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The need to assess progress in the implementation of the Bern Convention

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1964 (2011)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken note of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1964 (2011) on "The need to assess progress in the implementation of the Bern Convention" and brought it to the attention of the governments of the member States. It has also forwarded this recommendation to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, whose comments are taken into account in the present reply.

2. Wild fauna and flora constitute a natural heritage of major interest which must be preserved and passed on to future generations. Beyond the preservation of remarkable heritage, the conservation and sustainable use of nature and biodiversity are an essential contribution for ensuring a safe environment for all and fostering sustainable development. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the co-operation efforts undertaken in this area by the States Parties to the Bern Convention and encourages them to make activities under the convention more visible internationally. It notes in particular the work carried out by the groups of experts set up by the Standing Committee under the Bern Convention to address specific threats and conservation requirements of different species, habitats, sites and processes, as well as to monitor the implementation of the Standing Committee's recommendations.

3. It informs the Assembly that co-operation with the European Union and the European Environment Agency has been stepped up in 2011 and is to be maintained, particularly for the harmonisation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, set up within the Bern Convention framework, with the Natura 2000 ecological network resulting from the European Union's Habitats and Birds Directives.

4. Furthermore, it recalls that the Bern Convention has concluded Memoranda of Co-operation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (in 2008) on the one hand and with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2010) on the other hand. These agreements are tools for promoting exchanges of information and experience regarding implementation of those institutions' respective work programmes. They also help to foster institutional and technical co-operation on issues of common concern such as protected areas and ecological networks, ecosystems services, invasive alien species, biological diversity and climate change.

5. The Bern Convention has played a pioneering role in environmental protection by encouraging co-operation among States, promoting legislative harmonisation and providing the Parties with the tools for implementation. The Committee of Ministers recognises the importance of efficient enforcement of environmental legislation, including the implementation of the Standing Committee's recommendations and also efforts aimed at communication, education and public awareness regarding the work of the Bern Convention.

6. It encourages the Russian Federation and the Republic of San Marino to consider signing and ratifying the Bern Convention.

1. Adopted at the 1129th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (7 December 2011).

7. In reply to the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation that the activities of the Bern Convention be made one of the priorities of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers reiterates that the core mission of the Council of Europe is to safeguard and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Committee of Ministers recalls its commitment towards the Bern Convention and encourages the Standing Committee and its groups of experts to continue their work for the protection and sustainable use of biological biodiversity, in order to ensure a safe environment for all. In this perspective, the Standing Committee will have to take account of the current context of refocusing of activities and resources. For this reason, the Committee of Ministers supports that analysis is strengthened of the ways of ensuring a sustainable and meaningful future for the work of the Bern Convention.