

**REREP REGIONAL MEETING
"TOWARDS NATURA 2000 IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE"**

**29TH OF MAY 2009
SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

CONCLUSIONS

Background

The meeting "Towards Natura 2000 in South Eastern Europe" was organized by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) under the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) funded by the European Commission – CARDS Regional. It was held on the 29th of May 2009 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation and with the kind hosting of Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

Representatives of Ministries and responsible institutions for environment and nature protection from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Montenegro and Serbia, together with participants of international and non-governmental organizations, gathered in Sarajevo to discuss progress made in the region on issues related to nature conservation and Natura 2000. Ways for streamlining cooperation and coordination, particularly in cross-border context, for the representatives of different authorities and stakeholders in the candidate and potential candidate countries in SEE were discussed. Meeting also provided platform for sharing information on EU biodiversity and Natura 2000 policy and implementation experiences across EU27, as well as for sharing experience and lessons learned on setting and management of Natura 2000 and other ecological networks.

Major challenges and common priorities in SEE region

Country representatives acknowledged related discussions initiated at the regional workshop "Approximation with EU Nature Protection Legislation in South Eastern Europe", regarding legal aspects of designation and management of natural sites of NATURA 2000 and EMERALD networks in candidate and potential candidate countries. Regional workshop was held in June, 2008 in Babe, Serbia as part of the REReP Task II "Assistance in Environmental Law Drafting in South Eastern Europe"¹.

Country representatives confirmed their commitment to work towards implementation of the national priorities listed in May 2008 in the Joint Statement² of the Big Win Initiative³ for biodiversity conservation in South Eastern Europe and support to Dinaric Arc Initiative (DAI)⁴ with its broad framework of cooperation.

¹ <http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/LawDrafting/Activities-topic-workshops.html>

² Joint Statement of representatives of governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, May 2008: http://www.cbddinaricarc.com/pdf/Annex_1-3.pdf

³ The Dinaric Arc Ecoregion Project: <http://www.cbddinaricarc.com/content/view/28/41/>

⁴ Dinaric Arc Initiative Partners: WWF, UNESCO-BRESCE, IUCN, UNDP, UNEP, Council of Europe, FAO, Euronatur, SNV, ECNC, REC

Major challenges in SEE region

Country representatives further highlighted the following major challenges and common priorities in the region, respecting the different progress paths among the countries⁵:

- Lack of bylaws and weak implementation of existing laws on protected areas;
- Certain segments of legislative framework on nature conservation not completely in line with EU directives in some cases;
- Absence of national strategies and lack of clear priorities in many SEE countries;
- Inter-sectoral cooperation and communication still to be improved (e.g. infrastructure, water, climate change);
- Insufficient level of project documentation, monitoring and data;
- Management of protected areas;
- Institutional capacity still weak
 - insufficient capacities in human resources,
 - limited financial assets;
- Lack of public awareness and communication with general public to provide appropriate information about future Natura 2000;
- Improvement of effective cooperation between institutions and NGOs;
- Expanding regional cooperation and exchange of experience with countries of EU and with EC;
- Programming future funding framework.

Common priorities in SEE region

- Creation of an effective policy with clear priorities towards biodiversity protection;
- Continuation of work on legal drafting and/or implementation of laws and bylaws on nature conservation coherent with EU Directives and Regulations;
- Adoption of National Strategies and Action Plans on Biodiversity with clarification of competencies and further improvement of cooperation and information exchange;
- Translation of SEENET into National Ecological Networks;
- Establishment/improvement of monitoring system of species and habitat types for preparation for Natura 2000 sites;
- Further detailed research and development of databases;
- Development/finalization of selection of Natura 2000 sites;
- Development of a guide for application of Emerald/Natura 2000 and preparation of management plans of protected areas;
- Capacity building of structures included in Natura 2000 processes;
- Further efforts in communication to wide stakeholder groups and preparation of education materials (posters, CDs, leaflets, brochures);
- Continuity with regional cooperation and exchange of information;
- Building up on past/ongoing cross-border programmes/projects (e.g. SDC Balkan transboundary projects - further support to the forums established within the project/transboundary sites);
- Joint preparation of proposals for IPA multi-beneficiary programme.

⁵ Specific country presentations were delivered on the meeting and are available at:
http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/regional_meetings/regional_meeting_natura_2000/index.html

Potential country specific cross-border future priorities

Considering major challenges and common priorities in SEE region as described above, country representatives specifically highlighted the following potential cross-border future priorities:

- Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244):
 - Trans-boundary Park of Alps
 - Bjeshket e Nemuna – Prokletije
 - Mali Sharr – Korabi
- Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:
 - National Park Jablanica
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia:
 - Protection of Neretva delta
 - Una regional park on preventive protection
 - Neretva and Trebisnjica management project
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia:
 - Establishment of a Transboundary Protected Area (Biosphere Reserve) encompassing NP Tara
 - Sutjeska NP enlargement through Tara Canyon
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria:
 - Osogovo project
- Kosovo (UNSCR 1244):
 - Sustaining Rural Communities and their traditional landscapes through Environmental Governance in Transboundary Protected Areas (TBPA) of the Dinaric Arc.

Meeting materials, including the agenda, all delivered presentations and full list of participants are available at the REReP Secretariat web page:

http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/regional_meetings/regional_meeting_natura_2000/index.html