

Ms Mariam SULKHANISHVILI

Chief specialist at the Biodiversity Division
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
Protection
6 Gulua Street
0114 TBILISI / Georgia

Strasbourg, 13 November 2017

Subject: Complaint No. 2016/9 - Possible threat to “Svaneti 1” Candidate Emerald Site (GE000012) from Nenskra Hydro Power Plant development (Georgia)

Dear Ms Sulkhaniashvili,

The Bureau of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention met in Strasbourg on 18 September 2017 and took due note of all reports and additional studies that had been submitted for its attention. On the basis of these reports the complaint has now been moved to the category of complaints on standby.

The Bureau recognised that the site comprises some of the most pristine nature areas in Georgia and expressed again its concern over the fact that the area of the Svaneti 1 Candidate Emerald site has been drastically reduced, while noting the national authorities' efforts in adding new areas to the national Emerald Network in February 2017.

The Bureau decided that there is a strong need to receive further clarification on the exact species and habitats present in the area, and on how the exclusion of some parts of the candidate site will impact the overall sufficiency of the Emerald Network. The Bureau reminded national authorities of its decision from March 2017 that species and habitats evaluated during the first Emerald Biogeographical Seminar in May 2015 will have to be re-evaluated at the upcoming Emerald Biogeographical Seminar for the South Caucasus, taking place on 8-9 November 2017 in Tbilisi.

The final conclusions on the Georgian Emerald Network sufficiency to protect the habitats and species listed in Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998), resulting from the Seminar, are expected to be ready by the end of 2017. These will be communicated to the Bureau, to support the development of a recommendation on the case.

The Bureau also wished to draw the attention of national authorities to the possibility of organising an on-the-spot assessment to the area in 2018, after the November 2017 Seminar in Tbilisi.

The case will be discussed again at the next meeting of the Bureau in March 2018. I would be grateful to receive any information your authorities deem relevant on the case, in view of the discussions of the Bureau, in electronic WORD format, by 12th February 2018.

If the Complainant deems it necessary to send an updated report to the Bureau, the same reporting deadline will apply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'I' and 'O' followed by a flourish.

Iva OBRETENOVA
Secretary of the Bern Convention
Head of the Biodiversity Unit

CC: Mr David CHIPASHVILI - Association Green Alternative – Complainant
Mr Carl AMIRGULASHVILI - Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources
Mr Mikko VENERMO – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development