



## LARNACA DECLARATION

The European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Game Fund of Cyprus (Ministry of Interior) in the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern, 1979), was held in Larnaca, Cyprus from 6 to 8 July 2011. The event was attended by 100 participants representing various stakeholders, including Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention, international organizations, national and local authorities, enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations, scientific and research bodies, tourism industry, police authorities and mass-media.

Recognising that many birds species in Europe and worldwide are declining rapidly and that, for this reason, governments have adopted various measures to help birds, the Conference participants agreed that measures to tackle illegal killing are urgently required.

Despite efforts by many governmental authorities, illegal taking and trading in wild birds is still a serious pan-European problem with clear regional patterns, having a considerable negative impact on biodiversity across the continent. In some European countries, the driver for such activities is mainly direct or indirect financial profit for individuals or organised crime, generating illegal (untaxed) benefits not related to basic survival needs. Considering the multiple dimensions of illegal killing, trapping and trading of birds in Europe, such as the ecological/environmental, legal, economic, social and political aspects, a combination of measures, policies and strategies is necessary to solve the problem. These measures should sensitively combine law enforcement (including advocacy and judicial processes, effective investigative agencies, exemplary punishment and adequate court judgments), education and awareness of the general public and of specific target groups (eg: hunters, farmers, children and youth, etc.) and securing political support mostly by strengthening the operational capacity of law enforcement agencies or bodies.

The participants in the European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds call therefore on responsible stakeholders, governments, local communities, law enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations to unequivocally condemn all forms of illegal taking and trading in wild birds, and to pledge a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, and a full and proactive role in fighting against this illegal activity, which represents a serious threat to biodiversity, damaging nature as well as human society. More detailed recommendations will be submitted to the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to be held in Strasbourg on 29 November – 2 December 2011 for possible adoption.

They include, inter alia: i. The need to strengthen enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain through appropriate targeting, scientific and technical support and cooperation ; ii. The need to recognize the significance of the illegal taking and trade of birds as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favorable status of bird populations and a damage to the conservation actions undertaken by the Parties with adverse impacts on the conservation, legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors; and iii. The need to develop, finance and support national communication strategies promoting dialogue between relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

At the same time, the participants in the Larnaca Conference express their warm thanks to the Cyprus authorities for their generous hospitality.

*Done in Larnaca, Cyprus, 7th July 2011*