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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

40<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020

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**Follow-up of Closed file No. 2011/4:  
Threat to the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus  
monachus*) in Turkey**

**- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -**

*Document prepared by  
the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey*

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**

**27.10.2020**

**GOVERNMENT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2020**

**Follow-up of the Closed File No. 2011/4 : Threat to the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*) in Turkey**

**Background:**

The Yeşilovacık Harbor Project, consisting of building a filling area and construction of a port, was carried out by Yeşilovacık Harbor Enterprises Inc. The Environmental Impact Assessment of this construction was completed in 2008 and the construction of the port was completed in 2015. This complaint was about the threat that it poses on the habitats of Mediterranean Monk Seal, especially Balıklı Cave, which is very close to the construction site. However, all the construction process was completed based on an “ecosystem evaluation report” prepared by three academicians from Ankara University as a part of Environmental Impact Assessment. It had been committed by the company that the Mediterranean Monk Seal population would be monitored. According to this commitment, the construction company is obliged to finance the monitoring activities of the Monk Seal. Within this scope, the area is being monitored and the report is presented to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Monitoring Studies Within the Scope of Harbor Construction:**

“Balıklı Cave”, which is a breeding site for *Monachus monachus*, is located about approximately 600 m away from the piled jetty system at the tip of the harbor. An aquaculture engineer is employed to monitor the effects of harbor activities. They present their reports to the Mersin Branch of Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. Mersin Branch is evaluating the reports and make their inspection based on the information provided by those reports. These detailed reports are then presented to the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks based in Ankara.

In recent years, the monitoring studies used to be done by the academicians from the Ankara University. In the beginning of 2019, this implementation has been changed. The monitoring studies are done by an agriculture engineer who is employed by the harbor company now. The harbor company was obliged to carry out monitoring work based on the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. According to the commitment, the Mediterranean Monk Seal population is monitored by the company.

The area is monitored from 6 different observation points and the observed monk seal individuals are recorded. Among these, the object of this study, “Balıklı Cave”, or Observation Point 2 as it stands, is being monitored by cameras 7/24. Two cameras installed at the edge of the port, which are capable of rotating 360° are still used to monitor monk seal activities around the port. All the images from 6 observation points are collected in regular intervals and presence of monk seals are detected from these images. After the last report which was presented to the Standing Committee in 2018, the report about the monk seal sightings was updated and could be found in Appendix 1.

Besides, activities like observation of ships entering into and getting out of the port site, inspecting the illegal fishing activities, water quality analysis, inventory of marine fauna are still being carried out and are reported in quarters to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Inventory of marine species shows us that after completion of the construction of the port, the port site became an even better habitat, as it provided shelter for many invertebrate and fish species.

**Implementations of Monk Seal Conservation Action Plan**

In addition to the monitoring studies, some actions are taken within the scope of monk seal action plan prepared by the former Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. These monitoring studies are carried out together with Middle East Technical University, Institute of Marine Sciences.

As it was presented in previous reports, one of the activities in the action plan is to determine the habitats of monk seals within the marine and coastal ecosystems of Mersin province and to put forward the population sizes and monitor them.

A protocol with the title “Monitoring of Monk Seal Populations and Habitats” had been signed between Middle East Technical University Institution of Marine Sciences and Mersin Branch of the Ministry. This protocol, which was renewed in 2018, targets protecting the monk seal habitats and carrying them to future generations. The methods of monitoring monk seals was taught to Mersin Branch personnel by the University staff.

The implementation period of the action plan expired in 2019. Most of the activities were completed in the action plan and its implementation percentage is around 70%. Therefore, the action plan is being renewed with the participation of all the stakeholders.

All the monitoring studies and the implementation of the action plan revealed that monk seal population has a stable trend around the region.

Kindly submitted for the Committee’s information.

Appendix 1: Monk seal sightings

## APPENDIX I MONK SEAL SIGHTINGS AROUND THE HARBOUR

A camera system was installed at the port, against the Balıklı Cave, to be able to monitor the cave live and online. Besides, an additional camera was installed to be able to check the sides and end of the port together, and these two cameras are taking records online. By these cameras, the monk seal activity is being monitored all the time. Monk seals are recorded rarely while foraging under or near the port. Besides, regular interviews with the fishermen around the port is made and the data obtained are added to the report. The reports are prepared by the scientists and evaluated by the ministerial staff. Inspections are made by the staff of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. During the inspections, no environmental pollution was recorded in and around harbour area. Besides, some species were recorded which settled on the pillars of the harbour. These species include but not limited to, *Chthamalus stellatus*, *Patella caerulea*, *Phorcus turbinatus*, *Brachidontes pharaonis* and *Actinia equina*, which resulted in the occurrence of pelagic fish and sea turtles around the harbour area. Monk seal sightings are recorded in a table, which is given below;

Observation Point	Location	Day	Hour	Sex	Record Type
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	30.12.2012	16:49	Female	Photograph
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	20.01.2013	11:28	Female	Photograph
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2013	12:12	? – Young	Photograph and Video
OP-4	Yeşilovacık	20.12.2013	16:00	? – Young	Photograph
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2014	09:34	? – Young	Photograph and Video
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	17.02.2014	14:15	? – Young	Photograph
OP-5	Yeşilovacık	01.05.2014	11:25	Male	Photograph
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	03.02.2015	14:31	Male	Photograph
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	10.03.2015	17:30	Male	Photograph and Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	13.03.2015	11:00	Female	Photograph and Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2015	20:15	? – Long distance	Photograph and Video
Dolphin (Companion)	Yeşilovacık	29.04.2015	10:03	? – Long distance	Video
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	28.01.2016	16:05	Female	Report
OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	12.02.2016	21:30	Male	Video
OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2016	17:34	Male	Photograph and Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.09.2016	17:05	Male	Photograph
Dolfen (Port end)	Yeşilovacık	22.01.2017	00:13	Male	Video
OP-1 Sub Port	Yeşilovacık	28.02.2017	22:45	Male	
Port North Entrance	Yeşilovacık	02.12.2017	10:50	Male	Photograph
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	11.12.2017	11:42	Male	Video
Fire Depot Gate	Yeşilovacık	19.12.2017	20:52	Male	Video
Port Entrance North 3	Yeşilovacık	22.12.2017	21:12	?	Video
Port Dolfen	Yeşilovacık	10.01.2018	00:25	Male	Photograph
Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	08.02.2018	01:55	?	Video
Tisan	Yeşilovacık	20.05.2018	18:30	Male	Photograph
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	06.06.2018	20:20	?	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	13.08.2018	06:30	Female	Video + Photograph
Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	17.10.2018	01:42	?	Video
Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	17.10.2018	01:46	?	Video

Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2019	21:08.34	?	Video
Kayalıklar	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2019	21:09.57	?	Video
Mavikent	Mavikent	28.04.2019	15:33	Male	Video
Mavikent	Mavikent	02.05.2019	17:53	?	Video
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	05.05.2019	13:01	Male	Photograph
Dana Island	Dana Adası	12.05.2019	12:32	Male	Video + Photograph
Dolfen (Port end)	Yeşilovacık	21.05.2019	23:40	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	28.08.2019	08:05	?	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.01.2020	10:53	Male	Video
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	10.01.2020	14:35	Male	Video
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	23.01.2020	16:35	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.02.2020	14:00	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.02.2020	16:10	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.03.2020	16:20	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.03.2020	12:45	Male	Video
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2020	10:10	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.05.2020	14:13	Male	Video
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	15.05.2020	08:12	Male	Video