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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**WORKING GROUP
ON DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR THE BERN CONVENTION FOR THE PERIOD TO 2030**

2nd meeting (*virtual*)

Monday, 21st June 2021, 10.30 am – 2.30 pm (CET)

Meeting report

1. Opening of the meeting and welcome of participants by the Chair, Mr Simon Mackown

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and adopted the agenda with no changes.

Following an initial discussion among the participants questioning the general necessity and added-value of drafting a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention against the backdrop of the reform process it was currently undergoing and the uncertainty of future resources, it was concluded that the Group should pursue its mandate and continue with the drafting process.

2. Presentation of draft document of the “Vision” text for discussion and decision

Mr Dave Pritchard, independent consultant for the drafting of the Vision and Strategic Plan, recalled the process to date of the Working Group, its first meeting and subsequent consultation periods.¹ He reiterated the challenge of trying to include each member’s proposals while at the same time keeping the text short and concise.

During the discussion, several participants, while agreeing that it was heading in the right direction, conveyed that the Vision document should be less technocratic and “more catchy” in order to send a quick and effective political and visionary message. It was suggested to begin the document with an over-arching short “slogan” which could be based on an existing Bern Convention motto (e.g. “*Healthy nature for healthy Europeans!*”), and to

¹ See the previous meeting report of 23 March for further information: [T-PVS\(2021\)02](#).

follow that with a few short sentence with key messages. Below that could continue a description of the context and need for this Vision.

Furthermore, there was debate over the level of ambition of the Vision, with some participants considering that the current text only reiterated the status quo without highlighting a long-term vision, while some others felt that it should remain realistic and more achievable. It was generally agreed that the Vision should build on the fundamental articles of the Convention, and go further where possible within its remit.

Several aspects of the Bern Convention were reiterated as being key and worth including in the Vision statement, such as its unique cooperation mechanisms, its connection within the Council of Europe to human rights and democracy, its lists of species, its potential to address cross-border (regional) issues, sustainable use of biodiversity, and its bridging of research and society in relation to biodiversity.

A further discussion point was that of the alignment or relationship between the Vision and Strategy and those of other MEAs, notably the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, and the CBD's post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which was due to be adopted towards the end of the year. Some participants recalled that it was important not to increase the reporting burden and other strains on the countries who have to already deal with numerous overlapping conventions and institutions, thus it would be better to align. While this was generally agreed to, it was however recalled that not all Contracting Parties of the Convention were EU member states, so the texts could take into account, but not completely copy said Strategy.

Similarly, a suggested discussion point for the future was the possible alignment or link between national biodiversity strategies and a Bern Convention strategy. At national level, there were already efforts being made to align strategies, so such a process would make sense.

It was concluded that the Vision text would be revised slightly to include a headline slogan with an accompanying few catchy lines, followed by the descriptive section. It should become slightly more ambitious without moving too far from the Convention's core mandate, align where possible with other strategies notably of the EU and CBD, and feature the core, added-value activities of the Convention, some of which are mentioned above.

3. Presentation of draft document of the Strategic Plan component for discussion and decision

Mr Dave Pritchard again recalled the process to date of the Strategic Plan, noting that members had advised that the detail of this would be best addressed once agreement had been reached on the Vision.

Some members again cautioned about the reporting fatigue of states in relation to the many other overlapping conventions and institutions they are part of, and that unfortunately the Bern Convention is not always seen as a priority. Alignment, without duplicating, was thus again favoured. Furthermore, it was questioned as to whether the timing for this process was good, due to the ongoing uncertainty around the financial stability of the Convention. It was stressed, however, that the Strategic Plan should not necessarily need to be subject to the financial situation: the Plan would not mention any specific budget or figures; it would be a tool for the Secretariat to guide their limited resources, and could potentially attract more financial resources in the future.

The general consensus was that the current structure of the Plan was good, although a few visual elements may help to improve its aesthetics for the reader. The section on goals was generally welcomed, with just some minor editing and potential closer alignment with the GBF proposed.

In terms of the content of the Plan, it was stressed that it should remain focused on the core business and added value activities which the Convention has been dealing with for more than 40 years. While complementing the eventual CBD Strategy, it should in no way try to solve the many nature conservation issues which that Strategy

will set out, but focus on its own mandate. There was some disagreement on the level of detail that the Plan should go into, for example on targets and indicators. However, it was recalled that further “operational plans”, i.e. along the lines of the current biennial Programme of Activities, would go into these specific details. The Strategic Plan, as its names suggests, should remain more overarching and a guiding tool. It should also remain flexible to possible changing circumstances over a ten-year period.

In terms of working on a Strategic Plan at all, it was reminded that the Standing Committee had mandated the Working Group to develop this, so some form of text would need to be presented at the Standing Committee meeting. It would remain to be seen how developed such a draft would be, in particular given that a final version of the CBD GBF would most likely not be agreed in time to see how to reflect it formally in the document. A possibility then would be to finalise and hopefully adopt the Vision at the Standing Committee, while continuing to elaborate the Strategic Plan in 2022 with the GBF as a contributing factor.

4. Next steps

In terms of the process, there was general agreement that an even more interactive drafting process could be useful. In that regard there were suggestions to benefit from creative brainstorming/collaborative online tools such as Google Docs or Jamboard. It was also suggested to try to finalise and agree on a Vision text before going into more details on the Strategic Plan, because the one follows the other.

It was further agreed that a 3rd online meeting of the Working Group should be convened after the summer break.

The Chair informed that he would coordinate with the independent expert and Secretariat to agree on next steps, based upon the feedback of the Working Group in this meeting and the required tight timeframe for finalising the draft documents.

5. Any other business

With no other business, the Chair thanked the participants for their active and fruitful participation, the consultant and Secretariat for their preparation of the meeting, and closed the meeting.

Appendix - List of Participants
(par ordre alphabétique anglais)

Contracting Parties	Name and Function
Czech Republic	<p>Ms Eliška ROLFOVÁ Unit of International Conventions Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments, Ministry of the Environment</p> <p>Mr Jan PLESNIK Nature Conservation Agency</p>
Estonia	<p>Ms Merike LINNAMÄGI Senior Officer Nature Conservation Department Ministry of the Environment</p>
Norway	<p>Mr Andreas SCHEI Senior Advisor Norwegian Environment Agency</p>
Poland	<p>Ms Ewa PISARCZYK Chief specialist Nature Management Department General Directorate for Environmental Protection</p>
Portugal	<p>Mr Mário REIS Head of the Conservation and Monitoring Division (DCM) Department of Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (DCNB) Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF)</p> <p>Mr João TIAGO NUNES Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF)</p>
Slovenia	<p>Ms Katja VRTOVEC Nature Conservation Division Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning</p> <p>Mr Peter SKOBERNE</p>
Sweden	<p>Ms Melanie JOSEFSSON Senior technical advisor Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, EU-Section</p>
Switzerland	<p>Mr Norbert BÄRLOCHER Head of Rio Conventions (climate, biodiversity) International Affairs, Federal Office for the Environment</p>
Turkey	<p>Mr Emrah BOZKAYA General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks Ministry of Agriculture and Forest</p>
United Kingdom	<p>Mr Simon MACKOWN (Chair) Head of Species Recovery and Reintroductions Policy National Biodiversity and Ivory Team Wildlife Division, Defra</p>
Observers	Name and Function
CEE Bankwatch Network	<p>Mr Andrey RALEV Biodiversity Campaigner Czech Republic</p>
EUROPARC Federation	<p>Ms Carol RITCHIE Executive Director</p>

	<p>Ms Stefania PETROSILLO Policy Officer</p>
<p>FACE European Federation for Hunting and Conservation</p>	<p>Ms Sabrina DIETZ Wildlife Policy Officer Belgium</p> <p>Mr Matt ELLIS Head of Science and Research at BASC</p>
<p>IAF International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey</p>	<p>Mr Julian MÜHLE IAF Education Director</p> <p>Mr Gary Timbrell IAF CEO, Belgium</p>
<p>IENE Infra Eco Network Europe</p>	<p>Mr Tom LANGTON IENE Council of Europe Area representative United Kingdom</p>
<p>Planta Europa</p>	<p>Ms Erika PENZESNE KONYA Vice-Chair France</p>
<p>Pro Natura - Friends of the Earth</p>	<p>Mr Friedrich WULF Head, International Biodiversity Policy Switzerland</p>
<p>Independent consultant</p>	<p>Name and Function</p>
	<p>Mr David E. PRITCHARD United Kingdom</p>
<p>Secretariat, Council of Europe</p>	<p>Name and Function</p>
	<p>Mr Gianluca SILVESTRINI Head of the Biodiversity Division</p> <p>Ms Ursula STICKER Secretary of the Bern Convention</p> <p>Mr Marc HORY Bern Convention Project Manager</p> <p>Mr Eoghan KELLY Bern Convention Project Assistant</p>