

**Ms Marina MIŠKOVIĆ-SPAHIĆ**  
Ministry of Sustainable Development and  
Tourism  
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81000 PODGORICA  
Montenegro

Strasbourg, 18 August 2016

**Subject: Complaint No. 2016/4: Development of a commercial project in Skadar Lake National Park and candidate Emerald site (Montenegro)**

Dear Ms Spahić,

In June 2016 the Secretariat of the Bern Convention received a complaint submitted by an informal citizens group from Virpazar (complainant), alleging a presumed breach of the Convention by Montenegro. According to the complaint (enclosed), the breach of articles 4 and 9 would result from the development of a housing and commercial project known as "Porto Skadar Lake" in zone III of the Skadar Lake National Park.

The complainant argues that the project constitutes an important threat to the biodiversity of the Park, home to numerous bat, invertebrate, amphibians and other species listed under Appendix I and II of the Convention, including the Nearly Threatened *Lutra Lutra* and many endemic species. It appears that the Porto Skadar Lake is planned to include 60 villas, 50 apartments and hotel accommodation for up to 600 people, including recreational facilities such as swimming pools and a port for 30 boats, but also upgrading of related infrastructure such as roads.

The complainant informs that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had been conducted ahead of the granting of a building permit for Porto Skadar Lake by the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism, but claims that no biodiversity study was completed. It is further stressed that the specific area concerned by the construction has never been studied in detail and therefore it is unknown what species are going to be directly affected and how exactly.

The complainant also raises concerns about the way the Draft Spatial Plan of Special Purpose Skadar Lake is currently being developed and the large opportunities it leaves for the development of big tourist infrastructures. In addition, the complainant considers that no effective systems are put in place by the authorities to fight and control illegal activities (constructions, fishing, deforestation, etc.) in Skadar Lake National Park.

As you know, Skadar Lake National Park is an Emerald candidate site (ME0000003) and is subject to Recommendation No. 157 (2011) of the Standing Committee on the status of candidate Emerald sites and guidelines on the criteria for their nomination. As foreseen in

that Recommendation, national authorities should “take the necessary protection and conservation measures in order to maintain the ecological characteristics of the candidate Emerald sites”, until their full inclusion in the Emerald Network.

In the light of the above, I would be grateful if you could send us the position of your authorities regarding the concerns raised by the complaint, including detailed information on:

1. the state of approval and development of the Porto Skadar Lake project;
2. whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed before granting a building permit for Porto Skadar Lake project;
3. whether this eventual EIA included a biodiversity study and what were its basis and conclusions;
4. what is the state of adoption of the Spatial Plan of Skadar Lake National Park and did its development include a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment;
5. any other information you could consider relevant on the measures undertaken to implement Recommendation No. 157 (2011) with regards to Skadar Lake candidate Emerald site and
6. your authorities' plans for proposing the candidate Emerald site Skadar Lake for official adoption as Emerald site at the upcoming 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

I would be grateful to receive the information mentioned above, in a maximum 5-pages report in electronic **Word format**, by **30 September 2016**.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,



Iva OBRETENOVA  
Secretary of the Bern Convention

Cc. Mr Milan Knezevic – informal citizens group from Virpazar  
Mr Tobias Salathe - Ramsar