



Strasbourg, 19th September 2024 – Today, the Bern Convention turns 45 years old.

Open to signature on 19th September 1979, the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats was the first international treaty to protect both species and habitats, actively supporting the conservation of natural heritage and facilitating inter-governmental cooperation. The Bern Convention entered into force on 1st June 1982. It now includes 50 Parties, with 4 African countries among them since it is open to other countries beyond the solely European states.

The efforts of the Bern Convention encompass four main pillars of action:

- **Protecting biodiversity** to maintain the delicate balance between the species in our ecosystems. This is exemplified by results to help preserve and recover endangered species such as the brown bear, the wolf, and the lynx, among others.
- **Tackling environmental challenges** such as the importance of preserving biodiversity, climate change, harmful human activities and invasive species.
- **Raising public awareness** and actively involving everyone in the protection of our natural heritage. An example of this is the [complaint system](#) of the Convention – implemented since 1984, it allows everyone to raise their voice and report harmful actions against the environment.
- **Preserving our natural habitats** and their vital role in hosting numerous species of animals and plants. As a remarkable example, the [Emerald Network](#) is an ecological network put forward by the Convention that includes over 2,400 areas of special conservation interest in seventeen countries!

The Bern Convention continues to orchestrate a collective effort involving governments, NGOs, social institutions and people to protect our natural heritage. These years of dedicated work and the process of collaboration have yielded demonstrative results in environmental protection and the recovery of species and habitats. Now, the triple planetary threat of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss creates challenges for sustainable development, the protection of nature and the viable future of our planet. These concerns place the Convention in a position of relevance to continue providing efficient and democratic coordination to preserve nature for future generations.

Indeed, as says the Estonian Chair of the Bern Convention Standing Committee, Ms Merike Linnamägi, “the Bern Convention is unique in its ability to raise to new challenges. With its many excellent expert groups and Standing Committee that meets every year, challenges can be dealt with quickly and recommendations adopted within the year. These Recommendations are then basis for work that happens in member states. No other Nature Conservation Convention is so responsive to the challenges we face currently in the Global Biodiversity Crisis”.

Website: www.coe.int/biodiversity



Photo Credit: Merike Linnamägi©