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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

32nd meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2012

**Group of Experts
on Biodiversity and Climate Change**

(Strasbourg, 1-2 October 2012)

**– EXTRACT FROM THE LIST OF DECISIONS AND ADOPTED TEXTS
OF THE 31ST MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE
BERN CONVENTION -**

*Document prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance, Culture and Diversity*

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Meeting of the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change

(Strasbourg, 1-2 October 2012)

**EXTRACT FROM THE LIST OF DECISIONS AND ADOPTED TEXTS
OF THE 31ST MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE BERN CONVENTION**

CONTENTS

Point 5.1 Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change.....3

Appendix 1

Recommendation No. 152 (2011) on marine biodiversity and climate change4

5.1 Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change, Mr Petar Zhelev, presented the report of the meeting held in Strasbourg on 10-11 October 2011. Mr Zhelev informed on the topics discussed by the Group, as well as on the priorities identified for its future work. He further stressed that the Group decided to meet once every two years starting from 2012.

The representative of ACCOBAMS informed the Committee that the Secretariat of the agreement is planning to organise a workshop on climate change concerning the ACCOBAMS area and the Red Sea. The workshop would take place on second half of 2012. ACCOBAMS extended an invitation to all institutions working on the conservation of the biodiversity in the region, including the Bern Convention.

The Secretariat presented the Draft recommendation on Marine Biodiversity and Climate Change which, although inspired by the conclusions of the study prepared by the RAC/SPA on the Impact of Climate Change on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea, has finally a broader the scope targeting all European marine biodiversity, including the Arctic. The Recommendation has a comprehensive preamble taking stock of the main scientific concern in this field, but also recalling the reference documents or decisions adopted at the Council of Europe level, including those adopted by the PACE and the EUROPA Major Hazards Agreement, as well as at the global and regional levels. Finally, the Secretariat stressed that the Group has wished to put a particular emphasis on some of the specific threats, additional constraints, and effects of climate change on marine biodiversity, as well as on ecosystem services and their role in carbon sequestration, on the biodiversity of the overseas territories, and on invasive alien species.

Decision: The Committee welcomed the excellent work of the Group of Experts and was pleased to note that the system of classification prepared by this Group has been recently used by the European Environment Agency for preparing the biodiversity indicators on climate change adaptation.

The Committee took note of the report of the meeting of the Group of Experts, including the proposals for its future work.

The Committee amended and adopted the following recommendation:

- Recommendation No. 152 (2011) on marine biodiversity and climate change.

Appendix 1



Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 152 (2011) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 2 December 2011, on Marine Biodiversity and Climate Change

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention;

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and its natural habitats;

Aware that the conservation of natural habitats is a vital component of the protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna;

Recalling that Article 2 of the Convention requires Parties to take requisite measures to maintain the populations of wild flora and fauna at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic requirements;

Recalling that Article 3 of the Convention requires Parties to undertake to have regard to the conservation of wild fauna and flora in their planning and development policies, and in their measures against pollution;

Recalling that Article 4 of the Convention requires Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of wild flora and fauna species as well as of endangered natural habitats; and give particular attention to the protection of areas of importance for migratory species;

Recognising that climate change affects biological diversity in the territory covered by the Convention, including species, habitats and the Areas of Special Conservation Interest of the Emerald Network;

Recognising the need to adapt conservation work to the challenges of climate change so as to minimise its impacts on the species and natural habitats protected under the Convention;

Particularly concerned by the raise in global warming and by the related changes, including retreat of sea-ice cover, changes in salinity, oxygen levels and pH, circulation rates and pollution, as well as habitat loss, disruption of marine food webs and general alteration of ocean biogeochemistry;

Further concerned by the accelerating rise in sea level, affecting the littoral ecosystems and mainly the wetlands, the foreshores, islands and low-lying islets which constitute a unique or privileged habitat for numerous animal and plant species which again will be affected by accelerated erosion;

Recognising the many ecosystem services provided by marine communities, including a large potential for sequestering and storing carbon, particularly in coastal habitats, and stressing that changes in the functional attributes of ecosystems often affect their ability to deliver several of the ecosystem services upon which human society depends;

Noting that marine and coastal biodiversity is also threatened by increasing pressure from human activity (particularly construction work), contributing to the shrinkage of coastal wetlands and mangroves, the

disappearance of lagoons and grassbeds, shoreline retreat and coastal erosion, over-exploitation of marine resources through fishing and the introduction of invasive species;

Having regard to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 1794 (2011) on "Preserving the environment in the Mediterranean", Recommendation 1630 (2003) on "Erosion of the Mediterranean coastline: implications for tourism", "Resolution 1693 (2009) on water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin" and Recommendation 1883 (2009) on "The challenges posed by climate change";

Having regard also to Recommendation 271 (2009) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on "The global challenges of climate change: Local responses";

Recognising the work on vulnerability and impacts of climate change on the biodiversity of the Mediterranean sea, carried out under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention, 1976);

Recalling CBD COP Decision X/29 on "Marine and coastal biodiversity" which invites Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to further integrate climate change-related aspects of marine and coastal biodiversity into relevant national strategies, action plans and programmes (...) and urges Parties and other Governments to achieve long-term conservation, management and sustainable use of marine resources and coastal habitats, and to effectively manage marine protected areas;

Recalling also the guidance included in CBD COP Decision X/33 on "Biodiversity and climate change" to enhance the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of marine and coastal habitats that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change or which contribute to climate-change mitigation;

Taking into account the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and more particularly Target 10 aiming at minimising, by 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change, as well as Target 15 aiming at enhancing, by 2020, ecosystem resilience as well as the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks, and conserving and restoring at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification;

Recognising the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, namely the strategic objective aiming at a more climate-resilient, low-carbon economy; bearing in mind the work carried out by the EU Ad Hoc Expert Working Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change in the preparation of a EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, to be issued by 2013;

Recalling the "Message from Reunion Island" issued at the conference "The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to Counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss" (July 2008) and the exceptional importance of the biodiversity of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories and Outermost Regions and their vulnerability to climate change;

Recognising the importance of the work of the European Environment Agency on biodiversity and climate change indicators, and the launch of the European Topic Centre on Climate Change;

Recognising the need to improve co-operation with and between the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species and its related agreements, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and welcoming the joint outreach activity through the Rio Conventions' Pavilion with a view to harness synergy and promote collaboration;

Recalling Recommendation No. 122 (2006) of the Standing Committee, on the conservation of biological diversity in the context of climate change, adopted on 30 November 2006;

Recalling Recommendation No. 135 (2008) of the Standing Committee, on addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, adopted on 27 November 2008;

Recalling Recommendation No. 142 (2009) of the Standing Committee, recommending Parties and inviting Observers to the Convention to interpret the term “alien species” for the purpose of the implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species as not including native species naturally extending their range in response to climate change;

Recalling Recommendation No. 143 (2009) on further guidance for Parties on biodiversity and climate change;

Recalling Recommendation No. 146 (2010) on guidance for Parties on biodiversity and climate change in European islands;

Welcoming and bearing in mind the following expert reports: “Conserving European biodiversity in the context of climate change”, by Mr. Michael B. Usher [doc. T-PVS (2005) 21], “Climatic change and the conservation of European biodiversity: towards the development of adaptation strategies” by Mr. Brian Huntley [doc. T-PVS/Inf(2007)03], “Protected areas and climate change in Europe” by M. B. Araújo [doc. T-PVS/Inf (2009) 10 rev], “Climate change and the biodiversity of European islands” by Ms Cordula Epple and Mr Yves de Soye [doc. T-PVS/Inf (2010)09E], and “Impact of Climate Change on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity: current state of Knowledge”, by UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA;

Recommends Contracting Parties to the Convention and invites Observer States to:

1. Increase efforts to develop robust ecological models pertaining not only to species but specifically also to the biotic/abiotic mechanisms and processes regulating marine ecosystems so as to evaluate their resilience to climate change, bearing in mind that uncertainties surrounding the precise nature of future climate change and its impacts on biodiversity should not delay practical conservation action;
2. Develop cross-cutting and sectoral adaptation and mitigation policies and measures to take account of the different climate change scenarios, particularly focussing on mitigating current and potential impacts on already vulnerable marine and coastal areas;
3. Improve the status of marine biodiversity by stepping-up the designation of marine and coastal protected areas, including under the Emerald and the Natura 2000 networks, and ensure that they are managed in a sustainable way;
4. Improve the knowledge-base of effects of climate change on marine and coastal biodiversity, including improved understanding of mitigation and adaptation measures to effectively inform the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity, and ecosystem services. Ensure mechanisms are in place, to facilitate sharing of data and information at national, regional and international levels, making full use, where possible, of already-established mechanisms, including the Global Biodiversity Information Facility;
5. Examine how marine invasive alien species may affect the biodiversity and, in particular, how Lessepsian species may affect native Mediterranean biodiversity;
6. Continue to engage in the development and application of further guidance to implement the Convention in this regard; and
7. Keep the Standing Committee informed of measures taken to implement this recommendation.