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**(DRAFT)**

**Assessment on the current situation and  
needs of cooperation on the protection and  
sustainable development of mountain  
regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe  
(Balkans)**

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**BFSD - Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development**  
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## **Executive Summary**

Over the last twenty years the countries of the South Eastern Europe (Balkans) except Greece, have experienced periods of high instability, war, economic crisis and transition towards a market economy and EU integration. While Greece and Slovenia are full EU members, Bulgaria and Romania will join EU in 2007, Croatia is currently negotiating its accession, Macedonia got EU candidate status in 2005, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Albania are still among the least developed countries in Europe. The region is under strong economic development pressure, and the need to generate income and improve the living standards of the population is leading to the growing exploitation of natural resources. Environmental policies and institutions have suffered a long period of eclipse and are now being rebuilt, although with varying results. Despite many efforts during the past, the loss of biodiversity has continued as development challenge is both threat and an opportunity to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the South East Europe (Balkans). Among the major current and future threats are: habitat fragmentation or destruction, over-harvesting, illegal logging, deforestation, inappropriate management methods, unregulated development, unregulated exploitation of natural resources, etc.

The Balkan mountains stretch across South Eastern Europe, crossing 8 national borders, as well as the future boundary of the EU. The high mountain ranges or massifs of South Eastern Europe (Balkans) are characterized by a great deal of biological diversity. They are most biologically diverse mountains in Europe, with particularly high numbers of relic and endemic species, habitat of a remarkable flora and fauna, multitude of people and rich conglomerate of cultures and religions. The chain includes most extensive beech forests in Europe (Stara Planina – Bulgaria) and very rich avifauna recognised by Bird Life International as one of the most important regions in Europe. Global biological diversity is increasingly threatened according to a report released during the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP8), held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil; the South East European (Balkan) mountains are no exception.

At present the people living in the South East European (Balkan) mountains are facing many problems, such as: depopulation, poverty, high unemployment rate, environmental problems, communication and infrastructure problems and the political and economic marginality.

In the South East Europe (Balkans) it is difficult to find institutions or people capable of working on the integral development of mountain regions. Integral development means the encouragement of development that strives for economic growth while taking into account social and cultural aspects as well as an improvement or, at least, the stabilisation of the quality of the environment.

Against this background, the idea to cooperate on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans) has been initiated in order to ensure the conservation and a sustainable future for the region. During the last meeting “Sharing the experience – Capacity Building on Legal Instruments for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountain

Regions in South Eastern Europe”, held in Bolzano, Italy in December, 2005, the participants from the South East European (Balkan) countries concluded with a final Statement that their Governments may consider to develop a regional legal functioning framework for co-operation between relevant national authorities and regional/local stakeholders.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the current situation and needs of cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans) and to propose tools for enhancing this cooperation. These tools may result in a possible regional legal framework for protection and sustainable development of mountain regions of South East Europe (Balkans) that would offer an added value for the countries in the region. Although each of the mountain systems has its own specificity, it is not necessary to re-invent the wheel. The strength and the weaknesses of the current legal frameworks for cooperation and sustainable development should be examined to take positive examples, adapt them to the situation of the South East European (Balkan) conditions, and use the lessons learned from the problematic sectors, so that conservation and sustainable development can go hand in hand.

## 1. Introduction

An important step for the cooperation of the mountain regions in the South eastern Europe (Balkans) was raised during the Second Global Meeting of the Mountain partnership held in Cusco, Peru in 2004. Where UNEP-Vienna office, EURAC – Italy and MAKMONTANA-Macedonia, initiated the idea for the development of Balkan Convention.

The official Request for UNEP assistance to facilitate intergovernmental consultations aiming at enhanced regional cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions in the Balkans was sent by Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia in December 2004. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia initiated this idea being aware of the fact that efforts to protect, maintain and sustainably manage the natural resources of the South Eastern Europe (Balkan) cannot be achieved by one country alone and requires the cooperation among the countries in the region.

The experience of UNEP with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory and the EURAC in facilitating the Alpine-Carpathian experience sharing process and the development of Carpathian Convention as an existing tool for the sustainable development of mountain areas, is well known and it could serve as a potential model for cooperation in the South Eastern Europe (Balkan region).

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia also acknowledged that adequate involvement and participation of NGO's and other civil society groupings in such a development process is important and so appointed the MAKMONTANA – Association for the sustainable development of mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia/BFSD – Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development to take further part into this initiative.

Makmontana through the EUROMONTANA Balkan's Desk in Brussels elaborated study report on the current mountain conventions (Alpine and Carpathian), their actors, priorities for implementation, how they are benefiting local people and communities, how they are integrating conservation and the sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity into national sector policies. Balkan workshop on regional cooperation was organized during the EUROMONTANA Conference which was held from 24-26 October in Liptovsky Mikulas, the Slovak Republic. There was an important document drawn from this conference a "Declaration on Integrated Rural Development in the Mountain Areas of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The participants of the Balkan meeting supported the initiative for the cooperation of the mountain regions in the Balkans and gave the following suggestions:

- There should be adequate involvement of all stakeholders and respective ministries into this process
- Bottom-Up approach should be used
- On a further level there should be all Balkan countries involved

Other organizations like FAO-Mountain Partnership –Rome and FAO-Sub-Regional Office for CEE in Budapest expressed their interest to join and support this initiative.

On the last meeting on: “Sharing the experience – Capacity Building on Legal Instruments for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in South Eastern Europe” , held in Bolzano, Italy from 12 to 13 December, 2005, the participating Balkan countries adopted common statement that their Governments may consider to develop a regional legal functioning framework for co-operation between relevant national authorities and regional/local stakeholders.

Outcomes and progress of the Bolzano meeting have also been presented to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP8) by the end of March this year.

The landmark in the process for South East European (Balkan) cooperation and the progress on development of a South East European (Balkan) Framework Convention could be the Belgrade 2007 Environment for Europe Conference (where a possible Convention / Charter could be launched).

## **1.1. Objective of the Paper and Methodology**

The idea to cooperate on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans) is undisputable. But this cooperation to evolve into development of a new instrument could be a matter of discussion. One might argue, there is already a proliferation of conventions and activities tackling biodiversity and related issues, but a lack of implementation is evident. Adequately enforced, no additional instrument would be needed. The question is “would a new instrument be an overlap with already existing instruments or would it be an added value, providing new opportunities?” Therefore, the main objective of this document is to prepare the required base for decision-making that will analyse the current situation and needs of cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkan region), to identify gaps in trans-boundary cooperation, as well as, main needs and opportunities for enhancing cooperation in the trans-boundary context, including analysis of and recommendations for supporting existing cooperative programmes and projects, to explore existing instruments and to address the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, agriculture, forest land use, management of water resources, transport, tourism, energy, etc. and the different trends in the development of mountain technologies. It will also discuss which instruments and programmes do already address these sectors and investigate, if there are any benefits in developing a new convention.

The introduction gives a summary about the history and the current process in the context of a cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans), followed by a short description of the region. Another chapter gives an overview about existing

instruments, conventions and other legally binding instruments, as well as programmatic activities on the global, regional and local level, which have relevance in this respect. Furthermore, the document contains a short sector analysis. Specifically those socio-economic sectors will be looked at which have a direct link to the environment and their potential to affect biodiversity loss will be discussed. For each of the sectors a general introduction with respect to mountain development is given and an examination at the situation in the South East Europe (Balkans), including the trends and threats, is produced. Existing instruments addressing this sector are discussed, and positive examples from other mountain regions are highlighted. The section presents what benefits a future legal framework would bring, if any, and some key recommendations for each sector. Finally, conclusions and general recommendations are drawn.

This paper is not a scientific document containing scientific and statistical data. It is a collection of background information from existing publications, unpublished papers, the World Wide Web, meeting protocols, conference presentations and personal, verbal information. It should provide food for new thoughts and stimulate discussions and dialogue.

## **2. Description of the Region**

### **2.1. Geographical Location**

The Balkan Peninsula lies south of the Rivers Drava (46.5°N) and Danube (44°N) and is surrounded by the Adriatic (14°E) and Ionian Seas in the west, the Mediterranean Sea in the south and the Aegean, Marmara and Black Seas in the east (28°E). The Balkans is the historic and geographic name used to describe South Eastern Europe. It takes its name from the Balkan mountains which run through the centre of Bulgaria into eastern Serbia. The region has a combined area of 550,000 square km, and a population of around 53 million. In the broadest, geographical sense, the the Balkan Peninsula encompasses the area where there are today 10 states: Albania, Bulgaria, continental Greece, southeast Romania, European Turkey, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. The geographical map of the Balkan Peninsula is shown on Figure 1.

*Socio - economic studies of the Balkans frequently omit Greece and Turkey as countries that, unlike the other eight, are not countries in transition but have already been integrated for a long time in Western European political, economic and military structures. Slovenia is also often omitted from this group –either for geographic reasons or from a cultural and economic point of view.*

*The actual geographical definition of the Balkans includes the countries Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia. The common geography places all of them in the south eastern part of Europe. Romania has a special status among the Balkan countries since it has different political and cultural features, which is why it belongs more to the Carpathian region.*



**Figure 1. Geographical map of the South Eastern Europe (Balkans)**

The South East Europe (Balkan) region is very mountainous; the main ranges are the Dinaric Alps, the Balkans, the Rhodope Mts., the Shara and the Pindus. Except for the barren Karst plateau in the northwest and the eroded highlands of Greece, the mountains are densely forested. The Morava, Vardar, Strimón, Mesta, and Maritsa are the largest rivers. The Morava and Vardar river valleys form the chief corridor across the peninsula. The mild Mediterranean-type climate, with its dry summer period, is limited to the southern and coastal areas. The percentage of mountain area of the Balkan countries as defined by UNEP-WCMC methodology and national criteria is shown in the Table 1.

	UNEP-WCMC definition		National definition	
	Mountain area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of national territory	Mountain area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of national territory
Albania	20,604	71.7	15,000	60
Bosnia- Herzegovina	38,112	74.5	N/A	
Bulgaria	44,730	40.3	44,000	40
Croatia	16,578	29.3	21,000	38
Macedonia	21,530	83.7	N/A	
Romania	75,248	31.6	73,000	32
Slovenia	13,534	66.8	9,500	47
Serbia and Montenegro	54,890	53.7	N/A	
Greece	72,898	55.2	79,000	60

**Table 1. Percentage of mountain area of the Balkan countries as defined by UNEP-WCMC (World Conservation Monitoring Centre) methodology and national criteria**

## 2.2. Geology, Topography and Climate

The mountain ranges of South East Europe (Balkans) starts from the north with Dinaric karst mountains, which stretch from Slovenia, through Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro, to Albania. They are a series of nearly parallel ridges, plateaux and depressions, dissected by steep-sided valleys. From north to south, the range broadens and rises, with considerable areas over 1500m and, in the south, many summits over 2000m (highest peak: Daravica, 2659m). The predominant rock is a pure, massive Cretaceous limestone, although Triassic sediments, including sandstones and shales, are quite common in the north-west and outcrop elsewhere. Most of the range has no surface water, but its topography has resulted from solution of the limestone by rainwater, leaving the characteristic smaller depressions (*doliny*) and larger basins (*polje*: up to 70km long) of the rugged karst landscape.

North of Albania, these mountains are generally divided into three regions: the northern karst, including the Velebit mountains (highest peak: Vaganski vrh, 1757m); the central karst, south of Una, with parallel ranges such as Biokovo separated by *poljes* (highest peak: Cincer, 2008m); and the southern karst, south of Neretva, which is a high plateau with the highest peaks of the range, the highest (Durmitor, 2522m) being of Jurassic limestone. To the south, the ranges of Albania are more geologically complex, with a large proportion of Triassic to Cretaceous limestones, often with Paleozoic rocks beneath, and also many intrusions of basic igneous and metamorphic rocks. The mountains are most rugged in the north (North Albanian Alps), with bare glaciated summits of

limestone rising over 2400m. Further south is the Murdita, a dissected and glaciated plateau of igneous and metamorphic rocks, rising to over 2100m.

To the east of the Dinaric karst mountains, the first mountainous area of any height is a plateau of Tertiary deposits, with gabbros and granites to the south, starting south of the Vrbas river in Bosnia. These Dinaric ridges, aligned north-west-south-east, as with the karst ranges, reach a maximum altitude of 1631m near Sarajevo. To the south-east, in Serbia, Macedonia and Albania, is a platform of Paleozoic and earlier schists, the westernmost extension of the Rhodope massif, with remnants of Jurassic and Triassic limestones. The more resistant areas form massifs such as Rogozna (highest peak: 1863m), Kopaonik (2016m), the Koprivnik planina (2522m), Zljeb Gora (2403m) and Mokra Gora (2154m). The highest and most extensive are the rugged Shar planina, Korab and Jablanica mountains, 2000m or higher over a considerable area (highest peak: Turcin, 2748m), composed of metamorphic rocks. These mountains and the Lake Region, with the two large lakes of Ohrid and Prespa, are shared between Albania and Macedonia.

Further south in Albania is an area of more gentle relief, mainly on Tertiary sandstone and flysch, rising to the glaciated Grammos mountains (highest peak: 2524m) on the border with Greece. In Macedonia, the Shar planina continues south to the Suva Gora and the Baba and Plakenska planina (highest peak: 2604m). To their east are the Jakupica massif (2543m) and the lower ranges to its south and, east of the Vardar river, mountains which rise to the Malesevska and Osogovska planina, massifs with summits over 1500m (highest peak: 2255m) on the Bulgarian border.

The Stara Planina (Balkan Range) begins along the Serbian border with Bulgaria and runs east for over 600km. This narrow, rounded range was formed during the same era as the Carpathians. It has a core of Paleozoic schists and intrusive igneous rocks, overlain with strongly folded Jurassic to Cretaceous limestones and flysch. Midzhur, on the Serbian border, is 2169m high. Most of the remainder of the western and central part is 1000-1800m in altitude. The higher areas are generally of igneous rocks, including the highest peak, Botev (2376m). The eastern part of the range is broader and lower, with sedimentary rocks predominating.

South of the Stara Planina is the Rhodope massif and associated isolated mountains and ranges formed of Paleozoic schists and intrusive igneous rocks. These were uplifted during the Tertiary and eroded to a series of high planation surfaces. The most northerly of these mountains are Sredna Gora (highest peak: Bogdan, 1606m), just south of the central Stara Planina, and composed of the same schists and igneous rocks, but later folded and partially covered by flysch and Mesozoic rocks. This complex reappears to the south-east as Strandja, low mountains rising to 500m on the Turkish border, near to Black Sea coast. Just south of Sofia is the igneous mountain of Vitisha (2290m). The main part of the Rhodope massif occupies most of the western half of the border with Greece. The highest areas, both showing evidence of intensive glaciation, are the Rila (highest peak: Mousala, 2926m) and the less extensive but more "alpine" Pirin, with about 100 peaks over 2500m (highest: Vihren, 2915m), at the west end of

the main massif. The massif continues about 160km to the east, gradually declining in height.

A temperate-continental element from the north and a Mediterranean one from the south shape the climate of the Balkan Peninsula. Locally, relief and altitude are major factors (Table 2). In the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, the treeline ecotone is estimated to be between 1700 and 2200m.

	Popova Sapka 1750m	Solunska Glava 2540m	Moussala 2926m
Mean annual temperature (°C)	3.5	0.4	-3.1
Annual mean temper. Amplitude (°C)	17.4	16.3	16.7
Mean annual maximum (°C)	8.6	2.7	5.5
Absolute maximum (°C)	30.7	30.1	n.d.
Absolute minimum (°C)	-23.7	-27.9	n.d.
Number of frosty days (°C)	149	222	n.d.
Growing season (days with $t > 10^{\circ}\text{C}$ )	105	105	n.d.
Annual precipitation (mm)	1001	791	1000-1300

**Table 2. Climatic data from the treeline ecotone (Popova Sapka, 1750m, Shar Planina) and alpine zones (Solunska Glava, 2540m, Jakupica; Mousala, 2926m, Rhodopes-Rila)**

The Dinaric mountains have three types of climate: transitional in the northern karst; mediterranean from the central karst mountains to Albania; and continental to the east. The climate of the Balkan mountains is either continental or modified continental, in the Rhodopes. In general, temperatures increase to the south, and are inversely related to altitude. There is greater variation in temperature across the region in winter than in summer, but diurnal variations are higher in summer. The karst mountains have high rainfall and cloudiness, with cold winters. Particularly along their seaward side, autumn and winter are the main seasons for precipitation. This is at least 1200mm, rising to over 3000mm in the highest areas: 5300mm in the southern karst. The climate is also characterised by the strong *bura* wind, which blows across the mountains to systems over the eastern Alps or the Balkans. In Velebit, at 1594m, on average, there are 158 days a year with temperatures below 0°C and 187 with fog, and snow lies for four months. In the North Albanian Alps, at 2400m, average January temperatures are -4 to -6°C, average July temperatures are 4 to 11°C, and precipitation is 2000-2500mm. In the other mountain ranges, summer is the main season for precipitation, with relatively dry but snowy winters, especially at higher altitudes. Precipitation is at least 800mm above 1000m, rising to 1500-1800mm at 2000m, but nowhere more than 2000mm in Bulgaria, rising to 3000mm in Montenegro. The highest areas often retain snow cover well into the summer. In the higher mountains of Bulgaria, average temperatures are from -3.5°C in January to 12°C in August. The mountains of Macedonia are also characterised by a strong wind, developing

under similar conditions to the *bura*, but generally less extreme, and blowing southwards along the Vardar river: the *vardarec*.

### 2.3. Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Many of the forests of the western side of the Dinaric karst mountains are dominated by white oak (*Quercus pubescens*) with oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*) at lower altitudes, and hop hornbeam at higher altitudes. Forests of beech, often with fir, are found up to 1500m in more humid areas, and forests of black pine (*Pinus nigra*) in drier areas. On the eastern slope, the lower forests (up to about 1200m) are dominated by sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), and the upper ones by beech and hornbeam. Substantial areas of these mountains have been reforested over the past century, after centuries of deforestation and fires.

The lower mountain forests of Albania, up to about 1250m, are dominated by oaks. Sessile oak, often with Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), is dominant in northern and central ranges, and white oak and Hungarian oak (*Q. frainetto*) are more common in the drier conditions of the central and southern ranges. This zone also includes both natural and planted forests of sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). From about 1250 to 1600/1700m, beech forests with fir, sycamore and rowan predominate, except in the south where conditions are too dry and/or soils are too poor, so that the beech forests are replaced by forests of black pine or Macedonian (hybrid silver) fir (*Abies borisii-regis*). The latter have been significantly reduced in area as a result of cutting and grazing. The upper montane forests (1600/1700-2100m) are composed of mixed and pure stands of Bosnian, white-bark and Macedonian pines (*Pinus leucodermis*, *P. heldreichii*, *P. peuce*). The subalpine zone is dominated by dwarf pines.

Across the broad swathe of mountains from Croatia, through Bosnia, Serbia and northern Montenegro, to Macedonia, the lowest forests (700/800-1300/1550m; higher towards the south-east) are dominated by beech, generally with fir or durmast oak (*Quercus daleschampsii*). This zone also includes many spruce plantations. Above are montane forests dominated by beech at lower altitudes and, at higher altitudes, white-bark pine and spruce (1500-2100m) in Yugoslavia (with a high proportion of relic and endemic species), and associated with junipers in south-east Serbia and into Bulgaria (1500-1800m). Cleared areas have become grasslands, and peat bogs are not uncommon. The subalpine (1500/1900-2000m) includes dwarf pine and larch, with glacial relics.

The forests of the Stara Planina have been heavily influenced by human activities, with generally greater levels of deforestation on the more heavily populated southern side. The lower montane forests are dominated by beech, often with fir and durmast oak and, on the south side, 700-1200m on the south). These forests also include sycamore, maple and lime. They have been subject to considerable cutting, and some have been replaced by plantations of Scots pine. Above are middle montane forests of beech, spruce (1000-1500m; 1200-1700m). On the south side, these species are often mixed-though there are also pure spruce and fir forests-while on the north side beech forests predominate. On

deforested areas, *Nardus stricta* grasslands have taken over. All of these mixed deciduous-conifer forest types are habitats for roe and red deer, wild boar and a rich bird fauna. Higher forests of spruce (1500-1800m) and of spruce and Macedonian pine, often mixed but sometimes pure (1800-2000m). The subalpine zone (2000-2200m) was formerly forested, but has been extensively burned and grazed and is now mainly covered with juniper (*Juniperus sibirica*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and *Nardus stricta*, with some dwarf pine. On the highest peaks are alpine grassland dominated by various species, including *Festuca airoides* and *Agrostis rupestris*. These provide habitat for chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra balcanina*).

The pattern of zonation in most of the Rila and Pirin mountains and other parts of the Rhodope massif in Bulgaria is similar, but at higher altitudes. The lower montane forests (up to 1300/1500m) include Turkey and Hungarian oaks, hornbeam and beech. To the south, these are replaced by more Mediterranean species, including oaks, oriental hornbeam and sweet chestnut. The deciduous forests grade into mixed and pure coniferous forests, with spruce, fir and Scots pine over much of the massif, and black and white-bark pine and fir in the southern and central Rhodopes (1300/1500-1700m). The upper montane forests (1700-2200m) are dominated by spruce and Macedonian pine (especially at higher altitudes), with Scots pine and birch (*Betula pendula*). Overall, plantations comprise about half of the area of these large expanses of coniferous forest, which are important habitats for many species of birds, as well as roe and red deer, wolves and bears. However, the upper forest limit has generally been depressed by cutting and grazing. Above is the subalpine zone (2200-2500m) originally dominated by dwarf pine but, after centuries of burning and grazing, now mainly by juniper, *Vaccinium* spp. and *Nardus stricta*, all of which have extended down into deforested areas. The alpine zone, extending to the highest summits, is dominated by *Sesleria comosa*, *Agrostis rupestris*, *Festuca* spp. and *Carex* spp., and is home to chamois and various birds of prey.

The forests of Strandja are nearly all natural, with only a small area of spruce plantations. Lower forests are dominated by Hungarian and Turkey oak; higher forests by durmast oak and oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*).

## 2.4. Socio-Economic Features

The past dozen years brought about profound political and economic restructuring in the South East Europe (Balkan) region. They proved particularly painful in the former Yugoslavia, which underwent major political changes and ethnic conflicts. From a mere economic point of view, the economic and social outcomes were no less immune from flaws, resulting in them leading to costly reductions in terms of standards of living and economic production. The passage from paternalism to market, has prompted a turnaround in methods of production and has created unfavourable social consequences. Nowadays, the region as regards socio-economic development is facing further local economic deterioration, increasing dependence on global economic forces, demolition of

social and welfare structures; and reckless deregulation of existing socio-economic safeguards.

The Well-being Index<sup>8\*</sup>, recently developed by Prescott-Allen, includes and aggregates in a single Index a broad range of Human and Environmental Indicators. The Human well-being index (HWI) provides a useful overview of the current human socio-economic and cultural situation in the region. Table 3. shows that countries in the region have a medium to poor HWI. Greece and Slovenia as EU members are excluded from the socio-economic studies in the South-Eastern Europe (Balkans), and so from this Human Well-being index.

**Table 3. Human Well-being Index**

<b>Human well-being index</b>	
<b><i>Medium</i></b>	
Albania	42,0
Bulgaria	44,5
Croatia	45,0
Macedonia	44,0
<b><i>Poor</i></b>	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34,5
Romania	40,0
Serbia and Montenegro	39,5

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\*The Well-being Index is built by aggregating 87 environmental, economic and social indicators. The Index has a 0 to 100 range, divided in five sections: Bad (0-20), Poor (21-40), Medium (41-60), Fair (61-80) and Good (81-100). The Index considers Human and Environmental Well-being together; therefore it is not possible to obtain a good overall ranking without performing well in both areas. Prescott-Allen, Robert. 2001.

*The Wellbeing of Nations*. Washington and Ottawa: Island Press and the International Development Research Centre.

Europe's main characteristic is that of a social model based on inclusion and on guaranteeing fundamental human rights to all. The integration of South East Europe into the EU should be founded on the will to extend a civil system and a socio-economic identity. This identity should take into account the specific features of a territory: its environment, culture, history, and traditions.

It is necessary to rethink the approach of the international community, but also to help local and national communities build sustainable development models structured on adding maximum value to local human and environmental resources.

The prosperity of the mountain regions in South East Europe (Balkan) depends on the development of socio-economic activities that can be readily harmonized

with the natural heritage. At the same time, however, they must surmount various obstacles and be able to support the higher costs resulting from their relative isolation and extreme climate and altitude.

## **2.5. The Region – Main Challenges and Opportunities**

The Balkan Peninsula is considered one of the richest areas within Europe as regards natural habitats and biological diversity, with unique mountain areas, karst phenomena, lakes and rivers ranging from the Adriatic Coast up to the Dinaric Alps and Carpathian Mountains. Due to political situation after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the poor economic conditions in neighbouring countries, the remain natural assets are under severe threat and require support both on national and international level.

The challenges that South Eastern Europe (Balkans) is confronted with remain at the frontier of interest among policy makers. The present situation in this region impedes any efforts by regional and international actors to promote and advance the necessary reforms required by the EU accession process, while at the same time compromising the prospects for security and development within the geographic borders of the European continent.

Improved legislation for nature conservation and protected area designation and management is future challenge for the South Eastern Europe (Balkans). Throughout the region, legislation on the (re)distribution of land and rights needs to fully consider its effects on biological and landscape diversity. At least as important as appropriate legislation are the regulations, plans and resources to implement it. These are lacking to a greater or lesser extent throughout the mountains of South East Europe (Balkans).

There should be international and regional cooperation towards an effective, well managed network of protected areas in South East Europe (Balkans), providing example of the conservation and the sustainable development of mountain regions. Such cooperation should be undertaken within the broader context of enhancing environmental security in the region: an issue of growing importance, especially in the many mountain regions traversed by national borders.

The major initiative for the environmental protection of South East Europe (Balkans) started with REReP (Regional Environmental Program) under the EU Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe that was shaped by the countries of the region themselves — including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration).

REReP has been endorsed by environmental ministers from the region at the Ministerial Conference in Skopje in March 2000, as well as officials from the Stability Pact, effectively making it the official environmental policy of the region.

A Task Force comprising the ministers of environment for the countries of South Eastern Europe (Balkans), donors, international organisations, institutions and NGOs, guides its implementation. A Secretariat based at the head office of the REC in Hungary coordinates the programme. The countries adopted the

programme priorities and translated them into priority projects. They took the lead in project implementation and reporting to the REReP Task Force.

The activities of the REReP Task Force and Secretariat are supported by the EU CARDS programme.

REReP is now developing into a vehicle to assist the countries of South Eastern Europe (Balkans) in their long-term goals of European Union integration.

The revised programme structure targets four priority elements:

- 1) institution building;
- 2) support to environmental civil society;
- 3) support to environmental, regional cooperation mechanisms and cross-border projects; and
- 4) reducing environmental health threats and the loss of biodiversity.

The re-establishment of transboundary cooperation, the construction of new networks and South Eastern Europe's commitment to full implementation of REReP's activities all contribute greatly to the mainstreaming of environmental concerns into reconstruction and stabilisation activities.

Actions in these areas are implemented through projects identified and designed by the countries and in some cases by REC. Projects are then presented to donors for expression of interest in providing funding.

The future REReP activities will focus more on regional cooperation and transboundary (cross-border) areas.

REReP should be used as a potential tool for enhancing the cooperation and sustainable development of mountain regions in the South east Europe Balkans, especially through regional projects implementation.

The current EU Assistance allocated to South East European (Balkan) countries (except the EU members and EU accession countries) is going through the CARDS programme which is implemented by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR).

As for the period covered by the next EU Financial Perspectives (2007-2013), assistance to the countries of the region will be streamlined under the future Instrument for Pre accession Assistance IPA, which will replace the PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD and CARDS programmes.

This period of rapid societal changes in South East Europe (Balkans) presents many opportunities to learn from past experiences, good and bad, in other mountain regions, and test new concepts.

Looking at the other mountain ranges in Europe, such as Alps and Carpathians, there are some similarities between these two and the South East European (Balkan) mountain ranges. All three stretch over several countries, fulfilling important ecological functions and are vital catchment areas. All three mountain systems are also showing high biodiversity and endemism, and they are home to many different cultures and they are facing human pressure on natural values.

The Alpine and Carpathian Conventions are the only conventions dedicated to the protection of mountains currently in effect. Several aspects of the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions could serve as an example for the conservation and

sustainable development in the South East Europe (Balkan) region. Lessons can be learned, leading to more efficiency of such regional instruments. A positive example is the Alpine Network of Protected Areas that has been created between the administrations of alpine protected territories (13 national parks, and many nature parks, biosphere reserves, etc.). This network has been recognized by the Alpine Conference as an official tool for implementing the Alpine Convention. On the other hand, when one looks at certain sectors, such as tourism or transport, – although they are important economic factors for all of Alpine countries –, they present enormous problems in this Western European mountain system, e.g. transit routes in the Alps. In the South East Europe (Balkans), the anthropogenic pressure is still lower than in the Alps, therefore there is the opportunity for prevention and sustainable development to avoid the mistakes made in the Alps. The main challenge for the future is to prevent, rather than to cure. Although each of the mountain systems has its own specificity, we do not have to re-invent the wheel. Let us look at the strength and the weaknesses of the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions, take the positive examples, adapt them to the situation of the South East European (Balkan) conditions, and use the lessons learned from the problematic sectors, so that conservation and sustainable development can go hand in hand.

### **3. Overview of Existing Instruments, Programmes and Projects Relevant for the South East European (Balkan) Mountains**

#### **International Conventions and other legal instruments**

The overview is given for the following countries: Albania (AL), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (CRO), Greece (GR), Macedonia (MK), Romania (RO), Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia (SLO).

International Conventions and Other International Legal Instruments Coding system: acp = acceptance, acs = accession, apv = approval, rtf = ratification, Sc = succession, S = notification of succession, Ppr = in process of preparation for ratification, Ss = succession to signature, (x) = signed, but not ratified, (Ds) = declaration of succession

#### **At the Global Level**

**The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** – UNEP Secretariat (At the 1992 Earth Summit in Río de Janeiro, world leaders agreed on a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development. One of the key agreements adopted at Rio was the CBD with the three main goals: conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

Source: [www.biodiv.org/world/parties.asp](http://www.biodiv.org/world/parties.asp)

	Signed	
AL	-	1994 acs
BIH	-	2002 acs
BG	1992	1996 rtf
CRO	1992	1996 rtf
GR	1992	1994 rtf
MK	-	1997 acs
RO	1992	1994 rtf
SCG	1992	2002 rtf
SLO	1992	1996 rtf

### **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – UNEP Secretariat**

(Source: [www.biodiv.org/world/parties.asp](http://www.biodiv.org/world/parties.asp))

A supplementary agreement to the CBD adopted in Montreal in 2002. It seeks to protect biodiversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The protocol contains reference to the precautionary approach and reaffirms the precaution language of the Río Declaration on Environment and Development.

	Signed	
AL	-	2005 acs
BIH	-	-
BG	2000	2000 rtf
CRO	2000	2002 rtf
GR	2000	2004 rtf
MK	2000	2005 rtf
RO	2000	2003 rtf
SCG	-	2006 acs
SLO	2000	2002 rtf

### **The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – UNESCO/World Heritage Center** (Source: [www.whc.unesco.org/wldrat.htm](http://www.whc.unesco.org/wldrat.htm)).

The General Conference of UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention in Paris in 1972. To date, more than 170 countries have adhered to the Convention,

making it one of the most universal international legal instruments for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage.

	<b>Signed</b>
AL	1989 rtf
BIH	1993 (Ds)
BG	1974 acp
CRO	1992 (Ds)
GR	1981 rtf
MK	1997 (Ds)
RO	1990 acp
SCG	2001 (Ds)
SLO	1992 (Ds)

**Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat** – Secretariat / Ramsar Bureau (Source: [www.ramsar.org/key\\_cp\\_e.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/key_cp_e.htm),

[www.environmental.harvard.edu/guides/intenvpol/indexes/treaties/RAMSAR.html](http://www.environmental.harvard.edu/guides/intenvpol/indexes/treaties/RAMSAR.html))

The Ramsar Convention was adopted in the Iranian city Ramsar in 1971, coming into force in 1975. The mission is the conservation and wise use of wetlands by national action and international cooperation as a means to achieving sustainable development throughout the world. The number of sites designated to date is 1229.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Entry into force</b>
AL	1996
BIH	1992
BG	1976
CRO	1991
GR	1975
MK	1991
RO	1991
SCG	1992
SLO	1991

**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** – UNEP/CMS Secretariat (Source: [www.wcmc.org.uk/cms](http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cms))

The Bonn Convention aims to conserve terrestrial, marine, and avian migratory species throughout their range. Since its agreement in 1979 and its entry into force in 1983, its membership has grown steadily to include 80 Parties from all continents. Eight agreements have been concluded to date.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Entry into force</b>
AL	2001
BIH	
BG	1999
CRO	2000
GR	1999
MK	1999
RO	1998
SCG	
SLO	1999

**Under the Bonn Convention: Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) – UNEP/AEWA Secretariat (Source: [www.wcmc.org.uk/cms](http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cms))**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Entry into force</b>
AL	2001
BIH	-
BG	1999
CRO	2000
GR	1999 (x)
MK	1999
RO	1998
SCG	-
SLO	1999

**Under the Bonn Convention: Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats – UNEP/EUROBATS Secretariat (Source: [www.wcmc.org.uk/cms](http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cms)).**

EUROBATS was agreed in London (1991) and at present, there are 26 signatory Parties. It aims to address threats to 37 bat species and tries to achieve and maintain a favorable conservation status of bat populations. Further, it aims to counteract the threat posed to these species from habitat degradation, disturbance to roosting sites and certain pesticides.

Countries	Entry into force
AL	2001
BIH	-
BG	1999
CRO	2000
GR	-
MK	1999
RO	1998
SCG	-
SLO	1999

**Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – CITES Secretariat** (Source: [www.cites.org/eng/parties/index.shtml](http://www.cites.org/eng/parties/index.shtml))

CITES is an international agreement between Governments. It's aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The text of the Convention was finally agreed in Washington D.C. in 1973. CITES now covers some 30.000 plant and animal species and has more than 160 Parties.

	Entry into force	
AL	2003 acs	2003
BIH	-	-
BG	1991 acs	1991
CRO	2000 acs	2000
GR	1992 acs	1993
MK	2000 acs	2000
RO	1994 acs	1994
SCG	2002 acs	2002
SLO	2000 acs	2000

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – UN Secretariat** (Source: [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int))

The text of the Convention was adopted at the U.N. Headquarters in New York 1992. It was one of the five documents finalized during the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The Climate Convention aims to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Countries	Signed		Entry into force
AL	-	1994 rtf	1995
BIH	-	2000 rtf	-
BG	1992	1995 rtf	1995
CRO	1992	1996 rtf	1996
GR	1992	1994 rtf	1994 rtf
MK	-	1998 rtf	1998
RO	1992	1994 rtf	1994
SCG	-	2001	2001
SLO	1992	1995 rtf	1996

**Under the Climate Convention: the Kyoto Protocol – UN Secretariat (Source: [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int))**

The text of the Protocol to the UNFCCC was adopted at the 3rd session of the Conference of Parties in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. It was open for signature until March 1999 at the UN Headquarters and had received 84 signatures by that date. Those Parties that have not yet signed

Countries	Entry into force	
<b>AL</b>	2005 acs	2005
<b>BIH</b>	-	-
<b>BG</b>	2002 rtf	2005
<b>CRO</b>	-	-
<b>GR</b>	2002 rtf	2005
<b>MK</b>	2004 acs	2005
<b>RO</b>	2001 rtf	2005
<b>SCG</b>	-	-
<b>SLO</b>	2002 rtf	2005

**Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer – Ozone Secretariat of UNEP (Source: [www.unep.org/ozone/ratif.shtml](http://www.unep.org/ozone/ratif.shtml))**

The objective of the Vienna Convention is to protect human health and the environment against adverse effects resulting from modifications of the ozone layer. It was adopted in Vienna in 1985. The Parties are encouraged to cooperate in research related to this topic and in the formulation and implementation of measures.

Under the Vienna Convention, there are several Agreements: the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987); The London Amendment to the Montreal Protocol (1990); the Copenhagen Amendment to the Montreal Protocol (1992); the Montreal Amendment to the Montreal Protocol (1997); and the Beijing Amendment to the Montreal Protocol (1999).  
may accede to it at any time.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Signed</b>	
<b>AL</b>		1999 acs
<b>BIH</b>		1993 Sc
<b>BG</b>		1990 acs
<b>CRO</b>		1992 acs
<b>GR</b>		1988 rtf
<b>MK</b>		1994 Sc
<b>RO</b>	-	1993 Sc
<b>SCG</b>	-	2001Sc
<b>SLO</b>		1992 Sc

Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) – UNECE Secretariat (Source: [www.unece.org/env/lrtap/status/lrtap\\_st.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/status/lrtap_st.htm))

Since its adoption in 1979, the Geneva Convention has addressed some of the major environmental problems in the UNECE region. It provides an institutional framework linking science and policy. Since its entry into force in 1983, it has been extended by eight protocols and has at present 49 Parties.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Signed</b>	
<b>AL</b>	-	2005 acs
<b>BIH</b>	-	1992 Sc
<b>BG</b>	1979	1981 rtf
<b>CRO</b>	-	1992 acs
<b>GR</b>	1979	1983 rtf
<b>MK</b>	-	1997 Sc
<b>RO</b>	1979	1991 rtf
<b>SCG</b>	-	2001Sc
<b>SLO</b>	-	1992 Sc

**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes** – Secretariat??

(Source: [www.unece.org/env/water/status/lega\\_wc.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/status/lega_wc.htm))

The Helsinki or Water Convention, signed in Helsinki in 1992, is intended to strengthen national measures for the protection and ecologically sound management of trans-boundary surface waters and groundwater. It obliges Parties to prevent, control and reduce water pollution. It also includes provisions for monitoring, research, warning systems and public access to information.

Countries	signed	rtf, apv, acp, acs
AL	1992	1994
BIH	-	-
BG	1992	2003
CRO	-	1996
GR	1992	1996
MK	-	-
RO	1992	1995
SCG	-	-
SLO	-	1999

Under the Water Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health was adopted in London in 1999.

**Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements and Deposition of Hazardous Wastes** – UNEP Secretariat (Source: <http://www.basel.int/ratif/frstmain.php>)

In its first decade, the **Basel Convention** (adopted in 1989), was devoted to setting up a framework for controlling “transboundary” movements of hazardous waste. Criteria for environmentally sound management have been developed and a controlling system was put into place. Now emphasis lies on implementation and enforcement.

Countries	
AL	1999 acs
BIH	2001 acs
BG	1996acs
CRO	1994 acs
GR	1994 rtf
MK	1997 acs
RO	1991 acs
SCG	2000 acs
SLO	1993 ac s

In addition to the Basel Convention, there is **Ban Amendment** for the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal - Geneva, 22 September 1995. The Amendment has not yet entered into force. Its current status is as follows:

Countries	
AL	2005 acp
BIH	-
BG	2000 rtf
CRO	-
GR	-
MK	2004 rtf
RO	2002 acp
SCG	2002 acp
SLO	-

Furthermore, only one country from the region has signed the **Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation**, Macedonia (MK) in the year 2000.

**Energy Charter Treaty** – Brussel Secretariat (Source: [www.encharter.org](http://www.encharter.org), [www.encharter/index.jsp](http://www.encharter/index.jsp))

The importance of energy efficiency and the relation to a cleaner environment were underlined in the European Energy Charter. In 1994, the Energy Charter Treaty was adopted in Lisboa. Each Contracting Party strives to minimize, in an economically efficient manner, harmful environmental impacts coming from all operations within the energy cycle in its area.

The Energy Charter Treaty and the Energy Charter Protocol on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects came into force in 1998. It is a specific legally binding instrument in the area of energy efficiency, establishing governmental requirements in the areas of policies and programmes formulation and implementation. A permanent small Secretariat for all treaties and protocols related to the promotion of sustainable energy use was established in Brussels.

Countries	
AL	1998
BIH	2001
BG	1996
CRO	1997
GR	1997
MK	1998
RO	1997
SCG	-
SLO	1997

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) – UN  
 Headquarter, Treaty Section (Source:  
[www.pops.int/documents/signature/signature.htm](http://www.pops.int/documents/signature/signature.htm))

The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty (May 2001) to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants. POPs are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms and are toxic to humans and wildlife. Measures will be taken to eliminate or reduce the release of POPs.

Countries	Signed	
	AL	2001
BIH	2001	-
BG	2001	2004 rtf
CRO	2001	-
GR	2001	-
MK	2001	2004 rtf
RO	2001	2004 rtf
SCG	2002	-
SLO	2001	2004 rtf

### At the Pan-European and Regional Level

#### **Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats**

– Council of Europe (Source: [www.ecnc.nl/doc/europe/legislat/bernrati.html](http://www.ecnc.nl/doc/europe/legislat/bernrati.html)).

Also, known as Bern Convention, as signed there in 1979. An important instrument for the protection of wildlife and natural habitats, the Convention has 45 Contracting Parties today. It includes help for implementation (technical assistance on legal and scientific issues) and the setting up of the Emerald Network, as well as work on monitoring and control of threatened species.

Countries	signed	Entry into force
AL	1995	1999
BIH	-	-
BG	-	1991
CRO	-	2000
GR	-	1983
MK	-	1998
RO	1993	1993
SCG	-	-
SLO	-	1999

### **The Emerald Network**

The first list was launched in June 1989. This is a network of Areas of Special Conservation Interests (ASCIs), which is to be established in the territory of the Contracting Parties and the Observer States of the Bern Convention, including among others, Central and Eastern European countries and the EU Member States. For the later, Emerald Network sites are those of the Natura 2000 Network.

### **European Landscape Convention – Council of Europe**

(Source: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty>)

The Convention was signed in Florence in 2000. It requires Parties to recognize the importance and value of landscapes and to reconcile commercial consideration with the right to well-being, health, aesthetics and beauty. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of people's participation in decision-making on landscape protection and management.

Countries	Signed		Entry into force
AL	-	-	-
BIH	-	-	-
BG	2000	2004	2005
CRO	2000	2003	2004
GR	2000	-	-
MK	2000	2003	2004
RO	2000	2002	2004
SCG	-	-	-
SLO	2001	2003	2004

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents – UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division (Source: [www.unece.org/env/teia/parties.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/teia/parties.htm))

In Helsinki (1992), 26 countries and the European Commission signed this Convention. The objective is to protect human beings and the environment against industrial accidents capable of causing transboundary effects and to promote international cooperation between the Contracting Parties before, during and after such accidents.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Parties</b>
AL	1994
BIH	-
BG	1995
CRO	2000
GR	1998
MK	-
RO	2003
SCG	-
SLO	2002

**Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (EIA)** – Secretariat in Geneva (Source: [www.unece.org/env/eia](http://www.unece.org/env/eia))

This Convention was signed in Espoo in 1991 stipulates the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning. It also lays down the general obligations of States to notify and consult each other on all major project that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Signed</b>	
<b>AL</b>	1991	1991 rtf
<b>BIH</b>	-	-
<b>BG</b>	1991	1995 rtf
<b>CRO</b>	-	1996 acs
<b>GR</b>	1991	1998 rtf
<b>MK</b>		1999 acs
<b>RO</b>	1991	2001 rtf
<b>SCG</b>	-	-
<b>SLO</b>		1998 acs

**Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters** – UNECE Aarhus Secretariat in Geneva (Source: [www.unece.org/env/pp/ctreaty.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/ctreaty.htm))

The Aarhus Convention (called after the Danish city where it was adopted in 1998) seeks to strengthen the role of the public and environmental organizations in protecting and improving the environment for the benefit of future generations. It's an example of a new environmental agreement, linking environment and human rights.

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Signed</b>	
<b>AL</b>	1998	2001 rtf
<b>BIH</b>	-	-
<b>BG</b>	1998	2003 rtf
<b>CRO</b>	1998	-
<b>GR</b>	1998	2006 rtf
<b>MK</b>	-	1999 acs
<b>RO</b>	1998	2000 rtf
<b>SCG</b>	-	-
<b>SLO</b>	1998	2004

**Convention on the Protection of the Alps** (Source: [www.convenzionedellealpi.org](http://www.convenzionedellealpi.org))

The Alpine Convention was signed in 1991 and entered into force 1995. It requires its contracting Parties (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland and the European Community) to pursue a comprehensive policy for the preservation and protection of the Alps through the application of the principles of prevention, payment by the polluter and cooperation. The Convention is mentioned here, as it could serve as a model for the South East European (Balkan) Convention.

**The Convention on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians** (Source: <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/index.htm>)

On 22 May 2003 in Kiyv, Ukraine, the Ministers of the Environment of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine signed the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The Carpathian Convention entered into force on January 4, 2006. The Carpathian Convention provides the framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development, and a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved. This Convention is also mentioned here, as it could serve as a model for the South East European (Balkan) Convention.

**Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube** – International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River Basin (ICPDR) - (Source: [www.rec.org/DanubePCU/drpc.html](http://www.rec.org/DanubePCU/drpc.html))

The Convention on Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube (Danube River Protection Convention) forms the overall legal instrument for co-operation and transboundary water management in the Danube River Basin.

The Convention was signed on June 29 1994, in Sofia, Bulgaria, by eleven of the Danube Riparian States – Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic,

Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine – and the European Community, and duly came into force in October 1998, when it was ratified by the ninth signatory.

The main objective of the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) is to ensure that surface waters and groundwater within the Danube River Basin are managed and used sustainably and equitably.

## **Regional European Legal Instruments of the European Union**

### **A Brief Overview of the Environmental Acquis Communautaire**

EU environmental legislation covers environmental quality protection, polluting and other activities with negative environmental impacts, production processes, products, procedural rights for stakeholders and standards for administrative procedures. Quality standards have been set for air, waste management, water, nature protection, industrial pollution control, chemicals, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), noise and nuclear safety/radiation protection. There are also a number of highly important “horizontal issues,” such as environmental impact assessment, access to environmental information, and environmental liability, that are of relevance in almost all areas of environmental law.

EU law can be divided into primary and secondary law. Primary law consists of the following treaties and their related protocols and agreements:

- a) the consolidated version of the treaty establishing the European Community of March 25, 1957, which incorporates the last amendments made by the Treaty of Nice signed on February 26, 2001;
- b) the Treaty on European Union (consolidated version); and
- c) the treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community of March 25, 1957.

Acts of secondary legislation are those adopted by the competent bodies of the EU and, in terms of the legal hierarchy, fall below the primary law. Pursuant to Article 249 of the EC Treaty, institutions of the European Commission can apply four kinds of legal instruments: regulations, directives, decisions and recommendations/ opinions.

**Regulations** have general applications. They are binding in their entirety and directly applicable in a member state. Consequently, there is no need to transform them into national law, although “supportive” legal acts can be enacted on a national basis as long as they do not contradict any regulations.

**Directives** oblige a member state to achieve a certain result, but leave it to the national authorities — and the national lawmakers — to choose the appropriate forms and methods for achieving it. In the field of environment, directives play a much larger role than regulations. As a result, EU member states have a great deal of latitude in how they go about achieving specific EU targets and in how they transpose procedural requirements into domestic law. It comes as no

surprise then that environmental legislation varies widely from country to country in both the legal approach and the structure of domestic laws.

Following are some selected Directives and Regulations relevant for South East European (Balkan) countries.

### **Natura 2000**

Each of the EU Member States is setting up a coherent European Ecological Network of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the title of Natura 2000. It is a legally binding obligation. The network covers the European territory and coastal waters of the 15 EU Member States. This network, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types and species listed in the Habitat Directive Annex I and II, will enable the natural types, and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored to a favorable conservation status.

- "Habitat Directive" Directive 92/43/EEC concerning the Conservation of Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora
- "Bird Directive" Directive 79/409/EEC and Resolution of the European Community Council on Wild Bird Conservation –

### **Agriculture-Environment Regulation**

Council Regulation No. 2078/92/EEC on agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside.

### **"Water Framework Directive"**

Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

### **"GMO Directive"**

Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms.

## **Programmatic Activities**

### **At the Global Level**

#### **Agenda 21 – United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED)**

This well-known conference, held in Río de Janeiro in 1992, focused the world's attention on the need to promote environmentally sustainable development. The Agenda 21 – one of the five documents finalized during the conference – sets out a comprehensive programme of action for achieving sustainable development, sector by sector. This 800 pages document was potentially the most significant outcome of the Río conference, and possibly the most complex document ever negotiated at an international conference. A Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED and to monitor and report on implementation of the Earth Summit agreements.

### **Global 200 – WWF**

The Global 200 identifies the richest areas of the world containing assemblages of all the Earth's diverse biodiversity natural habitats. It is based on the principle that only by conserving representative examples of all the world's ecosystems, can we protect the broadest array of species and maintain the complex ecological and evolutionary processes that make up the web of life. The comprehensive scope of the Global 200 makes it an ambitious programme. Priority ecoregions stretch across every continent and ocean basin. Nearly half of the terrestrial ecoregions are critical endangered by the direct impact of human activities.

### **International Association for Biological Standardization – World Health Organization**

Nowadays known as the International Association for Biologicals, this organization organizes international meetings, which confront the numerous practical problems involved in standardization of biologicals and bring together researchers, manufacturers, public health authorities and government officials. International Conduct Code Concerning the Pesticide Distribution and Utilization – FAO.

This code was developed to address a number of difficulties associated with the use of pesticides in developing countries where adequate regulatory infrastructures are frequently lacking. The code was adopted by FAO member countries, and the objectives of the code are to set forth responsibilities and establish voluntary standards of conduct for all public and private entities. It also suggests how to distribute the responsibilities between governments, industry and others.

### **Man and Biosphere Programme – MAB / UNESCO**

This Programme develops the basis, within the natural and social sciences, for the sustainable use and conservation of biological diversity, and for the improvement of the relationship between people and their environment globally. It encourages interdisciplinary research, demonstration and training in natural resource management. MAB contributes to greater involvement of science in policy development concerning the wise use of biological diversity.

### **TRAFFIC**

TRAFFIC was founded in the mid-1970s largely to assist in the implementation of CITES. The network has developed its role in addressing wildlife trade issues in a wider context, including major commercial sectors such as fisheries and timber trade and a wide range of regional and local issues. The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals for the food and pet markets to ornamental plants and timber. An array of wildlife products and derivatives, such as food, exotic leather goods, musical instruments and even medicines, are found in markets around the globe.

## **World Conservation Strategy and the Subsequent Strategy for Sustainable Living (Caring for the Earth) – IUCN / UNEP / WWF**

The World Conservation Strategy was elaborated in 1980. It emphasized that humanity has no future, unless nature and natural resources are conserved. In this document the connection between conservation and development was highlighted and it was the first time the term “sustainable development“ has been used. Ten years later the same organizations published “Caring for the Earth”. The aim of this strategy is to help improve the condition of the world’s people, by defining two requirements. One is to secure a widespread and deeply held commitment to a new ethic, the ethic of sustainable living, and to translate the principle into practice. The other is to integrate conservation and development: conservation to keep our actions within the Earth’s capacity, and development to enable people everywhere to enjoy long, healthy and fulfilling lives.

## **Mountain partnership - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

The Mountain Partnership is a voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. Launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002, the Mountain Partnership taps the wealth and diversity of resources, information, knowledge, and expertise of its members to support positive change in mountain areas.

Presently, 46 countries, 14 intergovernmental organizations and 73 major groups (e.g. civil society, NGOs and the private sector) are members.

The dynamic core of the Mountain Partnership is action and initiatives on the ground. These initiatives are guided by the recommendations of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (2002). They cover specific themes – like policy and law, sustainable livelihoods, watershed management, research, gender, education, sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains (SARD-M) – and different geographic areas such as the Andes, Central America and the Caribbean, Central Asia, East Africa, Europe and the Hindu Kush Himalaya.

The Mountain Partnership is being supported by a Secretariat, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Secretariat is acting as a central reference point for networking and liaison for the Mountain Partnership and is collaborating closely with the Mountain Forum to deliver key information and communication services to all Partnership members.

**At the Pan-European and Regional Level** “Environment for Europe” – UNECE / EU / UNEP / IUCN

The “Environment for Europe” process remains an essential political framework for cooperation on environmental protection in Europe. It regularly brings together Environment Ministers at Pan-European conferences to formulate environmental policies. In addition, this process is open to all organizations and institutions working in the field of environment, including NGOs. The start of a Pan-European approach was in Dobruška, Czech Republic in 1991. The second conference was held in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1993. Here a Declaration, set out the political dimension of the process, aiming at harmonizing environmental quality and policies on the continent, and to secure its peace, stability and sustainable development. In 1995 in Sofia, Bulgaria, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy was endorsed. The fourth-ministerial conference held in Aarhus (1998), acknowledged the progress made in implementing PEBLDS, reaffirmed the importance of the strategy and launched the Strategy Guide. On the fifth-ministerial conference was held in Kyiv (2003), the ministers adopted the declaration, which underlined the importance of the Environment for Europe process as a tool to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the region, thus contributing to wider peace and security. The next conference is planned to be held in Belgrade in October 2007.

**Pan-European Biological and Landscapes Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) – Council of Europe**

The Strategy establishes an international framework for cooperation for consolidating and extending existing schemes and programmes in the conservation field. PEBLDS presents an innovative and proactive approach to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in

Europe. Endorsed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference “An Environment for Europe” held in Sofia in 1995, it concerns 54 countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Together with the Council of Europe, UNEP's Regional Office for Europe acts as the Secretariat of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which, inter alia, forms the framework for implementing biodiversity-related conventions, in particular, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Europe. UNEP/ROE initiated and manages a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the CBD (Secretariat) and the PEBLDS (Secretariat), containing a programme aimed at harmonizing the work under CBD and PEBLDS and making it mutually supportive. The principal aim of the Strategy is to ensure the sustainability of the natural environment. Special emphasis is given on concerted European action under the Convention on Biological Diversity. National authorities, donors, international organizations, NGOs, the research community and the public, are implementing the Strategy. The twenty-year time span of the Strategy consists of five-year action plans.

Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) – UNEP, Council of Europe

One of the most important means through which the Pan-European Biological and Landscapes Diversity Strategy is being implemented is the establishment of the **Pan-European Ecological Network**. In 1995, PEEN was established and endorsed by 55 countries. The participating States have agreed that the network should be established by 2005. The main objective is ensuring that firstly, a full range of ecosystems, habitats, species and their genetic diversity, and landscapes of European importance are conserved. Secondly, that those habitats are large enough to place species in a favorable conservation status. Thirdly, that there are sufficient opportunities for the dispersal and migration of species. Finally, that damaged elements of the key systems are restored and the system are buffered from potential threats.

### **European Diploma of Protected Areas – Council of Europe**

The diploma was created in 1975 and is awarded to sites of European importance from the point of view of fauna, flora and landscape, which are particularly well protected. The protection area must be subject to stringent protection and integrate successfully nature conservation and certain human activities. This prestigious award is undoubtedly the most effective way of conserving Europe's outstanding natural sites.

### **European Network for Biogenetic Reserves – Council of Europe**

Founded in 1976, this network is designed to conserve representative examples of our natural heritage by developing a rigorous, systematic methodology. These biogenetic reserves may vary considerable in size, but their selection is generally based on two criteria. Firstly, their value in terms of nature conservation, and secondly, the effectiveness of their protective status.

### **Environmental Action Plan for Central and Eastern Europe**

Task Force established by Environmental Ministers at the Ministerial Conference in Lucerne 1993. The aim is to promote environmental measures and to facilitate the implementation of the policy and institutional aspects of the Action Plan in Central and Eastern Europe. The Taskforce has members from EU, World Bank, EBRD and others, and the OECD serves as a Secretariat.

### **Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)**

This is a high-level cooperation of around 40 European countries and the European Commission, addressing the most important issues on forests and forestry. It declares recommendations in favor of the protection and sustainable management of forests in Europe. The MCPFE was launched in 1990 and it is a platform of dialogue (between signatory states, the Commission, countries with observer status, and other organizations and stakeholders) and for cooperation

of policy and science. It is also linked to global and other regional, forest-related issues.

### **The European Plant Conservation Strategy**

Planta Europa and the Council of Europe developed the European Plant Conservation Strategy to provide a framework for wild plant conservation, and in response to the decision by the CBD to consider the development of a global strategy for plant conservation. At the heart of this document are 42 targets for plant conservation in Europe, to be achieved by 2007. Delegates from 38 countries have been involved in the preparations.

#### **Parks for Life – IUCN**

In 1994, IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) published "Parks of Life" an action plan for protected areas in Europe. This plan was developed through wide consultation, and was promoted as advice to governments and to protected area managers across Europe. It considered the many pressures on protected areas, the variety of socio-economic situations and the presence of many international bodies. A wide range of projects has been developed as follow-up activities, designed to strengthen cooperation between protected area managers.

### **EUROPARC**

This Federation founded in 1973 under the official title "Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe", and has since grown to become the recognized, professional organization for European protected areas. An independent, non-governmental organization, its membership brings together the organizations responsible for the management of over 400 protected areas. Key aims of EUROPARC are: a) promote good practice in the management of protected areas, b) facilitate the establishment of new protected areas, c) raise the profile of protected areas and thereby to increase support for their future protection, and d) influence the future development of public policies and programmes, especially with the European Union.

#### **PAN Parks – World Wide Fund for Nature**

Five years ago, WWF and the Dutch Leisure Company Molecaten Group, began work on PAN (Protected Area Network) Parks Initiative. The idea is simple: to introduce a marriage between nature conservation and tourism on a European scale. PAN Parks aims to change tourism from a threat into an opportunity by building partnerships with nature conservation organizations, travel agencies, the business community, and other interested groups on local, national and international level. PAN Parks aims are: a) to create a European network of wilderness protected areas, b) to improve nature protection by sustainable tourism development, and c) to provide a reliable trademark that guarantees nature protection and is recognized by all Europeans.

## **Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE)**

The LCIE is a dynamic network of European organizations and experts from 29 countries (including representatives from government, the Bern Convention, international and national NGOs, together with scientists, land managers and other experts) working to secure viable populations of large carnivores in coexistence with people. The Initiative supports conservation activities throughout the continent, and disseminates experience and knowledge. The main areas of work are: a) protection of large carnivore populations and habitats, b) integration of large carnivores with local development, c) conservation of these mammals through legislation, policy and economic instruments, and d) public acceptance for the existence of carnivores in Europe.

### **Large Herbivore Initiative (LHI)**

This Initiative involves some 20 projects throughout Europe and Asia. These projects deal with a great variety of activities all meant to protect the large herbivore species and restore their ecological role within their original ranges.

## **Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin (EPDRB)**

State governments of the Danube River Basin and international institutions draw up an initiative in Sofia, in September 1991 to support and reinforce national actions for the restoration and protection of the Danube River. All partners set up a Task Force and a programme Coordination Unit and developed a Strategic Action Plan, which was mostly supported by PHARE, TACIS and by UNDP/GEF. The main objective of the EPDRB was to strengthen the operational basis for environmental management in the Danube River Basin and to support the Danube countries to implement the Danube River Protection Convention. With the DRPC entry into force in 1998, the transfer of tasks and responsibilities from the EPDRB under the umbrella of the DRPC is achieved.

## **Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**

Launched in 1999, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is the first comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy of the international community, aimed at strengthening the efforts of the countries of South East Europe in fostering peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity. The **Stability Pact** provides a framework to stimulate regional co-operation and expedite integration into European and trans-Atlantic structures.

The Stability Pact is a political declaration of commitment and a framework agreement on international co-operation to develop a shared strategy among all partners for stability and growth in South Eastern Europe. The Stability Pact is not a new international organisation nor does it have any independent financial resources or implementing structures.

Organisationally, the Stability Pact relies on the Special Co-ordinator, Erhard Busek, and his some 30-member team. His most important task is to bring the participants' political strategies in line with one another, to co-ordinate existing

and new initiatives in the region and, thereby, to help avoid unnecessary duplication of work. The offices of the Special Co-ordinator are in Brussels.

The Special Co-ordinator chairs the most important political instrument of the Stability Pact, the Regional Table. There are three Working Tables, which operate under the Regional Table:

- **Working Table I:** Democratisation and Human Rights;
- **Working Table II:** Economic Reconstruction, Co-operation and Development;
- **Working Table III:** Security Issues (with two Sub-Tables: Security and Defence, and Justice and Home Affairs).

The structure and working methods of the Stability Pact are modelled on the CSCE process. A special feature is that at Regional and Working Tables, representatives of South Eastern European countries are, for the first time, on an equal footing with those of international organisations and financial institutions in advising on the future of their region and in setting priorities concerning the content of all three working areas.

The first core objective of the Stability Pact in 2005 was: **Local Democracy and Cross-Border Cooperation**. This means promotion of efficient local governance and enhancement of co-operation among local actors (governmental, civic, and private sector) across national borders to foster regional co-operation in SEE.

### **REReP - Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme**

REReP is the main environmental component of the EU Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (Balkans). REReP is the only initiative under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to be taken by the countries of the region themselves. It supports activities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo - territory under UN interim administration). REReP has been endorsed by environmental ministers from the region at the Ministerial Conference in Skopje in March 2000, as well as officials from the Stability Pact, effectively making it the official environmental policy of the region.

After a REReP Task Force reviewed its entire operating mechanism, REReP's focus was redirected to supporting stabilisation and association processes (SAP). Furthermore, it was firmly embedded into an evolving international framework to ensure its continued existence. REReP is now developing into a vehicle to assist the countries of South Eastern Europe in their long-term goals of European Union integration .

### **SEEC - The South East European Cooperation Process**

The South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) is a genuine Balkan cooperation forum. Only countries of the region participate in this scheme, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia & Montenegro), FYR Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Croatia as observer.

In 1996, thanks to a Greek and Bulgarian initiative, the SEECP convened again in Sofia (Foreign Ministers' meeting, 6-7.7.1996), leading to the first Ministerial meeting in Thessaloniki (9-10.6.1997) with the participation of all countries of the region and to the Crete Summit (3-4.11.1997).

Important milestones of the Process have been the Attalya Summit (October 12-13, 1998) when the agreement on the establishment, in Turkey, of the Regional Center for the promotion of trade was signed, the Bucharest Summit (February 12, 2000) when the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in S.E. Europe was signed (to which the Serbia and Montenegro was fully adhered during the February 23, 2001 Skopje Summit). The Charter provides for procedural aspects and follow-up mechanisms of the SEECP (regular Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Political Directors meetings, a troika mechanism, secretarial services etc).

At the Skopje Summit of February 23, 2001, the Heads of State and Government welcomed the accession of Bosnia & Herzegovina as a full member. They also reaffirmed the commitments contained in the SEECP Summit and Ministerial Declarations and the Bucharest Charter, based on the principles of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, including all 10 principles, while the Summit Declaration "noted with satisfaction" the border demarcation agreement between the Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia, signed on the margins of the Summit. A far-reaching Action Plan for Regional Economic Cooperation was also adopted.

Following a Greek proposal, the Tirana Summit (March 28, 2002) stressed, inter alia, the SEECP countries' concern for the plight of refugees and displaced persons in the region, condemned acts of vandalism against cultural monuments and religious sites and "reaffirmed their commitment to jointly work for their preservation and restoration".

The Heads of State and Government also tasked the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Committee of Political Directors to review under the leadership of the new Chairman in Office (the Serbia and Montenegro) the activities so far conducted and the ways for increasing the effectiveness of the existing organizational arrangements, if necessary with concrete proposals for their improvement. It was also agreed that the Chairman in Office would represent the SEECP in the Informal Consultative Committee (EU - Stability Pact) set up following a decision by the GAC (19 November 2001).

Positively considering horizontal issues, the recent June 19 Belgrade Ministerial meeting decided - see Belgrade Ministerial statement - that SEECP activities should focus on the development of transport infrastructure, the interconnection of the energy networks, the fight against organized crime / illicit trafficking, the promotion of market economy, the development of telecommunications.

Following George Papandreou's proposal and the commitment undertaken at the Tirana Ministerial meeting (16 May 2001), the Ministers discussed the elimination of stereotypes from school textbooks and agreed on holding a relevant experts' meeting. SEECP countries were also encouraged to tackle this issue at the bilateral level by including the said commitment in bilateral agreements on culture and education.

Furthermore, the Ministers endorsed a Greek proposal and agreed that an experts' meeting should be held in order to prepare a special meeting of the Ministers of Culture devoted to the preservation and restoration of cultural monuments and religious sites.

In addition, the Ministers stressed that intensified regional cooperation in the field of law enforcement, judiciary and public order to reach effective border control is necessary to combat organized crime and illicit trafficking.

The Belgrade Ministerial meeting also dealt with the organizational aspects of the Process and endorsed a progress report on the activities of the Committee of Political Directors on the enhancement of the SEECP. Namely it was decided:

- To activate the Troika mechanism foreseen in the Bucharest Charter.
- To convene at least once every three months a meeting of the Committee of Political Directors (also foreseen in the Bucharest Charter).
- To establish for the first time a Task Force to work in specific areas.
- To appoint in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs a Contact Point for SEECP.
- To support the initiative of the current Chairman in Office to organize a meeting of regional initiatives to streamline mutual cooperation.

The future of the Process lies in its smooth and phased development into an organization. The overall objective is to enhance regional cooperation in a more efficient and result-oriented manner. From this angle, the Tirana Summit and the far-reaching Albanian proposals, along with the Belgrade Ministerial Meeting, constitute a tangible step forward. SEECP development requires, first of all, the full use of the mechanisms provided for in the Bucharest Charter.

### **SECI – South East European Cooperative Initiative**

The impetus behind the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) is encouraging cooperation among its Participating States and facilitating their integration into European structures.

SECI is not an assistance program. It does not interfere with, but rather complements with existing initiatives. SECI endeavours to promote close cooperation among the governments of the region and to create new channels of communication among them.

Furthermore, SECI attempts to emphasize and coordinate region-wide planning, identify needed follow-up and missing links, provide for better involvement of the private sector in regional economic and environmental efforts, help to create a regional climate that encourages the transfer of know-how and greater investment in the private sector, and assist in harmonizing trade laws and policies.

The United States, determined to advance support mechanisms for the Dayton Peace Agreement and to develop a viable exist strategy from the region, advocated the idea to promote regional economic and environmental cooperation among the countries of Southeast Europe. SECI was launched on the basis of "Points of Common EU-U.S. Understanding."

The Participating States of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative held an inaugural meeting in Geneva on December 5-6, 1996 and formally adopted the SECI Statement of Purpose on December 6, 1996. On December 19, 1996, as authorized by the Participating States, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (Swiss Federal Councilor Flavio Cotti), named Dr. Erhard Busek, former vice-chancellor of Austria, as SECI "High-Level Personality", hereinafter Coordinator. The SECI Participating States include: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Macedonia, Turkey and, as of December 2000, the Serbia and Montenegro.

SECI actively encourages the involvement of other regional initiatives such as the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Royaumont Process and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). SECI has made a conscious effort to invite representatives from these initiatives to its Agenda Committee meetings and project group meetings. SECI holds ad hoc consultative meetings with the coordinators of CEI and BSEC. Institutions with a regional focus are also encouraged to contribute and participate actively. SECI works with the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (Vienna), the Centro Studi Nord Est (Venice and Trieste), WCO's Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO-Warsaw), and the United Nations Center for International Crime Prevention, just to name a few.

### **ENVSEC – Environment for Security Initiative**

ENVSEC began operations in 2003 as a joint programme of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). NATO through its Science for Peace programme soon joined as an associate member. At the end of 2005 the ENVSEC Management Board (MB) accepted two new partners: the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). Their specialised expertise and capacity will increase the Initiative's ability to meet its objectives and deliver its work programs on the ground .

The ENVSEC Initiative works to assess and address environmental problems, which threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods, within and across national borders in conflict prone regions.

The Initiative works closely with governments, particularly foreign and environment ministries, national experts and NGOs. Together with the stakeholders ENVSEC has carried out assessments and published reports illustrated by maps, for understanding the linkages between environment and security in the political and socio-economic reality of South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Based on the assessments, the Initiative develops and implements work programs aimed at reducing tensions and solving the problems identified. Throughout the process of assessment and work programme development and implementation the emphasis is placed on multi-stakeholder participation.

The September 2005 Advisory Board meeting in Bratislava brought together more than 100 representatives from countries in which the Initiative is operational, donor countries and the international community, illustrating and proving the importance of a fully participatory approach to problem solving in the regions.

The secretariat is located at UNEP's Regional Office for Europe in Geneva. The initiative is open for collaboration with potential partners in the countries, regions and internationally.

The ENVSEC South Eastern Europe's priorities, following a regional meeting in Skopje in September 2004 and the recent high-level meeting on environment, security and mining in Cluj Napoca, Romania in May 2005, include the assessment and mitigation of security risks from mining.

With the launch of the document "Mining for Closure – Policies, Practices and Guidelines for Sustainable Mining and the Closure of Mines", ENVSEC presents a basis for action within South-Eastern Europe and the Tisza river basin towards the development of corporate practice, regulatory frameworks, governance guidelines and/or financial and insurance markets suitable for the support of a modern mining industry in the region. ENVSEC is developing and implementing a number of pilot projects to carry out feasibility studies for the remediation of sites with legacies of mining; it will help to establish networks of local actors and provide training based on "Mining for Closure"; and it has solicited cooperation with the European Commission in the region.

As part of the ENVSEC South Eastern Europe programme, technical assistance for transboundary protected areas management and the South Eastern Europe network of protected areas, such as for a trilateral Balkan Peace Park (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro) initiative is under preparation.

The project focus will be on supporting ongoing initiatives concerning transboundary cooperation on biodiversity and protected areas management, and facilitate collaborative and consultative processes. Furthermore, the project will support the establishment of the network of protected areas, based on experience from Alpine and Carpathian Networks of Protected Areas, and build capacity on selected topics at the sub-regional level. Results will be presented at the 6th Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" that will take place in Belgrade in 2007.

### **European Agency for Reconstruction – EAR**

The EAR task is to manage the European Union's main assistance programmes in Serbia and Montenegro (the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro, UN-administered Kosovo) and Macedonia.

The agency was established in February 2000 as the EU's main reconstruction arm in war-damaged Kosovo and later expanded to Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. The agency's headquarters is in Thessaloniki, Greece. It has operational centres in Pristina, Belgrade, Podgorica and Skopje.

An independent agency of the European Union, EAR is accountable to the Council and the European Parliament and overseen by a Governing Board composed of representatives from the 25 EU Member States and the European Commission.

The EC assistance funds delegated to the Agency for management in 2005 amounted to some €282 million. Since 2000, the Agency has managed a cumulative total of some €2.6 billion of EU taxpayers' money across its four operational centres.

The new European Commission-funded programmes managed by the Agency are designed to support good governance, institution building and the rule of law as well the development of a market economy while investing further in critical physical infrastructure and environmental protection. They also focus on social development and the strengthening of civil society.

The purpose of these efforts is to reinforce the region's own reform processes by strengthening the 'state machinery' of central and local administration, the police, the judiciary, public finances, and state utility providers.

### **Energy Community Treaty**

Improving the balance between energy supply and demand is crucial to boost and sustain economic development in South Eastern Europe. This requires a strong commitment by the countries of the region towards market oriented reforms in order to: improve overall energy conservation and efficiency, reduce an excessively high energy intensity of production compared to international standards, strengthen national institutional capacities and adapt legislation and regulation to EU norms and practices. It also means that countries should be prepared to draw fully on the substantial gains which can result from energy trading among themselves and with their neighbours. This implies that the current fragmentation of energy supply is to overcome through cooperation among the various entities concerned and through physical connection/reconnection of the network. A regional approach to energy supply, therefore, offers significant advantages both in terms of improved utilization of existing supply and production capacities as well as optimizing future investments. Major steps have already been taken over the last couple of years towards achieving these objectives in both the electricity and natural gas sectors. On 25 October 2005 a Treaty establishing the Energy Community between the EU and South Eastern Europe has been signed. Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on behalf of the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo have therefore take a step towards full integration of their energy markets into the EU energy market.

The creation of the Energy Community in SEE is the outcome of the so-called "Athens Process" for regional energy co-operation. This process was launched by the European Commission with the support of the Stability Pact in 2002. Thanks to the dedication of all the parties involved it made rapid progress

including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Electricity in November 2002 in Athens and the expansion of this co-operation to the gas sector through a second Memorandum of Understanding in December 2003. Under these, the SEE countries committed themselves to introducing common rules based on EU legislation in these two sectors. The process received a significant boost through the physical reconnection of the SEE grids to the UCTE network in October 2004.

The SEE countries efforts are being supported by a well co-ordinated group of donors led by the European Commission and including the World Bank, the EBRD, IEA, EIB, USAID, CIDA (Canada), Austria, Italy, France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Greece.

The Stability Pact's role has been to complement the European Commission's lead by generating political support for the process among the SEE governments and the international community as well as promoting the process to the business community.

The **political** significance of this treaty should not be underestimated. The SEE countries have formalised their commitment to regional co-operation in the energy sector including providing mutual assistance, with an internationally binding treaty. Implementation will result in the **countries of SEE becoming part of the EU's internal market in a key economic sector before their accession to the EU**. Many have compared this Treaty to the 1951 European Coal and Steel Community Treaty that paved the way for the European Community.

This Treaty is a highly ambitious one. It commits the SEE countries to a rapid timetable for restructuring a largely state-owned industry and adopting challenging directives in areas such as environment. Their progress on this will be monitored closely by the European Union and by the private sector as it considers what investments it can make. The socio-economic impact of the transformation including restructuring of companies and the introduction of tariff reforms must be acknowledged and programmes to create a social safety net, particularly for vulnerable groups.

## **European Green Belt**

IUCN Regional Office for Europe holds the Secretariat for the establishment of one of the world's most fascinating ecological networks: the European Green Belt, which is turning the former Iron Curtain, the "scar on the face of Europe", into a lifeline for people and nature. In 2005, the 22 countries that are connected through the Green Belt Initiative (GB) adopted an ambitious Programme of Work for the coming years to roll this backbone of a European ecological network out over 6800 km across Europe, from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. The Programme foresees inter alia the establishment of the Green Belt as a functioning ecological network by 2010, and numerous measures of stakeholder participation and awareness raising. IUCN set up the Green Belt Secretariat with local and regional coordinator structures and managed first information exchange on local activities and discussions during the regional meetings for the Central European and the Balkan GB in autumn 2005. The integration of local

communities with nature conservation and transboundary regional development could be demonstrated in several case studies, contributing to a sustainable, biodiversity conservation driven regional development.

Adding to the knowledge base for the Green Belt and other ecological corridors, IUCN developed a database on ecological networks in Central and Eastern Europe, as a starting point for a common European database. The next steps are a pan European Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping project in 2006/07, funded by the German BfN and DBU.

### **Dinaric Arc Initiative – DAI**

WWF, UNESCO-ROSTE, UNDP, IUCN and the Council of Europe created the Dinaric Arc Initiative – DAI. It is a broad framework of collaboration which aims to add value to the on-going programmes of all its partners, and put in place new specific actions aiming at:

- The preservation of the wealth and integrity of the Dinaric Arc through the establishment of networks of protected areas and support to initiatives for the conservation of its biological diversity and the sustainable management of its resources;
- The preservation and valorisation of the cultural diversity and the cultural heritage of the Dinaric Arc;
- The promotion of intercultural dialogue, trans-boundary collaboration and scientific co-operation among the countries of the region;

The Dinaric Arc includes portions of the following countries: Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Albania.

### **Associations active in the region**

#### **European Association for co-operation between mountain territories – (Euromontana)**

Euromontana is the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. It embraces regional and national mountain organisations throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organisations, environmental agencies, forestry organisations and research institutes.

It currently embraces 56 regional and national mountain organizations in 17 countries throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes.

Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

In order to achieve this, Euromontana facilitates the exchange of information and experience among these areas by organising seminars and major conferences, by conducting and collaborating in studies, by developing, managing and participating in European projects and by working with the European institutions on mountain issues.

The office in Brussels follows the development of all relevant policies and legislation emerging from the European Commission and EU structures, in order to make representation on those issues that are of significance to mountain areas.

Euromontana through its project activities launched **the European Charter on quality mountain food products**. The point of such a Charter is to write down the common perceptions and the concepts on what constitutes a mountain product in order to promote the cooperation, begin the engagement of different actors in order to develop these products and finally to raise awareness and engage the European and national institutions. Euromontana foresees a period of consultation from now on and will be going progressively towards a wide recognition and ownership of this Charter by the mountain organisations in Europe. The Charter would have first a political role. It would be signed by all the professionals, national or international institutions, research and development centres. Euromontana will also formulate its own recommendations to the European Commission, and when appropriate, to the national governments.

### **European Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Areas – (AEM)**

AEM collects public elected officials from mayors to Members of the European Parliament, local and regional authorities from the mountain areas federating, directly or through the national associations, approximately 50 regions, 100 provinces 12 000 municipalities from the European Union and Candidate Countries.

The AEM works to promote an endogenous, better balanced and diversified model of sustainable development for Europe (**cohesion**), taking regional particularities and natural handicaps into account, and to strengthen the participation of subnational regional and local stakeholders in framing and applying European policy (**governance**). Its objective is to promote better cooperation between the local authorities of Europe's mountainous areas (**regional cooperation**) by supporting the implementation of projects, and the establishment and monitoring of relations with the European Commission in relation to European programmes.

The 3rd European Conference of Mountain Regions held by the Council of Europe in 1994 adopted a European Charter of Mountain Regions. This document has been approved by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), as well as the Committee of the Regions of the European Union. Under a decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, this document was converted into a draft convention and summarised in the form of a draft framework convention, which was approved by CALRE at its May 2000 plenary session.

## **European Mountain Forum (EMF)**

The objectives of the European Mountain Forum is to promote sustainable development and management of European mountains and their environment, to facilitate exchange between all parties involved, and to encourage education, training, public awareness and technical assistance in all aspects.

## **Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development**

The Balkan Foundation for Sustainable development was established in 2005 by the MAKMONTANA – Association for the Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in the Republic of Macedonia and with donor support from the UNEP-Vienna office, and EUROPEAN ACADEMY (EURAC) from Bolzano-Italy. Its founding was based on a bold vision to create a vibrant, inter-regional foundation in the Balkan region to support citizen initiatives through local governments and NGOs. The impetus to develop this type of Foundation in South-Eastern Europe emerged from the belief that supporting democracy, sustainable development, cross-border and inter-ethnic cooperation at the local and regional levels is a cornerstone of a stable and democratic Europe.

It is a unique, cross-border regional foundation created with aim to provide grants and technical assistance to NGOs and local governments, focusing primarily on inter-regional, economic and sustainable development and transfrontier activities. It encourages the development of public/private/NGO partnerships, including cross-border and inter-ethnic approaches to promote regional and community development and to help prevent conflicts.

The Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development promotes good relations, social stability, and economic progress in the bordering regions of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. It does so by providing financial and technical assistance to projects which will result in tangible benefits to the communities on both sides of national borders and which will improve the quality of life of the people in the cities and small towns of the Balkan region.

A particular objective of the Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development is to provide conditions in which the communities of the Balkan Region will develop the confidence, identity and local resources for improving their general well-being and to guide them to the wider European and global development initiatives.

## **At the National Level**

### **BULMONTANA - Bulgarian Association for the Development of Mountain Regions.**

BULMONTANA is a non-governmental organization, founded in November 2001. The main objectives of Bulmontana is to support and promote the development of the mountain regions in Republic of Bulgaria. To work for the sustainable development of the mountain regions and increasing the living standard of the population living there. To support and stimulate the effective management and

use of the recourses of the mountain and rural regions in Republic of Bulgaria. To encourage the training and research in mountain regions in Republic of Bulgaria, and to develop international cooperation to share best practices concerning the sustainable development of mountain areas.

**MAKMONTANA – Association for the Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in the Republic of Macedonia.**

National Association for the sustainable development of mountain regions – MAKMONTANA is a non-governmental organization, founded in September 2000.

The objectives of Makmontana are: To promote sustainable development of mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia. To promote and to protect the cultural, economic, political and scientific interests of the population in the mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia. To inform the public on the problems of mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia. To encourage the training and research in mountain regions as well as the study of economic, social and environmental problems in the mountain regions of the Republic of Macedonia. To develop international cooperation for reducing the gap between the mountain regions of Europe. To implement the national and international projects on sustainable development of mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia. To promote the mountain quality products of the Republic of Macedonia. To support the development of mountain rural communities in the Republic of Macedonia.

**ROMONTANA – Association for Mountain Rural Development in Romania**

It is non-governmental organization established in 2000.

Romontana main objective is the sustainable of the Romanian mountain areas, support of the mountain communities in order to strengthen their own capacity of development and to establish viable professional structures able to support and promote the interests of the mountain producers.

**SEEENN – South Eastern European Environmental NGOs Network** was established in June 2000 with the agreement of more than 60 Balkan environmental NGOs, participating in the Conference “Sustainable development in the Balkans” in Struga, Macedonia.

The main objective of SEEENN is creation of a platform for co -operation and information exchange of NGOs in SEE in order to:

- to strengthen the environmental NGO community in SEE;
- to ensure permanent flow of information between NGOs; and
- to enable permanent and sufficient NGO input into REReP, Stability Pact and other development initiatives in the region

## 4. Sector Analysis

### 4.1. Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity

Even after millennia of human modification of the Earth's ecosystems, mountain areas remain refuges for a great wealth of endemic species, specialised ecosystems and remarkable landscapes. A common approach to conserving this biological and landscape diversity has been to establish national parks, nature reserves, and other protected areas. More recent approaches recognise that biological and landscape diversity must also be conserved on land under agriculture and forestry, and that the private sector can be a major conserver of such values.

In the South Eastern Europe (Balkan), the list of unique and well preserved natural areas is long, covering many habitat types from coastal lagoons to the high altitudes of the Dinarides and Rhodope Mountains. During the last ice age the South Eastern Europe (Balkan) was a place of retreat for many species. They have survived there, due to the presence of suitable niches (habitats) in the great variety of landscapes.

The South Eastern Europe (Balkan) is particularly rich in wetlands (Table 4.), with 43 internationally designated Ramsar sites currently classified in the region. The fact that most of them are situated along the state borders or along the coastal lines, demonstrates the need for the development of international cooperation.

**Table 4. Ramsar Sites in the South Eastern Europe (Balkans)**

<b>Balkan Peninsula</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Border</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>coastal</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>size (ha)</b>
Albania	2	1	50	2	50	33500
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	100	1	100	7411
Bulgaria	10	3	30	7	70	20306
Croatia	4	3	75	1	25	80455
Greece	10	2	20	5	50	163 501
Macedonia	1	1	100	0	0	18 920
Serbia-Montenegro	4	2	50	0	0	39 861
Slovenia	2	1	50	1	50	955
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>364 909</b>

Of particular interest are sensitive wetlands, the “karst polje” areas which are situated in the chain of the Dinaride Mountains. These are vast flat plains, covered periodically with water coming from subterranean rivers and the surrounding mountains.

The loss of wetlands has not been quantified for the region, except for the Danube floodplains, where 80% have been drained<sup>9</sup>. This has led to a general loss of biodiversity, but also to a loss of highly productive forests, retention capacities in cases of floods, and as a consequence a reduction of the self-purification mechanism of the rivers.

The northern mountains in the Balkans have a number of areas of particular conservation importance. The Zumberacko Gorje (Gorjanci) mountains (highest peak: Sv. Gera, 1181m) have an especially high biological diversity because of their positions at the junction of Alpine, Dinaric, Continental and Pannonian areas. The flora has many rare species, including 35 orchids and the fauna, from invertebrates to large predators, is also very diverse. The Snjeznik-Risnjak mountains (1528m) are notable for their large area of virgin beech, fir and pine forests, with a rich flora and many large predators. The Mala Hapela mountains (1279m) are known for their karst springs and lakes, primeval beech-fir forests and relic pine forests. The most important are the Velebit and Biokovo (in the central karst), which have a very high diversity of both fauna, notably reptiles and birds, and flora, including many endemics.

Bosnia, Hercegovina and Serbia and Montenegro include some of the most biologically diverse mountains in Europe, with particularly high numbers of relic and endemic species. Areas of especially high importance are Orjen, Sutjeska national park and Veliki Stolac/Tara Canyon/Durmitor national park, all of which are near or on the national frontiers between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. Other highly important areas in Serbia and Montenegro are also shared with other countries: Iron Gate national park (Romania); Shar Planina national park (Macedonia); Stara Planina (Bulgaria); and Prokletije (Albania). Other areas of particular conservation importance in the Albanian mountains include Bjeshket e Namuna in the Northern Albanian Alps, with wide range of forests types, many endemic plants, and many predators (e.g. bear, wolf, martens) and ungulates (roe deer, goats); Lura, in the murdita, with many endemic plants; and Dajti (1612m) in the Cretaceous mountains close to Tirana, with all of the montane forest zones and many endemic species.

The Stara Planina, particularly the Central Balkans national park, are of high conservation importance for a number of reasons. They include half of the Bulgarian fauna and vascular flora and the most extensive beech forests in Europe (30,000ha). Particularly because of their age and diversity of types, these provide habitat for a very rich avifauna, of which various woodpeckers and owls are particularly important. The caves of the area provided habitat for many species of bats. BirdLife International has recognised the region as one of the most important in Europe particularly because of the large number of rare, vulnerable and endangered birds of prey. Many of these inhabit the subalpine and limited alpine zone, which is also important because of endemic and glacial relic flora on the highest peaks. Important mammals include pine marten (*martes*

*martes*) wild cat (*Felis silvestris*), bear and wolf in the forests; and chamois at higher altitudes. Karst areas in the Pirin, Rhodope and Slayvanka mountains are also important for their high diversity of endemic plants, birds of prey and bats. From a floristic viewpoint, the most important habitats of the Rila and Pirin mountains are in the diverse subalpine and alpine, which include many endemic and glacial relic species. This zone also provides habitat for rare reptiles and chamois: Rila has the largest population in Bulgaria. Primary fir, pine and spruce forests are also important as habitat for bears, wolves and an avifauna which is rich in songbirds, woodpeckers and birds of prey, notably golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), tengmalms owl (*Aegolius funereus*) and pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*). Other parts of the rhodope massif, especially karst areas, are also important because of their high biological diversity and/or rare species, notably black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) and several other raptors. Strandja is of particular importance because of its role as a refuge during the Ice Age. Its oriental beech forests are unique, and it includes a number of relic and endemic species, such as the Strandja oak (*Quercus hartwissiana*), and a diverse mixture of Mediterranean and central European flora and fauna, notably birds and reptiles but also large mammals such as wolves, wild cats, otters, marble polecats (*Vormela peregusna peregusna*) and jackals (*Canis aureus*). But it should be noted that the current knowledge of the Balkan wildlife is currently fragmented, making it difficult to assess the status of many globally threatened species found in the region. Large mammals (e.g. wolf, bear, lynx) and birds of prey (Imperial Eagle, four species of vultures) are considered to be key European indicators for the value of large-scale semi-natural landscapes. The great Balkan lakes, lagoons and deltas host the most important colonies of the Dalmatian Pelican. They are the key sites for many European bird species migrating to Africa. Some species of bats, fish, reptiles, amphibians and some invertebrate species could also be considered as the umbrella species for purposes of long-term monitoring. Table 5. shows that a diversity of vascular plants in the Mediterranean, including the Balkan Peninsula, is significant compared to other regions of the world.

**Table 4. Diversity of vascular plants in four global hotspots**

Region	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Number of plant species	Number of endemic species	% of endemic species
Mediterranean	2 300 000	25 000	12 500	50
DR Congo	2 345 000	11 000	2 800	(approx) 30
India	3 166 000	15 000	5 000	30
Australia	7 682 000	22 000	7 600	34

Source: IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation Strategy, 2002

The potential current threats to the biodiversity in the South East Europe (Balkan) are as follows:

- Conflicts
- Habitat fragmentation by
  - planned road reconstruction
  - bad planning
  - infrastructure development
  - property speculations
- Habitat degradation through
  - increased number of motor-vehicles
  - industrial pollution (no filter and old technologies)
  - uncontrolled logging
  - deforestation (mainly illegal)
  - uncontrolled usage of waters
  - overgrazing
- Overuse of natural resources
- Poaching (uncontrolled hunting) including poisoning
- Unsustainable fishing practices
- Use of pesticides
- Lack of proper legislation and not enough enforcement of existing laws
- Process of re-privatization of arable and forest land when biodiversity conservation is not taken into consideration
- Lack of institutional capacities for protection and management of protected areas

### **Transboundary aspects of biodiversity conservation**

The South East Europe (Balkans) represent one of the most important areas for transboundary co-operation in protected area management worldwide. The regional co-operation should be further enhanced based on the institutional capacity to establish a programme for nature conservation and incorporate best practices.

The size of each of the Balkan countries is small relative to the main habitats in the region. For example the spacious mountain chains spread from the Northern Adriatic coast to Greece and further to the Black Sea. Often the mountain ridge forms the border between the countries. At least 50% of the sites of international importance in the region are transboundary, including all the large lakes like Skutari, Dojran, Ohrid and Prespa, many important rivers and important coastal zones (e.g. Neretva Delta, Bojana/Buna Delta).

In the last couple of years, the number of cross-border memoranda of understanding, agreements and initiatives has rapidly increased. More and more specific projects and cross border activities are carried out successfully in the region, using a variety of instruments, models and approaches for joint work.

Cross-border projects are focused on resolving concrete problems; they are now more process than resource oriented, with clear agreement on rules and procedures to be adopted. These efforts have led to an improved level of communication among project partners and stakeholders, better cooperation, local ownership and commitment.

Environmental cooperation is indispensable when it comes to sustainable management of shared natural resources. It has created mutual trust and established long-term horizons while developing a routine of cooperation. Environmental cooperation has been particularly successful in the protection of shared natural sites, such as the cross-border water management of the Sava, Drina, Neretva and Danube rivers, as well as of the joint natural resources Stara Planina and Shkoder Lake. Ohrid and Prespa lakes are already proven examples of successful cross-border cooperation in environmental issues.

But it should be also noted that a number of running activities related to transboundary cooperation has not been sufficiently communicated and third parties have not been familiar with the available knowledge. Initiatives such as the Balkan Green Belt and the European Green Belt and some other programmes have been started, but they need a common approach to become effective throughout the region. The European Green Belt scheme, of which the Balkan Green Belt will form part, is an initiative of several organisations under the lead of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and IUCN. This initiative aims to transform the former Iron Curtain along the East-West divide of Europe into a protected areas corridor, thus acting as a symbol of union between East and West.

In the IUCN Strategic Plan for South Eastern Europe (Balkan), 37 priority sites have been identified for a transboundary co-operation (see Annex 1). This represents the backbone of the comprehensive Protected Areas Network throughout the region. To initiate transboundary co-operation, further projects need to be launched by different organisations and international support should be assured. This will then guarantee the formal basis for the development of a comprehensive network of protected areas in the entire region.

Following the success of the Network of Alpine Protected Areas – established under the framework of the Alpine Convention – the development of a similar network in the South Eastern Europe (Balkan) is highly recommended. With respect to this protected areas network, emphasis should be given to transboundary PA, as they potentially provide a wide range of benefits. To name a few, safeguarding important areas of biodiversity divided by political borders, a more effective management of shared ecological units or migratory species (e.g. large carnivores), the preservation and enhancement of cultural values and their promotion, strengthening or re-establishing of good relations with neighboring states.

A possible legal framework will make use of international and regional instruments on the protection and conservation of biodiversity to which South East European (Balkan) States are Parties. Especially, the CBD and the Biosafety Protocol, the Bern Convention, the Bonn Convention, the Ramsar Convention, the UNESCO World Heritage, the PEBLDS, the NATURA 2000 and

EMERALD networks, and the EU Directives on birds, habitats and GMOs. This legal framework would also contribute to the implementation of existing mechanisms, ensuring the protection and sustainable use of South East European (Balkan) specific elements.

### **Key Recommendations**

The conservation of biological diversity in the South East Europe (Balkans) will be most effectively realised through enhanced protected areas system and connected ecological network.

To ensure the long-term sustainable development of the Balkans, the conservation of biological diversity has to be considered as integral part of it, so that means the Balkan countries should:

- Explicitly integrate conservation and the sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity into national sector policies such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, transport and energy and industry;
- Ensure the preservation of endangered species listed in the *Red List of Endangered Species*, especially through the maintenance of their habitats;
- Establish a *Network of Protected Areas in the Balkans*, each with an effective, participatory management system;
- Implement programs that will enable local populations to derive economic benefit from traditional and sustainable land-use and tourism practices that protect the high biological diversity of the Balkan Mountains;
- Strengthen the capacities of the Balkan countries for effective biodiversity conservation;
- Use a South East European (Balkan) legal framework as a platform for discussion and exchange of information;

## 4.2. Sustainable Local Development and Territorial Planning

Mountains are an important source of water, energy and biological diversity. Furthermore, they are a source of such key resources as minerals, forest products, and of recreation. As a major ecosystem representing the complex of interrelated ecology of our planet, mountain environments are essential to the survival of the global ecosystem. Further in the Agenda 21, in its Chapter 13 (Managing fragile ecosystems – sustainable mountain development) states that mountains areas are highly vulnerable due to their special characteristics (fragile ecosystems, hard climatic conditions, isolation, political and economic marginality, etc.). Therefore, conservation of the natural heritage, sustainable local development and territorial planning have to go hand in hand. There is clearly a need for integrated and participatory approaches based on typical resources of the local area. Synergies between various sectors (agriculture, handicraft, tourism, nature, etc.) have to be developed and strengthened. Consequently, a bottom-up approach has to be applied. Also important for the successful implementation of sustainable mountain development, is the creation of policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms. Those have to be specifically tailored towards the needs of local people in mountainous areas and should be supportive to local initiatives. As examples, the Austrian “Multi-sectoral mountain policy” and the Polish “Act concerning the economic development of mountain areas” can be used. In case of absence of such policy instruments, specific measures concerning mountains should be added to existing sectoral policies.

Since the UNCED conference in Río de Janeiro in 1992, many communities around the world have developed their own “Local Agenda 21”. This is the mandate to local governments to translate the United Nations Action Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Agenda 21) to the local level, promoting initiatives and programmes to support sustainable development. Local sustainable development concerns the relationship between economic activities, the use of natural resources and the quality of life achieved. Both, the final UNCED document and the Local Agenda 21, are non-legally binding instruments, and therefore depending on the political will of decision makers and the motivation of stakeholders and the public. A local Agenda 21 is more than an environmental plan. It is a framework to integrate the social, economic and ecological needs of the community in a balanced way. It should link local issues with global ones, providing local solutions to global problems, and making the slogan “think globally, act locally” a reality. It is not a project, which starts and finishes, but it is a permanent process and a long- term commitment. Integration plays a key role and has to be reflected in all stages of decision-making. Participation and community consultation are underlying principles. Administrative boundaries do not necessarily coincide with natural environmental features; therefore, there is the need to interact in an integrated, regional sense with other communities. Furthermore, state and national governments need to ensure that the outcomes of local Agenda 21 programmes are integrated with and inform all level of planning and policymaking. This requires a close cooperation between local and state governments.

The fact that thousands of such local initiatives exist already means that the potential for sharing experiences and networking is limitless. As experience has shown, the practical example is the best means of illustration for all actors. As mentioned already, there are several similarities between the three mountain ranges of the Alps, the Carpathians and South Eastern (Balkan). Thus, networking and learning from each other seems a most appropriate approach. The first step towards this goal was the conference in Bolzano, Italy, in December 2005. A more detailed look should be taken to examine and share experience from local initiatives that help to implement the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions. Examples include independent marketing of organically produced products, nature tourism, fruitful partnerships between municipalities – the so called “Alliance of the Alps” –, and many others. The Alpine Protocol on land use planning and sustainable development is concerned with coordination of land use, and to ensure that land is used in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Mountain regions must meet several different demands: they are home to plants and animals, but are also areas of economic activity; they are used for recreation, for agriculture and transport. However, usable space is sometimes limited, therefore careful territorial planning is necessary and there is the need for a harmonized regional planning in the South East Europe (Balkan) as a whole.

### **Key Recommendations**

The challenge facing the South East Europe (Balkan) region is a daunting one: how to increase material livelihoods of the population - in terms of development and quality of life - whilst at the same time conserving and sustainably managing the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of the region.

Possible solution to this could be, using the basic premise that socio-economic development and nature conservation do not need to be opposing forces. Rather, each should be the underpinning foundation of the other.

To ensure that long-term sustainable development of the South East Europe (Balkan) first and foremost benefits local people and communities, and stops the ongoing trends of increasing poverty, unemployment, rural depopulation and loss of traditional practices.

- Creation of mechanisms for broad public participation in the decision-making process;
- Promotion of local democracy, good governance, and decentralization;
- Establishment of mechanisms for interaction and dialogue between civil society and public administration at local, regional and national levels (Municipal Forums, Councils for Regional Development, Agencies for Local Economic Development);
- Promoting mechanisms for networking, partnership and cooperation between municipalities specifically devoted to the implementation of local Agenda 21;

- Ensuring synergy between policy advice, advocacy and policy formulation (elaboration of strategies for local sustainable human development), and identification and implementation of demonstration projects;
- Harmonization with respect to territorial planning, especially in transboundary areas, e.g. selecting a model area and use it as a demonstration model.

### **4.3. Integrated Water/River Basin Management**

Integrated and effective water resources management (WRM) is essential for sustainable development growth and poverty reduction. Poor river basin management increases economic damage and loss of life from floods, droughts, landslides and erosion. Low water quality carries health risks, damages fisheries, tourism and recreation industries and leads to loss of ecosystems. Poor drinking water service delivery affects the wellbeing of local communities, while unreliable irrigation water leads to loss of livelihoods. Weak inter-sectoral allocation of water can result in insufficient supplies for irrigation, hydropower, municipal water supply and ecosystem maintenance. Inadequate water policies, institutions and pricing regimes drain central and local government budgets and lead to poor WRM and service delivery.

Broadly, the South East European (Balkan) region has adequate water resources, though they are unevenly distributed among and between countries; some countries face localized water shortages. Most of the major rivers are transboundary. There are challenges in flood and drought management, and inter-sectoral allocation and water quality, particularly in regard to balancing the cost of municipal and industrial wastewater treatment with the benefit of improved water quality for recreation, fisheries and ecosystem function. All countries are working to put in place institutional frameworks, regulations and economic incentive regimes that reflect multi-stakeholder consensus. And at the same time provide for efficient use of water and adequate service delivery. All countries have also faced difficulties of deteriorating infrastructure for water and sanitation, irrigation and water regulation, linked in part to weakness of public sector institutions and broader fiscal and governance issues.

Total renewable water resources in the South East Europe (Balkan) are estimated at 580 billion cubic meters per annum, with large seasonal and annual variations. Water availability is classified as “low” for Bulgaria and Macedonia and “medium” for Romania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ninety percent of the “South East European (Balkan) countries” territory falls within transboundary river basins, and in addition to the Danube, which flows into the Black Sea, there are twelve smaller transboundary river basins flowing into the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Black Seas. More than half of the transboundary basins have three or more riparian states. Groundwater resources are important beneath the floodplains for the major rivers and in karstic aquifers along the Adriatic coast. Groundwater is the principal source of domestic and industrial water supply.

Water quality is of concern, with many major rivers unfit for bathing without substantial treatment. Nutrient runoff from agricultural, municipal and industrial sources in the Danube basin is the principal cause of eutrophication in the Black Sea. However, the South East European (Balkan) region has a number of ancient, tectonic lakes, as well as coastal lagoons and wetlands, which contain unique ecosystems; the Danube Delta is one of the largest and least developed wetland ecosystem in Europe.

Industry (including cooling water) is the principal water sub-sector in most countries, accounting for 60 percent of water withdrawal, though irrigation is the most important water use in Albania and Macedonia. Utilization of irrigation infrastructure declined precipitously in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania following the breakup of the former collective and state farms. Overall water consumption, whether for domestic, industrial or irrigation use, has declined over the past decade, for a number of reasons related to economic transition and, in some countries, to war-declining industrial production, falling incomes, deteriorating government services, as well as due to economic instruments such as the introduction of prices reflecting the real cost of service delivery.

Access to piped water supply networks is available to about 75 percent of the total South East European (Balkan) population, with a marked difference between urban and rural populations, at 94 percent and 51 percent, respectively. Because the wastewater treatment is generally non-existent or non-functioning, the discharge of wastewater is a major source of pollution for both surface and groundwater sources.

Groundwater resources, many of them transboundary, represent as much as 30 percent of total internal renewable resources. Shallow aquifers are at risk of pollution from point and non-point sources. This is serious concern since the countries in the region depend heavily on groundwater resources for drinking water supplies.

Hydropower accounts for 47 percent of total electricity production in the region, with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia highly dependent on this renewable source.

During the past decade most of South East European (Balkan) countries have made efforts to establish legal and institutional frameworks for water resources management. However, arrangements vary among countries and sometimes within countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina). So, it could be concluded that most of the countries still do not have institutional frameworks for water resources management. The Water Framework Directive of the European Union, which requires development of multi-stakeholder river basin management plans by 2009, as well as improvements in water quality to ensure all waters meet "good status" by 2015, provides for this framework; but making this a reality will take time.

In May 2003, the European Union (EU) and the World Bank jointly organised in Athens an international conference on "Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Shared Water, Future and Knowledge". The second recommendation of the conference's conclusions (Athens declaration) refers to the SEE Transboundary River Basin and Lake Basin Management Programme. It states

that "...the SEE programme on transboundary river basin management would assist countries in the region, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to draft integrated water resources management plans for all major river basins...". Our action focuses on assessing and managing transboundary water related risks, by enhancing cooperation and capacity building. Prior to 1992 there were only six international river basins in the Balkans, whereas after the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation, the number of internationally shared river basins in the area more than doubled. Today in fact there are 13 internationally shared river basins as well as 4 transboundary lake basins. Institutions dealing with water problems in the region need support to use modern information and communications technologies for monitoring, modelling and water management studies.

Key, water resources management challenges vary by country, but there are some common themes. For effective water resources management and service delivery, sound institutions and legal and regulatory frameworks are necessary. These need to reflect multiple interests, provide transparent guidelines on cross-sectoral allocations, and set the framework for economic and financial incentives to use water efficiently and maintain water quality. Furthermore, water infrastructure and water delivery institutions need to provide reliable services. If demand management measures such as economic instruments are put in place but infrastructure is poorly maintained or institutions are weak, these measures will not be effective. Water resources management challenges are also related to climate, in particular overall rainfall and the frequency of extreme drought and flood events.

Water is a precious resource that is becoming ever more valuable as pollution and other human actions have rendered many waters increasingly incapable of providing their life giving qualities. The South East European Mountains are naturally rich in water resources. There are 280 glacial lakes in the Pirin and Rila mountains alone, and the oldest lake in Europe, the Ohrid lake is situated in this region. Although many of the South East European (Balkan) waters have retained their natural quality and fulfil their natural ecological functions many of the lakes and rivers have been affected by pollution, by dams, and are at the centre of conflicts between users (i.e. industry, agriculture).

In order to protect, restore and sustainably manage water resources it is necessary that such resources be managed in an integrated and coordinated way. This means not only coordination between different users and agencies of the same country but between countries for those rivers and water resources that are international in character. The UN ECE Framework Convention on Transboundary Waters provides a basis for this to occur.

The term Integrated River Basin Management has thus been coined as basis for effectively managing water resources. Effective water management is not something that can be achieved in isolation of actions on land. The land and the water are inextricably linked and, for example, the clearing of forests over a large area can result in downstream floodwaters or pollution. Similarly, pollution through agriculture (erosion of soils, excessive fertilizer, or pesticide use) in the upstream areas reduces the quality for downstream areas. The headwaters of

rivers flowing out of the South East European (Balkan) mountains need to be maintained in good quality so that downstream areas who utilize these waters for drinking, irrigation or industry can do so.

A South East European (Balkan) legal framework would add momentum and political support to the efforts that have been begun to improve the intergovernmental management of water resources in the South East Europe (Balkan) region. This is particularly important in strengthening the cooperation between sectors that influence water. Although many water agencies have successful bilateral relations the relations between countries on matters affecting water, (economic development, agriculture, etc.) are considered national responsibilities for which little coordination exists.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Promote effective cooperation between Balkan countries, in order to alleviate potential risks of conflicts over transboundary water management issues;
  - Development of Southeastern Europe Transboundary River Basin and Lake Basin Management Program;
  - Assessment of regional and national frameworks to implement integrated water resources management;
  - Development of permanent transboundary institutions, especially for the smaller shared water resources, with technical capacity for basin planning and / or project preparation;
  - An enhanced role of civil society for supporting the above initiatives;

### **4.4. Agriculture & Rural Development**

Land-use within the Balkan Peninsula is still characterised by small farms and traditional farming practices including old breeds of domestic animals. Large temperate grasslands form a typical habitat in the mountains and the plains. Preservation of the most important ecosystems and sustainable use of sensitive areas should be one of the most important tasks in the future, including pastoralism and transhumance and the related cultural heritage. Projects that involve domestic livestock breeds and cultivated plants, promoting organic agriculture and protecting genetic diversity of certain species/sorts, should be supported.

Mountain agriculture has a long tradition in the South East Europe (Balkan). Almost 45 percent of the total population is living in the rural areas. Agriculture – as well as forestry – are the dominant forms of land-use in the South East Europe (Balkans). Many practices are based on century-old approaches and result in a high level of extensive small-scale and organic agriculture with a high diversification, especially in remote mountain areas. In these areas, there is a balance between local needs and local capacity. Rural depopulation and an ageing demography are typical as young people migrate in search of work. In

many cases this leads to a breakdown in the rural fabric, the decline of traditional lifestyles, the abandonment of land and as a consequence the loss of biodiversity. During the last decade the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has encouraged the sector to become more and more intensive, promoting large-scale farming – exactly the opposite what has been practiced in EE countries. In Western Europe, this has led to an enormous increase of water and soil pollution, an increase of pesticides in ground waters and a tremendous loss of biodiversity. This system is heavily subsidized, with funds going mainly to big farmers. (Generally, it is the case that agricultural investments are distributed without having sustainability criteria in place.) Although the CAP supports also the maintenance of some semi-natural landscapes, and helps to maintain rural communities in less-favored areas, the fact remains that financial support through compensation payments and market support encourages intensive production. To become part of the EU, accession countries must integrate into the EU's CAP. The adoption will effectively determine the future rural landscape both socially and environmentally. Without appropriate adjustments to the CAP it can be predicted that many of the consequences will be negative.

Under the "Rural Development Regulation" (1257/1999/EEC), agri-environmental schemes are the most prominent targeted environmental measures. They are implemented under the SAPARD pre-accession fund. However, much criticism has been raised that only a small percentage of the SAPARD funds are actually used for projects with an "agro-environmental" focus. An independent NGO evaluation of SAPARD in four countries of the region provides useful recommendations how this instrument could better promote rural development. The recommendations included full public participation in planning, promoting rural diversification and the support to small farmer, and better integration with other EU Directives, such as the Water Framework Directive, or Natura 2000.

In addition to efforts to reform CAP and to reorient SAPARD measures, other initiatives have recognized the importance of biodiversity issues in this sector. For example, the fourth Ministerial Conference "An Environment for Europe" in Aarhus 1998, noted that further action for the environment in the field of agriculture was required. Under the PEBLDS, a working group on agriculture and environment was established. During their last meeting (High-Level Pan-European Conference on Agriculture and Biodiversity) in June 2002 in Paris, the "Declaration on the conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity in the framework of agricultural policies and practices" has been finalized. Recommendations made included, the integration of biodiversity concerns into agricultural, rural and other policies, and the promotion of the multiple function of agriculture and the inter-sectoral and international cooperation. Furthermore, actions to implement this declaration have been elaborated and a proposal was presented to the fifth Ministerial Conference held in Kyiv in 2003.

The challenge is to increase food production in a sustainable way. There is the need for economic incentives for such initiatives, the development of appropriate technologies, income diversification, and land conservation methods through improved management techniques. Success will heavily depend on the

participation of people living in the region. Human resource development must therefore be promoted and information, education, wise planning and participatory approaches are essential. Low intensity farming and its advantages for nature conservation should be promoted, e.g. organic farming. There is extensive potential in the rural areas of South East Europe (Balkan) to produce high-quality, healthy food. These countries have a large stock of well preserved natural and cultural landscapes. Furthermore, traditional practices that provide a good basis for sustainable agriculture and the sustainable development of rural areas survive.

Organic farming is growing rapidly throughout Europe, and in 2001 the Agriculture Minister from 12 European countries have called for the creation of a European action plan for the development of organic farming and food under the so-called "Copenhagen Declaration". Existing EU legislation with guidelines for ecological agriculture could be used for production and processing and for marketing a strong network has to be built up.

### **Key Recommendations**

- preservation of endangered traditional local breeds of farm animals and plants (agro-genetic resources);
- promotion of organic farming and creation of a regional market for organic products, including marketing and promotional support for products produced sustainably;
- development of national strategies for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation;
- development of guidelines to ensure that biodiversity issues are taken into consideration when agricultural policies are developed;
- establishment of a regional network of stakeholders in the field of sustainable agriculture; and
- organisation of events at the regional level to develop expertise among relevant parties and promote the exchange of experiences.
- to stimulate inter-regional networking in South East Europe (Balkans);
- to stimulate multi-functionality of rural areas.

### **4.5. Forestry**

Mountain forests has many functions in the provisions of benefits to society, and these are of increasing utility to the public. It contributes to the protection of soils, of habitats and infrastructures. Beyond its direct economic role in the production of wood and the indirect one in the support of rural activities (grazing), tourism and recreation (including hunting), it is a basic element of the mountain natural heritage by its fauna and flora, and takes part in the cultural heritage by its landscapes and traditional practices.

During the last two decades, the economic context of mountain forest has been deeply modified. Subject to external competition, handicaps related to slope have

been providing a consistent incomes degradation in forest production, bringing sometimes to abandon the management of individual forests and thus to risks of a further fragilisation.

Moreover, such a trend has been increasing within a societal process leading to parallel demands incorporating recreation-based utilities (ski-resorts and summer trekking) and to some catastrophic event recalling the role that trees and forests can play in protection. All those demands, sometimes complementary, sometimes competitive, which are making pressure on forest owners and managers, call for urgent actions adapted to the current critical situation.

Untargeted partial actions issued by decisions often taken a posteriori, i.e. too late and which in any case do not meet causes of relevant phenomena to combat, are insufficient to answer this urging concern. To allow a sustainable development of mountain forests, equitable and balanced, public powers must take, at the different levels, regional, national and European, adapted and relevant measures, inherently coherent and organised around the five following axes:

On the other side the forest ecosystems in mountain areas are of vital importance to protect watersheds and to supply fresh water. They are also home to numerous wild species. The conservation of these habitats through various forms of protection and careful management are an important basis towards achieving sustainable development. The challenge is to find a balance between protection and a wise use of forests.

Forest cover is still significant in the South East Europe (Balkans). At higher elevations, where human pressure is less, there are vast areas of deciduous forests – most extensive beech forests in Europe. All the different forest habitats show an incredible natural diversity, most importantly in a European context. They are home to some Large mammals (e.g. wolf, bear, lynx) and birds of prey (Imperial Eagle, four species of vultures) that are considered to be key European indicators for the value of large-scale semi-natural landscapes.

Forestry has always been a constant element of human civilization, a fact that is also true in South Eastern Europe (Balkan) where it is the dominant form of land-use. Wood harvesting in the Balkans has a long history and plays an important role in the local economy, especially in Bulgaria and Romania. Although forest exploitation in the Balkans has never caused the same extent of damage as it has in Western Europe. The loss of forest cover through clear-cutting, increasing degradation due to monocultures and introduction of exotic species, pollution, grazing, illegal felling and inappropriate management practices have, however, all had a deep impact on biodiversity.

Established protected areas are an effective means to conserve forest ecosystems, but the existing protected forest area in the South Eastern Europe (Balkan) is not sufficient to save all forest types and the associated species. In addition, there is often no integration of conservation aspects in national policies, e.g. conservation issues are not integrated into forest management plans and sustainable forestry management is not a reality, or bad governance and weakness of implementation structures are causing hindrances to effective conservation.

There are several international agreements or programmes promoting the conservation of natural forests. Specifically the Helsinki/MCPFE process addresses this issue as do other more widespread agreements which address this issue in a wider context of biodiversity conservation i.e. the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention, Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitat.

Furthermore, the 4<sup>th</sup> criterion "Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems" (as well as indicator 4.1) of the six pan-European criteria for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) developed at the Ministerial Conference in Lisbon (1998) in the frame of the MCPFE process refers also to natural forests. For accession countries (Ukraine is excluded), the adoption of Natura 2000 is also related to conservation of the natural forests as part of the protected areas network. The MCPFE process also addresses conservation of forests for ecological purposes. The fifth criterion "Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water)" of the pan-European criteria for SFM and its related indicators address this issue. Considering that biodiversity issues are an essential element in sustainable forest management, a framework cooperation between the PEBLDS and the MCPFE has been drafted and is subject for adoption to the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests (Vienna, April 2003) and then to the Kyiv Conference.

Although the sustainable use of forests has been promoted in all international conventions and processes referring to forests, in the South East Europe (Balkan) region this goal has received poor financial support by international development agencies and through management mechanisms.

Finally, the role of the non-timber forest products should be mentioned as an economic factor in the region that should not be underestimated. For example, in most of the South East Europe (Balkan) there is an intensive collection of non-timber forest products (snails, aromatic and medicinal plants, herbs, mushrooms and berries). For local population it is often the only source of income and when there is demand, they are collecting protected species. There do not exist any management plans for such practices and it is doubtful, if they existed, if they could be monitored and enforced. Until now, it is not clear how these products are traded, especially those which are under protection. It seems to be a mixture of official and illegal trade chains, and the enforcement through the only existing instrument addressing this issue, CITES, is extremely difficult.

A South East European (Balkan) legal framework would definitely be an added value to existing mechanisms for protecting forests. At present, implementation of existing instruments occurs mainly on national territories and a framework convention with a possible protocol would foster regional cooperation. This instrument will lead to regional forest corridors – important for wildlife – and to transboundary management of forest resources. Such regional efforts could also bring market benefits. In addition, it would probably decrease the costs of forest monitoring and early warning systems, which today are done on a national basis.

## Key Recommendations

- Strengthening the policy and institutional framework of forest land use
- Foster data and information exchange
- Support to the private sector forestry
- Support to the design and development of innovative forest management schemes
- Capacity Building in Sharing Forest and Market Information
- Strengthening integration of forestry with other sectors – cross-sectoral issues
- Integration of conservation aspects into all national forest policies;
- Need for financial support to improve implementation structures, new technologies, public awareness, etc.

## 4.6. Transport and Infrastructure

Transport infrastructure in South Eastern Europe (Balkans) is generally below European standards and has been severely affected by:

- Direct war damage, which destroyed or rendered unusable important components of the infrastructure in the Serbia and Montenegro and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including roads, railway lines and airports. The destruction of bridges across the Danube and Sava rivers had, severely impeded road and rail traffic flow and inland navigation.

- Indirect damage from the conflicts as well as negligence and under-investment, which led to severely curtailing periodic and current maintenance and renewal activities. Disruption on the main corridors has led to diversion of traffic towards other, less adapted routes. Priorities have also changed for political reasons; in Croatia, for instance, priority is given to corridor V (north-east/south-west) instead of corridor X (former “trans-Yugoslav” north-west/south-east).

Overall, however, the capacity of existing infrastructure – under normal operating conditions - is well adapted to the present traffic and its foreseeable medium-term development, except for some links in the neighbourhood of the large cities of the region.

Given the outstanding needs, investments to increase capacity should be considered, in general, of low priority with regards to reconstruction and renewal works of the existing infrastructure, needed to provide the required quality of service in terms of speed and or bringing it back to design quality.

More particularly in the various modes of transport the situation is as follows:

### - Roads

Road endowment in the region is significant, although not reaching the typical levels of the European Union. In all five countries of the Western Balkans, road networks are relatively extensive, density and quality are quite different. Primary and secondary roads amount to some 57000 km. There are 1008 km of motorways (two-by-two lane divided highways) concentrated in Croatia, the Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia.

The state of the network is very uneven, although in general it shows a serious lack of periodic and current maintenance. The maintenance problem is becoming particularly acute in certain cases. In the Serbia and Montenegro it is estimated that only 30% of the roads are in a satisfactory condition. Furthermore, many roads do not comply with the requirements of European trucks, which are allowed axle loads up to 11.5 tons. This needs special attention.

#### **- Railways**

The railway network of the region consists of some 9 000 km of lines, of which only 612 km have double track and 3 333 km (37%) are electrified. Network densities are low for Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. The division of the former Yugoslavia has induced the creation of separate rail companies, which are generally owned and controlled by the state, and introduced severe difficulties into the operation of international services. Reform along the lines of EU Directive 91/440 on the separation of infrastructure and operations has been only partially implemented. In Croatia, restructuring has gained some momentum under the impulse of the International Financial Institutions. Investment and maintenance have been heavily neglected, leading to a deteriorating infrastructure, obsolete rolling stock and lack of technical innovation in signalling and telecommunication technologies. The main route of the region, the Trans-Yugoslav Railway (Corridor X) is, at present, interrupted for long-distance traffic.

#### **- Seaports and waterways**

The countries of South Eastern Europe (Balkans) have outlets to the Adriatic Sea via major ports in Rijeka, Split, Ploce and Dubrovnik in Croatia, Bar in the Serbia and Montenegro and Durres in Albania. These ports are generally significant for hydrocarbons and other bulk commodities, although container traffic is gradually being developed. Outside the Western Balkans region, Thessaloniki, in Greece, is an important sea outlet for the land-locked Republic of Macedonia. Croatia has the biggest commercial maritime traffic (40 million tons) in the region.

The region's inland navigation is dominated by the Danube, which was a key shipping artery (Corridor VII) prior to its interruption. Although traffic on the Danube has fallen sharply over the past decade, the river remains an essential transport link for Europe after the construction of its link with the Rhine-Main.

A key element severely affecting the navigation on the Danube is the destruction in April 1999 of major bridges in Novi Sad and Pancevo.

#### **- Airports**

There is an extensive air route network in the region, including international airports in each country. Due mostly to the conflicts, air traffic has been heavily reduced in the mid-nineties and, although is increasing, it still remains low compared with traffic in the rest of Europe.

Air traffic control systems are neither sufficient nor adequate to meet increasing traffic. Other safety-related infrastructure in the airports also needs to be modernised. The "Air Traffic Infrastructure Regional Study"(March 2001), prepared by the EIB, contains a good description of the problems of air traffic control and safety and gives a series of recommendations, which are now being discussed with the countries of the region.

The development of transport and energy networks in South East Europe (Balkan) region, connected and compatible with the corresponding European networks and those of their neighbouring countries, is an important means of improving links within the region and integrating the countries of the area into the political and economic mainstream of Europe.

In 1998, the five countries of Western Balkan region had a population of about 25 million people i.e. 6,6 % of the population on the European Union. They had an average Gross Domestic Product per capita of about € 2.050, only about 11 % of the EU figure. This shows the long way that these countries have to make in order to reach an economic level, comparable to the EU standards. An additional problem is the great differences in the level of development between the countries of the region. Per capita GDP is ranging from € 890 in Albania to € 5000 in Croatia.

During the last ten years, reforms oriented towards the establishment of a market economy and the strengthening of institutions have been introduced in all countries of the region. While the starting points and present situation differs considerably from country to country, it is obvious that major gains would be achieved through increased regional co-operation.

Improving transport and energy infrastructure in the region and integrating the countries of South Eastern Europe (Balkan) to the rest of Europe is important in order to support better quality of life through economic growth, regional integration, social cohesion and adequate environmental conditions. In this context, conditions for improvement of the situation would include:

- Rapid progress in the reform process at the national level, notably through the introduction of market mechanisms, modern operating practices and sound infrastructure financing and management ; strengthening of institutions through improved legislative and regulatory frameworks; restructuring of the sectors, including the eventual privatisation of some assets; and introduction of new technologies. The Stabilisation and Association process should provide the necessary guidance for the reform process and the progressive adoption of EU standards and policies for infrastructure development, including environmental, social and safety policies.

- Development, within a regional framework, of a sound investment programme based on the co-operation among the countries of the region and with the Member States and Candidate Countries of the European Union.

Mountain areas worldwide are by their nature often isolated and an obstacle to movement among people. Despite this, these areas are depended on information exchange and trade with neighbouring regions. Transit routes across mountains have existed since ancient times. With more and more industrialization and the development of modern transportation, mountain areas became increasingly accessible. This is a trend, which likely will continue and become even stronger in future. An efficient and flexible transport system is essential for economic development and quality of life. However, current transport systems often pose significant threats to environment and human health.

According to the latest report of the European Environmental Agency, transport trends in both the European Union and accession countries are moving away

from, not closer to, the main environmental objectives of EU policies on transport and sustainable development. These call for breaking the close link between economic growth and transport expansion, as well as stabilizing the “modal split”. In accession countries, the environmental pressure from transport is still less than in the EU, but this favourable situation is changing fast. Transport volumes in the accession countries, which fell significantly following the economic recession of the early 1990s, are now rising again as economies recover. By 1999, volumes were almost back to their 1990 levels, and this trend is expected to continue. Railways’ share of freight and passenger traffic remains well above EU levels but overall transport infrastructure in the accession countries is evolving towards a road-oriented system. This will make it harder to maintain a substantial market share for rail. The transport sector’s energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are three to four times lower than EU levels on a per-capita basis but as in the EU, are growing rapidly. Road and rail networks are less dense than in the EU, causing less fragmentation of the land, but motorway lengths have almost doubled over the past 10 years. This rising land-take for transport infrastructure will increase pressures on designated nature protection areas.

Current forms of transport have often negative impact on human health. This includes such factors as annoyance from traffic noise, evidence of direct effects of air pollutants on mortality, as well as on respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. On the mandate from the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 1999, a Charter on Transport, Environment and Health has been prepared, promoting sustainable transport alternatives. To this aim, inter-sectoral cooperation and high-level political commitment are needed to ensure that new transport policies consider health issues.

The OECD began an initiative to achieve a more responsible transport in 1998. The working group on transport developed the EST guidelines (Environmentally Sustainable Transport), which are fully in the spirit of sustainable development. Six criteria (out of the ten) have been identified as a minimum number required reflecting the wide-ranging health and environmental impacts of transport. The document contains several annexes, e.g. highlighting certain unsustainable trends, or the definition of environmentally friendly transport. The guidelines are proposed as a basis for developing a feasible and viable strategy for policymaking and practice in the transport sector.

Current transportation policies have been the cause of serious problems. We know what they are and they are predictable. In addition, many good recommendations for sustainable transport are available. Therefore, there is a great opportunity in south East Europe (Balkan) region for “prevention” of problems rather than “remediation” if regional and transboundary planning is applied. There is a strong need for both local and international lobbying aimed at incorporating Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments and the wide use of environmental friendly developments, e.g. tunnels and overpasses. Information on species vulnerability is important for taking measures to protect such species and for designing appropriate planning procedures. Information is necessary for all who are involved in planning and implementation

A regional instrument would be supportive to the sustainable transport development in the South East European (Balkan) Mountains. Areas of high biodiversity on the regional level could be taken into account (most relevant in transboundary areas) during planning of future transport routes avoiding the fragmentation of habitats. In additions, lessons from the Alps can be learned to avoid making the same mistakes.

#### Key Recommendation

- Put into practice many already available recommendations for sustainable transport ;
- Incorporate Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments;
- Exchange of knowledge and international cooperation is necessary;
- Investments are needed to ensure an effective and socially acceptable transport system;
- Ensure inter-sectoral cooperation and integration of health issues into transport policies.

## 4.7. Tourism

Many mountain communities around the world have promoted ecotourism to ameliorate problems of environmental degradation and under development. Although there is no agreement on what ecotourism is or should be, it is generally believed that ecotourism in the mountains will foster responsible tourist behaviour, conservation of important wildlife habitats and ecosystems, appreciation of local cultures and traditional life styles, and provision of sustainable forms of livelihood for people living in remote and communities.

Any attempts towards developing mountain ecotourism in the South Eastern Europe (Balkans) should focus on sustainability; diversity; institutional reforms; gender equity; local, regional and global economic integration; local financial incentives; and peace and security.

Ecotourism has been subject to various interpretations. Criteria such as local benefits, support for conservation, low-scale development, low visitor volume, and educational experience suggest that many mountain tourism destinations may not qualify as ecotourism venues. Nevertheless, mountain destinations that exhibit signs of mass tourism increasingly use the prefix “eco” in their advertising. Responsible mountain tourism can help to generate awareness and support for conservation and local culture and crucially, can create economic incentives for communities and countries to protect natural resources.

The beautiful mountain landscapes of the South East Europe (Balkans), the high natural value and the potential for recreational activities, such as hiking or tracking wildlife, could provide numbers of foreign visitors. Generally, each country has its own Tourism Agency, a governmental body – but each with

different responsibilities and competencies. Presently, there is no proper national legislation dealing with the increasing pressure on the natural, cultural and socio-economic environments. Existing legislation is only indirectly dealing with tourism. There is little or no recognition that uncontrolled growth in tourism aiming at short-term benefits often results in negative impacts. In most Balkan countries, official strategies for the development of sustainable tourism are missing.

However, there have been some efforts encouraging rural tourism in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Macedonia. Unfortunately, there are no economic instruments in force that would provide a vehicle for the development of sustainable practices.

The South East European (Balkan) mountain areas are fragile ecosystems characterized by rural agriculture and forestry activities, often socially endangered through high unemployment rates and the exodus of the youth. In such cases ecotourism – based on three pillars of economical, social and ecological principles – can be an effective tool towards a sustainable tourism development for all SEE countries. Some basic principles have to be taken into account: ecotourism development must a) be part of a wider sustainable development strategy – thereby creating mutually supportive linkages and reducing financial leakages away from the area; b) be compatible with effective conservation of natural ecosystems; c) involve local people and cultures, ensuring that all have an equitable share in its benefits.

There are a number of relevant initiatives, instruments and programmes addressing tourism. Although not included in the Agenda 21, the recognition of the importance of sustainability in tourism has increased. The Commission on Sustainable Development established a multi-stakeholder Working Group on Tourism. Other examples include: “CBD Guidelines on Biological Diversity and Tourism”, “Ecotourism: Principles, Practices and Policies for Sustainability” prepared by UNEP in cooperation with the International Ecotourism Society, and the Council of Europe’s Recommendations “On a General Policy for Sustainable and Environmental Friendly Tourism Development” (No.: R (94) 7) and “On a Sustainable Tourism Development Policy in Protected Areas” (No.: (95) 10). In addition, there has been an increasingly widespread application of environmentally appropriate management techniques in tourism companies and facilities, specifically hotels. There are also voluntary approaches such as certification systems, eco-labels (e.g. PAN Parks) and codes of conduct, like the “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism introduced by the World Tourism Organization. Furthermore, funding instruments to encourage tourism are available, e.g. LIFE programme and the Action Plan for Tourism. It should not be forgotten that activities during the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 offer an opportunity to review experiences worldwide and provide example for initiatives, projects and publications from NGOs, both international ones (amongst others, IUCN, WWF, Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe) but also NGOs from the region.

The need for a South East European (Balkan) tourism strategy is evident. All countries are facing similar pressures on environment and decline in rural

economies. Sustainable tourism – if appropriate implemented – can be a key tool for poverty alleviation and nature conservation. This should begin with a feasibility study, exploring the carrying capacity of potential locations, sharing experiences and other related activities will lead to common planning, including a joint strategy, and agreed policies and to appropriate legislation in each of the countries. Other important factors are building partnerships, improving skills, making resources available, cooperation with countries where tourists originate from, and the development of a joint marketing towards Western Europe. UNEP, WTO, and potential donors together with other inter-governmental organizations and possibly the business sector, should help and assist governments from Balkan countries and other relevant actors to develop this strategy and the action plan and to use tourism as a tool for sustainable mountain development.

Specifically in the field of tourism, a South East European (Balkan) legal framework would be a benefit for all countries in the region. This framework can provide a platform for information exchange, a discussions forum on ecological, economic and social aspects on different topics, such as methodologies of planning, carrying capacity of specific sites, identifying key factor of success in already existing model projects, and many others.

One of the major anthropogenic pressures on natural resources in the Balkans is caused by growing development of tourism. Although tourism is needed in the region for economic reasons, some areas, such as the coastal parts of Croatia, Montenegro and Albania, suffer from uncontrolled construction of infrastructure. There is a need to develop more sensitive tourism programmes based on the preservation of the natural resources and well managed protected areas. There are, however, local programmes in some countries, which are building on eco-tourism objectives, but without a clear regional marketing strategy and very little acceptance by the overall tourism industry. With some kind of small grants programmes, local communities might improve their life standards and build on sustainable management of biodiversity and nature. For example, bird watching and photo tracking programmes could be introduced or reinforced.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Joint development of more sensitive tourism programmes based on the preservation of the natural resources and well managed protected areas
- development of national strategies for sustainable tourism
- Use a participatory approach right from the beginning;
- Capacity Building
- Establish thematically focused networks for information exchange;
- Integrate tourism planning with a wider holistic regional development planning and ensure the integration of other sectors, e.g. agriculture, forestry;

## 4.8. Energy

The energy sectors of the countries of South East European (Balkan) region share a number of important physical and institutional characteristics.

Primary sources of energy are limited: many countries produce low-quality lignite (particularly in Bulgaria, the Serbia and Montenegro, the Macedonia and Romania) and there is hydroelectrical production in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Croatia. Only Croatia and Romania have some limited production of oil and gas but insufficient to meet the country's demand. Romania and Bulgaria also have nuclear power stations on their territory.

As a result, the countries of the region are heavily dependent upon the import of primary energy, particular of oil and gas. Bulgaria, the Serbia and Montenegro and the FYR Macedonia use gas for power production. Only limited amounts of gas are used in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gas is not available in Albania.

Local energy resources have their own limitations: the high cost and environmental constraints of lignite and coal-fired power plants (limitations regarding SO<sub>2</sub>, Nox, particules and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), or the dependence of hydroelectrical production on levels of rainfall.

Energy infrastructures were the subject of significant damages during the conflicts. In addition, they suffer from a number of inefficiencies at all levels of the chain: extraction (of lignite), generation, transmission, distribution. This has been brought about by a lack of investment, maintenance and (in some cases) repair.

To this has to be added the low-level of energy efficiency of the countries' economies, estimated at between 2 and 4 times less efficient per unit of GDP produced. This situation is both cause and effect of the lack of reforms of the energy sector: efficient management, opening up the sector to private operators, restructuring of vertically integrated state-monopolies, new price and tariffication policies, independent regulatory structures, improvement of the level of bill collections etc. All countries are interested in privatisation of parts of the system.

This general picture, hides a number of differences between the situations in the different countries. The cause of the severe supply deficits suffered in the in Serbia and Montenegro is not a lack of reform; the main problem in Albania is implementing a policy that will reduce an over-inflated demand. Bosnia and Herzegovina suffers from the division of a former unified network into three subnetworks on the lines of the division of the country. In the Macedonia limited reforms have begun to take effect, whereas in Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania reforms on the line of the EU Directives are underway.

Throughout the Balkan Peninsula, reconstruction of energy circuit lines involves the utilisation of concrete constructions as replacements for wooden posts. These new constructions, often financed through international programmes, are highly dangerous to birds, and are in particular a threat to raptor and owl populations, as they cause electrocution. Electrocuted birds can also catch fire, which is a great problem especially in dry SEE (Balkan) areas.

The recently promoted use of water and wind energy as "green energy" is another potential factor towards natural degradation. The last European wild rivers are endangered as well as the most important flyways of birds in Europe

for example at the Black Sea coast. Here better strategic planning and a comprehensive system of protected areas are needed to avoid damage to the natural heritage of the Balkan Peninsula.

Mountain areas are a key source of energy, providing biomass fuels, such as wood, agricultural residue and animal dung, as well as non-renewable fossil fuels (coal, gas, etc.). There is an increasing demand for more energy, in mountain communities itself but also in adjacent areas.

It is obvious that conventional energy programmes, designed to serve densely populated areas, are not practical for isolated mountain communities. Furthermore, some of the energy sources used in the Balkans have a damaging effect on the fragile mountain ecosystem, such as fuel wood. Supplies are threatened as population grows and living standards are decreasing. This has a negative impact on the environment, and is damaging health of people because of the smoke from fires and stoves used for cooking and heating. Access to energy is crucial to achieve social development. Unfortunately, one can observe an increase of non-renewable fuels such as kerosene, diesel and dry cell batteries, all of which are harmful for the environment.

Mountains are an extremely rich source of renewable energy, such as hydropower, solar energy and wind power. These renewable energies could be a major component of a sustainable development strategy. Therefore, mountains have the potential to shift consumption away from fossil fuels, bringing ecological, climatic and economic advantages. For example, renewable energies can strongly contribute – together with other environmental technologies – to increased labour efficiency and diversified economic activities in rural areas. The availability of energy is a key factor for agricultural productivity and to achieve food security and improve rural livelihoods. This would require the development of energy policies and programmes specifically tailored for mountain ecosystems. In the respect of renewable energy, the Balkan countries can learn from other mountain regions in Europe. Specifically examples from the Alps can be a model, taking into account the protocol on energy within the Alpine Convention. This protocol aims to tailor energy production, distribution and use to the interests of nature and landscape protection, as well as the needs of the people living there. The knowledge and expertise from the Alpine countries can be transferred to South East Europe (Balkans), promoting the fact that renewable energy sources are becoming more viable as prices decrease and technologies become more efficient. Small hydroelectric installations, which have a great potential to promote economic development in mountain areas, without having negative impacts on the environment and on local cultures, should be promoted.

More and more, governments and businesses are learning that a preventive strategy is not only an investment in the future quality of life but that it also makes good business sense. Endorsed in the Earth's Summit Agenda 21, UNEP set up a "Cleaner Production Programme", promoting the use of less polluting and more efficient processes, products and services. Besides an information clearing house (set up together with the US Environmental Protection Agency), UNEP is building national capacity through training sessions and demonstration projects. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that several organizations and NGOs have

developed guidelines for business and industry, e.g. IUCN, WWF, World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Thus, there have to be concerted efforts between all parties concerned. One thing is evident: Balkan countries need technical and financial help to modernize their industry and to adapt to cleaner production. The responsibility of the countries is to develop national policies and strategies, which include incentives and support schemes as well as awareness building programmes on this topic. Consequently, national energy and cleaner production policies should be linked with other relevant sectors and harmonized on the regional level. Against this background, a legal possible framework could bring additional benefits.

### **Key Recommendations**

- The rehabilitation and development of the energy sector must take into account environmental concerns so as to avoid environmental degradation.
- The “acquis communautaire” should to be applied and projects selected for finance should comply as much as possible to the requirements of the relevant EU directives on the environment.
- to create modern and efficient energy infrastructure networks (for electricity, oil and gas) to ensure that the energy system of the region can meet the energy demands of each country.
- Develop national policies and strategies specifically tailored for mountain ecosystems, linking those with other relevant sectors and harmonize on a regional level;
- Pay specific attention to renewable energy resources;
- Provide incentives for new technologies and cleaner production.

## 5. Conclusions

Generally, approaches to stop biodiversity loss have so far not been adequate. Despite, having so many instruments in place, we are still losing biodiversity worldwide. Often the driving forces are too complex and underlying socio-economic factors and their root causes are not understood. The future for the South East European (Balkan) region is very challenging. This region in transition is still facing many difficulties and threats. Specifically in the light of EU accession, the increasing integration with Western Europe and the liberalization of markets, governments have to take the responsibility to steer the development towards a sustainable future. The conditions in the various parts of the South East European (Balkan) Mountains vary widely, and in terms of economic and social aspects the South East European (Balkan) states represent small markets. Their economic sustainability depends on the creation of a common economic area that will attract foreign investors. In this sense, the regional approach is necessary precondition for sustainable development. Solutions to the problems of the region should emanate from the countries of the region.

In one of the recent EU documents named “The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity” issued in Brussels on January 27, 2006, the European Commission in the proposed measures to help integrate Western Balkan societies progressively into the European mainstream is especially encouraging the countries of the Western Balkans to acquire greater ownership of **regional cooperation**.

It is or should be crystal clear that institutionalised multilateral regional cooperation functions in a complementary and supportive way to the European integration process of the Balkan countries. Coordination of action and common goals boost their European course, strengthen their voice and reinforce EU efforts to form an effective regional policy. The EU has set regional cooperation as a necessary condition and target.

As with possible development of South East European (Balkan) legal framework, it would be wrong to generalize and to simplistically transfer the Alpine and Carpathian experience for cooperation and sustainable development to South Eastern Europe (Balkans). The different conditions in each of the countries should be taken into account and solutions should be tailored to specific local needs and circumstances, while cross-referencing with international experience is necessary and valuable. It is also clear that mountain areas need an integral approach towards sustainable development.

The South East Europe (Balkan) region is covered by numerous Multi Environmental Agreements (MEA) but lack of implementation is often being reported. Most existing instruments are seen in isolation, if implemented only on a national or local level, not looking at integration between policies and/or sectors. Generally, there is poor coordination, only limited cooperation and severe financial constraints. A legal framework on the protection and sustainable development of the transboundary mountain ecosystems of the South East Europe (Balkans) could provide some added values. The sectors most relevant in this context are conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity,

sustainable local development based on rich natural and cultural heritage and tourism. Specifically in those sectors, a legal framework would bring additional benefits. Furthermore, the cooperation and sustainable development of South East Europe (Balkan) based on legal framework could:

- enhance implementation of existing instruments and harmonising the processes in the region
- stimulate future partnerships & attract donors
- establish sub-regional platform for transfer of mountain technologies;
- foster integration & coordination between sectors

Summarizing the outcomes of this background paper, the proposed cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans) in a form of legal framework could foster cooperation, help in harmonization, strengthen integration and it would place the South east Europe (Balkans) within a holistic development perspective. The process to negotiate a new legal framework, to establish a Secretariat and the implementation will require financial resources. These additional costs and accompanying bureaucracy have to be weighed against the potential benefits. A legal framework by itself can never be a miracle cure. This clearly will require strong political will for implementation, as well as a range of programmatic activities supporting the framework's provision.

Civil society, people and the environment must be put at the forefront of the framework if its intended to work for the environment and for the people of the region.

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## Annex 1: List of important transboundary sites in SEE (Balkan) related to the mountains

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Border region</b>	<b>General Description</b>
1. AL, GR	Aoos/Vijose	Alluvial ecosystem from the mountains to the Adriatic coast
2. AL, GR, MK	Prespa-Ohrid	Old lake ecosystem and high mountains
3. AL, MK, SCG S	Sar Planina-Korab	High mountain ecosystems
4. AL, SCG	Prokletije Mountain	High mountain Ecosystems
5. BG, GR	Western Rhodope Mountains	Rich biodiversity (various endemic species and relicts), virgin forests
6. BG, GR	Central Rhodope Mountains and Nestos	Divers alpine biotopes including river valleys
7. BG, GR	Eastern Rhodope Mountains	Large steppe and grassland areas and river
8. BG, TR	Strandja	Rich landscape with high diversity of vertebrates, unique flora
9. BG, SCG	Balkan Mountain	High mountain ecosystems
10. BIH, HR	Dinara-Livanjsko Polje karst ecosystem	Large karst underground water system, largest karst polje world wide, high mountains
11. BIH, HR	Plitvice - Una karst system	Specific karst ecosystems as rivers, lakes and waterfalls
12. BIH, SCG	Durmitor - Tara	High mountain and river
13. BIH, SCG	Tara-Drina-Javor	Mountain forests
14. BIH, HR, SCG	Orjen-Sniježnica	Mosaic of mountains, waters and cultural landscape
15. HR, SCG	Danube-Fruska Gora	Cultural landscape and (alluvial)forest ecosystems
16. HR, SCG	Sava-Spacva-Bosut	Worldwide largest
17. HR, SI	Forests	Pedunculated oak forest system,
18. HR, SI	Cicarija	Open karst grassland
	Croatian-Slovenian (Kras-Risnjak-Sneznik)	Karst mountain forest and relict alpine high karst ecosystems
19. HR, SI	Kupa-Kolpa-Kocevje Valley	Natural river and forest ecosystems
20. HR, SI	Kozansko-Sava-Zumberak	Forest and wetland habitats
22. BG, MK, GR	Belasica – "Granichni Planini"- Belasica-Ograzhdhen-Maleshevska mountains	Mountain ecosystem
23. MK, AL	Jablanitsa-Shebenik	Mountain ecosystem, significant species refuge
24. MK, GR	Kozuf-Nidge-, Kajmaktcalan Mountain	significant species ecosystem refuge