

Strasbourg, 26 October 2018
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T-PVS/Files(2018)48

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

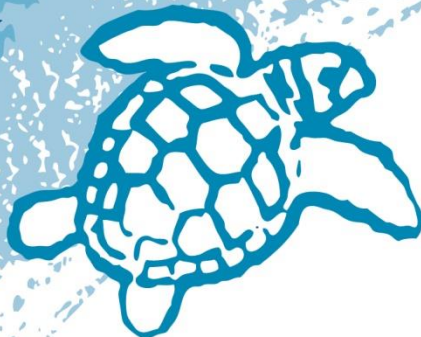
38th meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2018

File open

**Threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias
(Greece)**

- REPORT BY THE NGO -

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET*

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Mr. Øystein Storkersen
President
Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Athens, 26 October 2018

Our Ref. 24616**Re: File opened: Greece - threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias**

Dear Mr. Storkersen,

As the complainant of the open case file No 2010/5, (Greece - threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias) we hereby declare our support in relation to the content of the report submitted by ARCHELON (T-PVS/Files(2018)44).

We look forward to presenting the conservation status of the sea turtle nesting beaches in Kyparissia Bay for discussion at the upcoming Standing Committee Meeting, on behalf of both organisations.

We take this opportunity to enclose a Press Release, jointly issued with 14 Greek NGOs, in relation to the recent issuance of the Presidential Decree for Kyparissia Bay. We welcome the new legislation and reiterate the urgent need for the preparation and implementation of a Management Plan, as the Presidential Decree does not stipulate necessary management measures. Without the adoption of a management plan, the newly declared protected area will lack regulations and measures that will ensure the adequate protection of the sea turtle nesting beaches. Such regulations are fundamental in order to ensure full implementation of Recommendation No. 174 (2014) on the conservation of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and of sand dunes and other coastal habitats in Southern

Kyparissia bay (NATURA 2000 – GR 2550005 “Thines Kyparissias”, Peloponnesos, Greece). In addition, we express our extreme concern over the contract to explore and extract hydrocarbons in the marine area adjacent to the newly declared protected area, which was signed by the Greek Government simultaneously with the issuance of the Presidential Decree for the protection of Kyparissia Bay.

The adoption of the Presidential Decree does not automatically imply its immediate implementation, hence existing illegal activities and conservation problems will continue in the meantime. It is therefore imperative that the implementation of Recommendation No. 174 continues to be monitored by the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Venizelos

MEDASSET President

Member of IUCN-Species Survival Commission: Marine Turtle Specialist Group

Enclosed: *Press Release*

CC: *European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment:*

Mr Andras DEMETER, Directorate B – Natural Capital

Mr. Fotios Papoulias, Directorate B – Natural Capital

Mr. Yannis Couniniotis, Directorate E – Implementation and Support to Member States



Joint Press Release

17 October 2018

Presidential Decree declares new legal framework for the protection of Kyparissia Bay

Fourteen environmental non-governmental organizations in Greece, have expressed their satisfaction regarding the issuance of a Presidential Decree for Kyparissia Bay (EU Natura 2000 sites GR 2550005, GR 2330005 and GR 2330008).

Following several years of joint efforts by the NGOs, 2 draft Presidential Decrees, 3 decisions of the Greek Council of State (No. 32/2015, 175/2017 and 80/2018), a European Court of Justice judgement condemning Greece for failure to fulfil obligations (C-504/14, Decision of 10th November 2016) and a Recommendation on protective measures by the Bern Convention at the Council of Europe (case file 2010/5 «Greece: Threats to marine turtles in Thines Kyparissias», Recommendation No. 174), the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy has now taken a big step toward the protection of Kyparissia Bay.

It is, however, a paradox that the Ministry takes this important step for the protection of Kyparissia Bay while at the same time giving permission for the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons in the marine area adjacent to the newly protected area. This agreement raises grave concerns over the sufficient protection of the valuable ecological characteristics of the habitat and the sustainable development of the local community.

With the issuance of the Presidential Decree, the second most important nesting site of the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in the Mediterranean and one of the most important sand dune systems in Greece, now acquires a concrete institutional and legal protective framework against plans for unregulated coastal development. It should be noted that until today, the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy has issued two Ministerial Decisions for the protection of the area (May 2013 and May 2016), but these measures were of temporary effect.

For Kyparissia Bay to be sufficiently protected there is an urgent need for the preparation and issuance of a Management Plan for the area, in cooperation with the Kotychi – Strofylia - Kyparissia Bay Wetlands Management Body with the active participation of local stakeholders and community. The implementation of a Management Plan will ensure that illegal activities, that continue to degrade the habitat, will be addressed and that the needs of the local community will be taken into account.

The preparation and implementation of the Management Plan must address several crucial issues: a complete identification of the legal road system in the protected area; beach use rules (duration of stay at the beach, beach zoning, code of conduct etc.) that will prevent harassment of sea turtles during their highly sensitive reproduction cycle; rules for beach bars operating in the core habitat; fishing regulations; and hunting regulations to protect the area's bird fauna.

A new era has begun for Kyparissia Bay. An era of protection and sustainable management of the natural wealth of the area. The environmental organizations are hopeful that the long-awaited Presidential Decree will not prove to be “empty words”, but shall immediately be followed by the preparation of management measures and will constitute the basis for the adequate protection of the area and the sustainable development of the local community. At the same time, the NGOs express

intense concern about the agreement for the exploration and the extraction of hydrocarbons in the marine area adjacent to the protected area, which was signed simultaneously with the issuance of the Presidential Decree for the protection of Kyparissia Bay.

For more information:

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