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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

43rd meeting

Strasbourg, 27 November - 1 December 2023

Open case-file: 1995/6

**Akamas Peninsula
(Cyprus)**

- REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by the Ministry of
Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus*



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

**Complaint No. 1995/6: Case-file open on Cyprus: Akamas Peninsula
Government Report**

SCOPE

The purpose of this Report is to give as much information as possible to the Standing Committee on the progress made in implementing Recommendation No.191 (2016), as an update of the information included in the September 2022 Government Report.

The Republic considers that Points 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 of the Recommendation are fully implemented.

REMAINING POINTS OF RECOMMENDATION No. 191 (2016)

The remaining points included in the Recommendation are quoted and the actions taken towards their implementation is stated in this section.

Point 1: *«Declare the whole of the Akamas peninsula a national park, a biosphere reserve or a protected area with comparable international protected status, including in the protected area the Natura 2000 area “Periochi Polis-Gialia” (CY 4000001), aiming to facilitate a coordinated management of sea-turtle nesting beaches in NW Cyprus, and to ensure that the Akamas Peninsula, as a whole, including a terrestrial and a marine part, be managed in a sustainable, integrated way;»:*

The state forest area of the Akamas peninsula (consisting of almost 80% of the Natura 2000 area), along with most of the state land, has been declared as a National Forest Park. Additionally, an action plan with measures for the protection of the whole Natura 2000 site is currently being implemented.

The same consistent and coordinated conservation measures are being implemented in all nesting beaches of Akamas Peninsula and Polis-Gialia. Through the activities of the yearly Marine Turtle Conservation Program, it is ensured that there is a coordinated management and protection of the sea-turtle nesting beaches around Cyprus. See also comments made for points 5 & 8 of the Recommendation below.

The declaration of the state forest land as a National Forest Park is considered as an adequate tool to facilitate the protection of the whole peninsula.

The Republic considers that the current protection regime is adequate for the Natura 2000 site “Periochi Polis-Gialia”.

A sustainable development plan for the National Forest Park has been prepared and its implementation has commenced, with conservation actions and the environmental and planning approvals that are currently being issued for the first phase of the road improvement as directed by the Appropriate Assessment Report.

The sustainable development plan's budget has been approved by the Council of Ministers for the improvement of the road network, the construction of the nodes and the hiring of personnel for the management of the park.

Meanwhile refinement of other key aspects of the park are ongoing including operational rules, other conservation actions, local community involvement as well as surveillance and monitoring of species and habitats.

Point 2: *«Achieve the objective above by protecting adequately the area without undermining the existing good conservation status of the habitats and species of the designated Natura 2000 area “Chersonisos Akamas” and by ensuring a harmonious coexistence with the neighbouring communities;»*

The LDP has undergone an Environmental Impact Assessment Study that includes an Appropriate Assessment in relation to the Natura 2000 sites. The report by the Department of Environment has been issued with very strict conditions ensuring the protection of the Natura 2000 sites but also the protection of the Akamas Peninsula as a whole by prohibiting scattered development and promoting development near the community cores. This way environmentally important areas will not be negatively and permanently affected while the communities will be able to gain benefit from the nearby developments.

UPDATE: The LDP was published with a delayed implementation, and as of September 1st, the LDP is the Development plan used going forward.

Point 3: *«Establish an entity, with scientific staff and wardens, which would be responsible for the sustainable management of the protected area and the neighbouring communities, facilitating an effective implementation of protection measures;»*

At this point no such entity will be established, since the management and protection of Akamas is under the consistent and coordinated efforts of the Department of Environment, Department of Forests, Department of Fisheries and Marine Research and the Game and Fauna Service. Monitoring and surveillance of the area is currently performed by personnel of these departments.

The departments involved in the management of the area have qualified staff to perform these duties and responsibilities and thus a separate entity is neither needed nor will it provide any added value to the protection regime. Also, with the operation of the National Forest Park additional personnel will be assigned to the area. The Forest Park will be staffed with Park Rangers, with relevant authority and duties to implement protection and operation measures. The Park Rangers will be put in place within 2023.

When the National Forest Park is fully established and operational the relevant authorities will be responsible for monitoring habitats and species in order to review the effectiveness of the environmental management. The reports will be then reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee which is made up by governmental departments and the Scientific Committee which in turn is made up by relevant departments, Environmental NGO's, Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Union of Cyprus Communities, Cyprus Hunting Federation and environmental experts. If the report shows a negative change or trend to the species and habitats, relevant actions will be taken in order to eliminate the threat and/or pressure exerted.

Point 9: *«Close down illegal restaurants in the neighborhood of the beaches of Lara and Toxeftra (including Aspros river restaurant);»*

The issue is being monitored. The offenders have been prosecuted and the issue is now in the courts.

The SC will be informed on the outcome when available.

Point 12: *«Take appropriate measures to avoid light pollution impacts on the beach from the planned road that will be connecting the golf development with the existing coastal road and protect the beaches from light pollution in the entire coastal length of the Natura 2000 site;»*

A thick barrier, in the form of a planted fence will ensure that no direct lighting will reach the nesting beach from the road connecting the golf development with the existing coastal road. This condition has been included in the EO.

With regards to the protection of the nesting beaches of the entire coastal length of the Natura 2000 site «Periochi Polis-Gialia-CY4000001» from light pollution, this will be regulated via the Ministerial Decree for the Protection and Management of the area, in which specific restrictions will be set regarding this matter. There have been further delays due to the pandemic and the Decree has not yet been put into force. The legal procedures for the Decree have commenced and are expected to be completed in the second trimester of 2022.

Additionally, as part of the EU infringement case, the authorities reviewed newly submitted studies and data regarding the light pollution and visitation of the nesting beach, as per the recommendations of the Commission. The issued masterplan permits contain strict lighting restrictions and rules regarding the visitation and access to the nesting beach.

The proponent has sold their rights (permit and land) to a local bank to eliminate debts. No further building permits or requests for construction commencement have been submitted up to now. No construction or other works have commenced.

Point 13: *«Revisit the local development plan of the Polis Gialia so as to ensure, through Strategic Environmental Assessment, that it will not affect the integrity of the nesting habitats of marine turtles;»*

The last local development plan for Chrysochou Bay (including the area of Polis-Gialia) has been in place since 2015. Any future amendments will be assessed according to national and EU legislation.

No final decision has been reached for this issue yet. The SC will be kept informed.

MARINE TURTLE INITIATIVE

With regards to our participation in the Marine Turtle Initiative, we would like to inform the SC that we are currently revisiting our options with regards to this project, given the refusal of Turkey to recognize the Republic of Cyprus as an established state, internationally recognized and a member of the EU.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT
SEPTEMBER 2022**