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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

38th meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2018

**MEETING OF THE SELECT GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

20 April 2018
Rome (Italy)

- MEETING REPORT -

*Secretariat Memorandum
the Directorate of Democratic Participation*

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the meeting of the Select Group of Experts on IAS, 20 April 2018 in Rome (Italy);
- Take note of the progress in the development of new voluntary tools and guidance in relation to the management and control of invasive alien species;
- Take note of the proposals by the Group for future work priorities and working methods, including the date of its next meeting.

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

The meeting was opened by Mr Piero Genovesi, Head of the Italian Wildlife Service and Chair of the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group, who welcomed the participants at the meeting and stressed the excellent coordination and synergy developed over the years between the IUCN Invasive Species Specialists Group, the Bern Convention and the EU on issues linked to IAS eradication and control. He also reminded the objectives of the meeting - review of the recently launched initiatives by the Bern Convention, exchange of ideas on possible future activities, including ways to measure progress in the implementation of the various tools and guidance developed over the years and identifying ways to maintain the synergies between the different actors.

Mr Eladio Fernandez-Galiano, Director of the Culture, Nature and Heritage Department, also reminded the many positive outcomes of the work of the Group of Experts on IAS of the Convention in the past 20 years, also thanks to the strong involvement of several Parties to the Convention.

2. IMPLEMENTATION BY STATES OF THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Representatives of Parties at the meeting were invited to present progress achieved at national level since the last meeting of the full Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species.

The delegate of Austria, Mr Wolfgang Rabisch informed that almost all activities over the last two years have been focused on the implementation of the new EU IAS Regulation. He explained that the country encounters some difficulties to implement it, the main problem being that there are no clear responsibilities designated at national level and who is responsible for what. National lawyers have been trying to clarify the issues of responsibility and who will bear the costs for the implementation of the Regulation. He stressed that it might be useful that a guidance document explaining Member States how to implement, who is paying and where to get funding for this.

The representative of Italy, Mr Piero Genovesi, also underlined that all EU countries have as a priority the enforcement of the EU Regulation. However, an important component missing from the legal tool – voluntary methods guiding how to actually implement it are missing. In terms of enforcement of the Regulation, Italy adopted a new legal tool that entered into force in February 2018. Currently they provide support for the regional administration on how to enforce the tools, including the organisation of meetings with ZOOs, aquaria, regional environment agencies, with the carabinieri, etc. They are working together with many different institutions to explain how to inform the population of the issue IAS are posing to the environment and what they could do and not do. For example, they are releasing guidelines on what private owners of turtles should do - keeping the animal for their entire life, not to release it into the wild or exchange it, prevent reproduction and inform the Ministry they have it, etc.

A major issue identified in Italy is the extremely low level of awareness of the public and the need for a behavioural change of individuals and whole sectors. An EU LIFE project is currently implemented to address this issue, including the larger dissemination of all Codes of Conduct in Italian, through video spots, radio spots, and other means of disseminating the information. Important in the next years will be to showcase good practices developed in the past few years, after the adoption of the Bern Convention Codes of Conduct and after some time of EU Regulation implementation.

Last but not least, in Italy, experts are currently developing lists of national concern. This is done in the frame of specific terms of reference, with the organisation of several workshops with many species societies and experts. These meetings do not only help create lists of hundred IAS species, they also support enhancing collaboration between the scientific communities and other institutions and agencies.

Mr Eladio Fernandez-Galiano advised EU countries working on the EU Regulation implementation to look at the implementation instruments produced by Bern, including guidance on ways to identifying pathways at national level.

Mr Ricardo Scalera, Programme Officer at IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group, stressed that the funding issue is a key point. Tools are available and cover all aspects of the EU Regulation. These are developed by the Bern Convention, but also through LIFE funds. However,

these are dispersed and can be completely overturned by sectors and individuals. In addition, EU LIFE funds are not easily accessible. The latest LIFE call has been launched recently and consists of two steps: 1) A concept note on the project and 2) Only those selected for financing are asked to send the full proposal.

The representative of Norway and Chair of the Standing Committee to the Convention, Mr Øystein Storkersen, stressed the importance of involving all the sectors in the fight to control the spread of IAS, as the environment sector can't solve the issue by itself. A lot of activities and new initiatives are launched at the sectorial level. There is a strong need for strong cooperation with them, to visit the socio-economic side of the issue of IAS spread and when talking to the various components of society, to adapt the message to the audience.

The representative of Spain, Juan Luis Rodriguez Luengo, informed of the existence of a special IAS regulation at the level of the country. In the coming months, a preventive list of species considered potentially invasive because they are considered invasive in other countries is also developed, following a risk analysis.

Since 2011, in the Canary Islands and the Balears there is also a specific regulation with lists specific to these islands. Two days before the meeting, the Parliament has approved an amendment of the regulation on species of interest for hunting and providing for removing the Barbary sheep from the list. In addition, a preventive list of about 40 – 45 species was also adopted only for the Canary Islands. A new draft Regulation is also being developed for the Canaries, aiming to involve hunters in the control of feral goats and sheep.

The representative of the UK, Mrs Sarah Webster, informed that the country is focussing its work in five specific areas: 1) strategy and legislation; 2) Prevention; 3) early warning; 4) on-going eradications and 5) cross-cutting areas and research.

The implementation of the EU Regulation is also a main priority in the country, including public consultations about penalties and sanctions' regime. They are planning to either go towards criminal charges or combination and are working towards establishing their IAS lists which for the moment include the ten most widely spread species. They have also developed identification sheets which are designed to help the identification of species coming in the country at border control. England's new 25 year environment Plan also includes ISA objectives, under the biosecurity chapter of the Plan.

As far as prevention is concerned, a pathway action plan for zoos and aquaria was developed. Dedicated working groups are currently developing two new action plans for recreational boating and for angling. Regarding early warning, the country aims to develop risk management schemes which will help identify which species should be prioritised for eradication, schemes shared with other countries as well. In the field of rapid response eradication, the country develops contingency plans for several species, such as the Asian hornet for example. On the cross-cutting issue of research and communication, work is undergoing on ways to quickly detect plants at border or to develop a contraceptive for the grey squirrel.

Ms Valentina Bastino, DG Environment at the European Commission, stressed that it is very important that new tools developed at national level, such as the identification material at borders are shared with other countries.

The representative of Norway informed that in his country different funding opportunities are available to promote work on IAS eradication and control. In 2017, 19 counties in Norway received 1,3M Euros government funds to support action against IAS. On the legislative aspects, a new ban on invasive alien trees plantation was adopted and a general ban on import of any alien features, from bacteria to species.

In terms on communication, a lot of efforts are put into creating interest in the public by explaining what the cost of eradicating an IAS species is. Examples of highly harmful species are taken to illustrate the communication messages, i.e. Iberian snail or the raccoon dog. A recent survey implemented in Norway confirms that awareness of the public is quite high. A particular feature of the survey even shows the amounts individuals are ready to pay for the eradication of most well-known IAS species.

Eventually, Mr Piero Genovesi informed that currently there are discussions on showcasing measures implemented at national level in Europe at a joint CBD/IUCN event during the upcoming CBD COP 14.

3. PROGRESS IN THE PREPARATION OF NEW GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

The Bern Convention has recently launched the development of two new tools, aimed at accompanying and supporting Contracting Parties' efforts in preventing and eradicating the spread of IAS.

3.1 Guidance on e-commerce and IAS, by *Mr Andrea Monaco, Lazio Region*

The consultant charged with the task of developing the Guidance, Mr Andrea Monaco, explained that e-commerce is considered as one of the most important pathway for introduction of IAS. He presented the outline of work plan for the Guidance document, aiming at collecting the participant's comments and suggestions for the document. He stressed that opportunities to trade in living organisms increased greatly, as on-line trade is poorly regulated and provides the possibility to bypassing border controls and regulations and the complexity of traditional trade market.

The consultant started his work by monitoring social media for advertising of e-trade in species, as well and identifying changes in taste of consumers in order to prevent introductions in this kind of species. He further found interesting reports and grey literature on the issue and plans to review and select case-studies, guidance documents and best practices to be included in the guidance too. The consultant also mentioned that he is planning to also collect quantitative information for the needs of the guidance.

The following comments and suggestions were made for the Guidance document:

- Attention to be paid on the target group of the document. It is important to include a section in the document that provides some recommendations for internet companies and in particular big platforms, which normally are interested in having clean systems
- Monitor and review WTO and FAO work on the issue
- Necessity to coordinate the work with the European Commission framework contract currently implemented by IUCN in order to avoid overlap
- Include a section on available national legal basis (including regulations such as customs, postal and sanitary ones) which can be used to prevent the trade and stop it at border
- The problem with species names is important and should possibly be addressed too

The Group concluded that the 1st draft of the Guidance will be circulated for comments and suggestions and will have to first be presented at the 2019 meeting of the full Group of Experts on IAS ahead of submission for endorsement to the Stranding Committee in December 2019, together with an accompanying Recommendation.

3.2 Communication and IAS, by *Ms Camilla Orlandi, TIC MEDIA Art*

The consultant hired to support the preparation of a guidance document on communication and IAS, Ms Camilla Orlandi, presented the main outlines of the document. The document will be built around three components engagement/awareness/prevention and its main objective will be guide the engagement of relevant authorities and stakeholder in a dynamic process which will effectively address the need for a positive behavioural change in the population.

The Group discussed the proposed plan for the Guidance document concluded that:

- The issue of citizen science and its contribution, negative or positive, should be addressed
- Answers to the question how to address the not converted and not concerned should also be provided.
- The document might consider addressing the issue of how to deal with social perception of killing species/plants, etc. grey squirrels in England.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND AWARENESS OF EXISTING CODES OF CONDUCT AND NEW CODES OF CONDUCT: HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS

The Group held a discussion on the need for developing a monitoring mechanism that will allow to measure progress in the implementation of existing and new tools developed under the Convention. The following views and suggestions were made:

- Efforts to be put in advertising the tools, such as the Codes of Conduct. This could for example be made at the forthcoming meeting of the EU MS committee or the EU IAS Committee in June.
- Advertising the tool should happen in particular among technician, administrators and legal experts charged with legislation development on the IAS issue.
- An evaluation of the weaknesses and gaps in the implementation of the Codes of Conduct might be considered as it can reveal useful in future work towards the Codes advertising and visibility
- Translation into local languages of the odes should again be encouraged

5. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU REGULATION ON IAS

The representative of the European Commission gave a rapid feedback on the progress in the implementation of the EU IAS Regulation. The national action plans aimed at addressing priority pathways (Art. 13.2 of the Regulation) are expected before 14 July 2019.

6. IDENTIFYING SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES AND THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES: WILDLIFE PATHOGENS AND IAS

The Group was invited to discuss possible synergies between the Group of Experts on IAS and the one on the Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles, by the latter Group of Experts itself. The issue of alien pathogens and their negative impact on native herpetofauna has been a focus of the work of the latter Group of Experts in the past years.

Although the Group agreed that the issue of pathogens is not only an issue for the environment sector (it is also an issue of animal health and welfare dealt with by the agricultural sector and does not only concern herpetofauna), the general feeling of the participants was that it should be considered. Action is also needed due to the fact that Pathogens are by far the most important aliens and pose a threat for both wildlife and humans.

Taking into account the several facades on the issue, a key problem identified by the Group is the important knowledge gap on wildlife pathogens in general and the need for stronger cooperation and coordination of efforts between the amphibians' experts and IAS specialists. In addition, due to the important amount of pathogens and species' groups concerned, there are many misunderstandings on what is alien and what endemic, how to deal with species becoming vectors, how reintroduced animals are screened, etc. There is a need to work towards lifting these uncertainties and misunderstanding.

The following proposals have been made by the group:

- The creation of a dedicated group of experts that can study the gaps in knowledge, science, legislation, etc. and clarify what action could be taken;
- A focus of the work of such a group can be, in particular on alien species carrying alien diseases; a review of existing guidance focussing on wildlife pathogens through introduced species.
- Ensure greater coordination and communication between the ISA specialists and the relevant Group of Experts working on herpetofauna, but also with other communities and sectors;
- Address the issue of the lack of awareness among scientist about risks in spreading diseases, inform on risk and explain what to do and what not to.

7. OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST

The issue of classifying IAS by their environmental impact has been brought before the CBD by the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. The Group is going to propose that the issue of IAS is incorporated in the post 2020 strategy and targets of the CBD, currently under consideration, through three pillars: 1) pathways for prevention, 2) species management and 3) geographical indication. They are equally proposing that numerical targets and not only qualitative ones are included in the post 2020 CBD strategy. As the main focus of the CBD for the moment is biodiversity and sustainable development, the issue of the socio-economic assessment of IAS impacts is also considered.

The representative of Spain informed that the issue of alien species dangerous to people is currently dealt with in Spain. A new Spanish law on endangered animals is considered and should include a list of exotic species dangerous to humans.

8. POSSIBLE WORK AHEAD

The following issues have been discussed:

- Advertising of existing Codes of Conduct and their translation into local languages
- An evaluation of the weaknesses and gaps in the implementation of the Codes of Conduct
- Biosecurity and pathogens in relation to IAS
- Methods to control invasive plants

9. NEXT MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

The Secretariat reminded that the next planned meeting of the Group of Experts should take place in spring 2019.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None were raised.

Appendix 1

Strasbourg, 11 April 2018

T-PVS/Agenda(2018)3

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
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Meeting of the Select Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species

20 April 2018 (9:00 am – 6:00 pm)

Rome (Italy)

Palazzo Cenci-Bolognetti, Piazza delle Cinque Scole, 23, Rome 00186, Italy

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and opening of the meeting**
[T-PVS(2017)12 – Report of the 12th meeting of the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species]
- 2. Implementation by States of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species – Oral reports by Parties to the Convention**
- 3. Progress in the preparation of new Guidance documents**
 - 3.1 Guidance on e-commerce and IAS, *by Mr Andrea Monaco, Lazio Region*
 - 3.2 Communication and IAS, *by Ms Camilla Orlandi, TIC MEDIA Art*
- 4. Implementation and awareness of existing codes of conduct and new codes of conduct: how to measure progress – discussion**
- 5. Progress in the implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS**
- 6. Identifying synergies between the Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species and the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles: wildlife pathogens and IAS – discussion**
[T-PVS/Inf (2015) 20 – Priorities for conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Europe]
- 7. Other issues of interest**
 - Classifying IAS by their environmental impact
 - Alien species dangerous to people
- 8. Possible work ahead**
- 9. Next meeting of the Group of Experts**
- 10. Any other business**