



Statement from the Meeting “Intergovernmental Consultation on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in South Eastern Europe” held in Pelister (12-13 May, 2006)

Hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia and organized by the Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development and with the support of UNEP, Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory and EURAC .

Following the Bolzano meeting held in December 2005, we the participants from the South Eastern European countries and other stakeholders:

- Recognize that some recommendations from the Bolzano Statement are already being implemented ;
- Recognize the good value done by the study: Assessment on the current situation and needs of cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions/areas in South-Eastern Europe (Balkans) and request the BFS D to finalize it accordingly to the discussions and to the inputs coming from the participants;
- Recognize that a legal framework for the cooperation is feasible, and a draft should be prepared and ready for the next meeting;
- Recommend that the future legal framework should involve the following countries/entities: AL, BIH, BG, CRO, MK, SCG, UNMIK, and recognize that association of Greece and Slovenia is highly appreciated;
- Recommend that the legal framework should deal with the following areas in an integrated approach: biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and rural development , forest land use, management of water resources, transport, tourism, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, energy, spatial planning etc. and the different trends in the development of mountain technologies;
- Recommend that the legal framework that will be prepared should focus on the above areas taking into account the recommendations included in the Annex;





- Recommend that the process and the implementation of this legal framework should take into consideration the importance of education, public awareness and participation;
- Request UNEP in cooperation with EURAC and BFS D to continue supporting this process and organize the next meeting before the end of 2006;
- Recognize that the landmark of this process is the Belgrade 2007 Environment for Europe Conference;
- Call for active information exchange and cooperation with the Alpine and Carpathian Convention and their constituencies in the context of Mountain Partnership;
- Encourage the participants to take action for having and/or continuing support from inter-alia CEI, REREP, FAO, SECI, SEECP, ENVSEC, REC, IUCN, WWF, UNESCO, EUROPARC, EAR, USAID, CIHEAM, ADA, NORAD, SDC, SIDA, CIDA, EC and others, to make this issue as a priority.

The participants express their gratitude to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia for hosting the meeting in Pelister. (The Republic of Greece offered to host the next meeting in September 2006).

Pelister - Macedonia, 13 May 2006





ANNEX I

❖ **Transboundary aspects of biodiversity conservation**

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

❖ **Sustainable Local Development and Territorial Planning**

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.

❖ **Integrated Water/River Basin Management**

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;

❖ **Agriculture & Rural Development**

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;
- 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.



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❖ Forestry

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.

❖ Transport and Infrastructure

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.

❖ Tourism

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.

❖ Energy

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.

