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Strasbourg, 30 September 2010
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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PROTECTED AREAS AND ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS
2ND MEETING
STRASBOURG, 14-15 SEPTEMBER 2010
ROOM 8, PALAIS DE L'EUROPE

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REPORT

Document prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage

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On 14 and 15 September 2010, the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks held its 2nd meeting in Strasbourg.

Following its conclusions, the Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the present report;
- Take note in particular of the Declaration “Working together for Biodiversity” and welcome the common work by the different bodies of the Council of Europe in the field of biodiversity, protected areas and climate change;
- Welcome the good joint work of the Council of Europe and the EEA on ecological networks and encourage EEA’s and ETC-BD’s commitment towards future updates of the EUNIS classification system in the light of the progress made within the Emerald Network;
- Take note of the updated map of biogeographical regions;
- Adopt the translation of Res 4(1996) from the Palearctic Habitats classification system to the EUNIS one;
- Adopt the proposed calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest 2011-2020;
- Adopt the proposed criteria for assessing the National Lists of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest and the procedure for examining and approving Emerald candidate sites;
- Establish the status of “official candidate sites” for proposed Emerald sites delivered to the Secretariat;
- Adopt the draft Information form for species and habitats to be integrated in the Bern Convention Annexes and Resolutions.

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Jacques Stein, Vice-Chairperson of the Group of Experts, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants (listed in Appendix I). He wished them a very successful and fruitful meeting. Mr. Stein apologised for the absence of the Chairperson, Mrs. Maka Tsereteli, who was unable to attend the meeting due to unforeseen commitments.

Mr. Eladio Fernández Galiano, Head of the Council of Europe's Biological Diversity Unit, informed on the important staff turnover that occurred in the Unit. Mrs. Ivana d'Alessandro took over the responsibility of Secretary of the Bern Convention from Mrs. Carolina Lasén Diaz while Ms Iva Obretenova joined the Biological Diversity Unit and will now be the responsible administrator for Protected Areas and Ecological Networks. He also presented Ms Daria Cherepanova, recently recruited to foster the communication on the Bern Convention's activities.

2. Adoption of the agenda of the 2nd meeting of the Group of experts

Document for adoption

T-PVS/PA (2010) 01 – Draft Agenda

The Secretariat presented the agenda, including some last minute minor changes mainly concerning the order of the presentations. The Group of Experts adopted the amended agenda (Appendix II).

Mr Eladio Fernández Galiano introduced the context for the meeting's debates, and insisted on reminding the members of the Group of Experts that the 2010 Biodiversity target has not been achieved. The next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held from 18 – 29 October 2010 in Japan, will thus be devoted to discussing the Post 2010 Biodiversity Target and strategy. He stressed that the Bern Convention's Standing Committee and the GEPAEN will have to pay particular attention to the follow-up of the COP10, more concretely with regards to the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). The Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest will thus contribute to the regional implementation of the CBD PoWPA.

3. Decisions of the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention – Protection of natural habitats

Documents for information

T-PVS (2010) 4 - Extract from the report of the 29th Standing Committee meeting

T-PVS (2009) 15 - Report of the 1st meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks, September 2009, Strasbourg

The Secretariat briefly presented the decisions of the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention concerning the work of this Group of Experts. The Committee acknowledged the results achieved on the setting-up of the Emerald Network (progress achieved under the frame of the CoE/EU Joint Programme in Central and Eastern Europe, the pilot project in Morocco, the National projects in Switzerland and Norway). The goal set by the Bern Declaration is to complete the Emerald Network by 2020. The Group of Experts is called to make a series of proposals in relation to this goal, which the Standing Committee will likewise adopt already this year. The Standing Committee also welcomed the offer of co-operation made by the EEA, on the basis of a 5-year implementation plan and in a mid-term perspective.

4. Progress towards the setting-up of the Emerald network: Phase I

4.1. State of progress of the Joint EU/CoE programme for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in South Caucasus and in Central and Eastern Europe

Documents for information

T-PVS (2010) 5 – Summary review of the constitution process and progress report of the Emerald Network

T-PVS (2009) 8rev – Information document on the Emerald Network

T-PVS/PA (2010) 6rev - State of Progress of the EU/CoE Joint Programme on the setting-up of the Emerald Network in 7 ENPI countries

The Secretariat informed the members of the Group that the first document, T-PVS (2010) 5, is meant to be updated and presented for information on progress every year. The second document, T-PVS (2009) 8rev, presents the origins, history and legal basis of the Emerald Network and is not meant to be regularly revised. The third document T-PVS/PA (2010) 6 rev, presents the progress achieved under the Joint Programme (JP) on the implementation of the Emerald Network in 7 ENPI countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine). All national and sub-regional seminars were completed as planned, as well as the various contractual requirements in the frame of the JP. The calendar for delivery of data by the 7 targeted countries was reminded. Regarding the visibility of the project, a fact-sheet presenting the programme will be included in a dedicated brochure to be presented by the European Commission at the COP10.

Mr. Marc Roekaerts, consultant, presented more in details the progress achieved under the JP. In relation to the Emerald Phase I in the ENP region, the consultant underlined that potential Emerald sites were selected by all target countries, equitably distributed over bio-geographical regions. GIS boundary data for the sites has also been produced, as well as for the habitats and species. The need for an update of Resolution 4(1996) listing endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures appeared necessary during the implementation of the project. Indeed, significant data on species neither included in the Bern Convention's resolution nor in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, was produced by the seven countries. It counts for more than 2000 records on 750 species and habitats. The delivery agenda for 2010 and 2011 has also been presented, noting that the final total data delivery is expected in November 2011.

Mr. Alexei Lotman, Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional affairs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe questioned the expert on how the sufficiency vs. insufficiency of data in relation to the beginning of the evaluation process of proposed Emerald sites is decided upon. Mr. Roekaerts explained that the different phases of the setting-up of the Emerald Network are very clear and that within the frame of the pilot projects, as well as the Joint Programme, these phases are respected. He reminded that the Phase I is not only aimed at the delivery of a list of proposed Emerald sites. The data delivered should be assessed against its clarity and the amount of species and habitats it includes. For what concerns the scientific assessment of data, this concerns Phase II of the Emerald Process. For the time being, it is agreed not to start the scientific assessment of data until the countries deliver a database containing at least 80% of the potential Emerald sites. This percentage has been estimated to be the only one allowing for an evaluation which can really take into account the ultimate goal of the Emerald Network, which is the long-term survival of the species and habitats.

4.2. Results of the first pilot project for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Morocco

Documents for information

T-PVS (2010) 7 - Report on the designation of protected areas in Morocco

Mrs. Hayat Mesbah, Head of the Wildlife Conservation Service at the Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte contre la Diversification took the floor to present the final results of the pilot Emerald project in Morocco. She first stressed the significant biodiversity her country presents in the Mediterranean region. The identification of habitats and species in Morocco has been carried out

based on two strategic reports/studies and by a scientific team composed of researchers and teachers of different subject matters. 36 habitats, 23 flora and 136 fauna species have been identified according to Resolutions 4(1996) and 6(1998) of the Bern Convention, as well as the distribution data linked to them. The choice on the proposed Areas of Special Conservation interest has been made according to four main criteria: ecosystem representation, geographical position, data availability and the presence of legal conservation status. The latter one has been identified as very important for the scientific and management teams of the project.

Mrs. Ivana d'Alessandro thanked Mrs. Mesbah for the presentation and for the impressive and inspiring work done by the project team in Morocco, although achieved in the frame of a very small project. She underlined that Morocco is the first African Contracting Party to finalise an Emerald Pilot Project and launched an appeal to all Contracting Parties of the Bern Convention to contribute financially to the next phases of the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Morocco. Reacting to the presentation, Mrs. Marie-Christine Grillo-Compulsione from ACCOBAMS congratulated the achievements accomplished by Morocco under this pilot project, but insisted on the importance of including marine areas in their future work on protected areas, as well as to work more with other cooperative and legal tools for the conservation of marine biodiversity.

4.3. Reports and communications by national delegations on the developments of the Emerald Network

The delegate from Switzerland, Mr. Olivier Biber, informed that his country has already submitted a list of 37 proposed Emerald sites to the Bern Convention's Secretariat. However, he questioned the procedure suggested for asking the assistance of the EEA for the assessment of the proposed Emerald sites. In fact, Mr. Biber considers that it should not be up to the Contracting Parties to request EEA assistance, but to the Secretariat of the Council of Europe on behalf of its Member States. He also stressed that it is of key importance that the Bern Convention sends a strong sign to the different Swiss Cantons by providing a feedback on the 37 proposed sites as recognition of their efforts. The Cantons hold the mandate for nature conservation and their work so far should be recognised in one way or another, even though the 37 sites represent only 1/3rd of the possible sites in Switzerland.

Mrs. Dominique Richard, from the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, explained that the European Environmental Agency would appreciate receiving official letters requesting assistance, directly from the Countries which fall under its mandate: this would show their commitment towards its work. However, in the particular case of Switzerland, it could be acceptable to receive such a request directly from the Council of Europe.

The Group decided to include in the Draft Programme of Activities for 2011, a National Workshop gathering the Swiss experts for the Emerald Network, the EEA and the Council of Europe, in order to carry-out the technical assessment of the data provided (prior to the scientific one) and ensure the political support and commitment of the cantons to the Emerald process. In addition, the Council of Europe will address the ETC-BD, as well as the EEA national focal point in Switzerland, asking them to consider the opportunities to proceed to the scientific assessment of the proposed sites in this country as from 2011, although these do not represent yet 80% of the possible Emerald sites in the country.

The delegate from Serbia, Mrs. Snezana Prokic, presented a recently released brochure on the Emerald Network and its achievements in Serbia. She also informed that her country is currently implementing a new project on Natura 2000, funded by IPA. She underlined that the work in the frame of this project is based on the work on the Emerald Network.

The delegate from the Russian Federation, Dr Nikolay Sobolev, explained that since 2009 the EU/CoE Joint Programme on the implementation on the Emerald Network helped the identification of more than 300 potential Emerald sites. The main aim of the project as far as the Russian Federation is concerned is the identification of at least 50 % of the potential Emerald sites in European Russia.

These sites are meant to be the core areas of the PEEN. As far as the development of territorial planning schemes for all the administrative regions is concerned, a long-term territorial planning on the basis of biodiversity and landscape approach has been adopted.

The delegate from Norway, Mr. Tore Opdahl, informed the Group of Experts that during the last two years a consultant has been hired by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature management to evaluate a subset of the nationally Protected Areas as candidates to the Emerald Network. From the total number of nationally Protected Areas which is 197, including the 11 sites from the pilot project, the evaluation by the consultant concluded that 93 sites should be proposed as Emerald sites (ASCIs). They cover more than 7% of the total country territory. Mr. Opdahl underlined that his country supports the concerns expressed by the Swiss delegate and the need for a quick progress on the evaluation of the already proposed sites, mainly for political reasons. In 2009, the Norwegian Biodiversity Centre launched a new classification system for Habitats and Ecosystems. Mr. Opdahl explained that he is optimistic that this new Habitat and Ecosystem classification system will be helpful to overcome the "habitat translation issues" they have encountered. A decision has been made that a preparatory Seminar, following the same structure as the one to be planned in Switzerland, will be organized in Norway in 2011.

Dr. Angela Lozan from Moldova informed the Group that within the framework of the EU/CoE Joint Programme, a first set of data was delivered in 2009. GIS for 4 habitats has been achieved and GIS preparation for 10 selected species. The Species biogeographical table was performed for 75 species, while the Habitats biogeographical table was performed for 12 habitats. They are expecting to cover the objective for 2010 and to deliver 60% of the data as planned. The proposed areas for Emerald Network is 11, 23% of the total area of the Republic of Moldova.

The representative of Armenia, Mrs. Hasmik Galachyan, informed the group on the achievements since the beginning of the implementation of the EU/CoE Joint Programme in her country. Seven ecosystems and their mapping, as well as the database and maps in GIS have been prepared. The databases and maps in GIS on 15 animal, 3 plant, 43 bird species and 7 ecosystems have been set up. The country's team is currently preparing the 2010 data delivery according to the planning.

Dr. Leonid Protsenko from Ukraine presented the achievements from his country and underlined that the national team believes that the best way to select and propose the Emerald sites is to choose them from the nationally protected sites already existing. This is, in the team's view, the best way to ensure the long-term protection of species and habitats as well as their good management. However, he underlined that there is a need to work on additional sites without special protection, i.e. wetlands. There is a will in his country to involve the young generations in the work towards nature conservation in general. The Association of biology teachers is thus closely involved in the current CoE/EU project, in order to contribute to the review of database, etc.

5. Progress towards the setting-up of the Emerald Network: Entering Phase II

5.1. Third technical coordination meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency

The Secretariat informed the Group of Experts on the results from the coordination meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency (18 March 2010). The meeting was dedicated to the elaboration of a work programme, including deadlines, for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between both organisations. As regards the assessment of the proposed Emerald sites, countries have been divided in three groups, according to their progress within the process:

- Iceland, Norway and Switzerland: the assessment can be done by the EEA upon request from national Governments. Norway already requested this and the Council of Europe will do it on behalf of Switzerland.
- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (CARDS project’s data): the Council of Europe and the EEA will jointly organise two biogeographical seminars. The first one is scheduled to take place on 23-24 November 2010 in Strasbourg; and the second one will be held in 2011.
- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (ENPI East Emerald Joint Programme): The issue of the assessment of the sites submitted by these countries will be discussed at a later stage.

Mrs. Dominique Richard informed that since 2007, the EEA works with the EU neighboring countries on issues such as waste and climate change. However, biodiversity could be a priority issue for EEA in the ENP region in the near future. In relation to the first biogeographical seminar planned to be organised on 23 and 24 November, Mrs Richard insisted that they are still expecting to receive the related funding from the EEA and that it could be important that alternative dates are decided for its organisation in case the funds are received with a delay. She again reminded that this will be a preparatory biogeographical seminar and will target the six West Balkan countries which have previously participated in a CARDS project on the setting-up of the Emerald Network in their respective countries. It will aim at beginning the assessment of their Emerald sites proposals.

The delegate from Iceland, Mr. Ottosson, explained that his country is now candidate for joining the European Union. The decision over approaching or not the EEA already regarding the proposed Emerald sites in Iceland depends on news regarding their EU accession.

The delegate from France thanked the Secretariat for the efforts in building-up synergies with the EEA and offered their support for the Emerald Network implementation, the follow-up of the constitution process in South Eastern Europe, and the co-operation with the EEA.

5.2. Procedure of evaluation and acceptance of the areas of special conservation interest of the Emerald Network

Documents for information

T-PVS Emerald (2007) 03 – Proposal for setting up criteria for assessing the National Lists of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI)

T-PVS Emerald (2005) 9 - General principles of the procedure for examining and approving Emerald sites proposed by States

Mr. Marc Roekaerts briefly presented both documents mentioned above. These consisted in proposals from the Secretariat, which the Standing Committee has never adopted. However, both documents are essential for progressing in the establishment of the Emerald Network, as they describe on the one hand the criteria for carrying-out the scientific evaluation of the data, and on the other hand the procedure to follow for submitting the candidate sites to the Standing Committee. Both documents are nevertheless out of date and need to be reviewed. Bearing in mind the Bern Declaration and the urgency to speed-up the constitution process, the Group decided the following:

- A slightly revised version of both documents will be sent by e-mail for comments to the members of the Group, on Monday 20/09. Three weeks will be given for the reception of comments, the **deadline thus being 10 October 2010**.
- A revised Draft version will be prepared by Mr. Roekaerts with the assistance of the EEA, and submitted to the Bern Convention Standing Committee for analysis and possible adoption.

- The draft agenda of the Bern Convention standing Committee will be changed in order to allow for a debate on the draft criteria for Emerald sites evaluation during the first day of the Standing Committee meeting.
- The Group requests the Standing Committee to officially acknowledge reception of the candidate Emerald sites, by introducing the status of “Candidate Emerald Sites”, prior to the scientific evaluation.

5.3. Harmonising the Emerald and the NATURA 2000 Networks: integrating the EUNIS system

Mr. Marc Roekaerts informed the participants on three key difficulties arising when the harmonisation of the Emerald NETWORK and NATURA 2000 is at stake: the format of the Standard Data Form for sites, the inclusion of marine regions, as well as the classification system used for the Emerald Network. He also presented a SWOT analysis of Resolution 4(1996) classification system. Mr. Otars Opermanis from the ETC-BD also took the floor to explain that the multiplication of guiding documents is further complicating the task of deciding on unique criteria for the evaluation of proposed Emerald sites.

Mrs. Dominique Richard insisted on what exactly is at stake by explaining that the EUNIS classification system is also used under NATURA 2000, and that EEA is supportive and ready to take into account the data submitted through the Emerald Network in EUNIS revisions’ process. Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive is a selection of targeted Habitats under NATURA 2000. EUNIS is thus used because it is the only system allowing for further updates as it is able to encompass any new Habitats at a higher level and provides a common vocabulary on habitats for the European Continent.

Mr. Jan Plesnik from the Czech Republic also underlined that EUNIS is the only permanent database available, and suggested that the Group asks the Standing Committee to officially support the EEA in its work towards EUNIS updates, as well as to ensure that ETC-BD is committed to update EUNIS system in the light of the progress made within the Emerald Network.

After a thorough discussion between the members of the Group of Experts, the following has been decided:

- A translation of the existing Units of Resolution 4(1996) (so far using the Palearctic Habitats classification system) towards the EUNIS habitats classification should be operated. This would enable to update Resolution 4(1996) when necessary in the future by relying to an officially established organism responsible for integrating the habitat’s classification with new habitat types.
- Resolution 4(1996) using the EUNIS habitat classification will be sent to the members of the Group by e-mail, with a three weeks for comments, **10/10/2010 being the deadline for their reception.**
- The Group will ask the Standing Committee to endorse the revised version of Resolution 4(1996)
- The Secretariat will address the EEA, to ensure that the work towards the update of the EUNIS system according is done taking into account the various Emerald projects led by the Council of Europe.

5.4. Updating the calendar of the Emerald phases

Document for adoption

T-PVS/PA (2010) 8 - Draft Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest 2011-2020

Mr. Marc Roekaerts presented the draft Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest for the period 2011-2020. Mr. Roekaerts insisted on the good use of the three phases of the Emerald constitution process and explained that the work

programme up to 2020 is presented using the clear definitions of these three phases. Several delegations called for more flexibility within the different stages as well as for speeding up the process mainly for political reason. The Group of Experts decided that the document would be circulated for comments, the deadline being set for 10/10/2010.

5.5. Draft Information Form for proposed species and habitats

Document for information

T-PVS/PA (2010) 02 - Draft Information Form for Species or Habitats

The Group of Experts decided that three weeks period would be given to members of the Group for comments and suggestions to update the draft Information Form. **The deadline for the reception of comments is thus set to 10/10/2010.**

5.6. The “Emerald Barometer”, the updated Biogeographical regions’ map and state of progress on the update of the Interpretation Manual of Resolution No. 4

After a discussion on the state of readiness of the above-mentioned documents and tools, the Group of Experts decided that the Emerald Barometer should be developed in line with the criteria used for the NATURA 2000 Barometer. The work on the Emerald Barometer should be developed at a later stage and presented again to the Group of Experts in 2011.

In relation to the Biogeographical regions’ map, Mr. Roekaerts will continue working on the document and send it to the members of the Group for comments and suggestions, prior to submitting it for possible adoption to the Bern Convention Standing Committee.

As far as the Interpretation Manual of Resolution 4 is concerned, the Council of Europe Secretariat informed the Group that the document is presented only for information for the moment. It is within the framework of the Joint Programme on the setting-up of the Emerald Network in the seven ENPI countries that most of the work on this Manual is currently done. The deadline for receiving comments on the Manual is foreseen for 30 November 2010.

6. Ecological networks and Protected Areas in other fora

6.1. Information on recent European meetings and initiatives of interest for the Group

The Secretariat briefly presented the results of the Conference organised in the frame of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union “Post-2010 Biodiversity Vision and Target: the role of protected areas and ecological networks in Europe”. The Conference adopted the so-called “Cibeles” priorities for halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe. These are linked to, among others, the ecosystem services, the integration of biodiversity into agriculture and fishing, the marine environment, etc. A second Conference was also organized under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the EU in September 2010, where the issues of birds protection, the evaluation of ecosystem services as well as how to implement the new objectives for 2020 have been discussed. During both meetings, the Secretariat insisted on the importance to take the message on EU priorities in the field to Nagoya, when the global 2020 objectives for biodiversity will be decided upon. In times of economic crisis biodiversity should be seen as a way out of the crisis, helping to ensure sustainability.

Mr. Boris Erg from IUCN presented the results of the Granada Climate Change and Protected Area Summit, 18-19 November 2009. The main result of the Summit was the adoption of PACT 2020 (Protected Areas and Climate Turnaround), a 5-year follow-up programme for science, policy and practice of protected areas in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Mr. Erg underlined why protected areas and their extension the Ecological Networks are important. He further stressed that it is

still of vital importance to continue campaigning for biodiversity as crucial areas and species are still out of the protected areas.

Mrs. Edith Wenger, from European Environmental Bureau, presented the European biodiversity day, organized in Strasbourg, 28 April 2010. She underlined that this was an initiative of the OING Conference, in cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as well as the Secretariat of the Bern Convention. The meeting produced the Declaration “Working together for Biodiversity”. By signing this Declaration the three bodies have committed themselves to pursuing their action at pan-European level to improve biodiversity, protect natural areas and fight against climate change. They particularly called on governments to recognise the right to a healthy environment as an integral part of human rights. In relation to the results of the European Biodiversity Day, Mr. Jan Plesník proposed that the Group of Experts asks the Bern Convention Standing Committee to take note of the Declaration “Working together for Biodiversity” and to welcome the common work by the different bodies of the Council of Europe in the field of biodiversity, protected areas and climate change.

The Secretariat presented the work of two other Groups of Experts within the Bern Convention. The Biodiversity and climate change Group was created four years before the signature of the Bern Convention. The work of the group and his innovative thinking was taken on board by various other bodies ever since. Last year, the group developed a report on protected areas and climate change. This report is now published. Three additional reports are under development at the moment: on climate change and mountains, on islands and climate change and on forest fires. Other various discussions are also taking place within the frame of the Bern Convention: what to do with species without habitats, with migration systems, invasive alien species, etc. The Bern Convention Groups of Experts should not be working in isolation, be regularly get informed and possibly involved in each others' work.

7. Implementing the Pan-European Ecological Network: legal instruments, good practices and challenges for the future

7.1. Work by other international Conventions

In a statement, Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity addressed the members of the Group of Experts. Several International Conventions of interest to the Group of Experts were presented. Mr. Tobias Salathé informed the Group on the recent developments achieved under the Ramsar Convention. Mr. Abederrahmen Gannoun, Director of the CAR/ASP established under the Barcelona Convention, presented the main features of the Convention as well as its Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity Protocol. Mr. Yann Kohler from the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention took the floor to present the Platform of Ecological networks under the Alpine Convention. Mr. Giacomo Luciani, representing the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, briefly presented the Convention and the creation of a Biological Diversity Working Group.

7.2. Improving coherence and connectivity

Mr. Marco Cipriani, from the European Commission DG Environment presented the state of development of NATURA 2000. NATURA 2000 is the largest co-ordinated network of conservation areas in the world, covering around 17% of the total EU territory. Mr. Cipriani insisted on the mechanism for the selection of NATURA 2000 sites and some of their most important features. He further shared information on the first EU-wide assessment of the state of biodiversity and reminded that the ultimate objective of NATURA 2000 is to ensure that the species and habitats types reach «favourable conservation status». Some of the key findings of the assessment show that only 17% of species/habitats deemed to be in favourable conservation status, while 50% of species and up to 80% of habitats are in unfavourable status. Habitats associated with agriculture show worse conservation

status. He concluded his presentation by informing the Members of the Group on the management tools and procedures of NATURA 2000 and on the work ahead for ensuring an effective management.

Mrs Dominique Richard from the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity took the floor to inform the Members of the Group of Experts on the SEIS and BISE tools for reporting and accessing information on Ecological Networks and their activities. Mrs Richard underlined that the idea behind SEIS (Shared Environmental Information System) is the need to reduce the burden of different reporting systems for countries and the Underexploited opportunities offered by modern technologies. SEIS thus aims at improving the flexibility and simplifying the data reporting by countries. Mrs Richard underlined that among the next priorities of EEA is to be expand the use of SEIS to the ENPI and Mediterranean countries. As far as BISE (Biodiversity Information System for Europe) is concerned, Mrs. Richard first reported on the reasons of the creation of BISE: the need to hold robust data on the state and threats of biodiversity, if we are to succeed in the implementation, monitoring and further improvement of biodiversity policies in Europe. BISE content and services will be developed in collaboration with key users and information providers so that it meets the information needs of the post-2010 biodiversity vision and targets for the EU. Five entry points are created for the BISE gateway: on policy, on topics, on data, on research and on countries and networks. She further illustrated with visual tools the look and use of BISE and invited participants to visit BISE's portal for more information.

Mr. Boris Erg from IUCN SEE underlined the benefits of transboundary conservation ad protected areas. He also informed on definition of transboundary migratory corridors and described several case studies of such migratory corridors: the European Green Belt initiative, the Dinaric Arc Initiative and the Ecological Network for the Sava River. Dr Lawrence Jones-Walters from ECNC also took the floor to develop on the future priorities for ecological Networks as well as on the differences and similarities between green infrastructures and ecological networks. Mr. Jan Plesník informed the Group on recent initiatives developed by ENCA (European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies). Mr. Plesnik insisted on ENCA's believe that protected areas are focal points for maintaing healthy nature, but should be managed through a multi-use approach.

8. Taking stock on the PEEN: National and sub-regional updates

Representatives from Croatia (Ms Ramona Topic), from Moldova (Dr. Angela Lozan), from Serbia (Ms. Snezana Prokic) and from Ukraine (Mr. Leonid Protsenko) took the floor in order to present the latest developments in their respective countries concerning the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

9. Transboundary co-operation for the implementation of the PEEN

Mr. Atef Ouerghi, Programme Manager at the CAR/ASP, established under the Barcelona Convention, in Tunis, explained the work programme for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean area. Mr. Alexandre Mignotte from CIPRA FRANCE took the floor to present the establishment of ecological corridors in the Alps. It is within the implementation of the ECONNECT project (Ecological networks for more biodiversity in the Alps) that CIPRA FRANCE is working on identifying the juridical obstacles, barriers and opportunities to the development of ecological connectivity at a transalpine scale. Mr. Leonid Protsenko from the Interecencentre in Ukraine informed the participants on the development of ecological corridors in the Carpathians. He reported that the establishment of two trans-boundary ecological corridors (Ukraine, Poland, Romania) was undergone in the framework of the project "Realizing trans-boundary ecological connectivity in the Ukrainian Carpathians" (2008-2010). Mr. Jacques Stein from DGARNE in Belgium invited the members of the Group to consult his slides once they are published on the webpage of the Council of Europe/Emerald Network. The lack of time prevented Mr. Stein from presenting in details the PBEPT project (Plan de Base Ecologique et Paysager Transfrontalier).

10. Future work of the Group of Experts

Document for adoption

T-PVS/PA (2010) 3 - Draft programme of activities and budget for 2011

Mrs Ivana d'Alessandro took the floor to present the work programme and introduced the amendments that intervened according to the decisions taken during the first day of the meeting of the Group of Experts. Namely, two additional activities have been introduced to the work programme, two technical Seminars for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Switzerland and in Norway.

The lack of time prevented the members of the Group to hold a discussion on the current developments and future of the PEEN, as well as on the presentations heard during both days. Mrs. Ivana d'Alessandro also regretted the delay in the agenda, due to the long presentations of the second day of the meeting. She informed the Group that the meeting in 2011 of the Group will be organised accordingly and will allocate more time for discussions and strategic thinking about PEEN, its constitution and existing and possible synergies with the Emerald Network.

11. Any other business

No other points were raised.

12. Closing of the meeting

The Chairperson thanked the participants for their active participation, the Secretariat for the organisation of the meeting and the interpreters for their excellent work. He also expressed his satisfaction with the successful meeting and wished the members of the Group a safe journey back home.

Annex 1**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 2010 / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS 2010****Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks
Groupe d'experts zones protégées et réseaux écologiques****Strasbourg, 14-15 September 2010
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Annex 2**Agenda***Tuesday, 14th September***09:30 – 10:10 Welcome and opening**

1. **Opening of the meeting by the Vice-Chair (Mr Jacques Stein)**
2. **Adoption of the agenda**
3. **Introduction by the Secretariat and decisions of the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention – Protection of natural habitats (Ms Ivana d’Alessandro)**

10:00 – 11:30 Progress towards the setting-up of the Emerald Network: Phase I**4. Update on ongoing Phase I Emerald projects:**

- State of progress of the joint Council of Europe / European Union programme for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in South Caucasus and in Central and Eastern Europe (Ms Ivana d’Alessandro; Mr Marc Roekaerts, consultant)

Coffee break

- Results of the first pilot project for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Morocco (Ms Hayat Mesbah, Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification of Morocco)
- Brief reports and communications by national delegations on the developments of the Emerald Network

11:30 – 12:45 The Emerald Network: entering phase II**5. Progress towards the setting-up of the Emerald Network: Entering Phase II**

- Conclusions of the third technical coordination meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency, Paris, 18 March 2010 (Ms Ivana d’Alessandro, CoE – Ms Dominique Richard, EEA-ETC/BD)
- Procedure of evaluation and acceptance of the areas of special conservation interest of the Emerald Network: presentation of the criteria for the evaluation and approval of the proposed sites (Mr Marc Roekaerts)
- Harmonising the Emerald and the Natura 2000 Networks: integrating the EUNIS system (Mr Marc Roekaerts)

12:45 Lunch break**14:15 – 17:00 The Emerald Network: entering phase II (cont.)**

Mr Marc Roekaerts:

- The “Emerald Barometer”
- The draft Information Form for proposed species and habitats, to be integrated in the Bern Convention’s Annexes and Resolutions

- The updated Biogeographical regions' map
- Proposals for updating the calendar of the "Emerald Phases"
- State of Progress of the update of the Interpretation Manual of Resolution No. 4 (1996) listing endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures

Discussion

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| 17:00 – 17:15 Awareness and visibility |
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- Presentation by the Secretariat of the Emerald brochure and the Emerald factsheet

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| 17:15 – 17:30 Closing of the first day |
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| <i>A dinner booking will be made in an Alsatian restaurant (at 8pm) to help those wishing to get together in the evening. More information will be given during the meeting.</i> |
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| <i>Please note that this is not an invitation from the Council of Europe.</i> |
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*Wednesday, 15th September***9:30 – 10:30 Ecological Networks and Protected Areas in other fora****6. Information on recent European meetings and initiatives of interest for the Group**

- Conclusions of the Conference: “Post-2010 Biodiversity Vision and Target: the role of protected areas and ecological networks in Europe” (Mr Eladio Fernández Galiano)
- Information on the Conference : “Climate change and Protected Area Summit” (Mr Borig Erg, IUCN)
- Information on the “European Biodiversity Day”, Strasbourg, 28 April 2010 (Ms Edith Wenger, IONG Conference)
- Work of other related Council of Europe Group of Experts of the Bern Convention (Mr Eladio Fernández Galiano):
 - Biodiversity and Climate Change
 - European Island Biological Diversity

10:30 – 12:30 Implementing the Pan-European Ecological Network: legal instruments, good practices and challenges for the future**7. Work by other international Conventions**

- Convention on Biological Diversity: statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr Ahmed Djoghlaif (reading by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention)
- Ramsar Convention (Mr Tobias Salathé)

Coffee break

- Barcelona Convention (Mr Abderrahmen Gannoun, RAC/SPA Director)
- “Restoring the web of life – Ecological networks for more biodiversity in the Alps” (Mr Yann Kohler, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention)
- Carpathian Convention (Mr Giacomo Luciani)

8. Improving coherence and connectivity

- "Natura 2000: from designation to effective management" (Mr Marco Cipriani)
- Accessing information and reporting on Ecological Networks: the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) (Ms Dominique Richard, EEA, ETC-BD)
- EEA (Update on Ecological Networks activities and the BISE) (Ms Dominique Richard, EEA, ETC-BD)

Lunch break**14:00 – 14:45 Improving coherence and connectivity (cont.)**

- IUCN (Mr Boris Erg, IUCN)
- Future priorities for ecological networks: challenge and opportunity, ECNC (Dr. Lawrence Jones-Walters)
- The European Network of Head of Nature Conservation Agencies (Mr Jan Plesnik, ENCA representative)

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| 14:45 – 16:45 Tacking stock on the PEEN: National and sub-regional updates |
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9. Reports and communications by National Delegations in view of updating the information collected in 2007

10. Transboundary co-operation for the implementation of the PEEN

- Conservation of the coastal and marine biological diversity through the development of a Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network – MedMPAnet RAC-SPA (Mr Atef OUERGHI, RAC/SPA Programme Officer)
- The PBEPT project (« Plan de Base Ecologique et Paysager Transfrontalier ») between Walloon Region (Belgium) and Luxembourg (Mr. Jacques Stein, DGARNE)

Coffee break

- Legal barriers and potentials for the implementation of ecological corridors in the Alps (Mr. Alexandre Mignotte Director, CIPRA FRANCE)
- Ecological Corridors in the Carpathians (Dr. Leonid Protsenko, Interecocentre, Ukraine)

Discussion

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| 16:45 – 17:30 Next steps and future work |
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11. Future work of the Group of Experts

12. Any other business

13. Closing