CASE STUDY- DEVELOPMENT IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA

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Presentation structure

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6. Position of Civil Society
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1. Environmental Situation in Cyprus

- 42% of Cyprus is covered by forests or woodland
- 40 Sites of Community Importance
- 30 Special Protection Areas
- Increase in average temperature and a decrease in average annual rainfall over the last 100 years
- 56.7% of the island is in critical condition of desertification
- 42.6% of the island is in sensitive condition of desertification
2. Environmental importance of Akamas Peninsula

- Hosts diverse, natural landscapes (diverse features of vegetation, wildlife, geology)
- Covers a total area of 7.762 hectares
- 650 native flora taxa (40% of the total flora)
- 43 endemic plants (30% of the total number of the endemics of the island)
3. National and European legislation (1/2)

- Included in the "Natura 2000" network in 2011
- Site of Community Importance (SCI) (CY4000010)
- Special Protection Area (SPA) (CY4000023)
- Covers a total area (SCI and SPA) of 17.914 hectares, of which 44% is marine and 56% is terrestrial
- Under National Forest Law 25(I)/2012
3. National and European legislation (2/2)

- Protected Nature Area (Marine Reserve) under the provisions of the Fisheries Law (CAP 135) and Regulations (273/90)
- Regulated from the Policy Statement for Rural Development in accordance with the Law on Town Planning and Land Use (Article 34A).
4. Development in Akamas area (1/5)

- The area attracts development from the private sector and local plot owners due to its natural beauty.
- Many holiday houses and hotels already exist close to the Akamas area.
4. Development in Akamas area (2/5)

- Department of Environment (DE) granted permission for the development of six houses with swimming pools adjacent to an area defined as "Natura 2000".
- Area is the habitat of the critically endangered species Mediterranean monk seal (Monachus monachus), which is protected by European and National legislation.
- Preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment report as well as the opinions of related Governmental Agencies were taken into account.
- Permission for the development of a hotel, 31 villas and 30 houses with swimming pools was pending.
- Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR) suggested the DE should assess cumulatively the impact of all actual and planned developments on the area through a single Environmental Impact Assessment report.
4. Development in Akamas area (3/5)

- Intervention on the local coastal area, which was reformed as a beach available to the public.
- A non-indigenous invasive flora species was planted in the area where endangered local rare species grow.
- None of the above was taken into consideration during the preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment report.
- One of the developments was progressing without having permission from the Town Planning and Housing Department.
- Despite the above issues, the DE granted permission to all the pending developments, with most of them taking place 20 meters away from the habitat of the monk seal.
4. Development in Akamas area (4/5)
4. Development in Akamas area (5/5)
5. Position of Private and Public Sector

- Private Sector is in favor of the development of the area either through the building of hotels, villas or golf resorts.
- The Public Sector recognizes:
  - the importance of the Environment and Environmental governance
  - sustainable development of the economy and the society of Cyprus
  - government policies should integrate environmental protection and financial growth
  - Overall supports development in the area, given that National and European legislation is followed.
6. Position of civil society

• Thinks of Akamas peninsula as a national treasure
• Strongly oppose to any development in the area. The same applies to non governmental organizations.
• Massive protests outside the House of the Parliament and at the development area.
• Negative perception of the development in all kinds of media (television, newspapers, social media).
7. Position of the Audit Office of the Republic of Cyprus

- Agree with DFMR about a single Environmental Impact Assessment report for all the developments.
- Pointed to the relevant Departments all the illegal interventions in the area and the weaknesses/inaccuracies of the Environmental Impact Assessment report.
- Informed the DE and the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus that the second permission for developments was given before the DE gets advised by the Environmental Committee Report, as the national legislation requires. Consequently we requested for the permission to be withdrawn.
7. Lessons learned

- Environmental governance is of great importance, nonetheless it is considered a sensitive area. Often it causes conflict between the civil society and the public and private sector. A balance has to be found that maximises the satisfaction of all three stakeholders.
- Environmental Impact Assessment reports may have inaccuracies. Many individual small scale assessments may not represent the true image of a single large scale assessment.
- Pressure from private sector and civil society may cause public sector departments to rush in decision making, skipping steps required by legislation.
Thank you for your attention!

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