most Parties have adopted national legislations prosecuting persons illegally catching, killing or trading in wild birds;

Regretting that despite growing efforts by competent authorities, compliance with international obligations and enforcement of legislation are still weak and not always accompanied by appropriate sanctions;

Recognising and regretting that illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds is still carried out, and that in some Parties these are a growing phenomenon, sometimes involving other transversal questions like the transit of the killed and captured birds through third countries;

Bearing in mind the difficulties in identifying the illegally killed or captured species and to prove the crimes before the Courts, to achieve the effective prosecution of offenders;

Bearing in mind the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity (document T-PVS (2007) 7 revised), adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention on 29 November 2007, and particularly its Principles No. 2 – Ensure that regulations are understandable and respected; No. 3 – Ensure that harvest is ecologically sustainable; No. 8 – Empower local stakeholders and hold them accountable; and No. 11 – Encourage cooperation between all stakeholders in management of harvested species, associated species and their habitats;

Regretting the negative conservation impact that results from the indiscriminate killing and trapping of birds by using prohibited means and methods of killing, capture and other forms of exploitation, listed in Appendix IV of the Convention;

Welcoming, and bearing in mind, the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2011-2020, and its Aichi targets;

Recalling the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (COM (2011) 244 final) and, in particular, its target 1 “Fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives”;

Recalling the provisions of the Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (2009/147/EC), in particular, its Articles 2 (objectives), 5 (general system of protection of all bird species), 6 (prohibition of trade), 7 (hunting), 8 (prohibited methods of capture or killing) and 9 (derogations from articles 5, 6, 7 and 8);

Recalling that Contracting Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) shall ensure that any use of migratory waterbirds is sustainable for the species as well as for the ecological systems that support them and also develop and implement measures to reduce and, as far as possible, eliminate illegal taking and the use of poisoned baits, and prohibit the possession or utilisation of, and trade in, birds and eggs which have been taken in contravention of any laid down prohibition;

Recalling also that the Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia, under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), has identified as a priority action the protection of the Memorandum of Understanding species from unlawful killing, including poisoning, shooting, persecution, and unsustainable exploitation;

Further recalling that the CMS Scientific Council has proposed the development of a Memorandum of Understanding for the conservation of African-Eurasian migratory land birds;

Recalling that the promotion of cultures and traditions, as well as of a European identity based on shared values should be respectful of human and fundamental rights, including animal welfare;

Recognising that effective measures to secure compliance with obligations need to include actions aimed at education, changes in social attitudes and awareness campaigns;

Recognising that the need for improved knowledge should not in any way delay the undertaking of urgent measures in response to the growing problem of illegal bird killing, taking and trade reported by several Contracting Parties;

Recommends Contracting Parties to the Convention and invite Observers to:

## **1. General**

- a. Develop and support national communication strategies, promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups, and noting traditions, cultures and values. These strategies should be based on the following principles: (i.) this is about illegal killing of birds, not legal hunting; (ii.) zero tolerance of illegal killing of birds; (iii.) recognition of legal hunting and sustainable use.

## **2. Legal aspects**

- a. Consider birds as a European heritage and a valuable resource, thus applying a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds to support a shift of culture and promote active stewardship;
- b. Strengthen the enforcement at each stage of the bird-crime chain through appropriate political, operational, scientific and technical support and cooperation, and include a concerted focus on end-users;
- c. Promote partnership and coordination between government agencies and stakeholders so as to streamline enforcement at the local, national and international level, and target awareness raising.

**3. *Biological aspects***

- a.* Improve the knowledge-base needed to support the solutions to the problem of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds such as, in terms of priorities, a European bird migration atlas for the better knowledge of flyways of species and populations, seasonality of movements and connectivity among key areas for migratory birds;
- b.* Establish systematic monitoring and reporting systems for illegal activities using standardised methods for data collection, covering the major taxonomic groups, providing for common reporting format and taking into account population flyways;
- c.* Undertake prioritised actions in hotspots of bird concentration and illegal killing activities in order to facilitate best practice approach across countries along flyways. The break down of the links between the demand for birds and the supply through illegal activities should be dealt with priority by the relevant countries and institutions;
- d.* Ensure the effective management of protected areas with the aim of maintaining and improving the connectivity of habitats in the wider landscapes thus ensuring the functionality of flyways;
- e.* To take forward the issue of poisoning of migratory species in a global context including lead poisoning, to Conferences or Meetings of Parties of CMS and respective agreements

**4. *Social / Cultural / Educational aspects:***

- a.* Strengthen the capacity, human resources, budget and competencies of the relevant enforcement and judicial authorities to effectively prevent and punish wildlife crimes;
- b.* Where internal processes allow, encourage the creation of special units of judges and prosecutors, provided with specialist training on wildlife crime, and ensure all relevant cases are assigned to them.

**Appendix 9**

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,**

**MR. NEOCLIS SYLIKIOTIS**

**ON THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE FOR THE ILLEGAL KILLING OF WILD BIRDS**

*6/7/2011, Larnaca, Cyprus*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome in Cyprus all the distinguished guests in this European conference and I wish you a pleasant stay. The conference which is co-organized by the Council of Europe and the Republic of Cyprus will tackle the controversial and sensitive issue of illegal killing of birds in Europe.

The Ministry of Interior and the Game & Fauna Department of the Game Fund are honored by the Council of Europe's decision to host this conference in Cyprus, and by the so many distinguished guests, scientists, researchers, administrators, and enforcement agencies. I would especially like to thank the staff of the Secretariat of the Bern Convention for the excellent cooperation during the preparation of this conference.

Hunting of birds and especially migratory birds, were central part in the activities and nutrition of Cypriots in the past. In the oldest human shelter, which was discovered and excavated in Cyprus, situated on a steep beach location called "Aetokremmos" in Akrotiri 11.000 thousand years ago, thousands of bone fragments of mammals, birds and reptiles were found. Among these, were bone fragments of 3,205 wild birds, of which 502 were identified. These belong to at least 73 different species of birds such as ducks, geese, various other waders, owls, doves and even a thrush.

Today, worldwide it is proven that the main threat to wild birds is land use change and the degradation and loss of bird habitats. The vast majority of these changes result from human actions while in Cyprus land-use change over the last 20 years has been growing rapidly with an impact on birds.

The widespread building construction, intensive agriculture and pesticide use, scattered houses in rural areas, the extensive road network, high-voltage cables in major bird areas and migratory routes result in fragmentation and destruction of important habitats with direct impacts. As a result of these changes some bird species in Cyprus are "under serious threat" such as the griffon vulture, the bonelli's eagle, the audouin's gull, and the black-bellied sandgrouse. Many other species including species commonly seen in the past such as the crested lark, are declining due to changes in land use. In an effort to counter-act this negative situation the Republic of Cyprus established and manages 29 sites as Special Protection Areas for the wild birds.

The illegal killing and trapping of wild birds is an important additional problem, especially in some European countries, where even today man uses illegal methods to capture or kill them. In Cyprus, the problem still exists, despite considerable efforts by the relevant competent authorities. Today Illegal killing acts additionally to many other problems which threaten wild birds.

Since 2004 when the Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the European Union, we fully implement the relevant EU Directive on Wild Birds including the relevant articles which involve the protected species and the illegal methods of trapping. The Republic of Cyprus, gives special attention and priority to the implementation of the law. The Game & Fauna Service of the Game Fund, the main competent authority for the enforcement of wild birds legislation, every year reports a significant number of wildlife violations, including many cases of illegal trapping. Many of these include the illegal use of nets, limesticks and sound devices. I would like to stress that both protected and huntable species are threatened by these illegal methods, while illegal methods are also used during hunting.

Apart from the Game Fund, the Republic of Cyprus has re-established since 2007 the anti-poaching Police unit to better address the problem and strengthen the anti-trapping efforts.

Selling and trading of protected birds and the enormous illegal profit is probably a source of this problem. It is for this reason that over the last 2 years the Game Fund in cooperation with the anti-poaching Police unit with organised operations have reported and charged several restaurant owners. I want to assure you that these operations will continue and will be intensified so as to pass the right messages.

Law enforcement is however only one aspect of the issue. Another, may be more important one, is the awareness of society as a whole. The society should understand the substance of the problem and the crime that is being committed so that everyone can contribute to its ending. For this reason it is imperative to organize information and awareness campaigns.

The Republic of Cyprus has the political will to move in the right direction for addressing any form of illegality and to fulfill our obligations under various laws and conventions, such as the Bern Convention. Additionally, the Republic of Cyprus as the country Presiding the EU Council in the second half of 2012, has a target of achieving significant progress and minimize the problem, which admittedly sometimes puts our country on-the-spot.

Cyprus is one of the main passages and destinations of migratory birds. Their protection and management is not exclusive of Cyprus, but of all of us. Hence the pursuit of this Conference apart from what has been said, I believe should also be the co-operation and exchange of knowledge with other countries and international organizations for achieving the common objective of protection and conservation of species and the elimination of illegal killing of birds.

To conclude this greeting I want to wish every success to the meetings of the Conference and I look forward to read its outcomes.

Neoclis Sylikiotis,  
Minister of Interior

**Appendix 10****ADDRESS BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND PRESIDENT  
OF THE GAME FUND,****on the European Conference on illegal killing of Birds,***6-8 July, 2011.*

Dear participants, Dear guests,

I would like to welcome you in Cyprus for the European Conference on illegal killing of Birds. It is a pleasure to see so many researchers, administrators, non governmental organizations, friends and colleagues in this European-wide conference to address this important issue.

As President of the Game Fund over the last 7 years I have been fully involved and aware of the issue of illegal bird killing and I know from first hand the efforts undertaken in Cyprus. Every year the Game Fund reports considerable number of wildlife violation cases. Only over the last 3 years, 992 cases of wildlife violations have been reported by the Game Fund out of which 509 cases involved illegal killing of birds or illegal methods of capturing birds. Furthermore, over the last 2 years the Game Fund in cooperation with the Police anti-poaching unit, have reported 23 restaurant owners for selling or offering wild birds. The Game Fund also closely cooperates with the SBA Police which I would like to thank for their efforts, and also with the United Nations in the Buffer zone to address the problem comprehensively.

All the reported cases will be judged in Courts, which I must say have an important role to play as high and deterrent fines are necessary. The legislation gives this possibility as most wildlife violations are potentially punishable with up to 17,000 euros fine and / or 3 years of prison.

High illegal profits gained by wildlife violators, makes them aggressive and puts the personnel on the ground at risk. Over the years the Game Fund personnel has faced numerous oral threats as well as damages on their private property. The Republic of Cyprus fully supports the efforts of law enforcement agencies and will stand by and support our personnel by all means.

Like said, the problem of illegal killing of birds is a problem which requires close cooperation and coordination among the different stakeholders. Law enforcement agencies, hunting associations, researchers, non governmental organizations and the wider public should engage so that the correct message get across: All wildlife violations in the law are crime activities.

The wider public has an important role to play. People need to realize that killing or eating protected species apart from being a violation of the law, jeopardizes our own wellbeing and sustainability efforts, the results of which might not be visible for some time in the future.

As President of the Game Fund over a number of years I must say that considerable efforts and progress has been made in tackling this problem. Attitudes towards illegal killing of birds are changing but more is needed with focused and targeted efforts.

I believe we have important things to share but most importantly we would like to hear from you, the experts, your opinion and to share with us best practice and efforts undertaken internationally.

I wish you all pleasant stay in Cyprus and I look forward to positive outcomes of this European conference.

Dr. Lazaros Savvides,

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and President of the Game Fund.