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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

30th meeting
Strasbourg, 6-9 December 2010

Complaint in stand-by

**Lošinj Dolphin Reserve (*Tursiops truncatus*)
(Croatia)**

REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT

*Document prepared by:
The Government of Croatia*

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Carolina LASEN DIAZ
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Biological Diversity Unit
Directorate General IV
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
Tel. +33 (0)3 90 21 56 79
Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 37 51
E-mail: carolina.lasen-diaz@coe.int

Subject: Lošinj Dolphine Reserve (*Tursiops truncatus*)

Regarding your letter dated 11th December 2009, please find below explanation regarding conservation status of the Lošinj Dolphin Archipelago.

As stated in our letter dated 31 August 2009, it was necessary to find a compromise with local community related to the fishery restrictions that might be imposed to local fisherman with the protection of Cres Lošinj archipelago under the category of special marine reserve. In reference to that, additional field consultations with local people (stakeholders) were conducted by the State Institute for Nature Protection (SINP) during 2009, with an aim of determining their concerns about the Lošinj-Cres marine protected area, reaching to find compromise solution which will assure protection of bottlenose dolphin and its habitat. Consultations showed that the category of special marine reserve cannot allow for even limited commercial fishing activity which was inappropriate for one of the most populated islands in the Adriatic, where people have long fishing tradition. Therefore, the conclusion of additional stakeholder's consultations and additional analysis resulted with the finding that protection under strict category of special marine reserve could cause more harm than good due to the resistance from the local community.

Attempting to find compromise in favour of protection of habitat for dolphins, but also reaching for support from the local community, the Ministry of Culture and SINP have developed new proposal for the protection under the category of the regional park and send it to local stakeholders for further consultation. The category of regional park under Croatian Nature Protection Act (OG 70/05 and 139/08), is adequate to IUCN category V of protected areas. This category allows for limited economic use of natural resources, however, all natural values, including species and habitats for which the regional park was proclaimed in the first place, have to remain preserved. The zonation of the area was also proposed. "No take" zone was defined to include *Posidonia oceanica* beds (NATURA habitat type) as well as important sites and corridors for dolphins, marine turtles). Within "No take zone" fishery will not be allowed, only some small traditional fishing contest (New Year fishing contest) will be allowed once a year, liable to particular permit to be issued by the County Authority. Local fishing boats could only sail through the zone, with no fishing activity. Fishing boats cording will be allowed at "Corpo morto" only, on the spots which will be defined with the Regulation of internal order of the future regional park. This Regulation, in accordance to Croatian NPA, is to be developed in the future by Regional (County) Public Institution who will manage future regional park or by Local Public Institution for management of regional park (if decided so by Regional and Local authorities). Aquaculture in "No take zone" will not be allowed. Diving activities restrictions will be defined by the above mentioned Regulation and controlled through the particular permits which will be issued from County Authority for each diving activity. The border of the MPA was also slightly changed and the total size of the MPA proposed in the new Study is now 46.296,53 ha (out of which the 46.058,59 ha is the sea and 237,94 ha is on land).

Proposed conservation measures were based on the recommendations and data received from relevant scientific bodies and organizations (primarily from the Blue World Institute and the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee).

As stated in our letter of 31 August 2009, both the Ministry of Culture and the SINP are of the opinion that if all of the precautionary measures that the Study for permanent proclamation predicts for are met, the adequate conservation of both the bottlenose dolphin and its habitat in the Cres – Lošinj area will be achieved. The conservation measures proposed by Study will be transferred to the Management Plan of the Cres-Lošinj Archipelago Regional Park, which will be prepared after the formal proclamation, including consultations with all relevant stakeholders. In parallel, the Regulation of internal order of the regional park could be developed by the County/Local Public Institution.

In our letter above, we have also informed you that new Study for proclamation of Cres-Lošinj Archipelago in the category of the Regional park, has been sent to local community for opinion and their response was expected during September. Although we have asked local partners several times, we have not received any reply so far. As early noticed, after positive response from local community, the next steps will include: finalization of the study by the SINP, preparation of the proposal of an act of designation by the Primorsko-goranska County, informing the public (the procedure of providing public access to information relative to Regional Park shall be organized and implemented by the Primorsko-goranska County), and actual proclamation of the protected area by the Primorsko-goranska county assembly.

As also previously mentioned, the Cres – Lošinj Archipelago is included in national ecological network since November 2007, as a result of it, and according to the Nature Protection Act (OG 70/05 and 139/08), in the case of a planned intervention in the ecological network area, which by itself or in combination with other interventions, may have a significant impact on the conservation objectives and integrity of the ecological network area, its impact on ecological network has to be assessed. Assessment is prescribed by the NPA and it follows the provisions of Habitats Directive, articles 6(3) and 6(4). Additionally, every NEN or NATURA 2000 site should be managed in accordance with management plans which have to be developed by managing public institution.

Therefore we believe that protection of that specific area of Adriatic Sea and its species and habitats is well secured even before regional park is proclaimed.