

DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS, HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

Ms Klodiana MARIKA
Director
Directorate of Development
Programmes on Environment
Ministry of Tourism and
Environment
Boulevard "Deshmoret e Kornbit",
No.1
100 I Tirana, Albania

Strasbourg, 15 July 2026

Subject: Complaint No. 2016/05, Open File, Albania: Presumed negative impact of developments on the Vjosa river including hydro-power plant and Vlora International Airport

Dear Ms Marika,

At its second ordinary meeting of 2026 on 17-18 June, the Bureau of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention decided to examine the recent developments that have occurred in the Vjosa-Narta Emerald candidate site, which is also the subject of the above-mentioned complaint, in light of the most recent reports submitted by the authorities and the complainant as well as notifications of concern received from European citizens.

Decision: The Bureau welcomed the ongoing dialogue with Albanian national authorities. The Bureau considered information received on new tourism development projects within the area of the Vjosa-Narta Emerald candidate site and welcomed the suspension of construction works at the site and the commitment of the Albanian authorities to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment. However, it regretted that the authorities had not provided comprehensive information on the Vjosa Narta Emerald candidate site and had not submitted yet an updated Standard Data Form (SDF) for the Emerald sites in Albania.

The Bureau also highlighted the existing legal framework applicable to Emerald candidate sites and recalled the obligation to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment for projects that may have significant effects on such sites, including those located outside their boundaries. It also requested the authorities to consider

the cumulative impact of the different projects, including the Vjosa airport and the new projects, when conducting the Environmental Impact Assessment.

The Bureau also noted with concern that the approach taken by the Albanian authorities could pose similar risks to other Emerald candidate sites in the country.

The Bureau requested the Albanian authorities to provide additional and more detailed information ahead of its September meeting (22–24 September), particularly regarding the permits issued and the procedural steps undertaken. It also requested a map of national protected areas showing the overlap between the protected areas and Emerald candidate sites, together with the precise locations of the proposed development projects. The Bureau also requested the Albanian authorities to provide feedback on the support offered by the Bern Convention Secretariat in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the existing and new projects affecting the Vjosa Narta Emerald candidate site. Furthermore, the Bureau encouraged close cooperation and constructive dialogue between the Bern Convention Secretariat and the Albanian authorities, particularly with regard to the preparation of a new SDF for the Emerald Network in Albania.

The Bureau also decided to defer its decision on the organisation of an on-the-spot appraisal until its next meeting in September.

Furthermore, I would like to recall the decision taken by the Standing Committee at its 45th meeting, held in December 2025:

The Standing Committee:

Thanked the Complainant for the updated report submitted in November ahead of the Standing Committee and both parties for their presentations on the implementation of [Recommendation No. 219 \(2023\)](#).

Highlighted the outstanding importance of the Vjosa river and its estuary, one of the best-preserved fluvial ecosystems in the entire Mediterranean Sea basin, which is currently at risk of being irreversibly damaged by human activities in this area, including Vlora International Airport.

Regretted that point 1 of [Recommendation No. 219 \(2023\)](#) on the suspension of the construction of Vlora airport to conduct an appropriate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was disregarded and expressed again its strong regret that point 1 of [Recommendation No. 219 \(2023\)](#), requesting the suspension of construction of the Vlora International Airport pending the completion of a new and sufficient Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and appropriate assessment, was not implemented, and noted with concern that no such new EIA has been presented to date, despite repeated calls from the Bureau and the Standing Committee.

Requested the Government to ensure full compliance with the Bern Convention, including Articles 3 and 4, and underlined that the any restoration, mitigation or offsetting measures as well as possible operation of the Airport must be based on, and follow, a comprehensive and legally compliant EIA, addressing cumulative impacts on habitats and species of concern in the Vjosa–Narta area.

Called for increased cooperation between the Government and civil society organisations, in particular EcoAlbania and PPNEA.

Requested the Government to consider holding an On-the-site Appraisal and inform the Bureau of the feasibility in its next report.

Noted its understanding that adherence to [Recommendation No. 219 \(2023\)](#) will also satisfy key EU accession requirements, helping Albania's European integration prospects and called on the Government to fully implement it.

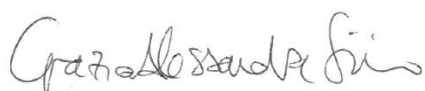
The Standing Committee announced that **the file remains open** and, due to the urgency of the matter, requested both parties to provide updates for the **Autumn Bureau meeting in 2026**.

I would like to invite the authorities to send a progress report including the information requested in both above-mentioned decisions and any other relevant updates no later than **15 August 2026, to be addressed at the autumn meeting of the Bureau**.

Case-file reports should contain the information requested by the Standing Committee or its Bureau and be as concise as possible. The report should be submitted in electronic WORD format and strictly kept to a maximum of 6 pages in total, including an abstract of approximately 2700 characters (with spaces), which may be included in a publicly available summary document. If you require additional space or wish to attach photographs or other heavy media, please send them as a separate annex to the report. Wherever possible, provide a secure link to a Cloud Drive for ease of access.

On behalf of the Standing Committee and the Bureau, I would like to thank you for your ongoing cooperation with the Bern Convention and for your work in protecting species and habitats.

Yours sincerely,



Grazia Alessandra Siino
Secretary of the Bern Convention

Cc: Permanent Representation of Albania to the Council of Europe;
Mr Olsi Nika, EcoAlbania (Co-Complainant);
Mr Xherri Xhemal et Mr Zydjon VORPSI, PPNEA (Co-Complainant);
Mr Sergey Dereliev, AEWA;
Mr Ivan Ramirez, CMS;
Ms Telma BANCO-WUSNCH and Mr Frank VASSEN, European Commission
Focal Points to the Bern Convention.