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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

**COMMENTS CONCERNING
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATION 2273 (2024) –
“TOWARDS COUNCIL OF EUROPE STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY
SEAS AND OCEANS TO COUNTER THE CLIMATE CRISIS”**

[ADOPTED ON 20 JUNE 2024 BY THE BUREAU OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE]

**Comments by the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention,
on behalf of the Standing Committee,
on Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2273 (2024) – “Towards Council of
Europe strategies for healthy seas and oceans to counter the climate crisis”**

1. The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) welcomes the opportunity given to it by the Committee of Ministers to comment on Recommendation 2273 (2024) – “Towards Council of Europe strategies for healthy seas and oceans to counter the climate crisis” and its accompanying Resolution 2546 (2024).
2. As rightly noted in Resolution 2546 (2024) (para. 5), “the preservation of biodiversity of seas and oceans is one of the objectives of the (...) Bern Convention” and that “this convention provides a good basis to contribute to better protection of seas and oceans around Europe.”
3. As acknowledged in the report accompanying Recommendation 2273 (2024) (para. 31), the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention conducts a number of activities directly related to seas and oceans.
4. Indeed, since 2007, a [group of experts](#) has examined all types of issues relating to biodiversity and climate change, including in marine environments. In 2009, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention also set up a Group of Experts on Island Biodiversity in Europe, which has drawn up a [Charter on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in European Islands](#).
5. The conservation scheme for migrating sea turtles in the Mediterranean is another topic addressed by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. In this context, it adopted in December 2023 a [Guidance tool](#) on the conservation of sea turtles nesting sites which it will promote whenever needed.
6. Another species-specific initiative under the Bern Convention is the [pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons](#), which aims at restoring all existing sturgeon populations and re-establishing self-sustaining sturgeon populations as well as their life-cycle habitat in their historic range to an extent that ensures species survival and representation of the subpopulations where possible. Sturgeons in fact are excellent flagship species for ecologically healthy rivers and seas due to their size, longevity, diverse habitat utilisation and their migratory life cycle that connects coastal waters to the upper reaches of riverine ecosystems. Therefore, their protection needs a holistic approach, connecting international waters, coastal areas, and often multi-national river systems, which is the aim of the meetings organized under the Bern Convention of the National Focal Points on the conservation of the Sturgeon.
7. Further, the Bern Convention’s [case-file system](#) is a unique monitoring tool which allows NGOs or private citizens to submit complaints for possible breaches of the Bern Convention by countries that have ratified the Convention. A number of these case-files relate to marine species and coastal water management, notably cases concerning marine turtles.

8. As acknowledged in the report accompanying Recommendation 2273 (2024) (para. 31), several [European diplomas](#) have also been awarded to marine areas of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity and which are managed in an exemplary way, such as the Ekenäs Archipelago National Park (Finland) and the Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve (Portugal) and to wetlands in direct contact with the sea. The Bern Convention is also implementing the [Emerald Network](#) which is an ecological network made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest and which aims to ensure the long-term conservation of species and habitats of European importance requiring specific protection measures and protected by the Bern Convention. Several Emerald Network sites (or candidate sites) have a marine part or are exclusively marine.

9. The Bern Convention bodies work in close co-operation with civil society actors dealing with the protection of seas and oceans as well as with relevant international organisation. Some of them have even observer status such as MEDASSET (Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles), Oceana, Sea Shepherd, The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece (ARCHELON), and, for international organisations, ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean sea and contiguous Atlantic Area), ASCOBANS (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas), OSPAR (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic), UNEP / MAP (Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution) and the Black Sea commission (Convention on the protection of the Black Sea against pollution).

10. Despite an already large variety of activities in the field of the preservation of biodiversity of seas and oceans as demonstrated above, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention can't agree more with the conclusion reached by the Parliamentary Assembly in Resolution 2546 (2024) (para. 5), that “the activities of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention should be further strengthened to protect marine ecosystems effectively and safeguard the rights of future generations.” This would indeed contribute to a better protection of seas and oceans in Europe. The Standing Committee therefore welcomes the recommendation included in the report accompanying Recommendation 2273 (2024) (para. 31), which states that “it is vital that our States and parliaments support it.” In fact, this support has already started with the Committee of Ministers increasing in November 2024 the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe dedicated to the activities of the Bern Convention and its staff, which the Standing Committee wishes to acknowledge once again. It nevertheless shares the renewed call of the Parliamentary Assembly, as it appears in its Resolution 2546 (2024), to “support the Bern Convention and stabilise the resources allocated to its implementation” (para. 6.3), particularly with a view to increase its activities.