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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

41st meeting
Strasbourg, 29 November - 3 December 2021

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF AN *AD-HOC* WORKING GROUP
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE TURTLES**

in the framework of the initiative to develop a guidance tool

*Document prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Participation*

I. BACKGROUND

At its 40th plenary in December 2020, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention decided to initiate the development of a guidance tool, such as an action plan or guidelines, for the conservation of marine turtles. This decision is motivated by the lack of progress in the numerous and long-standing cases under the Bern Convention involving marine turtle nesting sites in the Contracting Parties Cyprus, Greece and Turkey.

The main aim of the initiative is to support the Contracting Parties Cyprus, Greece and Turkey in finding a solution to the pending marine turtle cases and to prevent further marine turtle complaints in these or other Contracting Parties. The Committee stressed the need for the guidance tool to be practical, results-oriented and action-driven. Further, it noted that the guidance tool should be inspired by and complement existing instruments and plans, without duplicating such actions.

The Standing Committee called on Contracting Parties and Observers to provide technical support for the development of the guidance tool. For this purpose, the Secretariat invited Contracting Parties and Observers to express their interest to participate in an *ad hoc* Working Group.

II. SCOPE

The *ad hoc* Working Group will provide a cooperation platform for strengthening the conservation of marine turtles. It will advise the Standing Committee, in collaboration with the Bureau, the independent experts and the Secretariat, in developing a guidance tool for the conservation of marine turtles with the aim of supporting the Contracting Parties Cyprus, Greece and Turkey in finding a solution to the pending marine turtle cases and to prevent further marine turtle complaints. In particular, the *ad hoc* Working Group shall:

- Examine and discuss the findings of the independent consultants;
- provide advice and guidance for facilitating a multi-stakeholder consensus building process and strengthening a sustainable collaborative approach to decision-making with the overall aim of developing a sustainable co-existence of economic development and marine turtles' protection in the Contracting Parties concerned by the case-files;
- provide recommendations for the drafting of the guidance tool with the aim to define objectives, expected results, indicators and measures/actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the objectives and deliver the expected results;
- support efforts to gain support and engagement from key stakeholder groups, including governments, regulators, companies;
- support the development of communication plans to ensure the visibility and promotion of the outcomes of the initiative;
- Ensure the consistency and appropriate synergies with all relevant treaties, organisations and initiatives at regional and pan-European level.

III. COMPOSITION

The Working Group will comprise relevant representatives of Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention as well as relevant Observers to the Bern Convention.

The Working Group will select one Chair.

The Working Group will cease its functions once the guidance document on marine turtles conservation will be adopted, unless otherwise instructed by Standing Committee.

VI. WORKING METHODS

The Working Group members will provide input through meetings, conference calls, written contributions to draft papers, reports, and other means as appropriate.

The working language will be English.

The Working Group will determine its own meeting frequency; however, it is expected to meet at least three times from late 2021 to 2022 and will reconvene as required. The Working Group shall operate virtually.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee will review and evaluate the work of the Working Group at the Bureau's annual meetings.

In collaboration with the independent consultants, the Working Group will report to the Standing Committee at its annual meeting.

In co-operation with the Chair, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organisation and preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Working Group and any other support activities deemed necessary.