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INFORMATION NOTE

from: General Secretariat

to: Delegations

Subject: Outcome of the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (Bern Convention) (Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2012)

- Information from the Presidency and the European Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information from the Presidency and the European Commission on the abovementioned subject.

**Outcome of the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (Bern Convention)
(Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2012)**

- Information from the Presidency and the European Commission -

The 32nd Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention ran smoothly and ended up successfully. The Parties to the Bern Convention hold constructive and fruitful discussions which led to the adoption of decisions that will contribute to the conservation of wild flora and fauna in their natural habitats, and enhance and promote European co-operation in that field.

The Standing Committee addressed a number of issues, including:

- Implementing the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity: setting priorities for the Bern Convention,
- Financing the work of the Bern Convention,
- Improving the case-file system of the Bern Convention by proposing mediation,
- Request for amendment of Article 22 by Switzerland,
- European Codes of Conduct and Recommendations on Invasive Alien Species,
- Guidance on marine biodiversity and climate change and recommendations on Biodiversity and climate change,
- Large carnivores' populations in Europe recommendations,
- European Charter and recommendation on the Conservation of Fungi,
- Protected areas and Ecological networks: Progress report and draft resolution on Emerald sites,
- Illegal killing of birds, and
- Election of Chair, Vice-Chair and Bureau members.

At this Standing Committee meeting, the role and priorities of the Bern Convention in the implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 regionally, were identified and Parties agreed on the proposed strategic approach for future work and implementation of the Programme of Activities.

Another strategic issue discussed was how to ensure adequate financing and long-term financial stability financing for the Convention's activities in the future, as at present the Convention's budget consists of the Council of Europe contribution, which is decreasing; and of voluntary contributions from Parties. Parties to the Convention expressed different views on the proposed options tabled by the Advisory Group of selected experts on finance of the Convention, which was set up last year. It was decided the Advisory Group to further work with the Bureau of the Convention and the Chair of the Standing Committee. The Bureau will carefully analyse the opinions expressed by Parties at the Standing Committee meeting, taking into account the Council of Europe budgetary provisions for 2014-2015, and then submit a draft decision on budgetary matters to the next Standing Committee meeting. The Secretariat will consult Parties on their possible voluntary contributions and the form in which they prefer to receive financing requests.

Parties and observers expressed favourable views on the introduction of a system of mediation under the Convention. The Standing Committee adopted the Rules applicable to mediation, as amended, and instructed the Bureau to carefully follow-up expenditure related items to this new tool within the case-file system, and ensures its affordability.

The 32nd Standing Committee examined the Swiss proposal to amend Article 22 of the Bern Convention in order to allow Parties to enter certain reservations concerning the undertaking initially made in the context of the Convention, even after having signed the Convention or deposited its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. The Parties rejected the proposed amendment of Article 22 of the Convention.

The thematic recommendations discussed and adopted, will provide Parties with guidance on the actions needed towards preventing damage to and improving the conservation status of protected species and natural habitats. These recommendations are a major step forward in applying a coherent approach to biodiversity conservation across Europe particularly in addressing the issues of invasive alien species, biodiversity and climate change and large carnivores' populations. The Committee, recognising the significance of the draft European Charter and recommendation on the gathering of fungi and biodiversity, postponed their endorsement to the next Standing Committee meeting, in order to allow some time for further analysis.

The Committee highlighted the importance and the progress achieved in the establishment of the Emerald Network, and the harmonization with the Natura 2000 network so as to ensure network coherence and contribute to the achievement of the Aichi biodiversity targets. The Committee adopted a resolution focusing on the national designation of adopted Emerald sites and implementation of management, monitoring and reporting measures.

The Standing Committee invited Parties to express their interest in hosting the next Conference on Illegal killing of birds in Europe and to reply in written and within the deadlines to the questionnaires prepared by BirdLife International, for the reporting exercise.

Moreover, the Committee, in this meeting elected Mr Jan Plesník (Czech Republic) as Chair, Ms Snežana Prokic (Serbia) as Vice-Chair, Mr Øystein Størkersen (Norway), Ms Jana Durkošová (Slovak Republic) and Mr Jón Gunnar Ottósson (Iceland) as Bureau members.

The Presidency and the Commission would like to thank all delegates and experts, participating and actively engaging in preparation of the EU positions for this meeting, for their constructive collaboration and support which resulted in fruitful discussions and delivering common decisions that will contribute to biodiversity protection and conservation.