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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) (Strasbourg, France, 5-8 December 2017) - Report by the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex a report by the (former) Presidency and the Commission on the above subject.

**Outcome of the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)
(Strasbourg, France, 5-8 December 2017)**

- Report by the Presidency and the Commission -

The 37th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) took place between 5 and 8 December 2017 in Strasbourg, France.

The Standing Committee meeting was attended by about 100 participants, including 31 Parties and many non-Parties and non-Governmental organisations.

23 EU Member States participated (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom), as well as the European Commission.

The Standing Committee endorsed the proposal from Albania to list the endangered subspecies of the Eurasian lynx, the Balkan lynx (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*), in Appendix II to the Bern Convention as a strictly protected fauna species. The Standing Committee also noted that this was the first addition to the appendices in more than ten years.

The Standing Committee adopted six Resolutions and welcomed the reports and information documents compiled in preparation for its 37th meeting. In general, all of the EU proposals for amendments to draft Resolutions were accepted.

The Recommendation on mainstreaming a gender-equality perspective in the implementation of the Convention was welcomed, and it was noted that the Council of Europe, the international organisation hosting the Convention, is a leading international organisation in the promotion of gender equality.

There were three Recommendations under discussion on the topic of alien species. After several years of discussions, the Recommendation on the European Code of Conduct for Invasive Alien Trees was adopted during the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee. The Code of Conduct strongly supports the precautionary principle and the need to tackle emerging invasive alien species and promotes the use of native tree species. The Code of Conduct on International travel and Invasive Alien Species was also adopted. This was considered an important issue since the amount of tourists crossing international borders every year is increasing and the opportunities for them to serve as vectors for IAS are many. The third topic on invasive species was the Recommendation on the Control and Eradication of IAS on Islands, which was the main outcome of the workshop on experiences in control and eradication of invasive alien species on islands.

The outcome of the work by the Intergovernmental Task Force on illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) was the scoreboard for measuring progress in combating illegal killing of birds. The Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals were also encouraged to use the scoreboard. The 37th meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee approved a recommendation on the establishment of the scoreboard for measuring progress in combating illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds as a voluntary self-assessment tool.

The Standing Committee examined and adopted the Recommendation on biosafety measures for the prevention of the spread of amphibian and reptile species diseases. The urgent need for biosafety measures preventing the spread of infectious diseases of amphibians and reptiles was felt by the parties as many amphibian species have been lost in nature because of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* and other emerging diseases.

Other topics discussed during the week included climate change, eradication of ruddy duck, work done on the conservation of birds and amphibians and reptiles, and many tasks carried out on the Emerald Network, including the updated lists of candidate and adopted Emerald sites.

The Standing Committee stressed the importance of voluntary contributions for ensuring the smooth functioning of the Convention and invited parties to step up their efforts in providing financial support to the Convention. The programme of activities and budget for 2018-2019 was approved. The Standing Committee gave a mandate to the Bureau to monitor the budgetary difficulties of the Council of Europe and to seek solutions to possible shortages in the Convention budget, after the financial situation of the Council of Europe was clarified at the beginning of 2018.

The Standing Committee elected Mr Øystein Størkersen (Norway) as its Chair, Ms Jana Durksova (Slovak Republic) as Vice-Chair and Ms Merike Linnamägi (Estonia) and Ms Hasmik Ghalachyan (Armenia) as Bureau members, and it acknowledged the automatic election of the previous Chair, Mr Jan Plesník (Czech Republic), as the third Bureau member.

The Standing Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on 27-30 November 2018 in Strasbourg.
