



HOUSE OF LORDS
European Union Committee

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25 November 2020

Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith
Minister for Pacific and the Environment
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Block
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear Zac,

EM I2020/20: Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the fortieth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Nature Habitats (Bern Convention)

Thank you for your Explanatory Memorandum (EM) on the above Proposal, which was considered by our Environment Sub-Committee on 25 November 2020.

We were concerned to hear about the significant reductions to the Bern Convention's funding over the last decade. We note that this issue is arising in the context of the UK's newly-global outlook after leaving the EU, and as international (rather than EU) agreements become more important both in shaping the UK's policy and as a forum for the UK's diplomatic advocacy. At the same time, the Government has put forward 'nature' as one of its priorities for COP26, and the biodiversity COP is due to take place next year. In that context, this important Convention needs to be maintained, and the UK should be a leader in making sure that it is properly financed.

We note that you are of the view that both of the funding proposals put forward need further clarity; but that as of 2 November you had not reached a view on what policy position the UK would take at the Standing Committee meeting. After the meeting has taken place, please update us on what position the UK took, and what decision was ultimately reached.

Are you taking any action to encourage the Council of Europe to increase its funding – or rather to reverse the decrease in its funding – of the Convention?

In addition, what assessment have you made of the impact of the reduced funding on the scale and effectiveness of the Bern Convention's activities? And what will be done in the short term,

before a new funding model is established, to ensure that the Convention's work continues and remains effective?

The Committee continues to take an active interest in this matter, and we look forward to a response by 11 December.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Jessica Mulley, Clerk to the Commons Committee; Les Saunders and Donald Harris in the Cabinet Office; and John Leach, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lord Kinnoull". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee