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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

39<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019

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**MANDATE OF THE BERN CONVENTION INTER-  
SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FINANCES**

*Memorandum of the Secretariat  
established by the Directorate of Democratic Participation*

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## MANDATE OF THE BERN CONVENTION INTER-SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON FINANCES

### Background

At its 38<sup>th</sup> meeting, taking place on 27-30 November 2018, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention, decided to invite an inter-sessional working group to make proposals for the future financing and development of the Bern Convention. These proposals shall be presented to the Standing Committee at least two months before its 39<sup>th</sup> meeting, in order to be considered.

### Reminder of the decision of the 38<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting

*The Standing Committee warmly acknowledged the voluntary contributions provided so far by many Contracting Parties but regretted that not all Parties could adhere to this commitment over the last years. In light of the current serious financial constraints of the Convention and the new readiness of some Parties to even increase their voluntary contributions, the Standing Committee called upon all Contracting Parties to review their past contributions with the aim to secure the future joint financing of the work under the Convention.*

*The Standing Committee noted with great concern the continuous issues facing the Convention in terms of financing, the constant decreases in the Convention's allocation from the Council of Europe's ordinary budget and the further cuts expected over the next three-year period of downsizing of the Organisation's activities.*

*The financial challenges that the Convention faces provide an opportunity for Contracting Parties to agree on a vision for the future of the Bern Convention.*

*The Standing Committee invited an inter-sessional working group to articulate this vision of the Convention's role amongst other MEAs. This should explain the unique value that the Convention adds and can develop in the future.*

*The Standing Committee decided, as immediate measures, to instruct the Secretariat:*

- *to seek savings as described in paragraph 4 (page 7) of document T-PVS (2012) 8, as relates to the support to Contracting Parties for attending Standing Committee meetings and for the production of reports;*
- *to change the modus operandi of thematic Groups of Experts, through a stronger focus on the elaboration of documents and studies, including through consultancies and to consequently reduce the need for face-to-face meetings. The Secretariat will use its discretion, in consultation with the Chair of the Standing Committee, to decide when and if there is a need to have broad Contracting Party attendance in said Groups of Experts.*
- *to actively request funding of expenses for meetings hosted by Parties, this includes support towards the attendance of other Contracting Parties and expenses incurred on the development of studies and documents for the meetings;*
- *to prioritise the continued funding of the Emerald Network and the case-files system to continue the collaboration with relevant EU institutions and agencies, such as the Commission, the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity ETC/BD;*
- *to use the Convention reserve as deemed necessary, after presenting a plan for withdrawal from the reserve to the Bureau, for approval.*

*The Standing Committee further decided, in view of ensuring a stable, sufficient, predictable, long-lasting and fair future financial mechanism for the Convention, to instruct the Secretariat in collaboration with the inter-sessional working group which will operate through electronic means:*

- *to develop a Resolution on the financing of the Convention with a scale of a financial contribution by the Contracting Parties based on a minimum and a maximum level. The criteria used for the development of the scale will be developed by the inter-sessional working group;*
- *to prepare in parallel a document clarifying various options as regards financing of the Convention including the legal aspects of the development of an additional Protocol or agreement to the Convention. The document should discuss the benefits and risks of the various options;*
- *to present the above-mentioned Resolution, together with the parallel above-mentioned document, at least two months before the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in order to be considered at this meeting.*

### **Mandate of the inter-sessional working group on finances**

Considering the decision of the Standing Committee at its 38<sup>th</sup> meeting, the inter-sessional working group on finances should:

- a) articulate a vision for the future of the Bern Convention and its role amongst other MEAs, explaining the unique value that the Convention adds and can develop in the future;
- b) develop the criteria used for the development of the scale of financial contributions mentioned in point c) below;

Furthermore, the inter-sessional working group on finances should, in collaboration with the Secretariat:

- c) develop a Resolution on the financing of the Convention with a scale of a financial contribution by Contracting Parties, based on a minimum and a maximum level.
- d) prepare a document clarifying various options about the financing of the Convention, including the legal aspects of the development of an additional Protocol or agreement to the Convention. The document should discuss the benefits and risks of the various options;
- e) present the above-mentioned Resolution and parallel document, at least two months before the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in order to be considered at the meeting.