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Specific File

**Management of the Akamas Peninsula
and Limni Site in Cyprus**

Report by the Government

*Secretariat Memorandum
Prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Natural and Cultural Heritage*

Management of the Akamas Peninsula and Limni Site

1. Introduction

1.1. Akamas is not only a Bern Convention and “Emerald Network” issue but it falls also under EU obligations for implementing the Habitats Directive and the “Natura 2000” network. It should also be stressed that the Council of Europe and new EU accession countries agreed that the “Emerald Network” will be implemented through the process of establishing “Natura 2000” sites. The list for the latter will be submitted by Cyprus to the European Commission by 1st May, 2004.

1.2. The Government of Cyprus’s main goal, the protection and sustainable management of the Akamas Peninsula taking into consideration the present and future needs of the local communities, has not changed. It is with this goal in mind that on July 3, 2002, the Council of Ministers approved the policy principles that will direct the overall protection and management of the area.

1.3. As a new government took office on the 1st of March, 2003, the new Ministers of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, and of Interior, undertook a concerted effort to be fully briefed on the Akamas issue, and on the relevant standing decision of the previous Council of Ministers.

Inter alia, the main competent agencies were requested and submitted comments on the decision. The Ministers also visited the area and held a round of meetings with the stakeholders, e.g. the local communities, NGOs and the Scientific Technical Chamber of Cyprus.

The outcome of the above was the preparation by the Environment Service of a new draft proposal for a Council of Ministers’ decision on the issue, modifying and expanding the current one.

The proposal is under consideration by the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment.

2. Management Arrangements and Proposals

Broadly based on the aforementioned decision by the Council of Ministers (as expected to be slightly modified probably in October 2003 based on the experience gained so far), the following strategic management arrangements are in the process of being introduced/ implemented:

- (a) The Ministerial Committee on the Akamas will undertake the supervision of the preparation and implementation of the Management plan (see below) and the resolution of policy problems and issues to arise in the process.
- (b) Establishment of a Coordinating Committee to prepare, manage, monitor and readjust the Management Plan.
- (c) Preparation and implementation of a programme aiming at the international promotion of the area as a high quality environmental destination.
- (d) The development zones that will be modified within the framework of the Policy for the Countryside, the provisions of the Management Plan that will be prepared for the area to be included in the “Natura 2000” network, and the World Bank Management and Conservation Plan for the Akamas Peninsula will all form part of the new comprehensive Management Plan.

3. The new Management Plan

The basic elements of the new management Plan will be the following:

3.1. General Policy Measures

- (a) Freezing of the issuing of new permits for “safaris” and the reexamination of all permits issued.
- (b) Exclusion of the Akamas area from the route of the Cyprus Rally as well as other rallies.
- (c) For the cleaning up of the area allocation of £50.000.

- (d) All sign-boards placed illegally to be removed from the area.
- (e) Implementation of the Council of Ministers Decision No. 52335 of 31.8.2000 for the protection of the Akamas Forest from overgrazing.
- (f) Preparation of a rehabilitation plan for the area where military exercises took place.
- (g) Immediate removal of all activities and demolition of all illegal constructions in the Coast and Nature Protection Area declared under the Policy for the Countryside.
- (h) Compulsory acquisition and compensation of private properties enclaved in the state forest.

3.2. Development Measures

- (a) Introduction of economic incentives for small hotel units and other relevant establishments; services; workshops for traditional craftsmen and businesses; etc, within the development zones of the villages.
- (b) Subsidies for the preparation of architectural drawings for the different development plans that will be implemented.
- (c) Encouragement of the establishment of agricultural units/industries (i.e. wineries, cheese-making together with distribution networks and selling stations) and the adoption of a unified standardised label and name of origin and their proper promotion.
- (d) Implementation of an agri- environment plan with grants aiming at the introduction of good agricultural practices.
- (e) Investigation of the possibilities to increase the area of good quality land that can be irrigated with the parallel introduction of strict controls to avoid development irrelevant to agricultural practices.
- (f) Public investment for the improvement of infrastructure in the villages.

3.3 Physical Planning Policy Measures

- (a) Amendment of the development zones for the villages of the Akamas peninsula.
- (b) In the areas of “Lara”, “Toxeftra” and “Fontana Amorosa” no development of any kind will be allowed. Arrangements will be made for the transfer of the existing building coefficients to other properties or compensation will be paid. In the case of failure to reach an agreement then compulsory acquisition will be enforced.
- (c) Within the goal of providing basic services to visitors, a communal project appropriately located and designed to be established at the south Lara Bay and managed by Inia Community Council.
- (d) In the area to the east of the communities, the policy for isolated dwellings will apply, according to the relevant provisions of the existing Countryside Policy. Certain sub-areas, ecologically important, will be exempted.
- (e) Development allowed in the already established development zones will not be affected.
- (f) Development areas (residential and tourist zones) around the settlements will be revised taking into consideration the already established zones, the real needs of the communities for possible extensions and the expediency of modifying the existing tourist zones to residential or resort housing ones.
- (g) State agencies will prepare spatial plans for the development areas. The plans will include principles of architectural design, principles of rehabilitating existing buildings, the required infrastructure, etc.
- (h) The existing zones of protection of the forest will be reviewed to ascertain if it is feasible to reduce them where feasible, without compromising the degree of protection required. Issues of compensation to the owners who are affected by these protection zones will also be examined.

3.4. Movement

- (a) A basic road of local significance will be designed, on the basis of criteria for its proper integration in the sensitive environment, and with construction materials that will be in harmony with the character and the physiognomy of the area, which will connect the communities of Kathikas, Arodes, Inia, Drousia, with the coastal area. Simultaneously, such regulatory measures will be imposed that will not allow the creation of development prospects along the road, except where the road may be passing through development areas.
- (b) Unrestricted movement of vehicles (with the exception of buses and heavy load vehicles in the forest or other sensitive area).
- (c) Improvement of the road network connecting the Akamas communities with the Paphos-Polis Chrysochous main road.
- (d) Registration and evaluation of the existing road network.

3.5. Other Measures

- (a) Establishment of picnic sites and hygienic facilities in properly selected areas.
- (b) Preparation and implementation of a comprehensive plan for the protection and conservation of archeological, historical and cultural sites.
- (c) Preparation of feasibility and environmental studies for the creation of the following: International Youth Centre, Environmental Information Centre, Educational Centre, Centre on Traditional Architecture, and a Centre of Craftsmanship.
- (d) Preparation of a study for the rehabilitation of the abandoned Androlicou village.

4. Limni Site

With regard to the Limni site, the Council of Ministers has considered the issue and has taken the position that turtle conservation concerns can and should be tackled through the provisions and procedures provided for in the Town and Country Planning legislation (land use controls), the Environmental Impact Assessment legislation (impacts of projects), and the Foreshore Protection legislation (use of beaches).

Based on the above, the Town and Country Planning Council has already considered the issue within the context of the Polis Chrysochous Local Plan. The Council has provisionally decided for the effective protection of the site and its ecological character safeguarding, in parallel, the economic and social development of the broader area. The detailed definition of the protection boundaries will be submitted together with the Polis Chrysochous Local Plan to the Council of Ministers for approval by the end of 2003.

5. Over the last year, the legal framework for the declaration and management of protected areas based on the transposition into national law of the European Union's environmental acquis communautaire (e.g. Habitats and Birds Directives) has been completed. Two relevant bills were submitted to the House of Representatives, expected to be passed into laws on the 19th of September, 2003. They will form the basis for the legal definition of the boundaries of the 2 protected areas at Akamas and Limni, and the adoption and implementation of the requisite management plans.