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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Second Conference on the Illegal killing,  
Trapping and Trade of Wild Birds**

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**Seconde Conférence sur la mise à mort,  
le piégeage et le commerce illégaux d'oiseaux sauvages**

Tunis (31 May 2013)

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**INFORMATION NOTE  
ON THE  
SECOND CONFERENCE ON THE ILLEGAL KILLING,  
TRAPPING AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS**

*Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*

**INFORMATION NOTE ON THE**  
**SECOND CONFERENCE ON THE ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS**  
*Document prepared by the Secretariat*

## **BACKGROUND**

The issue of the illegal killing, trapping and trading of birds, particularly in Mediterranean Parties has been regularly on the Agenda of the meetings of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention for the past 15 years.

At its 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, in December 2010, the Standing Committee concluded that illegal killing of birds was still carried out, and in some Contracting Parties it was a growing phenomenon; it realised that the implementation of national legislation was often weak; that the issue also involved other transversal aspects like the transit of the killed and captured birds through third countries, the difficulty to identify the illegally killed species; the capture of endangered species; the need for countries to co-operate and to work with nature conservation NGOs; the need for proper enforcement with appropriate penalties at all levels.

Expressing its deep concern on the extent and negative trends of illegal killing, trapping and trading of birds in the European continent, the Bern Convention promoted the organisation of the first "European Conference on illegal killing of birds", held in Larnaca, Cyprus, on 6-8 July 2011.

The Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds, organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Game Fund of Cyprus (Ministry of Interior) gathered over 100 participants representing various stakeholders, including Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention, international organisations, national and local authorities, enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations, scientific and research bodies, tourism industry, police authorities and mass-media.

The event marked a turn-over in tackling the issue of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds, by launching a long-term process aiming at enhancing national and international cooperation and coordination in this field, fostering adequate enforcement of existing legislation, sharing good practices and setting the basis for an appropriate monitoring process.

Participants stressed that there was no single solution, but a combination of techniques, actions, measures and strategies was urgently required as many birds species in Europe and worldwide are declining rapidly.

The Conference delivered the "[Larnaca Declaration](#)", and a draft Recommendation which the Standing Committee adopted at its 31<sup>st</sup> meeting in 2011 under the reference: [Recommendation No. 155 \(2011\) on the illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds](#).

The key message was "**Zero tolerance toward illegal killing of birds**". The Standing Committee decided to organise a Second Conference, in two years time, to monitor progress of Parties towards the eradication of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds.

## **THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CONFERENCE ON THE ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS**

### ***Baseline consideration***

Birds are a European natural heritage and a valuable resource. A zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, trapping and trade should be applied to support a shift of culture and promote active stewardship in this field.

### ***Objectives of the Conference:***

- To assess progress of Parties in the implementation of the measures contained in the operational paragraphs of Recommendation No. 155 (2011), particularly in respect of the legal, biological and institutional, and awareness aspects;

- To monitor and assess progress towards the development and implementation of national communication strategies, promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups, and noting cultural sensitivities. These strategies should be aimed to the conservation of bird population and based on the following principles: (i.) this is about illegal killing of birds, not legal hunting; (ii.) zero tolerance of illegal killing of wild birds; (iii.) recognition of legal hunting and sustainable use;
- To take stock of, and analyse, the challenges faced by Parties in the implementation of the Recommendation (for instance regarding preventive measures, effective enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain, monitoring and reporting, data collection and sharing, prioritisation of actions in hotspots of bird concentration, awareness raising, partnership and coordination of relevant stakeholders at local, national and international level) as well as to put forward the examples of success;
- To propose priority actions to remedy identified weaknesses, and measures to implement them, to be included in a draft Action Plan.

### **Scope**

According to the definition agreed by the participants at the Larnaca Conference, “Illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds” refer to:

*Activities which are illegal under national or regional law/regulations and involve the deliberate pursuit, killing, injuring or catching alive of wild birds or are aimed at illegal marketing live or dead specimens of wild birds, including their parts and derivatives.*

*Such activities include but are not limited to: killing/trapping in closed periods, in areas with prohibitions in force, by unauthorised persons and/or protected species; use of prohibited means and substances; breach of bag limits; possession, donation, use, movement, transfer, offer for sale, advertisement, consumption, import, introduction from the sea, transit or export, of specimens<sup>1</sup>.*

### **Enforcement challenges**

Partnership and coordination between government agencies and stakeholders is critical to streamline enforcement at local, national and international level. A coordinated approach should cover each stage of the chain of activities related to illegal killing, trapping or trade, including end-use of illegally obtained specimens and activities related to prohibited means and substances. Another major challenge relates to the misuse of derogation provisions, particularly for non-emergency reasons.

### **Biological challenges**

Illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds have been recognised as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favourable status of bird populations, negatively affecting those conservation actions undertaken by the States and resulting in adverse impacts on the conservation, legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors.

In order to effectively stop and prevent these illegal practices and their negative consequences, urgent improvement of the knowledge base is needed to support the solutions to these problems. Moreover, the “zero tolerance approach” adopted at the Larnaca Conference suggests that the lack of specific knowledge should not prevent from taking effective action in view of the evidence that certain types of illegal activities are increasing in some countries.

### **Cultural and awareness challenges**

While there has been considerable biological and legal work focused on bird conservation, there has been a lack of addressing the same issue from a human perspective, consisting in understanding public beliefs, attitudes, motivations and behaviours toward illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds.

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<sup>1</sup> See conclusions of Working Group 1 : How to make legislation and enforcement more effective, Larnaca Conference

While for poaching in general the main motivations are related to economic or recreational factors regardless of conservation regulations, the specific issue of illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds has also a deep-rooted cultural component as soon as identity and traditions are among the arguments that are often used by both the offenders and the final users to justify their actions.

To move forward, the Larnaca Conference suggested a paradigm shift from people as a problem to people as part of the solution, emphasising on the need for public involvement approaches are as innovative path forward to address the issue. Parties were requested to develop and support national communication strategies, promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups, and noting cultural sensitivities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Assessment of the replies of Parties to the questionnaire prepared for evaluating compliance with the relevant recommendations. Presentation and discussion of the assessment report. Presentation by national experts, NGOs and International Organisations/Agreements of other key issues and/or available tools, to feed discussions.

Working groups to further explore specific issues related to enforcement, biological and institutional, and awareness aspects, in order to propose priority actions to remedy identified weaknesses, and measures to implement them, to be included in a draft Action Plan.

## **WORKING LANGUAGES**

English - French

## **ORGANISERS**

The Council of Europe (Secretariat of the Bern Convention), in co-operation with the Ministry of Equipment and Environment, and the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia, and with the technical support of Birdlife International and FACE. The Conference is foreseen in the framework of the joint Bern Convention/CMS Initiative "Week on the Conservation of Birds", and is a contribution to the CBD/IUCN initiative Friends of Target 12.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Officials from Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, International Conventions, Tunisian National authorities, nature protection NGOs, experts and other relevant stakeholders.