

## Statement Secretary General of the Alpine Convention to COP 6 Carpathians

(25 November 2020, 6 minutes, time slot 14:40 – 15:40)

Dear Carpathian partners,

It is an honour and a real pleasure for me to be addressing the Carpathian Convention Conference of the Parties for the first time since I took up my role as Secretary General of the Alpine Convention.

My priority during my first months in office has been to meet all our strategic partners. It goes without saying that this has included the Carpathian Convention. I have soon learnt to appreciate the professional, warm and constructive atmosphere between our two Secretariats which is for sure one of the elements of success of our partnership. I have also been impressed by your numerous initiatives, your enthusiasm for the protection of the Carpathians and the extent of the partnerships that you can mobilize!

This is particularly evident from the milestones that you have managed to reach in the last years under the Hungarian Presidency and which you are rightly celebrating today.

Our Alpine Conference, the equivalent of your COP, is also approaching and there the Presidency of the Alpine Convention will pass from France to Switzerland. Therefore, now is a perfect time to reflect on the many joint interests we share between our sister Conventions and to discuss further cooperation opportunities. Let me mention two priorities in this respect.

First of all, **climate change**. Climate change is a reality and not only a distant scenario – a reality that we in the Alpine area are facing and that we share with you and other European and global mountain ranges. The Alpine Convention recognizes that it is not possible to fight climate change only within the national borders, but that we need to tackle it at transnational level. And beyond this: we need cooperation between mountain ranges worldwide. This is why in the last years the Chair of the Alpine Climate Board has shared the Alpine experiences with the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Climate Change. Moreover, we have cooperated with UNEP experts regularly participating as observers in the meetings of the Alpine Climate Board and engaging in related activities, such as the recent “Matchmaking workshop” in September 2020. This cooperation is set to continue in 2021 and to be enlarged to other mountain areas globally. I am very happy that in December 2021 we will start a global dialogue during an interregional workshop organised by UNEP under the “Adaptation at Altitude” programme financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. There, we will be able to share our knowledge with the Andes, the South Caucasus, East Africa and the Hindu Kush Himalaya!

The second cooperation topic I would like to focus on today is **biodiversity**. Both our mountain ranges are rich in biodiversity, but they are also biodiversity hotspots, due to their fragile balance. In the Alps, we are witnessing soil degradation and the loss of species at quick rates. This trend will not decrease in the future and we need to act now to reverse it and to actively protect our plant and animal species. The Alpine Convention is currently working through its Biodiversity Board on concrete targets to be agreed upon at ministerial level. As for climate change, I believe that we need to find a joint voice between mountain areas and that we need to make this voice heard

in the most important processes related to biodiversity worldwide. Again, the Carpathian Convention has proven to be a strategic partner in this effort. A first concrete result is the organization of the “Mountain Biodiversity Day” next January 13. At this event, we will bring together focal points of the Convention on Biological Diversity from mountain regions globally; moreover, representatives from the Alpine and Carpathian Convention will shed light on the new “Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” and we will discuss the way forward to elevate the importance of mountains within this strategic Framework. I see the “Mountain Biodiversity Day” as the first joint step in a journey that will bring us to the “15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity” and, beyond that, to contribute to the “Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” with a joint mountain perspective.

Last but not least, we have started the process of renewing and bringing new life and impulse to the Memorandum of Cooperation between Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity.

Let me conclude with a consideration: now more than ever we need to keep working for ensuring that our current and future generations can experience protected landscapes, clean air and a healthy environment, sustainable living solutions and a high quality of life. I have no doubt that our cooperation, already intense in the last three years, will grow even stronger also in the coming years!

The Alpine Convention is here and ready! I am sure that together, we can be at the forefront for exploring innovative and creative solutions to work together and preserve our two unique mountain ranges and be a best practice of mountain cooperation not only in Europe, but on the global scenario. I congratulate again the HU Presidency for the achieved results, and I am very much looking forward to work with the Polish Presidency.

Thank you.