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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity**

(CO-DBP)

Group of specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas

12-13 January 2004
Room 2, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**THE TEBERDA NATIONAL BIOSPHERE RESERVE
(Russian Federation)**

RENEWAL

Expert report by
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*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture
and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

The European Diploma for Protected Areas was first awarded to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve in 1994 and has been renewed once.

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the reserve.

Appendix I reproduces Resolution (99) 15 which was adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. In Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for possible renewal.

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I. Introduction

The European Diploma, Category A, was awarded to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve in 1994 and renewed in 1999, until 5 September 2004. The expert visited the reserve from 26 to 29 June 2003 with a view to the renewal of this diploma, scheduled for 2004.

The visit was organised by Mr Djapar S. Salpagarov, director of the reserve.

The four-day visit covered the following locations: the development zones of Teberda and Dombay, Alibek valley, the site of the climbers' encampment and the largest glacier in the reserve, which bears the same name, natural forests located between 1250 and 2300 m, several valleys often frequented by tourists, the new museum. Mr Umar Semyonov, deputy director of the reserve, responsible for the scientific sector, and Mr Igor Tkachenko, scientist and educationalist in the education sector, accompanied the expert on these visits. The problems of the reserve were discussed at two meetings attended by Mr Yuri Sarkissyan, deputy director responsible for surveillance of the reserve and education.

During his brief stay in Moscow the expert shared his impressions of the reserve's problems with Mrs Maria Moskvina, head of international relations at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The organisation of the visit was perfect. We thank all the aforementioned individuals for their highly cooperative contribution to the visit's success and their warm welcome. We also thank the director of the reserve and his staff for their devotion to nature protection.

II. Situation and value of the reserve

The Teberda reserve is located in the Republic of Karachevo-Cherkessia. It occupies two areas in the upper valley of the Teberda and the Kizgich (Arkhyz) on the northern side of the Great Caucasus. The two parts extend as far as the main ridge of the Caucasus, south of which lies Georgia. The reserve is 100 km from Cherkessk, capital of the Republic, and 60 km from the Black Sea. The altitude ranges from 1 260 to 4 047 m, but the reserve is almost entirely over 2 000 m above sea level. Annual rainfall is some 700 mm, and the average temperatures are -7° in January and 23° in July.

The core reserve was established in 1936. Biosphere reserve status was granted in 1997. The reserve covers an area of 84 996 ha. A buffer zone up to 5 km wide, around both parts of the reserve, was established by decision of the Government of the Republic of Karachevo-Cherkessia in 1998.

The European interest of the reserve is clearly demonstrated by:

- the exceptional diversity of natural habitat types. There are 4 forest tiers formed by several communities of *Fagus orientalis*, *Abies nordmanniana*, *Pinus kochiana*, *Picea orientalis* and *Betula litwinowii*, ranging in altitude from 1250 m for the sub-alpine tier, up to 2700 m. A large part of the forests have retained their primary structure.

- magnificent landscapes, visible everywhere. Wooded, wild slopes cut into by deep gorges and torrents, peaks and crags covered with eternal snow, numerous mountain lakes and glaciers stretching down to the forest area, capture the imagination of visitors.

- an abundance of fauna and flora marked by the very strong presence of endemic species, as well as several species threatened at international level. There are some 165 vertebrate species including nearly 100 nesting birds. Of particular interest are the bear, lynx, otter, West Caucasian tur (*Capra caucasica*), Caucasian chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra caucasica*), European bison, introduced in the Arkhyz area; the birds include the bearded vulture, black vulture, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, Caucasian black grouse (*Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi*), Caucasian snowcock (*Tetraogallus caucasicus*), Eurasian eagle-owl etc. The flora comprises 300 moss species and 1 280 vascular plant species, 235 of them endemic to the Caucasus.

III. Quality and system of protection

1. Administration

The reserve is under the direct control of the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation.

There are 176 posts for reserve staff, of which ten or so are vacant. Funding for the reserve's activities remains its main problem. The budget does not cover its running costs. The Republic of Karachevo-Cherkessia makes a voluntary contribution (700.000 roubles for the year 2003). Otherwise, the reserve does what it can to raise funds from certain economic activities.

2. Management

2.1. General

The Russian reserves known as *zapovedniki* are governed by a strict protection regime. The conservation of ecosystems in their natural state and ongoing research are the prime objectives of this category of protected areas.

2.2. Zoning

The reserve and surrounding area form 4 distinct zones, clearly differentiated by function and regime:

- The reserve. Exceptions to the strict protection regime are permitted on less than 2% of the reserve's surface area and concern the landscaping of grassy areas around the wardens' houses in the reserve, grazing in the Teberda valley and tourism in the Dombay area.

- Tourism zone. This comprises above all the development zones of Dombay and the surrounding territory of the reserve where the tourist facilities, ski slopes and a few walking trails are located, and where there are tight restrictions on leisure activities.

- Buffer zone where activities that could damage the reserve are prohibited, and whose characteristics provide continuity with those of the reserve. The buffer zone runs along the frontier with Georgia, linking the two parts of the reserve.

- The 100.000 ha Dautsky national refuge lies to the north-east of the reserve, and in practice fulfils the function of buffer zone.

2.3. Land ownership

The reserve is the property of the State (Ministry of Natural Resources), except for the Dombay site, which occupies 104 ha, and the 7 ha Alibek site, which belong to the municipality of Teberda.

2.4. Fauna, flora and habitats

The large mammals are under pressure from poaching, which is on the increase according to the official data for the period 2000-2002. An inventory of large predators, ungulates, certain species of raptor, gallinaceous birds etc is carried out each year.

All wood-cutting activities ceased when the reserve was established. The use of trees and dead wood is very limited. Following a fairly quiet period, several fires destroyed 68 ha of forest in July 2000.

Livestock breeding is limited to the vicinity of the wardens' houses and a narrow strip by the road in the Teberda valley. Several meadows are mown under special regulations and supervision.

2.5. Tourism

Walking on the few trails laid out in the reserve requires a special permit. Groups of tourists are led by guides who are trained by reserve staff. Owing to the economic situation in the country, there are between 10 and 20 times fewer visitors compared with the early 1990s.

2.6. Information and education

The reserve is recognised as an educational centre initiating visitors into ecological concepts. The Nature Museum has played an important role in this respect for decades. The new museum building has just been completed. This fine educational tradition will be carried on but the new museum has a much larger capacity and opens up possibilities for a number of activities and demonstrations in the area of ecology education, and above all nature conservation.

2.7. Research

Scientific research has been ongoing since the reserve was set up. A remarkable amount of work has been produced: fifty or so volumes of Nature annals, the Records of the national reserve, several monographs, some 2.000 articles, including works making scientific knowledge more broadly accessible etc. Research is carried out by the reserve staff, partly in collaboration with various universities. The scientific department has 27 members of staff. 14 articles were published during the period 2000-2002.

2.8. Management plans

Forestry plans are prepared for 20-year periods, and scientific plans and education plans for periods of 5 years.

2.9. International networks

The Teberda biosphere reserve has applied for World heritage list status.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Action taken on conclusions and recommendations

Conditions

1) The tourism facilities located near Dombai, and the climbers' camp and ski tows located in the Alibek valley be neither extended nor developed.

This condition has been met. Moreover, one of the 6 installations has been dismantled.

2) Any possible regionalisation or privatisation activities be such as to have no adverse effect on the reserve's present status of protection.

This condition has been met on the territory owned by the State and in the area of the climbers' camp at Alibek. A few new buildings have been constructed in Dombay where, according to the reserve's management, there is no more land on which to construct buildings geared to tourism. All activity in the buffer zone has to be authorised by the management of the reserve.

Recommendations

1. Everything should be done to ensure that the resources necessary for maintaining and, if possible, improving the reserve's operation are made available.

The situation is not satisfactory despite the fund-raising efforts of the reserve's management and the backing of sponsors.

2. Information and education activities should be stepped up as far as possible, one suggestion being that the new museum at Teberda be completed.

These are priority activities for the managers of the reserve and are covered by a 5-year plan. Thanks to funding from the GEF project, the museum building has been completed and the interior fitting is to be finished in 2003. The funding for mounting exhibitions is inadequate.

3. Scientific research activities should carry on and the results needed for the management of habitats and species should be published.

Research is one of the paramount activities of Russia's reserves. The staff of the Teberda reserve do their best but the funding available for research is severely limited.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, we recommend that the award of the European Diploma, category A, to the Teberda biosphere reserve be renewed. The value of the site and its excellent state of protection justify its European interest.

Attaches the following conditions to the renewal:

- the tourism facilities located near Dombay and the climbers' camp and ski tows located in the Alibek valley be neither extended nor developed;

- any regionalisation or privatisation measures must in no way adversely affect the reserve's present protected status.

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

- every effort should be made to provide the reserve with the funding required to maintain and, if possible, improve its functioning;
- the information and education activities should be further stepped up as far as possible, one suggestion being the completion of the new museum in Teberda;
- scientific research activities are to be pursued and the results serving environmental management purposes to be published.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Resolution (99) 15 on the renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve (Russian Federation)

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 9 September 1999
at the 678th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the regulations for the European Diploma for protected areas;

Having regard to Resolution (94) 23 awarding the European Diploma, category A, to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve;

Having regard to proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Taking into consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas on 29 and 30 March 1999;

Renews until 5 September 2004 the European Diploma awarded to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve,

Attaches the following conditions to the renewal:

1. The tourism facilities located near Dombaï, and the climbers' camp and ski tows located in the Alibek valley be neither extended nor developed.
2. Any possible regionalisation or privatisation activities be such as to have no adverse effect on the reserve's present status of protection.

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. Everything should be done to ensure that the resources necessary for maintaining and, if possible, improving the reserve's operation are made available.
2. Information and education activities should be stepped up as far as possible, one suggestion being that the new museum at Teberda be completed.
3. Scientific research activities should carry on and the results needed for the management of habitats and species should be published.

APPENDIX II

Draft resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve (Russian Federation)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the regulations for the European Diploma for protected areas;

Having regard to Resolution (94) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve in category A;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Taking into consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas on 12 and 13 January 2004;

Renews until 5 September 2009 the European Diploma awarded to the Teberda National Biosphere Reserve;

Attaches the following conditions to the renewal:

1. the tourism facilities located near Dombay and the climbers' camp and ski tows located in the Alibek valley be neither extended nor developed;
2. any regionalisation or privatisation measures must in no way adversely affect the reserve's present protected status.

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. every effort should be made to provide the reserve with the funding required to maintain and, if possible, improve its functioning;
2. the information and education activities should be further stepped up as far as possible, one suggestion being the completion of the new museum in Teberda;
3. scientific research activities are to be pursued and the results serving environmental management purposes to be published;
4. cooperation with the nature conservation authorities in Georgia is to be pursued and stepped up with a view to creating a transfrontier protected area.