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The fight against harm to the environment in the Black Sea

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1837 (2008)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined with interest Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1837 \(2008\)](#) on “The fight against harm to the environment in the Black Sea” and welcomes the interest shown by the Assembly in this question. It has brought the recommendation to the attention of the member states and forwarded it to several competent bodies for information and possible comments.²
2. The Committee of Ministers shares the Assembly's concern over the growing environmental degradation of the Black Sea, which is increasing the risks for the neighbouring populations. It also emphasises that no activity with negative transboundary environmental effects should be developed in relation to internationally protected areas, such as those protected under the Bern Convention and those to which the Council of Europe awarded its European Diploma of Protected Areas. It notes that the fragility of the Black Sea is due to it being almost entirely closed, to the extent that pollution control must form part of co-operation efforts made by the Danube basin countries.
3. In this context, the Committee of Ministers welcomes the co-operation structures and standard-setting framework existing in the Black Sea region and encourages the riparian countries to make full use of them in order to strengthen co-operation in environmental activities and risk reduction. It also notes that these states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine) are all Parties to the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), which provides an appropriate framework for improving policies for the prevention of technological accidents. Furthermore, five of the six states bordering on the Black Sea are Parties to the Bern Convention. The Committee of Ministers closely follows the work, including ongoing international expert evaluations, which is carried out by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (T-PVS), in particular regarding the implementation of its [Recommendation 111 \(2004\)](#) on the proposed navigable waterway through the Bystroe estuary (Danube Delta, Ukraine).
4. The Assembly is invited to take note of the comments of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Agreement and the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the recommendation, appended to the present reply.
5. The Committee of Ministers also wishes to draw attention to the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent, adopted by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) and addressed to the member states in Recommendation Rec(2002)1 of the Committee of Ministers. These principles attach full importance to the problems linked to sustainable development including in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, in particular in sections “IV. Principles of a planning policy for sustainable development in Europe”, “V. Spatial development measures for

1. adopted at the 1063rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (8 July 2009)

2. European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional/spatial planning (CEMAT); Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP); European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and Standing Committee of the Bern Convention – Group of Specialists on the European Diploma of Protected Areas (T-PVS/DE).



different types of European regions” and “VI. Strengthening of co-operation between the member states of the Council of Europe and participation of regions, municipalities and citizens”. It urges the member states to draw on these principles.

6. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to set up the Black Sea Euroregion (BSER) Association. It regards the Black Sea Euroregion as a useful framework for co-operation at local and regional level, which aims to complement existing international co-operation initiatives.

Appendix 1 – Comments by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) on Recommendation 1837 (2008)

After careful examination of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1837 (2008) at its meeting in Istanbul on 30 and 31 October 2008, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

1. Shares the concern of the Parliamentary Assembly on the growing environmental degradation of the Black Sea which is increasing the risks for its neighbouring populations;
2. Notes that the Black Sea is a closed water body very vulnerable to technological accidents such as oil spills from tankers or pollution incidents such as the one on the Tizsa and Danube rivers in the year 2000, in which a flood of toxic cyanide and heavy metals entered those rivers following the break of a mining dam;
3. Supports enhanced co-operation on environment and risk reduction activities in the states bordering the Black Sea, while noting that all those states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine) are all Parties to of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and that such a framework is an appropriate one to further develop prevention policies concerning technological accidents;
4. Notes, however, that other states (particularly those in the Danube catchment area) need to identify the sources of pollution and to collaborate to reduce the high discharge of pollutants that is a source of environmental and health risk for populations living around the Black Sea;
5. Encourages Parties to the Convention on the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992) to reinforce the activities of the Convention and to improve the implementation of obligations so as to reduce risks and pollution. Parties are also encouraged to establish appropriate synergies with the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution;
6. Calls all states involved in oil transport questions in the Black Sea to improve safety preventive measures and to fully comply with international regulations aimed at avoiding oil spills and minimise risks.

Appendix 2 – Comments of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on Recommendation 1837 (2008)

The Bern Convention's Standing Committee:

1. Shares the concern of the Parliamentary Assembly on the growing environmental degradation of the Black Sea and its warning about the “danger of becoming an unprecedented ecological disaster”;
2. Notes that five out of the six states bordering the Black Sea (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine) are Parties to the Bern Convention, and have also signed and ratified the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest, 1992), which provides the framework for the conservation of marine resources, together with the Russian Federation;
3. Agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly about the need to strengthen the Bucharest Convention in order to make it a more effective instrument of regional co-operation for environmental protection;
4. Stresses that due to the fragility of the Black Sea as an almost closed sea, the control of pollution should include co-operation efforts with the countries of the Danube River basin;
5. Notes the recommendation from the Parliamentary Assembly regarding the stopping of the Danube-Black Sea Navigation Route Project in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta, and recalls that the Standing Committee opened a case file against Ukraine for this project after adopting Recommendation 111 (2004) on the proposed navigable waterway through the Bystroe estuary (Danube Delta, Ukraine), whose implementation is still being monitored;
6. Recalls that the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve holds the Council of Europe's European Diploma of Protected Areas since 2003;
7. Invites the Parliamentary Assembly to continue collaborating with the Bern Convention on matters of common interest.