

STATEMENT

Task Force for Implementation of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction
Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP Task Force)
Seventh Meeting

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Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

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Mrs. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and honor for me to address you here on behalf of the UNEP-UNDP-OSCE Environment and Security Initiative (short EnvSec).

The Environment and Security Initiative was launched in 2002 by the three organizations. It focuses on the link between environmental risks and pressures, or competitions over natural resources, and national security concerns.

Besides our EnvSec activities in Central Asia and Caucasus, for obvious reasons, the South East European (SEE) region was chosen as a pilot region of the initiative, and as a natural choice is covering the countries of the REReP region. The EnvSec cooperation in SEE is firmly built on past and ongoing cooperation with the REC, and as I understand the association of the REC to the EnvSec Initiative is under discussion, and activities in the region could be implemented in cooperation with the REC.

In its first Phase, the EnvSec Initiative identified several environmental hotspots that become national security concerns when they are combined with high population density or urbanisation, socio-economic pressures, weak governance structures and tensions between communities.

At the recently regional workshop held in Skopje, the strategic directions for Phase II of the initiative were set out, which will focus on the priority areas of:

- Management of and reduction of transboundary risks of hazardous activities, and in particular management and mitigation of transboundary risks of mining operations, both obsolete and operating or new ones;
- Improved cooperation for the management of transboundary natural resources.

The Skopje Workshop endorsed an Environment and security strategy, which will include a political component, as well as capacity building and the drawing up of and support to an investment portfolio for priority action.

The project portfolio includes:

- Reduction of the EnvSec risks from mining in SEE;
- Cross-border environmental monitoring and early warning systems;
- Transboundary natural resources, such as: Tisza and Sava rivers, Prespa lake and mountain ecosystems.

Several projects are ongoing and partly funded, an amount of USD 1.000.000 will be required from donor sources to complete the Phase II of the initiative in this region.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recently joined the EnvSec Initiative as an associate partner. Several NATO (science for peace) projects are now being embedded into EnvSec in SEE.

The next Environmental Ministers Conference "Environment for Europe" will be held in Belgrade in 2007, and therefore will be not only of major pan-European importance, but also of significance of the region. Tangible outputs of the EnvSec Initiative culminating at the Belgrade Conference could include a Charter on EnvSec, a regional programme on the reduction of mining risks, as well as a SEE network of mountain protected areas.

We are hopeful and confident that the EnvSec Initiative will meet the support of the next phase of the REReP programme by helping to address these very specific concerns in the REReP framework. This present meeting should be a further step in reaching the goals of the EnvSec Initiative, and it is hoped we hope that other agencies will soon join the UNDP, UNEP and OSCE in this effort striving for a clean, safe and prosperous region.

The recently established UNEP Office in Vienna (besides its function as the Interim Secretariat of the well-known Carpathian Convention) acts as the EnvSec Focal Point for SEE. We remain available for all support and information you might require.