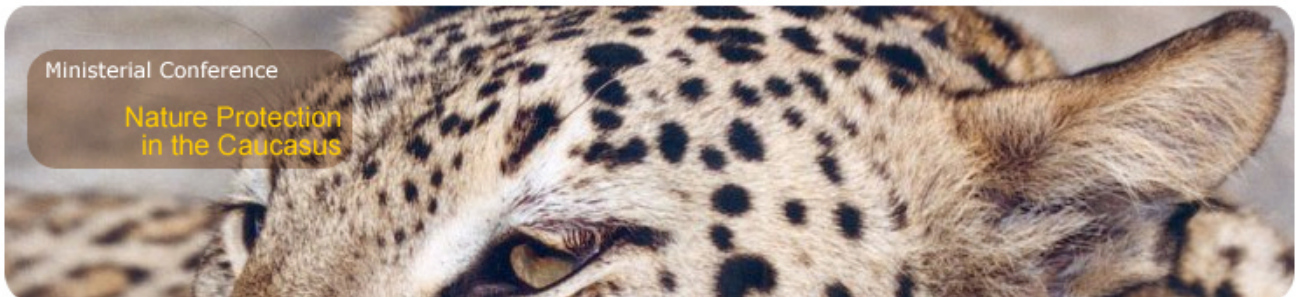


Ministerial Conference: Nature Protection in the Caucasus
Promoting Transboundary Cooperation for CBD Implementation
9-11 March 2006, Berlin – Germany



Jan Willem Snee, Chair of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts

**Ministerial Conference Nature Protection in the Caucasus
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Jan Willem Sneep

**Chair of the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological
Network (PEEN) of the Council of Europe**

Introduction

First of all I like to thank the organizers to give me the possibility to represent the Council of Europe in this important Caucasus Ministerial Conference.

I am very impressed by the extra ordinary rich biodiversity Caucasus region.

I think that the governments concerned and the people living in the Caucasus region should be very proud on their rich biodiversity region.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the continent's oldest political organisation founded in 1949. The council was set up to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members. (Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe).

Since November 1990 the accession of 21 countries of Central and Eastern Europe has given the Council of Europe a genuine pan-European dimension, so that it is now the organisation that represents Greater Europe.

The Council of Europe has been concerned with environment and nature conservation for almost 40 years.

Its activities contribute to protect the environment in a perspective of sustainable development through:

- Implementation of global environmental policies at Pan-European Level
- Creation of platforms of dialogue
- Standard-setting activities
- Precise policy development projects
- Set up technical networks
- Research and analysis
- Capacity building
- Awareness

All activities take place at intergovernmental level, parliamentary level and local and regional authorities level.

Activities of the Council of Europe in the framework of biodiversity and landscape conservation

* Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

* Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (CoE and UNEP)

* Three networks to protect nature:

- Emerald Network
- Pan-European Ecological Network
- European Diploma for Protected Areas

* European Landscape Convention

* European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT)

Bern Convention

The Bern Convention was adopted and signed in Bern (Switzerland) in September 1979 and entered into force on 1st June 1982.

The Convention aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats and promote cooperation among states on nature conservation matters.

Co-ordinated by a Standing Committee (Conference of Parties) that meets every year.

The results are:

- More than 100 Recommendations and 7 resolutions on various problems concerning implementation in the states
- Monitoring of endangered European biodiversity (experts groups)
- Action Plans for threatened species
- Monitoring of conflict areas where the Convention may not be respected (opening of over 80 file cases, 20 on the spot appraisals)

One of the main objectives of the Bern Convention is the development of the EMERALD NETWORK

Emerald Network is a Pan-European network of Areas of Special Interest Conservation

The objectives of the Emerald Network are: harmonisation of policies on protected areas and helping accession states to adapt ecological networks to European Union requirements

The aim of the Emerald Network is to setting up a pilot database of Areas of Special Interest

A pilot project programme was launched in 1999. Since 1999 many pilot projects are successfully implemented in 28 European countries. The Emerald Network has been launched for example in Georgia (2002), and in Azerbaijan (2005). These two pilot projects have been successfully implemented in this framework and the work for identifying the sites is going on in these countries.

The Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus (ECP) has coincident objectives with the Emerald Network concerning the protection of habitats and therefore contributes to the aims of the work of the Council of Europe in this region.

Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

In 1995 the third Ministerial Conference “An Environment for Europe” in Sofia endorsed the Pan European Biological Diversity and Landscape Strategy (PEBLDS)

Up to 54 European countries endorsed the action to the setting up of the Pan-European Ecological Network as a part of their programme of work of protected areas.

It was agreed to establish this ecological network within a period of 20 years

The PEBLDS aims to protect the biological and landscape diversity in Europe, in a perspective of sustainable development.

PEBLDS is the European Forum to implement the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). It is a framework to strengthen the initiatives and to develop co-ordinating actions and synergies.

Decision making body is the Council for the Strategy and the Joint Secretariat is the Council of Europe and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

So, I said the main proposal in 1995 was the setting up of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN). The objectives of PEEN are:

- Seeks to conserve ecosystems, habitats species, their genetic diversity and landscapes of European importance
- It intends to link core areas physically through corridors and buffer zones, including restoration areas where needed in whole Europe
- It is a tool for conciliation of socio-economic activities and their preservation of biological and landscape diversity

Foundations of the PEEN will be national and regional networks and where possible, crossing-borders networks.

In 2003 the 5th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” agreed to halt the loss of biodiversity at all levels by 2010 (**Kyiv Resolution**).

The follow-up of this Kyiv Ministerial Resolution on Biodiversity is the adoption of an Action Plan for PEEN by the PEBLDS Council at the 3rd intergovernmental Conference Biodiversity in Europe in Madrid in 2002.

This Action Plan is aiming to

- Involve in the establishment of PEEN the conventions and international instruments (EU Natura 2000, Bern Convention, Emerald Network, Ramsar Convention, Bonn Convention, World Heritage Convention, European Diploma sites etc)
- Conserve all core areas by 2008
- Ensure that the PEEN will give guidance by 2008 to major national, regional and international land use and planning policies
- Identification of the PEEN by 2006 in all States of the Pan-European Region (core areas, restoration areas, corridors and bufferzones) and establishment of coherent maps
- Enhance institutional support for the implementation of PEEN

Implementation is the keyword of the PEEN process now. In order to guide the development of PEEN an intergovernmental Pan-European Committee of Experts for the Development of the PEEN was established by the PEBLDS Council.

This Committee is also working as a forum for the presentation of the various initiatives developed in Europe in the field of connectivity programmes

The Committee is also a place where national, transboundary and international experiences in this field can be exchanged.

So far, the priority for the Council of Europe is the development of the PEEN and the Emerald Network, together with the implementation of sustainable use of the territory, integrating also the aspects of preservation of the cultural heritage and the human rights.

The most important challenge for the Council of Europe’s environmental activities and for the PEBLDS process in the Caucasus region is the complete setting up of the Emerald Network and the development of national ecological networks contributing to the establishment of PEEN in the whole region.

So was said, the Council of Europe is working at political level. Its activities are implemented in cooperation with the ministries. The civil society is represented by NGOs which are invited to attend the specialised workshops for the implementation of the Emerald Network and the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN). These activities are also brought to the attention of the parliamentarians and the local and regional authorities, through the appropriate Council of Europe's institutions: the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

A ministerial report on the implementation of PEEN in Europe is in preparation. This report will be composed of a technical and a political report and will be presented at the Ministerial Conference to be held in Belgrado in 2007 and is also intended to be presented at the CBD level.

It is good to share the experiences and knowledge from different European regions and to learn of each other and to stimulate each other to go on with our nature conservation activities.

The ministerial process of PEBLDS could possibly offer a good framework for developing the cooperation among international institutions and the donors. The ECP and the Regional Council would usefully be represented in the PEBLDS meetings and in the "Environment for Europe" ministerial conferences, in order to present the projects and get international support for them.

Your success in the field of biodiversity conservation (implementation of the PEEN concept) is the success of all Europeans, it s our Pan-European success.

Thank you for your attention