



Strasbourg, 27 June 2025

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**  
45<sup>th</sup> meeting

**Bureau meeting**

18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> June 2025  
(Online)

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**- MEETING REPORT -**

*Document prepared by  
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

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## 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING & ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, Mr Carl Amirgulashvili, opened the second ordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention for 2025.

### 1.1. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair will open the meeting and present the draft agenda to the Bureau members, thereafter requesting its formal adoption.

**Decision:** The meeting agenda was adopted (see Appendix I).

## 2. REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

### 2.1. Follow up on the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe on 16-17 May 2023 in Reykjavík, Iceland

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the latest developments subsequent to the Reykjavik Summit, in particular on the 134<sup>th</sup> ministerial session (Luxembourg, 14 May 2025) of the Committee of Ministers during which it:

- adopted the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and took note of the Action Plan;
- invited its Deputies to consider setting up an intergovernmental multidisciplinary committee on environment in the context of the negotiation of the Programme and Budget for the next biennium;
- adopted the Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Committee of Ministers decided to transmit the [Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment](#) and its accompanying [Action Plan](#) to all intergovernmental committees and partial agreements concerned, as well as to the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), in order that they may take it into account in their work. The Secretariat also raised the Bureau attention to Strategic objective 5 “Protecting wildlife, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes” where the Bern Convention is referred to, and the related Action 5.5 of the action Plan “Reinforcing the impact of the Bern Convention, in particular in the context of the case-file system.” with the following 2 Expected Results:

- Specific recommendations from individual Case Files are followed up and acted upon;
- Cases are resolved and closed within a reasonable timeframe, taking into account any advice provided by the Standing Committee.

As for the possible setting up of an intergovernmental multidisciplinary steering committee on the environment (CDENV), the Secretariat informed the Bureau that the issue will be discussed in Autumn 2025 in the context of the negotiation of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget for the next biennium (2026-2027), with a possible decision in November 2025.

The Secretariat also informed the Bureau that the [Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law](#) will be open for signature on 3 December 2025 in the margins of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME).

The last GME meeting will take place the week before the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (on 2-4 December 2025). A representative of the Bureau of the Bern Convention will be invited to participate. The main agenda item to be discussed by the GME will be to work on an initial Progress report on the implementation of the Strategy. The GME meeting will also be the opportunity to address one or two topical issues, possibly among the topics proposed for the future Standing Committee based on the 5 strategic objectives of the Strategy.

The Bureau took note that the Ministerial session in May did not address the possibility to set up a Trust Fund. It was considered premature to discuss and decide on this.

Finally, the Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Council of Europe Secretary General, Mr Alain Berset, decided that the Council of Europe should participate in the COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025. It is envisaged that the Council of Europe organises side-events on the issue of human rights and environmental disinformation.

**Decision:** The Bureau welcomed the adoption of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and took note of its accompanying Action Plan. It committed to ensuring a proper follow-up in its field of competence.

The Bureau invited Parties to the Bern Convention to consider signing and ratifying the Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law as soon as possible.

It regretted that the idea of a possible trust fund was put aside for the time being and instructed the Secretariat to inform the Working Group on exploring sustainable financing options for the Bern Convention at its coming meeting. It recalled that the Working Group is supposed to meet before the Bureau next meeting mid-September 2025.

### 3. FINANCING AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BERN CONVENTION

#### 3.1. Voluntary contributions received in 2025: state of play

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the status of voluntary contributions as of June 2025. It should be noted that, as a rule, an update on these contributions is presented only during the spring and autumn Bureaux and at the Standing Committee. However, it was decided to provide this update also during the summer session to allow for closer monitoring.

To date, five voluntary contributions have been received, for a total amount of 56 000€ This is already equal to the amount received in September 2024—meaning that the performance is more positive and encouraging this year, as this result has been achieved two months earlier than last year.

Importantly, approximately 160 000€ is currently being processed, in addition, from four additional contributors. This indicates that the outlook for voluntary contributions in the coming months is even more positive and shows an encouraging upward trend.

The annual activity report, as decided at the previous Bureau meeting, is still under preparation.

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the current data regarding the number and amount of voluntary contributions received. It shares the view that the situation appears more encouraging than in the previous period. To further encourage the payment of voluntary contributions, it was recommended that several bilateral meetings be organised in the coming months with representatives of Contracting Parties to the Convention, in order to raise awareness of the work of the Convention.

With regard to the annual activity report, the Bureau took note that work is still ongoing.

#### 3.2. Revision of the Rules of procedures of the Standing Committee

The Secretariat recalled that the Bureau discussed the issue of the revision of the Rules of procedures of the Standing Committee during its meeting in March 2024 and instructed the Secretariat to draft revised Rules of Procedure for examination at one of its forthcoming meetings. The Bureau noted that the reasonable timeline for adoption by the Standing Committee was its 45th meeting in December 2025. The following elements were listed to be considered for possible inclusion in a revised version of the Rules of Procedure:

- clarifications on the written procedure;
- reference to possible extra-ordinary meetings of the Standing Committee with consequences such as the fact that there should be no need to proceed with elections of the Chair, vice-chair and Bureau members and to admit again observers;

- possibility to revoke the status of observer if it is seen that that observer was inactive for a long time in the Standing Committee;
- clarification on the length of the term of office of the Chair, Vice-Chair and other members of the Bureau, for example: 2 years, renewable once as in other CoE conventions;
- consideration of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods;
- any other possible issue that may appear at the time of drafting the revised Rules of Procedure.

The Secretariat was unfortunately not in a position to work on the topic later in 2024 nor at the beginning of 2025. An initial look into the file was nevertheless conducted with a view to present a preliminary draft at the Autumn meeting. This, however, meant that the December 2025 deadline for the adoption of the revised Rules of Procedure will not be met, as set in March 2024.

The Secretariat also raised the issue of establishing specific rules of procedure for subordinate bodies. In particular, it was suggested that the membership of these bodies should be clarified (i.e., the representatives of Parties and the experts), as well as the procedure to be followed if a vote is required.

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the information provided. It thanked the Secretariat to prepare preliminary draft revised the Rules of procedures of the Standing Committee for its Autumn meeting, as well as elements for specific rules of procedures for the subordinate bodies.

It recalled that even though votes in the subordinate bodies can be needed to elect a Chair, consensus should be the target for other issues which should be based on scientific evidence. The Bureau also acknowledged a need to define the roles of Parties representatives compared to observers.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET FOR 2025**

##### **4.1. Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the conservation status of species and habitats**

The Secretariat recalled first that reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the conservation status of species and habitats for the period 2019-2024 is expected to take place in the coming months. This explained why a Webinar was organised to help participants to have a clear view of what was expected from them in that reporting exercise. The webinar, held on 7 May 2025, focussed in particular on concepts such as Favourable Reference Values (FRV), habitats condition and future trends. These themes were identified after an analysis of the main gaps and lack of data in the previous reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012). Practical perspectives from more experienced countries were shared. Participants expressed their satisfaction with the organisation of such a meeting.

The 8th meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting is expected to be held early November (date and place to be confirmed), back-to-back with a training course on the new EEA's reporting platform Repornet 3 for non-EU Contracting Parties, with the assistance of very valuable experts.

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the information provided.

##### **4.2. Joint meeting with the CMS MIKT on IKB and Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds**

The Secretariat reported on the [Joint Meeting](#) of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points (SFPs) on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping, and Trade in Wild Birds, and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) that took place from 13-15 May 2025 at the UN Campus in Bonn, Germany, and online. The meeting was an occasion to:

- review progress and achievements in implementing the Rome Strategic Plan, with updates from MIKT members, Bern Convention SFPs, and observers,
- share findings from the Scoreboard 2023 exercise, assessing national efforts and progress in combating illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds (IKB),
- exchange best practices in enforcement, highlighting successful national efforts in prioritising IKB enforcement,

- explore technological advancements that aid in IKB monitoring, improve data collection, and support regular surveillance efforts for countries,
- discuss the process to conduct a mid-term assessment of the Rome Strategic Plan and elaborate the MIKT Workplan (2026-2030),
- review progress on National Action Plans (NAPs), identify best practices,
- discuss funding opportunities to support IKB mitigation efforts and enhance regional and international cooperation.

The report of the meeting will be prepared by a consultant contracted by CMS MIKT.

As a follow-up to the meeting, the preparation of the mid-term assessment of the Rome Strategic Plan will be launched with the help of a consultant, unless no objections are voiced by any of the Parties in writing after the meeting. The process will aim at complementing the information available in the 2023 Scoreboard data and analysing the advancements in the Strategic Plan's implementation. The CMS MIKT disposes of financial resources for contracting an independent consultant and offering support to some countries for collecting data, setting up a plan of action, identifying a baseline, if not done yet.

It remains to be confirmed if the Bern Convention is to enlarge the geographical scope of the survey on motivations for IKB. The survey is inscribed in the Rome Strategic Plan and is to be commissioned by the CMS MIKT Secretariat to BirdLife International. It has been planned to cover the Mediterranean countries and Serbia, while some additional Parties could be usefully included in the survey too, subject to sufficient capacity of BirdLife International team and availability of financial resources on the side of the Bern Convention. The Bureau will be informed of the results of the consultations.

Following a joint field trip in the afternoon on 15 May, the meeting of the Bern Convention [Group of Experts on the Conservation of Wild Birds](#) then followed on 16 May in the morning, in a hybrid format. The time of the meeting was very limited to minimise its cost, considering a lower priority in the 2025 work plan of the Bern Convention attributed to the meeting by the Standing Committee.

The experts exchanged about the threats of windfarms and solar panels to wild birds, and bats, and provided feedback to a draft guidance document on the subject, commissioned by the Secretariat. The guidance document was welcomed by the Group, but it was recommended to ensure a closer collaboration with the CMS Energy Taskforce, focusing on the impact of energy infrastructures on birds. A further elaborated draft of the guidance document will be brought to the attention of the Group of Experts, and the Bureau, as soon as available. It was stated that minimising the negative impact of powerlines on birds should also be addressed in the above mentioned guidance document, rather than through separately reviewing the [Recommendation No. 110 \(2004\)](#) on minimising adverse effects of above-ground electricity transmission facilities (power lines) on birds.

The experts further discussed four topics that the Group identified as key for the conservation of wild birds either at the previous or the current meeting: light pollution, lead poisoning, pesticides and other chemical pollution, negative impact of small carnivore species on birds, in particular on small islands.

It was suggested to hold a complementary, online meeting of the Group after the summer, to exchange on a further developed version of the guidance document, to prioritise topics to be further addressed by the Group and to review its terms of reference, dating back from the late nineties, as well as to share information about the species action plans, time permitting. The latter two topics were on the agenda but could not be addressed due to a very limited duration of the meeting.

The reports of both meetings, in particular the proposals for follow-up actions, will be brought to the attention of the Bureau, and the Standing Committee, in due time.

<p><b>Decision:</b> The Bureau took note of the outcomes of the two meetings concerning conservation of wild birds and the plan to organise a follow-up online meeting of the Group of Experts on the conservation of wild birds, the conclusions of which, in particular on light pollution, will be relevant to the Parties. That online meeting should be held before the Autumn Bureau meeting, if possible. The</p>
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Bureau acknowledged that the terms of reference of the Group needed updating and the rules of procedure required clarification.

### 4.3. European Diploma for Protected Areas

The Secretariat reported on the three consecutive meetings that were held in Granada, Spain, on 20-22 May 2025:

- A meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas;
- The celebratory event of the 60th anniversary of the European Diploma;
- A roundtable of the managers of the European Diploma holding areas, which ended with the adoption of what was called the Granada Declaration.

The Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas met on 20 May. It paid special attention to the areas in particular need of monitoring and discussed two on-the-spot appraisal (OSA) visits: to the Sierra Nevada National Park, Natural Park and Biosphere Reserve (Spain) and to Gallipoli Cognato Regional Park (Italy). The Group of Specialists decided to recommend awarding the Diploma to the first one and to renew the Diploma to the second one. The Secretariat reminded the Bureau that the Committee of Ministers will still need to formally adopt the relevant decisions for these proposals to come into force, which is expected to be done early July 2025.

The Bureau was informed that the Secretariat received a new application to the European Diploma, from the Eagle's Nest Landscape Park in Poland. The file was however not complete and sent only a few days before the meeting of the Group of Specialists which was therefore not in a position to consider the application.

The Group of Specialists also looked into the annual reports sent by the Diploma holding areas but did not notice anything very specific. This was however the occasion for the Group to address a few issues to improve the system such as asking the Park managers whether they would prefer to report every two years or continue on an annual basis. Another issue raised by the Group of Specialists was to find new Specialists for the coming years (there are currently only four Specialists remaining in the Group). Finally, the Group also noted that there were no visits planned neither in 2025 nor in 2026 but more than 10-15 per year afterwards which was a major concern, both budget wise and to find enough experts volunteering to do these visits. The Secretariat was asked to draw a clear picture of the situation and to come with suggestions on how to proceed for the next meeting of the Group of Specialists, probably in February or March 2026.

The Secretariat continued by highlighting that the meeting of the Group of Specialist was followed on 21 May 2025 by the celebratory event of the 60th anniversary of the European Diploma Award for Protected Areas, which was [broadcasted](#) live (see [news item](#)). Participants were pleased by the event. It ended with a moving awarding ceremony of the European Diploma to the Regional Park Gallipoli Cognato, which was postponed for four years due to Covid, in particular.

The Round table of Managers of the Diploma holding areas which was held on 21-22 May 2025 was an opportunity for managers to meet and share [good practices and successful stories](#) of conservation in European Diploma holding areas in five thematic sessions. This was very appreciated by participants. The Roundtable ended with the approval of the so-called [Granada Declaration](#), stating the importance of the European Diploma, the values which it encompasses and challenges and opportunities for the future of the award and the Diploma holding sites (see [news item](#)). One of the conclusions of the Roundtable was to hold such an event regularly, enabling managers to meet again, share their experiences, and build a genuine network.

The series of events concluded in the afternoon of the last day with a visit to the Sierra Nevada National Park.

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the information provided.

The Bureau thanked the Spanish authorities for the organisation of the celebratory event of the 60th anniversary of the European Diploma, and for the meetings held on this occasion.

It requested the Secretariat to send a letter to Bern Convention focal points asking for candidates to join the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas and to suggest options for dealing with the very large number of on-the-spot appraisal visits to be organised from 2027 onwards.

#### **4.4. Group of experts on Large Carnivores**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau members of the resumption of the work of the Group of Experts on Large Carnivores, as decided by the Standing Committee at its meeting in December 2024. After a long period of hibernation, the Group of Experts met on 10-11 June 2025 in Strasbourg and online. Governmental experts, representatives of the observer organisations and independent experts gathered to discuss the state of conservation of the large carnivores throughout Europe, share good examples of practice in monitoring and managing the populations on the national level and the population scale, propose topics to be further addressed by the Group, discuss the potential need to review the scope and impact of the existing recommendations on large carnivores and the terms of reference of the Group.

The request of the Standing Committee to the Group of Experts on Large Carnivores to ensure monitoring of the wolf populations following the decision to modify the protection status of the species was also discussed, leading to a conclusion that a draft survey would be prepared to collect information on a) the legal and policy changes envisaged/introduced following the downlisting of *Canis lupus*, b) data on the status of the wolf populations, harmonized to the extent possible. It was stressed, that the exact focus and scope of the monitoring needed a clarification.

The ongoing work on developing conservation strategies for the Balkan and Carpathian lynx and a draft document on managing large carnivore populations, intended as a guidance document for the Parties, were presented and received positive feedback. A follow-up online meeting is to be organised in the autumn (October, tbc) to conclude on what the Group wishes to propose to and request from the Standing Committee regarding the Group's terms of reference and further work.

#### **Decision:**

The Bureau took note of the outcomes of the meeting of the Group of Experts on Large Carnivores, clarifying that the revised Terms of Reference of the Group were to be complemented by Rules of Procedure, similar for all Groups of Experts to the extent possible.

The Bureau offered its interpretation of the request of the Standing Committee concerning monitoring the status of the wolf populations, confirming that initially the legal and policy changes should be identified over a limited period of 2-3 years. Monitoring of the impact and the status of the wolf populations should be ensured in parallel, to avoid that any negative developments go unnoticed.

The Bureau advised to revise and bring the guidance document on managing the populations of large carnivores to the attention of the Standing Committee in December. The conservation strategy of the Balkan lynx would be proposed to the Standing Committee for endorsement as well, similarly to the strategy concerning the Carpathian lynx, provided it is sufficiently advanced.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: CASE-FILES**

### **5.1 Multistakeholder meeting on the case-files of marine turtle in Greece (7 May 2025)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau members of the meeting held at the Greek Ministry of Environment with the Ministry officials and the NGOs, which was instrumental in fixing the dates of the OSAs and advancing the preparation of their respective agendas.

**Decision:**

The Bureau took note of the outcomes of the multistakeholder meeting in Athens and the preparatory steps leading to the OSAs.

**5.2. On-the-Spot Appraisal visits in Laganas Bay (open case file 1986/8 *Protection of Caretta caretta in Laganas bay, Zakynthos Island*) and Thines Kiparissias (open case file 2010/5 *Threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias*)**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau members about the on-the-spot appraisal visits in Laganas Bay and Thines Kiparissias, as mandated by the Standing Committee meeting held in December 2024. The visits were carried out by an international expert in animal ecology, global change, biodiversity conservation, and endangered reptiles, Adolfo Marco, accompanied by a member of the Secretariat on 17-20 June 2025. Despite some initial difficulties, the Greek authorities agreed on the Terms of Reference and the agenda of both visits, facilitating access to the different relevant beaches both by day and by night, to evaluate the parameters critical for the conservation of the site and the species. In both locations meetings with relevant stakeholders were included in the agenda of the meeting.

**Decision:**

The Bureau took note of the information on the OSA preparations and set-up, leading to the visits taking place in the same week as the meeting of the Bureau, and the timeline for drafting the report, which would be brought to the attention of the Bureau at its Autumn meeting.

**5.3 International Nature Conference, "Nature Policy as a Foundation for Conservation" (28 October 2025, Skopje, North Macedonia)**

The Secretariat inform the Bureau members of the International Nature Conference that the NGO Eko-vest is organising in Skopje on 28 October and to whom the Secretary of the Bern Convention was invited. The main aim of the conference will be to bring together international stakeholders, such as representatives from the Bern Convention, national institutions and civil society organisations to open a broad discussion about nature protection. The conference will be organised following a request from the Standing Committee held in December 2024 to organise such a meeting between the stakeholders involved in the Mavrovo case (Open file no. 2013/1: Hydro power development within the territory of the Mavrovo National Park the Republic of North Macedonia) further to the virtual OSA held in 2021.

**Decision:**

The Bureau took note of the information concerning the International Nature Conference. It was recommended that we pay particular attention to the level of representation at the conference, and that we link our participation to that of the relevant national authorities in order to ensure progress in implementing the recommendations related to this case-file.

**5.4 Complaints on stand-by**

➤ 2019/04: United Kingdom: Badger Culling Policy in the England

**Decision:**

The Bureau thanked the respondent for their email response to the information request, as well as the complainants query on the scope of the information request, and their email response to the respondent's email.

The Bureau noted the additional information offered, which mentioned operational choices and economic factors relevant to the decision to not impose an immediate moratorium on badger culling. However, the Bureau is concerned by the explanation and elaboration given.



The respondent reiterated that all badger culling licences would end in January 2026, yet the Respondent's email of 10 June 2025 indicated that the UK intends to end the cull later in this Parliament - which will end in 2029. This update indicates a less defined end date. The Bureau requests that the respondent addresses this recent statement and clarifies the timeframe for the end of badger culling licences.

The Respondent has indicated that a continuation of badger culling is required to maintain disease control and preserve gains before the effective rollout of badger vaccination. The maintenance of the cull is also justified by the Respondent by reference to limitations in capacity, cost and time to scale up vaccination. The Bureau is concerned that financial reasons are used to justify a derogation from the Convention and requests more detail and explanation on these feasibility issues in the next progress report.

It is noted that the Respondent has communicated developing a bTB strategy that will consider the vaccination of cattle and badgers, with the aim of bTB eradication by 2038. The Bureau is concerned that the maintenance of badger culling is not only inconsistent with the stated policy of the current UK Government, but also of published scientific opinion, whereby in the circumstances of the England, badger culling has had no meaningful contribution to the control of bTB in cattle. Furthermore, the advice from Natural England's Director of Science indicates that further supplementary culling in existing cull zones is not necessary from a disease control perspective.

It is observed that satisfactory vaccination solutions have existed for some period of time, as acknowledged in UK government policy, which indicates also that culling is the preference of stakeholders. As also indicated by the complainant in their response, a solution is not unsatisfactory on the basis of inconvenience or due to a required change in the behaviour of those who benefit of the derogation.

Referring to Article 9 of the Bern Convention, the Bureau called for the Respondent to move with greater urgency and progress on the ending of the badger culling policy as there are clear satisfactory alternatives available. The Bureau is greatly concerned and would consider the elevation of the case-file status in the absence of very positive news for the Summer 2026 Meeting.

The Bureau requested the progress reports from both respondent and complainant for the Bureau meeting in Summer 2026. The case remains on stand-by.

- 2021/07: Serbia: Alleged threat to fauna species and protected sites due to the proposed construction of a lithium mine in the Jadar River Valley

**Decision:**

The Bureau thanked the authorities and the complainants for their reports.

The Bureau took note of the information provided in the report, in particular the 7133 appeals submitted against the 2024 decision of the Constitutional Court reinstating the validity of the decree on the Spatial Plan for the Special Purpose Area for the Implementation of the „Jadar" Project of Exploitation and Processing of Jadarite Mineral, and an ongoing second-instance administrative procedure. The Bureau requested information on the outcomes of that procedure, or advancements in relation to it.

The Bureau noted also the alleged failure of the authorities to provide the complainants with the adequate response to their request for an information of public importance on the documentation regarding the distribution of protected species and habitat types identified on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The Bureau requested that the information be provided, as well as a clarification concerning the alleged removal of 60 species by the Institute for the Protection of Nature from the Nature Protection Conditions issued for the mining company, potentially breaching Art. 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2 of the Bern Convention.

The Bureau reiterated the Standing Committee's request for information on the EIA Study for the underground exploitation project of the lithium and boron deposit "Jadar", defined by the Ministry of Environmental Protection upon the request by Rio Sava Exploration LLC Belgrade, and further

developments in relation to the project, including estimated risk of a spill, contingency plan with envisaged prevention and mitigation measures, also bearing in mind the potential transboundary impact of the extraction and processing of the lithium ore.

The Bureau is concerned and requests for greater detail on how the current legislation and procedures in Serbia provide effective safeguards and requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments in mining cases of sufficient quality and scope to ensure that species and habitats listed under the Bern Convention are considered and protected appropriately.

The Bureau remained concerned about the potential heavy impact of the mining project on water quality and soil, with a significant impact on the flora and fauna species present downstream of the mine and called the authorities to refrain from pursuing the mining project before adequate assessment of its environmental impact is completed according to the best available standards. A dialogue about such standards was offered in support of the authorities' endeavour to identify optimal solutions to the environmental concerns linked to the project.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to work towards an online consultation meeting with the focal point and respondent, possibly with an involvement of an independent expert and/or a representative of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention). The aim of the meeting would be to determine the scope of the authorities' possible engagement. This organisation should be advanced in time for the September 2025 Bureau, with the outcome of the consultation contributing to the Standing Committee in December 2025. Further steps will be considered following the online consultation.

The Bureau requested progress reports from both respondent and complainant for the Bureau meeting in Summer 2026, unless any important developments occur beforehand. The case remains on stand-by.

➤ 2022/08: Serbia: Possible negative impact of mining activities in Mountain Baba

**Decision:**

The Bureau thanked the respondent for their report and noted that due to valid personal reasons the complainant could not provide an update report in time.

The Bureau noted the clarification on Spatial Plans, whereby the Ministry of Construction indicated that spatial planning in the area falls under local jurisdiction and that no national-level spatial plans for special-purpose areas in Mountain Baba were developed by this Ministry.

The Bureau is concerned that at "Krajinji Rid", noise level measurements were conducted, but air quality measurements were not. It is noted that the Inspectorate filed a report for an economic offense against the company and the responsible individual with the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Kragujevac. The Bureau requested information on further developments in relation to the measurements and the filing of the report.

The Bureau also noted the communication of the timeline of inspections, in particular that related to the Lešje mine, but is concerned that current enforcement of the previously issued prohibition order on 28 September 2022 to halt limestone exploitation until compliance with environmental conditions from a 2019 decision is not enforced pending the appeal to the order by the company. It is of great concern that the law allows for continued operation pending the resolution of the appeal, and with no stated date by which this process will conclude.

By summary of the government's report, mining continues in some areas under existing permits, while others face restrictions pending environmental compliance. The Bureau considered that there is active inspection and enforcement, but procedural delays (appeals, funding, and compliance) are hindering the full implementation of environmental safeguards. It is noted that from the reports, the process of appeals suspends enforcement action, thereby allowing the continued operation of the mine despite the adverse decision. The Bureau invited the respondent to clarify and quantify the timelines for the process of appeals and delays and what steps are undertaken to resolve these procedures.

The Bureau is concerned and requests for greater detail on how the current legislation and procedures in Serbia provide effective safeguards and requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments in mining cases of sufficient quality and scope to ensure that species and habitats listed under the Bern Convention are considered and protected appropriately.

The Bureau reiterated its invitation to the respondent to give renewed focus to public engagement and access to documentation and requested evidence of any efforts in this direction, such as launching public consultation, engagement through site visits, public hearings, or making relevant documentation – such as inspection reports, blasting logs, or other pertinent records – available on publicly accessible websites. The government report does not elaborate on this matter.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to work towards an online consultation meeting with the focal point and respondent, possibly with an involvement of an independent expert and/or a representative of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention), with Bureau members attending as observers. This organisation should be advanced in time for the September 2025 Bureau, with the outcome of the consultation contributing to the Standing Committee in December 2025. Further steps will be considered following the online consultation.

The Bureau looked forward to receiving the progress reports from both respondent and complainant for the Bureau meeting in Summer 2026. The case remains on stand-by.

## 5.5 New complaint forms received

The state of play with the complaints against the EU proposal to downlist the wolf, other new complaints brought to the attention of the Bureau last spring and a list of newly received complaints were presented.

The complaints concerning the EU proposal to downlist *Canis lupus* were assessed: a) all complaints referred to the negative consequences of the EU proposal to downlist the species; b) most complaints followed the same pattern and did not differ much in contents; c) some complaints included country-specific information on the context of the population and the impact on the national level; d) some complaints were incomplete – those only were not eligible.

All complainants were going to be informed accordingly. The main complaint(s) were to be identified from among those who confirm their intention to pursue, bearing in mind the situation. There were arguments to ask the EU but also the other clearly identified Parties to respond to the allegations.

All the newly received complaints, presented at the Spring Bureau meeting, were notified to the relevant respondents, who were invited to submit their responses to the Bureau by 31 July 2025.

Further three complaints were submitted – those evaluated as eligible will be addressed to the relevant Parties as required.

### Decision:

The Bureau took note of the process of handling over 600 complaints regarding the downlisting of the wolf, and the workload that represented. It recommended merging the complaints into a single case-file, with the EU and the other specifically targeted Parties to the Bern Convention as respondents.

The Bureau took note of the deadline for replies to be submitted by the Parties concerned by the new complaints and the steps to be taken in relation to the newly submitted complaints.

Advised to consider merging the newly received complaint concerning an alleged breach of the Bern Convention with regard to wolves in one of the Parties with the earlier complaints concerning the alleged negative implications of changing the protection regime of the species in the same Party.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 6.1. Dates of the next Bureau meetings

The Secretariat will inform of the dates of the next Bureau meeting (16-18 September 2025).

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the suggested dates and decided to hold the next meeting in Strasbourg on 16-18 September 2025.

## 6.2. Others

The Secretary of the Bern Convention expressed concerns about the heavy workload faced by the Secretariat.

**Decision:** The Bureau took note of the prolonged sick leave of one of the Secretariat's staff members and of the current challenges. It remains ready to discuss ways to better prioritise the activities and increase work effectiveness at the next Bureau meeting in September.

The Bureau members and the Secretariat agreed on the importance of better communicating about the activities and impact of the Bern Convention.

**Decision:** The Bureau agreed that on-going and future communication activities will be presented and discussed at the next bureau meeting in September.

## Appendix I – Agenda

### AGENDA

#### 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING & ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

##### 1.1. Adoption of the agenda

#### 2. REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

##### 2.1. Follow up to the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe on 16-17 May 2023 in Reykjavík, Iceland

- 134<sup>th</sup> ministerial session of the Committee of Ministers (Luxembourg, 14 May 2025)

#### 3. FINANCING AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BERN CONVENTION

##### 3.1. Voluntary contributions received in 2025: state of play

*[T-PVS/Inf(2025)18Rev - Table of the voluntary contributions received in 2025]*

##### 3.2. Revision of the Rules of procedures of the Standing Committee

#### 4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET FOR 2025

*[Calendar of meetings 2025]*

*[T-PVS(2024)09 - Programme of Activities and budget for 2025]*

#### **4.1. Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the conservation status of species and habitats**

*[TPVS(2025)5 - Meeting report of the Webinar on the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)]*

#### **4.2. Joint meeting with the CMS MIKT on IKB and Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds**

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)06\_rev - Agenda and list of documents of the Joint Meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points (SFPs) on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT)]*

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)13 - Annotated Agenda of the meeting of the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds]*

#### **4.3. European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)04 - Agenda of the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas]*

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)05 - Agenda of the celebratory event of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Diploma]*

*[T-PVS/DE(2025)06 - Granada Declaration]*

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)08 - Agenda of the roundtable of the managers of the European Diploma holding areas]*

#### **4.4. Group of experts on Large Carnivores**

*[T-PVS/Agenda(2025)15 - Agenda of the meeting of the Group of experts on Large Carnivores]*

*[T-PVS/Inf(2025)20 - Overview of the Bern Convention Standing Committee recommendations concerning large carnivores]*

*[T-PVS/Inf(2025)21 - Terms of reference of the Group of Experts on large carnivores]*

### **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: CASE-FILES**

#### **5.1. Multistakeholder meeting on the case-files of marine turtle in Greece (7 May 2025) and OSAs in Laganas Bay and Thines Kiparissias (17-22 June 2025)**

#### **5.2. International Nature Conference, "Nature Policy as a Foundation for Conservation" (28 October 2025, Skopje, North Macedonia)**

#### **5.3. Complaints on stand-by**

*[T-PVS/Notes(2025)4– Summary of complaints on stand-by]*

*[T-PVS/Inf(2025)17– Register of Bern Convention's case-files]*

- 2019/04: United Kingdom: Badger Culling Policy in the England
- 2021/07: Serbia: Alleged threat to fauna species and protected sites due to the proposed construction of a lithium mine in the Jadar River Valley

*[T-PVS/Files(2025)2021-07\_gov - Government Report]*

*[T-PVS/Files(2025) 2021-07\_comp - Complainant Report]*

- 2022/08: Serbia: Possible negative impact of mining activities in Mountain Baba

*[T-PVS/Files(2025)2022-08\_gov - Government Report]*

*[T-PVS/Files(2025) 2022-08\_comp - Complainant Report]*

#### **5.4. New complaint forms received**

### **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**6.1. Dates of the next Bureau meeting**

## **Appendix II – List of participants**

### **CHAIR**

Mr Carl AMIRGULASHVILI, Head of Biodiversity and Forestry Policy Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Georgia

### **VICE-CHAIR**

Mr Claude ORIGER, Policy Adviser, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, Luxembourg (Excused)

### **BUREAU MEMBERS**

Mr Charles-Henri de BARSAC, International and European Wildlife Agreements Officer, Sub-Directorate for the Protection and Restoration of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Ministry for Ecological and Solidarity Transition, France

Ms Merike LINNAMÄGI, Advisor, Biodiversity Conservation Department, Ministry of the Climate, Estonia

Mr Burak TATAR, Senior Specialist, Directorate General of Nature Conservation and National Parks, Department of Wildlife Management, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye

## **SECRETARIAT**

### **Council of Europe / Directorate of Social Rights, Health and the Environment**

Ms Grazia Alessandra SIINO, Secretary of the Bern Convention

Mr Mikaël POUTIERS, Co-Secretary of the ad hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME)

Mr Krzysztof ZYMAN, Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement

Ms Marta MĘDLIŃSKA, Project Manager

Mr Michaël NGUYEN, Administrative and Project officer

Ms Irina SPOIALA, Administrative assistant

Mr Mark BARLOW, Administrative assistant

Ms Lilas HEULLANT, Trainee