

Strasbourg, 20th November 2023

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

43rd meeting

Strasbourg, 27 November - 1 December 2023

Strasbourg

APPLICATION OF THE CONVENTION

- Summaries of case files -

- FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS -

WINTER 2023

*Memorandum prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

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FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Turkey: Follow-up to Recommendation No. 95 (2002) on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanli beach (Turkey)

Date submitted	
Submitted by (Complainant)	
Respondent State	Turkey
Specie/s or habitat/s affected	
Background to complaint	<p>The presence of a chrome factory, greenhouses and other developments as well as erosion issues on the Kazanli beach were considered by the Standing Committee a risk to the long-term conservation of this nesting site. In 1998 Recommendation No 66 (1998) concerning the protection of the Turkish beaches of Kazanli, Samandag and Yumurtalik Bay was adopted. In 2000 concerns were presented at the Standing Committee that this Recommendation was not enforced, so a case file was opened. An on-the-spot appraisal carried out in 2002 had revealed that the authorities had taken serious steps to rehabilitate the beach, but that further conservation action was needed. The on-the-spot appraisal resulted in the adoption by the Standing Committee of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) at its 22nd meeting. In light of the progresses achieved by the Turkish authorities in the implementation of Recommendation No.95 (2002), and considering that a better overall protection of the area had been achieved, the Standing Committee decided to close the case in 2004, but asked the government to continue to report on the situation.</p> <p>In 2006, the Standing Committee took note of the information presented by the NGOs as to the existence of several outstanding problems and instructed the Bureau to consider the possibility of reopening the file. The following year the Bureau included this issue in the agenda of its September meeting as a “possible file” and the Standing Committee asked the authorities to report at its meeting the following year.</p> <p>One issue that had to be dealt with, was the deposit of 1.5 million tons of hazardous toxic waste with a high concentration of toxic chromium (Cr 3+/6+) compounds directly next to the Kazanli nesting beach. In 2010 Turkish authorities informed the Standing Committee that a toxic waste neutralisation facility was established within the chromium factory’s grounds and the toxic waste neutralisation process had started. 200,000 tonnes of chromium were already neutralised and waited to be transferred to a landfill site, which had not yet been defined.</p> <p>In 2013 MEDASSET reported that in their view monitoring of beach erosion and removal of hazardous waste were still the two points of Recommendation No.95 (2002) that still had to be implemented.</p> <p>In 2014 the EIA for the establishment of the permanent landfill for the neutralised waste was finalised and the site started to be operative in 2015. The follow up of recommendation No.95(2002) continued annually until in 2015 the Standing Committee decided to follow up bi-annually.</p>

Summary 2017	<p>In 2017 both the authorities and the NGO shared reports on the implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002).</p> <p>Regarding the greenhouses, the authorities stressed that the remaining constructions, although close to the sea, were legal. Further, the authorities reported that the latest analysis revealed that chromium and other chemical compound levels were below the limits. As to the project to contain the erosion, this was not launched due lack of budget, but the neutralization process of hazardous waste continued.</p> <p>The complainant continued to report severe erosion problems, weak waste management (plastic debris on the beach), photo pollution, presence of illegal buildings and little progress on the removal of the neutralised waste next to the Soda chrome factory.</p>
Standing Committee 2017	<p>The Standing Committee took note of the updated information provided by the Turkish authorities and the NGO MEDASSET. It requested the Turkish authorities to provide a progress report on the implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) for its meeting in 2019.</p>
Authorities' report 2019	<p>The authorities informed the Standing Committee that the shore edge line in the region is in the local court and the court is still waiting for renewal of cadastral work. When the cadastral work will be completed, all the lands beyond the shore edge line will be transferred to public property.</p> <p>Concerning chemical waste discharge into the sea by the chrome factory, the authorities reported that discharged chemical compound levels were below the limits. Neutralized hazardous wastes deposited in a temporary landfill were being transferred to the permanent landfill site whose environmental impact assessment was completed three years ago.</p> <p>As for the erosion, a project was drafted by the provincial directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Middle East Technical University, Institute for Marine Sciences. The project, whose aim was to determine the level of erosion and formulate strategies to halt the erosion process, was expected to start in 2020.</p> <p>Other activities to implement Recommendation No.95 (2002) continued as in previous years, with the only update that monitoring of nesting activity on the beaches was previously funded by the soda-chromium company, while since 2017 this was carried out by universities and the provincial directorate of the Ministry.</p>
NGO report 2019	<p>As in 2017, the complainant continued to report severe erosion problems, which were not solved by the arbitrary use of rocks and concrete on the shoreline. Weak waste management (plastic debris on the beach), discharge of agrochemical products in the sea, photo pollution and presence of illegal buildings were still unresolved issues according to the complainant. Few new drainage channels of sewage waters reaching the sea were observed. The complainant also reported the announcement of a new Kazanlı Tourism Development plan, which would be allegedly served by Çukurova regional airport, 40 km from Kazanlı.</p> <p>Furthermore, the complainant reports that nests are threatened by local predators, dead adults and hatchlings were detected during monitoring of a local NGO.</p>
Standing Committee 2019	<p>The Standing Committee took note of the updated information provided by the Turkish authorities as well as the presentation of the complainant, MEDASSET, which called upon the Standing Committee to urge the authorities to implement all conditions of the recommendation without further delay. It also expressed its concern about the continuing pressures on the area and in particular the erosion of the beach.</p>

	<p>The Standing Committee urged the Turkish authorities to implement all conditions of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) and requested an updated report in two years</p>
<p>NGO report 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 1</u> of Recommendation No.95 (2002): compared to 2017, some sand accumulated in front of the boulder sets. To restore the area the complainant suggests to remove the dirt road at the section’s northern end remove the small drainage pipe at the section’s northern end as any discharge from it directly flows onto the nesting beach. ➤ <u>On Point 2</u>: vehicles were observed directly behind and on the nesting beach, causing light pollution and disturbances, uncontrolled vehicle entry points exist in all sections. ➤ <u>On Point 3</u>: as in previous years, two beach clean-ups took place after the 2020 nesting season. Further, beach usage principles during the nesting season were also published on newspapers in early June 2021. Plastic debris and litter continue to be observed on the beach. ➤ <u>On Point 4</u>: the lights observed in 2019 at the wastewater pumping facility were turned off, and the small minibus parking place was removed, together with some streetlights close to illegal buildings. According to the complainant, other facilities, including the Soda-Chromium Factory, continue to cause light pollution as in previous years. ➤ <u>On Point 5</u>: data on wastewater analysis are not publicly available, according to the complainant. At least seven pipes extending into the sea were observed by the complainant, who reports that it is unclear if these are draining chemical waste from the Factory or from elsewhere. Dead sea turtles continue to be observed, as in previous years. ➤ <u>On Point 6</u>: the complainant reports that erosion remains a critical problem and suggests that coastal engineering studies should be launched to evaluate manmade structures that are allegedly further accelerating erosion. The broadening of the road lining creates suspicious of possible development, which is of great concern for the complainant. ➤ <u>On Point 7</u>: the complainant states that signage on the nesting beaches has further decreased resulting in an severe lack of information on regulations. ➤ <u>On Point 8</u>: the complainant reports no update on the Kazanlı Tourism Development plan, except for news on Çukurova Airport stating the airport will be opened in 2022. Akdeniz Municipality’s strategic plan for 2020-2024 also mentions a “Kazanlı Beach Arrangement Project”. ➤ <u>On Point 9</u>: the illegal building in K1 has not been removed and its first floor was still occupied, according to the complainant’s observations. ➤ <u>On Point 10</u>: according to the complainant’s report, 700.000 tons of the toxic waste remained next to the Mediterranean Sea, despite commitment in 2009 that the removal would be completed by 2019. In 2021, no significant change was observed in the sizes of waste deposit piles comparing to 2019. ➤ <u>On Point 11</u>: The wedding hall has not been removed, but was closed during the time of the complainant’s survey. ➤ <u>On Point 12</u>: As noted in point 5 and 14, there area drainage channels reaching the sea in all sections. Further the complainant questions the capability of the sewage water facility to detect and/or remove heavy metals and other toxic materials from waste waters.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 13:</u> “The huge summer house complex “Onur Sitesi” remains on the dunes in section K1 and is a source of light pollution after 00:30 (Fig. 21). Authorities should collaborate with experts and ensure that owners adopt appropriate landscaping and lighting. In disregard of the Recommendation, on 21/10/2020 (Decision No. 223159) the complex was included in the “Sustainable Development and Controlled Usage Area”, despite the fact that the adjacent nesting beach area is included in the “Natural Site - Qualified Natural Conservation Area” ➤ <u>On Point 14:</u> the complainant calls for analysis reports on agrochemical contamination possibly caused by drainage channels reaching the sea. The complainant also reports that Akdeniz Municipality announced a strategic plan for 2020-2024 promoting agricultural practices, including organic agriculture, and environmental recycling. A composted fertilizer production unit has been established recently, possibly in relation to the bio-agriculture strategy of Akdeniz Municipality.
<p>Government report September 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 1</u> of Recommendation No.95 (2002): the remaining greenhouses are legal according to current national legislation. As reported in 2019, that the shore edge line in the region is in the local court and the court is still waiting for renewal of cadastral work. When the cadastral work will be completed, all the lands beyond the shore edge line will be transferred to public property. ➤ <u>On Point 2:</u> as indicated in previous reports, the taxi parking area doesn’t exist anymore. ➤ <u>On Point 3:</u> as in previous years, the municipality and some volunteers clean the area before each nesting season. ➤ <u>On Point 4:</u> Before every nesting season, inspections are made at the beaches by the provincial directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The enterprises, including the Soda chrome factory, are reminded about the necessity of preventing light pollution. The municipality informed the Ministry that the lights used in Soda Chrome factory were adjusted accordingly to the standards set in Circular 2009/10. ➤ <u>On Point 5:</u> Wastewater generated during the production of chromium compound chemicals is treated at the industrial wastewater treatment plant and discharged in accordance with environmental legislation. Wastewater analysis are conducted by a laboratory, discharged chemical compound levels are below the limits. The yearly monitoring of nesting activities shows no nests from <i>Caretta caretta</i>, but over 1,000 nests of <i>Chelonia mydas</i>. Yearly data can be consulted on the government’s report. ➤ <u>On Point 6:</u> the erosion of the coast is continuing and it is clear that the beach will be lost in the future, unless an immediate action is taken to prevent coastal erosion. Turtles have started to use the filling areas of a former sand dune area and even behind it for nesting purposes. Although a project was in cooperation with the METU Marine Sciences Institute on the factors causing coastal was prepared, due to lack of funds, the project couldn’t be implemented. ➤ <u>On Point 7:</u> awareness raising activities targeting local business, fishermen and the public visiting the beach continued as in previous years. Activities targeting schools had to be suspended due to COVID-19. ➤ <u>On Point 8:</u> no updates since 2019 report. ➤ <u>On Point 9:</u> see Point 1. ➤ <u>On Point 10:</u> The old waste are stored in the factory area and covered with impermeable geomembrane material. These hazardous wastes are then treated in a dedicated facility which neutralise them. To date, approximately 1,222,800 tons of waste has been processed in this

	<p>facility (800,000 tons in 2019). The authorities recall the innovative nature of this process and the huge investments behind it. Neutralised wastes are deposited in a temporary landfill which is surrounded by an impenetrable geomembrane covering material. Possible leakages are monitored through the analysis of underground water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 11:</u> The wedding hall is still in place. Although the building itself is not used for weddings, its garden is used for this purpose. ➤ <u>On Point 12:</u> The authorities report that the analysis reports of waste water treatment are published on the website of Mersin municipality, but the link provided is not available.. ➤ <u>On Point 13:</u> The summer house complex “Onur Sitesi” is legal, therefore its removal is not foreseen ➤ <u>On Point 14:</u> the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry had several projects in the past to decrease the usage of chemicals for plant diseases. Nowadays, the Provincial Directorates of Agriculture and Forestry organises trainings for farmers to prevent untimely and unnecessary spraying, reducing the effect of agricultural chemicals.
<p>41st Standing Committee 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Took note of the complainant’s concerns that progress in the implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) was lacking, especially concerning the erosion of the nesting beach and building removal. The Committee expressed its regret that the project in cooperation with the METU Marine Sciences Institute on the factors causing coastal erosion, due to lack of funds, could not be implemented. ➤ Urged the authorities to implement all conditions of Rec 95 (2002) and to accelerate the neutralisation process of the remaining hazardous wastes, hoping that in 2023 all waste would be neutralised. Both parties were invited to submit updated reports in two years.
<p>Government report August 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 1</u> of Recommendation No.95 (2002): Nothing new: the remaining greenhouses are legal according to current national legislation. As reported in 2019 and in 2021, the shore edge line in the region is in the local court and the court is still waiting for renewal of cadastral work. Once this work is done, all the lands beyond the shore edge line will be transferred to public property. ➤ <u>On Point 2:</u> as indicated in previous reports, there is no taxi parking anymore. ➤ <u>On Point 3:</u> The municipality, with the volunteered contributions of students from the surrounding schools, clean the area before each nesting season. ➤ <u>On Point 4:</u> Before every nesting season, inspections are made at the beaches by the provincial directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The enterprises are informed about the necessity of preventing the light pollution at the beaches. The responsible municipality is reminded of the precautions about photo-pollution, and they interview with enterprises around and the Soda chrome factory to take necessary measures. ➤ <u>On Point 5:</u> The Soda-Kromsan factory processes hazardous wastes. Its wastewater is subject to an Environmental Permit for Industrial Wastewater Treatment. Discharge of wastewater is carried out in accordance with Environmental Legislation, and this matter is monitored by the Directorate of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change. The yearly monitoring of nesting activities shows 90 nests from <i>Caretta caretta</i>, in 2022 and over 1,000 nests of <i>Chelonia mydas</i>. Yearly data can be consulted on the government’s report. ➤ <u>On Point 6:</u> It is evident that coastal erosion is progressively advancing in the nesting area. Turtles have started using an area which used to be a sand dune, and even the fill areas behind it, to nest. Without prompt intervention to prevent coastal erosion, it is clear that the

	<p>beach will be lost in the future. Consultations have therefore been held with the Directorship of Erdemli METU Institute of Marine Sciences, and a draft project for Monitoring Coastal Sediment Movements has been prepared. Collaborative protocol preparations regarding the draft project are ongoing between the two institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 7:</u> Education efforts are ongoing. Fisherman training sessions were conducted in 2023. During fieldwork, individuals observed on the beach and businesses are being informed about sea turtles. The release of rehabilitated sea turtles back into the sea was carried out with the participation of the Governor of Mersin and media organizations. Press releases were also issued during these programs to raise public awareness about sea turtle conservation efforts. ➤ <u>On Point 8:</u> Environment plan is a higher order plan that binds all the relevant institutions and Kazanlı beach appears as marine turtle protection site in that plan. ➤ <u>On Point 9:</u> As a result of discussions and correspondence between the Akdeniz Municipality and the landowners, it has been decided to demolish the illegally constructed building located in the Kazanlı Beach K1 area. ➤ <u>On Point 10:</u> The hazardous waste, classified as old technology waste, which was generated as a result of the factory's activities in the vicinity of the shoreline between 1984 and 1998, has been managed by covering it with impermeable geomembrane material within the factory premises. These hazardous wastes (Cr+6) are processed within the ETAN (Old Technology Waste Neutralization) Facility located on the factory site to render them non-hazardous (Cr+3). It has been reported that approximately 1,633,745 tons of waste have been processed at the facility up to this date. ➤ <u>On Point 11:</u> No change: The wedding hall is still in place. Although the building itself is not used for weddings, its garden is used for this purpose. The Municipality does not take any actions for its removal. ➤ <u>On Point 12:</u> Sewage waters of Kazanlı is pumped to Karaduvar waste water treatment facility, fully treated there and released to deep sea. Analysis reports of wastewater treatment are published on the website of Mersin municipality. ➤ <u>On Point 13:</u> The building complex called “Onur sitesi” is still on K1 section of the beach. As they were constructed legally, there could be no solution possible as of today. <p><u>On Point 14:</u> Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods are being implemented in the region to reduce the impact of agricultural chemicals and prevent untimely and unnecessary pesticide applications by farmers. Farmer field schools and producer training programs are being conducted to provide education and information on this matter.</p>
<p>Complainant report August 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is insufficient action in relation to five measures that require continual implementation, resulting in widespread litter (Point 3), lack of nest monitoring (Point 5), lack of information (Point 7), and signs of agrochemical pollution (Point 14). Seven measures have not been implemented to date: Points 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 13. Of great concern is the illegal discharge detected in front of the soda-chromium factory. ➤ <u>On Point 1</u> of Recommendation No.95 (2002): Greenhouses in beach section K3 still remain. The earth graded secondary road used in the K3 region is combined with the beach and vehicles park at night and illuminate the beach and sea with their lights. There are also stray dogs.

- On Point 2: Even if the taxi parking area has been removed a long time ago, there are parking areas and vehicles that cause light and noise pollution. Facilities also cause light and noise pollution. The car parks of the two restaurants located on K2 are illuminated from a high point and very strong.
- On Point 3: There is intense macro-pollution throughout the beach, mainly plastic pollution. The local NGO which usually performs the cleaning was not able to do it this year because of the consequences of the February earthquake. No cleaning activity by other stakeholders has been identified this year.
- On Point 4: Almost all of the public lighting is amber toned and placed to face the opposite direction of the beach. The sources of light pollution that affect the beach the most come from restaurants and a playground. The Soda-Chromium factory, the car park at Onur Sitesi and the vehicles parked behind the beach are also sources of serious light pollution.
- On Point 5: Analysis results regarding the chemical waste discharge aren't available. The complainant observed shiny and crystallized waste materials by the middle of the beach, a discharge area (believed illegal) within the factory, and plastic pollution. There are several pipes extending into the sea which, according to the complainant, might be discharging chemical wastes from the factory. A small pipeline construction was observed on the west part of the Soda-Chromium factory. No sticks, signs, cages or any other forms of nest markings were seen on any sections, except for single long sticks placed on possible nest locations in part of K1, nor any warning signs on the nesting beach. A monitoring and protection activity that received professional (or academic) support was last carried out in 2021.
- On Point 6: There is no information regarding any means of monitoring the coastal erosion of nesting beaches in Kazanlı. The only remedial measure taken against the beach erosion problem in the SPA continues to be the use of boulders and concrete/cement structures.
- On Point 7: As of July 2023, not a single proper "sea turtle nesting beach" sign was seen in the entire SPA.
- On Point 8: The Environment Status report published by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Mersin Provincial Directorate was last published in 2021. There is no information about implementing environmental plans within the scope of this report. There is no new development within the scope of the Tarsus Kazanlı Tourism project.
- On Point 9: The illegal building in K1 is completely abandoned but remains, even though it isn't occupied anymore.
- On Point 10: The wastes from the Soda-Chromium Factory are deposited in a temporary landfill which is too close to the beach.
- On Point 11: The wedding hall in section K3 rarely operates.
- On Point 12: Sewage water from Kazanlı is pumped to Karaduvar waste water treatment facility, where it is treated before being released to the sea. Monthly analysis reports of wastewater treatment facilities can be found on the website of MESKİ (Mersin Su ve Kanalizasyon İşleri Müdürlüğü - Mersin Water and Sewerage Administration).
- On Point 13: The summer house complex called "Onur Sitesi" remains on section K1 and is a source of light pollution at night. Although the Government Report of 2019 stated that the complex was constructed legally and thus cannot be removed, the parcel was included in the "Sustainable Protection and Controlled Usage Area" published in November 2020.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>On Point 14:</u> the complainant calls for analysis reports on agrochemical contamination possibly caused by drainage channels reaching the sea. The complainant also recalled the Akdeniz Municipality strategic plan for 2020-2024 promoting agricultural practices, including organic agriculture, and environmental recycling. Updates are needed regarding the operation of the composted fertilizer production unit at the back of the beach in K1, details of the bio-farming attempts, as well as the project “Integrated pest management in undercover vegetables and fruits”. Besides the obvious agrochemical wastes affecting the SPA, the entire area of Adanalıoğlu-Kazanlı-Tarsus is filled with industrial facilities, all of which are definitely contributing to the waste problem.
<p>Bureau September 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ welcomed that a draft project for Monitoring Coastal Sediment Movements had been prepared with the Directorship of Erdemli METU Institute of Marine Sciences and hoped that this would lead to a limitation of coastal erosion. It also welcomed that it had been decided to demolish the illegally constructed building located in the Kazanlı Beach K1 area and asked to be informed when this building will have been demolished. ➤ however noted no other progress in the implementation of Recommendation No. 95 (2002) and remained very preoccupied by the situation of sea turtles at Kazanlı beach. ➤ requested that the Kazanlı nesting beaches be safeguarded against any coastal build-up, and requested the authorities to provide information of maps and details in relation to the “Kazanlı Tourism Development plan”, the “Kazanlı Beach Arrangement Project”, and the designation of “Sustainable Development and Controlled Usage” areas and “Nature Conservation” areas. ➤ More generally, the Bureau requested full implementation of Rec 95 (2002) with no further delay, and encouraged both parties to continue working on the marine turtles’ initiative.

2001/5: Iceland: Follow-up to Recommendation No.190 (2016) on the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife, especially birds, in afforestation of lowland in Iceland

Date submitted	
Submitted by (Complainant)	
Respondent State	Iceland
Specie/s or habitat/s affected	
Background to complaint	
Summary 2015	This Recommendation was included on the agenda of the Bureau for monitoring purposes. At its last meeting, the Standing Committee congratulated Iceland for accepting to undergo an AEWA Implementation Review Process (IRP), and confirmed the readiness of the Bern Convention for joining and contributing to the IRP visit. The Committee also decided that, in case the visit would not take place in 2015, Iceland would be requested to report on the implementation of the above recommendation at its 36th meeting]. Despite strong organisational efforts by the Secretariat of the AEWA, preparation of joint (AEWA, Bern Convention, Ramsar Convention and CAFF) terms of reference, and setting up of dates, the visit has finally been postponed. Icelandic authorities have in fact just submitted proposals for amendments to the terms of reference in view of restricting the scope of the mission to AEWA and Bern Convention’s provisions.
Summary 2016	A joint on-the spot appraisal of the Bern Convention and AEWA took place in the period 23-27 May 2016. The preliminary results of the mission will be communicated orally to the Bureau members as the mission report is not yet finalised by the independent experts charged with its preparation. A new set of recommendations to Iceland, which will supersede those of the current Recommendation No. 96 (2002), are expected to be presented for examination and possible approval by the Standing Committee.
Standing Committee 2016	This Recommendation was adopted by the Standing Committee in 2002, as a follow-up to a complaint lodged by BirdLife. The monitoring of the implementation by Iceland of this recommendation was decided with the agreement of the country. In 2014, the Standing Committee took note of the report of the authorities of Iceland, as well as of the statements made by BirdLife International and the representative of the AEWA. The Committee congratulated Iceland for accepting to undergo an AEWA Implementation Review Process (IRP), and confirmed the readiness of the Bern Convention for joining and contributing to the IRP visit. At its 35th meeting, the Standing Committee took note of the delays in the organisation of a joint AEWA / Bern Convention mission to Iceland in relation with the afforestation policy of the country, and invited the Icelandic authorities to facilitate the organisation of such a visit during the first semester of 2016.

	<p>The Committee took note of the report and findings of the Joint AEWA/Bern Convention mission which took place in the period 23-27 May 2016 as presented by the independent expert in charge of the mission, Mr Colin Galbraith. The Committee welcomed the general satisfaction of the Government of Iceland with the report and their agreement that the draft Recommendation proposed supersedes and replaces the current Recommendation No. 96 (2002). The Committee further took note of the specific comments expressed by the Government of Iceland on the different operational parts of the proposed draft Recommendation.</p> <p>The Committee warmly thanked the members of the mission team for the successful work achieved and the Government of Iceland for the excellent hosting and facilitating of the visit.</p> <p>The Committee examined and adopted, with minor changes proposed and agreed by the AEWA Secretariat and the delegate of Iceland, Recommendation No. 190 (2016) on the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife, especially birds, in afforestation of lowland in Iceland.</p> <p>The Committee further decided that the follow-up of the implementation by the Government of Iceland of the newly adopted Recommendation will be done taking into account the deadlines recommended in the joint AEWA/Bern Convention mission report.</p> <p>Eventually, the delegate of France congratulated the Secretariats of the AEWA and the Bern Convention for the excellent synergy in the handling of the case which is of interest for both instruments.</p>
Standing Committee 2017	<p>The Standing Committee took note of the information provided by the national authorities of Iceland on the implementation of the Recommendation. It further took note of the decision of the AEWA Standing Committee to request a revised programme of work for the implementation of some operational paragraphs of the set of recommendations addressed jointly by the Convention and AEWA to the Icelandic authorities.</p> <p>The Standing Committee urged the national authorities to speed up their efforts in fully implementing the Recommendation and instructed the Secretariat and the Bureau to continue to collaborate with the AEWA Secretariat and the AEWA Standing Committee in closely following-up the implementation of the Recommendation. The issue will be revisited at the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee.</p>
Standing Committee 2018	<p>The Standing Committee took note of the on-going processes at national level in Iceland, namely for example that a new forestry bill was recently introduced in the Parliament which, if and when adopted, will pave the way for future work on the issue and the preparation of a national forestry strategy.</p> <p>The Committee urged the national authorities to step up their work on the full implementation of all operational paragraphs of the Recommendation, including the preparation of a schedule and clear programme of work, to be revised as soon as possible taking into account the AEWA Standing Committee comments.</p>
Standing Committee 2019	<p>The Standing Committee expressed once again its concern regarding the absence of a written report submitted by the national authorities of Iceland directly to the Bern Convention, but noted that a report on the implementation of this joint Bern/AEWA Recommendation had been submitted two days ago to the AEWA Secretariat. The report could not be assessed by the Committee.</p>

	<p>Considering that AEWA’s Standing Committee meets during the second week of December 2019 and will assess the report by the Icelandic authorities, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention invited the AEWA Secretariat to communicate the result of this assessment to the Bureau of the Bern Convention, for consideration at its first annual meeting in 2020.</p> <p>The Standing Committee reminded Iceland that a report on the implementation of the Recommendation No. 190 (2016) is expected to be sent each year to both AEWA and the Bern Convention.</p>
<p>NGO signal June 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NGO has grave concerns that Iceland’s draft nation-wide plan for forestry (NWPF), on which comments were invited by 18 June, fails to take account of key 2016 recommendations of resolution no. 190 of the Bern Convention Standing Committee on this case, for example those on: a national indicative forestry strategy, the country-wide scheme for long-term monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats (evidence suggests that the forestry will cause population declines in a number of important species), EIA legislation, an evidence-based approach to support locational guidance for forest planting, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Guidance on good environmental practice in afforestation eg on alien invasive species. ➤ NGO considers this especially regrettable as in fact since 2016 there has been much progress in line with the AEWA/Bern recommendations by the Environmental Institutes, which would be undermined by the plan. ➤ Icelandic law, especially on environmental impact assessment and construction monitoring, fails to take into account cumulative impacts on biodiversity of multiple, dispersed small tree plantings and is difficult to implement at local government level. It is vital that any national forestry plan undergoes a Strategic Environmental Assessment to consider the cumulative impacts at national and international level. ➤ In June 2019 the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources nominated members of a working committee to prepare the NWPF to state national policies regarding the status and future of forests in Iceland. The committee introduced a draft of the plan on 7th of May 2021. ➤ However, the committee did not unanimously agree to the results. Two members submitted a memorandum criticizing the NWPF draft mainly on several environmental related issues, concluding that a better and a more rational forestry plan is needed if any common agreement is to be reached on forestry in Iceland. ➤ Ongoing research by a respected international team of scientists shows that forestry plots reduce breeding density of most waders at least up to 250 m from the plots. As small plots have a proportionally longer edge, the effect of forestry can be greatly reduced by planting fewer, larger forests. The draft forest plan fails to consider this key issue. ➤ NGO believes it would greatly help the Minister of Environment to ensure that the forestry plan is improved in line with the Bern convention SC recommendations, before it is adopted, if Bern Convention secretariat were accordingly to write expressing concern about this matter, including in support of the criticisms of two of the Committee members appointed to oversee the development of the plan. <p>update 30 August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Following a query sent to the ministry of the Environment, the prompt answer was:

	<p><i>“The project board for the preparation of a national plan for forestry is reviewing the comments received on the draft. It is expected that the ministry will receive a proposal for a plan, presumably at the end of next month. The Ministry will review the proposal with regard to the mission statement of the project board, provisions in the relevant law and current policy. If this review warrants, the Ministry will request further work from the project boards on certain issues. But then work begins on putting the plan into publication, it will be presented to the Environment and Communications Committee of the Althingi (parliament) and then published by the Minister, cf. law on forests and forestry.”</i></p> <p>➤ Elections and government reforms could jeopardise this plan.</p>
<p>Government report September 2021</p>	<p>➤ The Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) finds the recommendations somewhat lacking in clear and constructive guidance due to the number of recommendations, as well as the manifold suggestions in each of the numbered recommendations.</p> <p>➤ ENR has taken various steps towards conserving natural habitats and wildlife in Iceland, including areas of afforestation on lowlands. These steps have been taken in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and as mentioned in Birdlife Iceland’s letter, dated June 11th, 2021, there has been considerable progress in line with the AEWA/Bern mission report.</p> <p>➤ 2019/ A new bill on forestry. Restoration of biological diversity, protection and increased cover of natural forests and cooperation with stakeholders are among many objectives of the new act.</p> <p>➤ Increase in forestry-based actions: new act on forestry; increased budget to forestry projects, mainly based on the national climate action plan; focus on natural forest distribution and restoration; increased afforestation projects</p> <p>➤ Increase in land restoration projects: Various land restoration projects with emphasis on natural forests, grasslands, and wetlands - have been financed by ENR. Ongoing review of policy on state support for restoration and other land-based initiatives including preserving and enhancing biodiversity.</p> <p>➤ Increased monitoring: For the past two years the practice of monitoring at protected areas has been under review by the ministry and its respective institutions (Institution of Natural History and regional Nature Research Centers). In 2020 an organized monitoring program started at dozens of protected areas, many being important bird habitats.</p> <p>➤ Plans for forestry and land restoration: The process of developing a Nation-Wide Forestry Plan (NWFP) and a Nation-Wide Land Restoration Plan (NWLRP) is underway. Steering committees were appointed for both plans. The committees include members of relevant agencies and individuals with diverse backgrounds. The plans have gone through a public consultation process and strategic environmental assessment. Following the consultation process the ministry has instructed the steering committees to finalize the draft plans, as well as adding an appendix to their report where reactions to comments from the consultation process are explained. The ministry will then review the plans considering consistency with current public policy and terms of reference and make suggestions of amendments if necessary.</p> <p>➤ The Emerald Network: In September 2021 Iceland will start the process of proposing sites to Emerald Network (EN).</p>

<p>Bureau meeting 15-16 September 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcomed that the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources had taken various steps towards conserving natural habitats and wildlife in Iceland, such as a new bill on forestry, an increase in forestry-based actions, an increase in land restoration projects, increased monitoring as well as plans for forestry and land restoration. It further welcomed that Iceland would start the process of proposing sites to the Emerald Network in September 2021. ➤ The Bureau also took note of concerns expressed by an NGO that Iceland’s draft nation-wide plan for forestry (NWPFF) fails to take account key recommendations of Resolution No. 190 (2016) and that it undermines the progress made since 2016 in line with the AEWA/Bern recommendations by the Environmental Institutes. ➤ The Bureau welcomed the overall progress made and urged the Icelandic authorities to keep up the positive trend. It asked to authorities to clarify the compliance of the draft plan for forestry with Resolution No. 190 (2016). ➤ The Bureau reminded the Iceland that a report on the implementation of the Recommendation No. 190 (2016) is expected to be sent each year to both AEWA and the Bern Convention. It asked the authorities to provide further information on the draft plan for the 41st Standing Committee.
<p>Government update November 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concerning Point 5 of Rec190, the draft NFP includes the sentence: Wetlands should not be drained for afforestation and natural woodlands should not be used for forestry with other species. ➤ Re: maps and date, the draft NFP does not go into such detail. Its purpose is to set general goals in forestry. Selecting land for afforestation is done at lower planning levels. The draft NFP does include the following goals in that respect: In selecting land for afforestation, it is important to recognize environmental and social values in the proposed afforestation areas that might be affected by afforestation. Those values should be compared to expected environmental, social, and economic benefits of afforestation. The result should then be part of the application for planning permission at the local level. ➤ Re: decision-making, a tiered decision-making system is built into the draft NFP, with local municipalities involved in the process of eventual site selection for afforestation (see above). Municipalities have all the tools they need, according to the Planning Act, to protect important nature conservation areas without them necessarily being officially designated at the national level. ➤ Re: conservation priorities, the draft NFP includes this goal: Forests should promote increased biodiversity and good status of other environmental values. This goal includes all forests and involves selection of land for afforestation. Environmental benefits of multiple use forests and forestry can be reached in a variety of ways, for example through good forest management practices, the right species selection, creation of glades, regeneration method sand other diverse methods. The draft NFP also includes the goal of: Renewing the current best practices guidelines within the next five years.
<p>41st Standing Committee 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Standing Committee took note of reports of both parties, and presentation of the Icelandic Forestry Service, and of Birdlife Iceland. It appreciated the progress achieved, while also noting concerns of the complainant and their request to return this on the agenda as a possible file. ➤ The Committee recalled that the Icelandic authorities should refer to Recommendation No. 193 (2017) on the European Code of Conduct for Invasive Alien Trees, and ensure good communication and cooperation with relevant national and international stakeholders.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It requested an update report from the Icelandic authorities for the 2nd Bureau meeting of 2023 ahead of its presentation at the 43rd Standing Committee.
<p>Government report August 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On Point 1 of Rec 190 (2016): In August 2022, the Minister for food, agriculture and fisheries published the first combined strategy for land reclamation and forestry as well as an action plan. The strategy is prepared according to recent laws on land reclamation, as well as on forests and forestry. The Action Plan touches on recommendations in Recommendation no. 190. ➤ On Point 2 & 6: This contract has not been finalized. ➤ On Point 3: In December 2021 Iceland proposed five sites to the Emerald Network. In June 2022, a biogeographical seminar was held. At the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee in 2022, the five sites were listed as candidate sites. ➤ On Point 4: In 2021 Parliament passed a revised act on EIA and SEA. This does not change much with regards to forestry. It must be noted that the regional afforestation programs were abolished as such in 2019 and are now part of the Forestry Service. ➤ On Point 5: In August 2022, the Minister issued a single comprehensive land reclamation and forestry plan, as well as a five-year action plan. The plan is entitled “Land and Life – Strategy and Vision for Land Reclamation and Forestry until 2031”. The vision and focus of the new strategy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The state of ecosystems and their biodiversity is consistent with ecosystem potential. ➤ The utilisation of forests, wetlands and other ecosystems is sustainable and they have a strong resistance to natural crises and other disturbances. ➤ The country's ecosystems store rich amounts of carbon in soil and vegetation and play a key role in the carbon balance. ➤ Increased land quality in forests and thriving ecosystems support improved quality of life, public health and improves communities' resilience to environmental change. ➤ The land supports diverse business activities and sustainable development of settlements across the country. ➤ The Action Plan covers 2022-2026 and therefore shapes priorities for government action in the coming years. Defined measures include research on the impacts of land reclamation, forestry and recovery of wetlands on biodiversity, creating new quality criteria for land selection for forestry, and an assessment of the carbon balance for climate emissions accounting. Direct actions mainly involve restoring ecosystems on degraded land, restoration of wetlands, restoration of natural forests and forestry. Regional plans are in the making in close collaboration with municipalities. ➤ On Point 7: The screening of afforestation proposals is in accordance with the EIA act and any afforestation project must go through a screening by the relevant municipality and a development permit to be issued. The Land Reclamation and Forestry Action Plan states that new quality criteria for land selection for forestry shall be developed. This is to be prepared in 2023. Additionally in 2023, a risk assessment for alien tree species is being developed and will be scrutinized by an expert committee on the import of alien species. ➤ On Point 8: The Forestry Service is responsible for advising landowners, based on the best information available, including data produced by the IINH. The IINH may review individual afforestation plans.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On Point 9: These processes are reviewed on regular basis. By adopting in law the issuance of national and regional plans for forestry an inclusive and broad review process is included. ➤ On Point 10: Authorities have recently introduced a Green Book which contains information on the state of biodiversity in Icelandic ecosystems. The Green Book is a step towards a national biodiversity strategy which plans are to start developing in cooperation with relevant stakeholders coming autumn. ➤ On Point 11: This is included in the Land and life action plan. A research proposal is being prepared which addresses both the impact from afforestation and from habitat restoration on biodiversity, including birdlife. Other research is also ongoing on how different types of forests affect birdlife and on edge related impact. ➤ On Point 12: It is included in the Land life action plan to update existing guidance on good environmental practice in afforestation. This is to be concluded in 2023. ➤ On Point 13: Included in the Land and life action plan is the review of support to farmers and other landowners for afforestation and ecosystem restoration.
<p>Bureau September 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ noted the generally good progress in implementing Recommendation 190 (2016), in particular welcoming the single comprehensive land reclamation and forestry plan of 2022 “Land and Life – Strategy and Vision for Land Reclamation and Forestry until 2031” within which an Action Plan covering 2022-2026 is included which shall shape the priorities for government action in the coming years.