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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

30th meeting
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**Conservation of the Akamas and Limni areas in
Western Cyprus**

REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT

*Document prepared by:
the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of Cyprus*

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REPORT FOR THE NEXT STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE BERN CONVENTION

AKAMAS PENINSULA

Both the Akamas Peninsula and the Limni Area in N.W Cyprus are areas of extraordinary ecological significance. Specifically, the Akamas Peninsula hosts many species of fauna and flora both on land and at sea. On the other hand the Limni area is very significant as a nesting ground for the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and as feeding ground for the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*).

For this reason, the Government of Cyprus has been working intensively the last years in order to take the necessary decisions for the protection and the long-term and sustainable management of both areas.

Akamas Peninsula

Since the last meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention in 2009, an important development took place which concerns the proposal by the Government of Cyprus of a certain area of the Akamas Peninsula, to be included in the Natura 2000 Network of the European Union.

After several years of preparation, the Council of Ministers has approved an area of the Akamas Peninsula, which was proposed in February 2010 to be included in the Natura 2000 Network, as a Site of Community Importance (SCI) and as a Special Protection Area (SPA). The final boundaries as sent to the EU are attached as Appendix I.

The procedure followed for the identification of the boundaries to be proposed in the Natura 2000 network, included several meetings of the Scientific Committee, as well as numerous field visits for the detailed mapping of the habitats and species, that lasted many years. As it is known this procedure faced a lot of difficulties and for this reason the Council of Ministers has decided to promote a compensation plan for the people that own property in the Natura 2000 area, which gives them the option either to exchange their land with other land elsewhere in Cyprus, to be compensated or to transfer the development rights of their property in other areas.

It is believed that the area to be included in the Natura 2000 network, in connection with the management plan that will be prepared, which is the procedure that was followed for all the other Natura 2000 sites, will ensure its long-term protection.

In addition to the measures taken for the Natura 2000 area of Akamas Peninsula, the Council of Ministers is also promoting a Plan for the management of the entire area of Akamas, taking into consideration the needs of the local Communities. This plan includes provisions for the improvement of the infrastructure, the revision of the development zones, the restriction of certain activities taking place in the area, eg. safari and rally, the promotion of ecotourism, or other small businesses, the promotion of the area to visitors, etc. As this plan is very ambitious and needs a lot of effort, the Council of Ministers has decided to appoint a Project Manager of the Management Plan, who will have the responsibility to ensure the smooth implementation of the plan. The filling of this position is still pending.

Regarding the revision of the town planning zones, the Town Planning Department is currently proceeding with the procedures as foreseen in the relevant Law, in order to establish such development zones that will ensure the protection of the environment in parallel with the promotion of the sustainable development of the area. This procedure has not been completed yet, as it is a very time consuming process and thus no zoning maps are available at this time to be send to you, something that can be done as soon as the maps are finalized and published.

Natura 2000 site “Polis-Gialia

As far as concerns the Natura 2000 area of Limni, part of it, is considered national forest, thus the Forestry Department implement daily monitoring, covering the entire site. The coastal zone is protected by several national laws, which prohibit any disturbance of the turtle nests, as well as any development on the beach. Furthermore, the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, as the competent authority on the protection of turtles, carries out a yearly monitoring plan, aiming the protection of the species.

The Management Plan (MP) for the Natura 2000 site “Polis-Gialia” has been finalized, after thorough work carried out by all the relevant Departments. The draft MP was presented to the local communities and interested groups in March 2010, but there are still some issues that require further discussions between the Departments and some interested groups, such as the fishermen of the area.

After its finalization, the MP will be used as a reference for the preparation of a Ministerial Decree, which according to the Law, should include the specific activities prohibited and allowed, as well as the specific management measures for the specific area. In more detail, the Decree will include restrictions regarding land-development rights, beach use, coastal development projects, provisions for the monitoring of species and habitats and will provide the authorities the tool to sufficiently manage and protect the area, as it will clear all gray areas that may exist in other legal documents or requirements.

The Executive Summary of the Management Plan for the area, on which the preparation of the Ministerial Decree will be based, is attached as Appendix II.

Appendices:

Appendix I: Akamas Maps (Natura 2000 boundaries)

Appendix II: Management Plan of the Natura 2000 Site of the “Polis – Gialia” (in Greek, unfortunately no English version is available)

Department of Environment
Ministry of Agriculture, Natural resources and Environment
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