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T-PVS (2000) 57

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
20th meeting

Strasbourg, 27 November – 1 December 2000

Specific site

**Conservation of the marine turtle (*Caretta caretta*)
in Patara (Turkey)**

Report by
MEDASSET
The Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean
Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures
in Patara SPA, Turkey

Report prepared by
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September 2000

I. BACKGROUND

The beach of Patara on the Turkish Mediterranean coast has been identified in 1988 as one of the most important nesting beaches of Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in the Mediterranean (Baran & Kasperek 1989). The beach (Addendum I – Map) is among the 13 most important nesting beaches in Turkey. According to assessments in recent years, the number of nests on the beach varies roughly between 33 and 85 per season (MEDASSET 1998).

Following the successful discovery of a significant turtle population on the beach in 1988, the Turkish government on 2 March 1990, declared the area a *Specially Protected Area (SPA)*, and put it under the responsibility of the *Authority for Specially Protected Areas (APSA)* which was then under the Prime Minister's Office and now belongs to the Ministry for the Environment.

Patara has an outstanding landscape, fauna and flora, and a unique archaeological site. Any conservation efforts should take into account the overall protection of the area (Addendum 4).

The *Standing Committee* of the *Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats* had already recommended in 1988, that the Government of Turkey give appropriate protection to the beach and specifically called in recommendation no. 24 (11 January, 1991) for a halt in construction activities until management plans were drawn up. The Patara issue was first brought up by MEDASSET in 1988 and has since been supported by others in the *Standing Committee* meetings, where it was subsequently discussed on a regular basis. After the *Standing Committee* had wished in January 1996 to examine the case of marine turtles in Patara as an urgent case (T-PVS (96) 50), an on-the-spot appraisal was carried out that year in order to clarify open questions. The Report (Document T-PVS (96) 65) makes detailed Recommendations, and the *Standing Committee* decided in December 1996 to keep the Patara file open in order to monitor the effectiveness of conservation measures. As the report still left some questions open, MEDASSET carried out a field survey in summer 1998, and subsequently submitted a report to the *Standing Committee* of the Bern Convention with detailed specific Recommendations for conservation and management (T-PVS (98) 49). A further update report and review of Nature Conservation Measures was submitted in 1999.

II. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The aim of this review is to monitor the progress made in implementing the Recommendations for the protection of Patara adopted by the *Standing Committee* in 1996 and the Recommendations worked out by MEDASSET in 1998.

III. RESULTS

The general impression from Patara is that nothing has substantially changed from 1999 to 2000. Most of the adverse effects on the Patara ecosystems have continued to exist or deteriorated further.

The following specific observations were made:

- The ban on hunting in the area of Patara is now being enforced by the police, although with some difficulty due to the terrain in the sand dune areas of Ovakoy municipality.
- Sand and shingle extraction continues.
- Refuse bins have now been placed on the nesting beach at the café end, at only 20 metres from the water, and are emptied each morning by truck which drives along the beach during the entire nesting and hatching season (Addendum 2).
- 300 metres of fencing now enclose an area of the dunes that has been planted (Addendum 2).
- Illumination of the beach at Patara is undiminished, indeed the lights of the ASPA (Specially Protected Area Authority) facility now remain on all night despite protests, on the grounds that the night guard needs them.
- Turtle monitoring – 4 students from Antalya equipped with satellite positioning equipment (GPS) have been monitoring the nests.
- A new rubbish disposal site now operates in Cayaozy, near the sand extraction area. The old sites remain littering the dunes and the rest of the area with garbage.
- The safari tours on Patara village beach have been stopped, but they are now operating further along the beach at Letoon, where despite an entrance gate and warning signs caravans have been parked (Addendum 3).
- At the northern end of the beach, Parking of cars and caravans on the beach is still a feature, with overnight camping. A barrier installed is lifted to provide access. Vehicle use continues to compact the beach for 3km (Addendum 3).
- The number of sunbeds has increased to around 200 and they are not removed from the beach at night.
- Concrete blocks for beach umbrellas on the nesting beach have increased to around 40.
- A strong searchlight is used by beach guards to check the beach at night.
- Since early 1999, the area behind the beach has been set on fire 9 times, causing grave damage to the archaeological site, and destroying valuable flora and fauna.
- A tarmac road has been laid into the archaeological site.

Nine Recommendations had been formulated in 1996 following the on the spot appraisal, and 48 in 1998 by MEDASSET, all of which have been reviewed in 1999 and 2000.

At least some turtle monitoring was carried out, the ban on hunting was enforced, refuse bins have been placed on the beach at the S.E. (café) end, although the bins are emptied by trucks driving on the beach and they are close to the waters edge. Leaflets have been made available, and the staff of the ASPA establishment continue to keep a watch on the beach at night, albeit with a searchlight.

MEDASSET recommends that the lights of the ASPA facility should be extinguished at night, and urges implementation of the previous recommendations below.

IV. CONCLUSION

Turkey has made some small progress in implementation of the Recommendations on the conservation and management of the Patara beach, as expressed in documents T-PVS (96) 65, T-PVS (98) 49 and T-PVS (99) 69. MEDASSET therefor strongly recommends that the Standing Committee of the *Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats* should keep the file on Patara open, and review the progress of the implementation of the Recommendations on a regular basis.

Addendum 1: Map of Patara beach and SPA.

Addendum 2: Map of S.E. end of Patara beach.

Addendum 3: Photographs and Jeep Safari brochure.

Addendum 4: A letter to Mr. Chabasson (UNEP/MAP co-ordinator) proposing Patara as a World Heritage Site, and a text derived from the writings of Archaeology Professor Dr. Fahri Içik, on the history and culture of Patara.

Table 1. Monitoring of the reaction of Turkey to the recommendations worked out during an on-the-spot appraisal to Patara in August 1996 and presented to the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (document T-PVS (96) 65).

1996 Recommendations in Report T-PVS (96) 65 (Bern Convention)	August 2000 Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the protection of the Patara archaeological site continues to prevent any human settlement behind the beach 	No further human settlement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enforce regulations against illegal buildings 	Illegally constructed buildings still in situ but no new illegal buildings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> control tourist flow, because too large a volume of tourists will generate numerous problems for the environment in the specially protected area and in particular for marine turtles 	No control measure arrangements were observed. (The number of tourists was generally low in Turkey in 2000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organise regular monitoring of marine turtles during the nesting season, as was done in 1996 	Monitoring was carried out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alert the local population and tourists to the importance of protecting marine turtles 	A leaflet has been produced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> erect a barrier in front of the car-parks for the middle and the north sections of the beach and ban motor traffic from the north section 	There is a barrier at the North section of the beach, but not fixed. Access is easy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> erect an information sign at the end of the hillside track at the edge of the beach and ensure that a fourth way onto the beach is not formed there, draw attention to the ban on walking in the dunes 	No sign erected and this fourth way onto the beach is now regularly used by tourists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue plantations to stabilise the dunes, particularly the hedges on the top of the first range of dunes at the back of the beach, so as to accentuate the dark side of the horizon from which the marine turtles take their bearings 	generally speaking, the stabilisation of the sand dunes continues, but local people also use the afforested area for firewood extraction and picnics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that no powerful, tall, seaward-facing lights are erected in the village or between it and the beach 	The flood-lights of Beyhan Hotel still have an impact on the beach

Table 2. Monitoring of the reaction of Turkey to the recommendations worked out by medasset in 1998 and presented to the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (document T-PVS (98) 49).

1998 Recommendations in T-PVS (98) 49 (MEDASSET)	August 2000 observations
1. Hunting – It was recommended:	
▪ to stop illegal hunting outside the hunting season	A new law bans hunting, and is enforced by the police.
▪ to clearly mark the borders of the area in which hunting is totally prohibited	Two signs have been erected.
▪ to extend the ban on hunting over the entire sand dune ecosystem	Attempts are being made
▪ to stop illegal fishing with shotguns and dynamite	Attempts are being made
▪ to encourage the participation of local people and authorities in the control of illegal hunting activities	Warnings have been issued by the police
2. Sand and shingle extraction – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
▪ to stop sand extraction from the sand dunes immediately	sand extraction still continues
▪ to ensure that sand extraction is controlled effectively and illegal extraction is punished	no apparent action
▪ to rehabilitate damaged areas of the sand dunes	no action taken
▪ to make a full assessment of the loss and damage to sand dunes through sand extraction and agricultural encroachment	no action taken
▪ to consider closure of the road to Çayagzi to all traffic at night (install barriers)	no action taken
▪ to encourage participation of local authorities and local people in the control of illegal sand extraction activities	no apparent action
▪ to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the extraction of shingle from the river bed	no apparent action
▪ to prepare a management plan for the extraction of shingle from the bed of Esen Çayı, taking into account the need for the conservation of the unique river landscape.	no apparent action

3. Waste disposal – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to immediately stop garbage disposal within the borders of the "Specially Protected Area" 	<p>Dumping operation has been moved to Cayaozi, leaving the old tip in situ .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to remove all solid waste from the sand dunes and to dispose of it in an ecologically sound manner 	<p>no action, solid waste is still present, even that prepared for recycling in the past – now scattered all over the sand dune area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to rehabilitate the sand dunes once the garbage has been removed 	<p>no action taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to apply the "polluter pays" principle to the costs of the removal and ecologically sound disposal of the garbage 	<p>no action taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to co-operate with local authorities in order to avoid any future garbage disposal in the SPA 	<p>no apparent action</p>
4. Beach pollution – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to collect litter left by tourists on the Patara village beach, and to empty the litter boxes on a daily basis during the tourist season. 	<p>Some progress has been made, although not in a turtle friendly way.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to collect litter from the northwestern beach at least once a week during the tourist season. 	<p>no observed information, but reports indicate no action taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to collect the litter around Esen Çayı mouth on at least a 20-day basis. 	<p>no action taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to consider whether to initiate a deposit system for plastic bottles, in particular to those sold by the kiosk on Patara Village Beach. 	<p>no action taken</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to enhance efforts to combat illegal dumping of oil by ships along the coasts of Turkey. 	<p>no apparent action</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure that the entire beach is cleaned of crude oil after spillage has occurred. 	<p>no information available</p>

5. Stabilisation of sand dunes – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to re-assess the need for the stabilisation and afforestation of the sand dunes to the present extent 	Some fencing and planting has been carried out (Addendum 2).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to consider leaving part of the sand dunes in its natural state, thus conserving some of the original, highly dynamic sand dunes along with their natural fauna and flora 	no action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to consider the replacement of alien species, in particular <i>Eucalyptus</i> spp., with local, autochthonous species 	no action taken
6. Livestock grazing – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to assess the number of goats and cows regularly grazing in the sand dunes, and their impact on the natural vegetation cover 	no apparent action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to monitor vegetation development under grazing pressure from domestic animals 	no apparent action
7. Illumination of the beach by artificial lights from buildings – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to immediately remove the floodlight on top of the Beyhan Hotel 	no action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to avoid any additional illumination of those hotels and buildings which are visible from the beach 	Illumination now includes ASPA facility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to avoid any new construction which may be visible from the beach 	no new constructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to better integrate those constructions which can be seen from the beach, into the landscape, e.g. by increasing the coverage with plants, by painting the outer walls with less bright colours, etc. 	no apparent action

8. Visitor management – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to erect a barrier and ban all vehicles from the north-western beach 	Barrier erected for the purposes of charging for vehicle access. Thus vehicle access actively encouraged. Vehicle use has severely compacted the beach for 3 km (Addendum 3).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to strictly enforce the regulations which prohibit the access to the entire beach at night, and to prohibit in particular people from staying on the north-western beach at night 	no restrictive action; on the contrary, staying on the northwestern part of the beach by night and day legalised by applying entrance fees (Addendum 3).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to mark those areas of the beach where intensive turtle nesting occurs and to prohibit tourists from entering these areas 	no action taken
9. Marine turtle monitoring and nest protection – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to carefully evaluate all existing information on turtle nesting on the Patara beach in order to assess population trends and protection needs, and in order to better understand the spatial use of the beach by turtles. 	No apparent action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to continue monitoring marine turtle nesting with standard methods which allow comparison with results from previous years. 	Monitoring by 4 students this year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to consider regular relocation of turtle nests threatened by inundation, to be carried out by trained turtle specialists. 	no apparent action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to continue protection of turtle nests against predation by foxes. 	no information
10. Protection of the Nile Soft-shelled Turtle – It was recommended:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to study the biology and ecology of the population, in order to get a better understanding of its conservation needs 	no apparent action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to create artificial sand banks along the canal in order to provide nesting habitats 	no action taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to immediately stop the fishing with shot guns and explosives in the river and in the canal 	Attempts made

11. Public awareness building for environmental issues – It was recommended in 1998:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to produce leaflets for visitors and other sources of information in order to raise the understanding of environmental matters in the protected area, and publicise necessary restrictions 	A leaflet has been produced, but it is felt that more information should be made available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to inform local people about the environmental issues of the Specially Protected Area on a regular basis, in order to enhance the understanding of protection measures, and to create pride in an unspoilt environment 	no apparent action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to integrate environmental planning into local administration 	no apparent action
12. International co-operation:	August 2000 observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to link external assistance for conservation measures to progress made on implementation level 	apparently no external assistance link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to link external assistance to the political will of the Government of Turkey to enforce conservation measures. 	apparently no external assistance link

Environmental situation and technical reports presented by MEDASSET to the Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) at the Council of Europe, published under T-PVS reference:

PATARA (TURKEY)

Updated reports presented yearly since 1990:

T-PVS (96) 53A: Conservation of Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and Construction Projects on the Beach of Patara (Turkey), follow up report with Comments on the: ‘Status Report on Patara Specially Protected Area, Turkey’ by the Authority for the Protection of Special Areas, APSA (23/5/96), 2 pages.

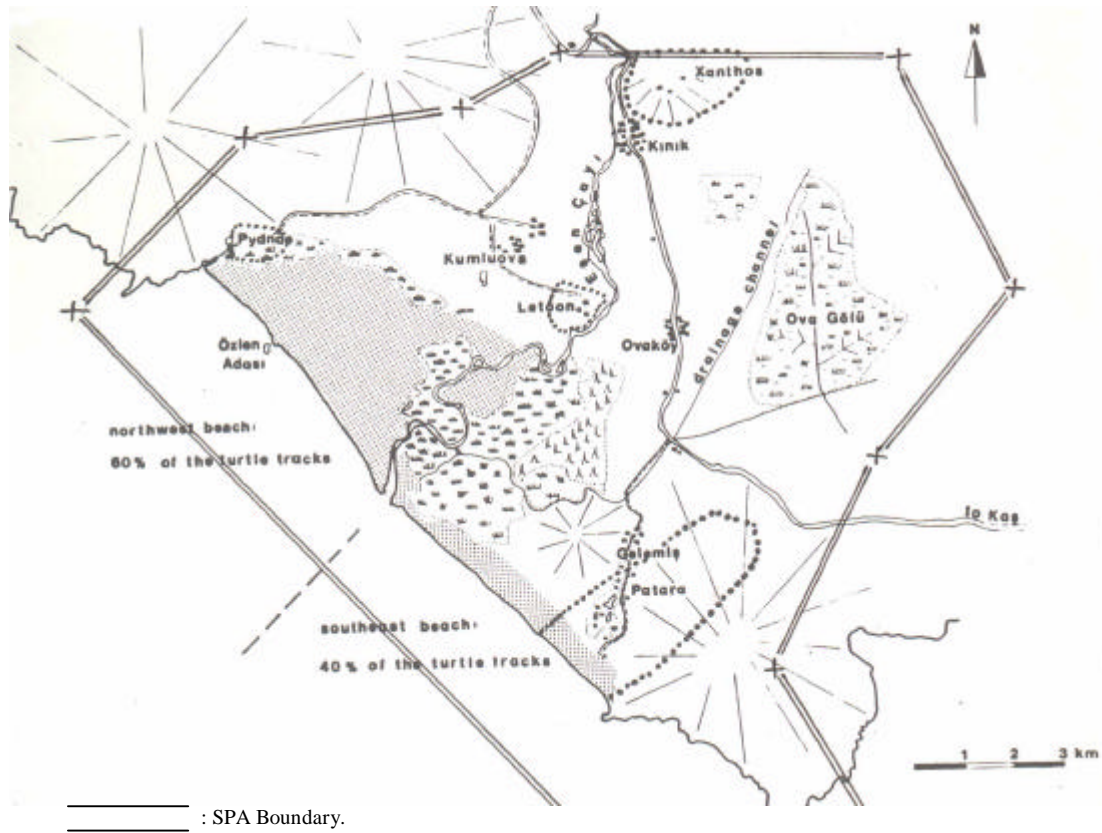
T-PVS (96) 53: Conservation of Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and Construction Projects on the Beach of Patara (Turkey), Brief Update on MEDASSET’s action to “Save Patara” 1989-1996, 9 pages.

T-PVS (97) 45: Marine Turtle Conservation in Patara, Turkey, follow-up report, 4 pages.

T-PVS (98) 49: Specific Site, Marine Turtle Conservation in Patara, Turkey, 13 pages.

T-PVS (99) 69: Specific Site, *Caretta caretta* in Patara (Turkey), 11 pages.

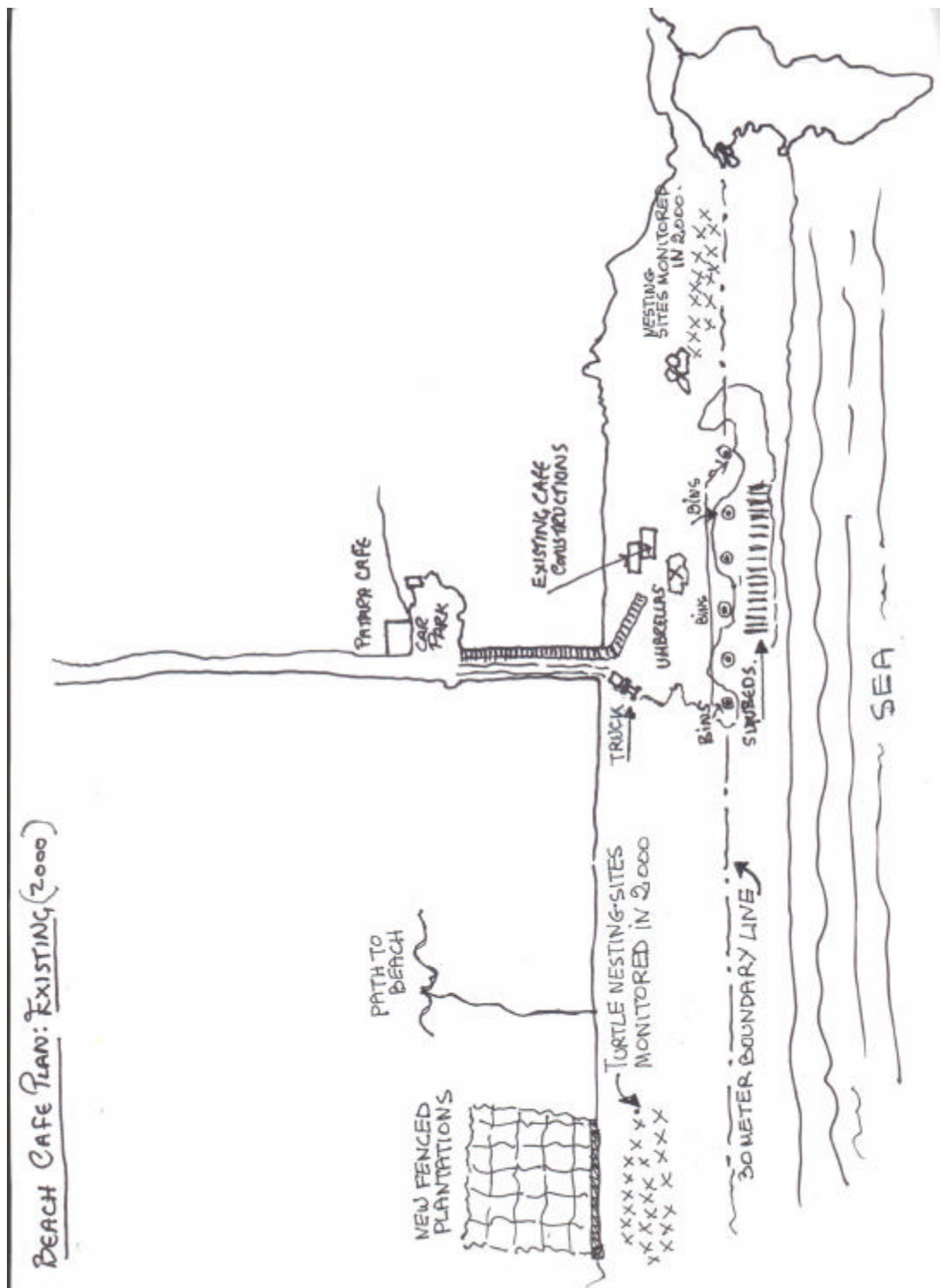
ADDENDUM 1



Map of the Patara beach and SPA. The dotted lines shows the borders of areas which have been protected as “archeological sites”.

ADDENDUM 2

S.E. END OF PATARA BEACH (Sept. 2000).



ADDENDUM 3



PATARA: Caravans and camping on Latoon beach (August 2000)



Jeep Safari

TLOS - SAKLIKENT - XANTHOS - LETOON - KARADERE- (PLAJ)

SUZUKI JEEP SAMURAI (4x4 WD)

SIWIMMING AND LUNCH ON A UNIQUE BEACH

DEPARTURE : 08.45

RETURN : 18.45

PRICE : 90 DM



ADDENDUM 4

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
COORDINATING UNIT FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Mr. Lucien Chabason, *Coordinator*

48, Vassileos Konstantinou Avenue
P.O. Box 18019
116 10 ATHENS

Athens, 27 April 2000

Our Ref.: 1569

Dear Mr. Chabason,

Re: Patara.

MEDASSET has been involved in the uniquely important archaeological and ecological site of Patara since 1987. It is a littoral ecosystem with an extremely important sea turtle nesting beach, according to a WWF assessment one of the 17 most important sea turtle nesting sites in Turkey, a wetland area with a newly discovered colony of the brackish water turtle *Trionyx triunguis*, an extended sand dunes system, and the indigenous flora includes *Phoenix theophrasti*, in an ancient date orchard.

The Turkish government in their wisdom have recognised the unique ecological nature of the site, and in March 1990, declared the area to be a Specially Protected Area under the protection of the Authority for Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs).

In response to MEDASSET's continuous reports, since 1988, on the impact of tourist development on the deteriorating nesting beach, and later those of WWF, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (Council of Europe) carried out an on the spot assessment of the area in August 1996, and opened a file on Patara.

Despite all of this:

The nesting beach has been opened up for vehicles, parking and camping.

Exotic plant species are being introduced.

Sand and shingle is being extracted.

Part of the wetland is being used as a garbage dump.

Considerable numbers of discarded shotgun cartridge cases and the sound of shots, indicate that the SPA is the focus of intensive hunting activity.

From an archaeological point of view, Patara is considered by archaeologists to be as important as Ephesus:

- Since early 1999, the site has been set on fire 9 times and at the time of writing is once more ablaze, affecting both, the antiquities and Patara's precious ecosystem. A tarmac road has been laid into the site.

In view of Patara's unique character and beauty, we are moved to suggest that adoption as a World Heritage Site, might provide the protection and care so sorely needed.

Yours sincerely,

LILY VENIZELOS

[illegible]

PATARA

The location of the city is typical of early settlements, as described in ancient legends. One cannot overlook the fact that many of the ships of the Early Bronze Age used the port, and the wrecks of Uluburun and Gelidonia Peninsula bear testimony to the fact.

With its ancient past and important location, Patara was first known as 'Pttara', so named by the indigenous Lycians, who called themselves the 'Trmmili'. This meant 'city' in the Urartean

language. The Hittites called the city "Patar". Tudhalia IV, the Great King of the Hittites said "I offered gifts and sacrifices in front of the Mount Patar, erected steles and built holy places".

The position half way along the shore of the bay and to the east is possibly the ideal location for the first dwellers of Pttara, reminiscent of Anatolian "Hoyuks", higher ground where people would settle down. The discovery of imported and domestic pottery remains of extraordinary quality on the surface dating back to pre Iron Age will no doubt shed light on the little known "Lukka"

Patara was one of the "six greatest" cities of Lycia, and later became the capital of "Pamphylia and Lycia" under the Roman Empire. It was also the capital of the two Anatolian Mediterranean regions extending from Indos to Chorakesion, from Dalaman Creek to Alanya and also of Side and Perge. Patara is also frequently defined as the "chosen city" or the "Metropolis of the Lycian Nation".

The people of the Lycian Union identified Apollo as "Apollo Patroos", thus proving his Pataran identity. On the Patara coins that were minted in 167 BC there was an impression of Apollo looking to the right, his head was adorned with a crown of bay leaves and on the reverse of the coin there was a sign of the Lycian Union. Further proof that Apollo was from Patara. Another fact is that Patara was Apollo's home of "divination" and this fact alone carried the fame of the city to the rest of the world. The city was equal in standing to Delphi and had common traits with Delos. The god would carry on with his "divination" in Delos for six months during summer, and then he would migrate to the sunny, warm shores of Patara.

Saint Nicholas of Myra remains today the bearer of gifts to the children of many nations. According to Vita per Michelem (814-842 AD), Saint Nicholas was born in Patara where he studied and became famous. In 1140 an Icelandic pilgrim, Nichulas von Pvera, visited "the school of Nicholas" in Patara. It is claimed to be possible that a "religious school" bearing his name in is going to surface one of these days. In early Christianity, Patara was a city of bishops. The importance of the city in monotheistic times is indicated by the fact that Eudemos was Bishop of Patara.

Patara is where Sultan Cem chose to sign an agreement with Rhodes in 1478/79.

Poseidon was known in Anatolia and Patara as "asphalios" and the people would seek the protection of the "earth shaker."

In the surrounding area tourism has been responsible for the destruction of natural locations at the eastern foot of Kursunlutepe, where the theatre is located, in Dogucasari, in Gunluk, on the Bodrum side, and in Kokluk. The “emerald” green of Marcimecik slopes were taken as well just to make sure there was direct access to the sea. The tourist developers cast greedy eyes on the archaeological site of Patara.

The hopes of the excavations taking place in Patara focus on the fact that the city was one of the first Lycian settlements. This is based on the archaeological findings in the tenth year of the work conducted there. It is not surprising that so far no writing in the Lycian language has been found because the numbers of those monuments and inscriptions is very limited. The archaic and classic locations have not yet been excavated. Archaeologists expect to find information at the Tepecik Acropolis or at Dagucasari Fortress location that would decipher the local language. They also expect to find more to link with Apollo. As Patara Harbour was a commercial centre, dual language texts are expected from the commerce and sacrificial inscriptions yet to be found in the Temple of the Oracle.

In 1962 the only permanent resident of Gelemis was Asarci Cemil and his wife Sultan. Since the entire region to the north of Patara was sacrificed to tourism from 1986, the entire area extending from the harbour to Kokluk. Gunluk and Bodrum in the east and to Kisik and Kulaksiz peaks in the north was opened to development. The green houses were dismantled, trees were cut and the historic heritage was destroyed, in short the historic heritage was considered non-existent.

Archaeological research in Patara could last for decades, and the location could be used as a training ground in the field of archaeology. The Patara Excavation Headquarters serves as a study centre for the Lycian Civilisation Research.

“The Improvement Plan for the Specially Protected Area of Patara” will be completed this year. The finalisation of the plan is very important for the villagers and for the Site. Most people think that it is the main hope for the protection of the natural and historical heritage in Patara. The State will start expropriation in the 1st degree Archaeological Site of Patara, beginning with the city centre (near the theatre, Arch and Tepecik Necropolis).

After the excavation of the underground chamber tombs, the borders of the 1st degree Archaeological Site have been extended to include the area of Bodrum Tepe.

Patara is still one of the most well-preserved antique cities of Anatolia.

Archaeologists dream to see Patara in The World Heritage List. This would be the final preservation shield for the antique stones, green leaves, footprints of *Caretta caretta* and for the blue Mediterranean with its shining sands.

It is also the dream of many people who know and love Patara, that its unique past and beautiful landscape should be preserved for future generations. A rival to Ephesus, it fully deserves inclusion in the World Heritage Site programme.