

# **6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP6)**

25 November 2020

online

## **Statement by the Czech Republic**

Excellencies, Representatives of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, esteemed observers and stakeholders, dear colleagues and friends,

I am honoured to address you at the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic.

First of all, please allow me to express our great appreciation to the Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment as well as to the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention for organising and hosting the meeting even under these unprecedented circumstances. And of course, a regret that we cannot be meeting in person in the Polish part of the Carpathian mountains.

During our morning programme, we have heard the report on the progress in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention presented by the Secretariat. It highlighted some of our joint achievements in the past three years and also outlined some of the future priorities, be it large carnivores, protecting the remaining natural and virgin forests, developing transport infrastructure that respects ecological corridors, the Carpathian route linking the examples of our rich cultural heritage, or combating climate change. Now, I would like to invite you to direct your attention to some of the issues that might not be as tangible as adopted documents or project outcomes, but which can help us to better understand what the Convention stands for.

As an example, in 2018, the Carpathian Convention won a Gift to the Earth – WWF's highest award – in recognition of the important role the Convention has played in facilitating action by its member states and relevant stakeholders to preserve the exceptional natural values and promote sustainable development in the region as well as serving as a model for cross-border cooperation.

While talking of awards, I would also like to mention the successful TRANSGREEN project that recently won the Natura 2000 award. By this prize, the European Commission recognises conservation success stories across the EU. Please note that the project won in the category Cross-border cooperation and Networking. I believe that this category is particularly appropriate, since representatives of more than 480 organisations took part in the project implementation. Surely, what enabled to establish such a large network was the long-term cooperation and building of partnerships across the Carpathian region, facilitated by the Convention.

As regards networking, our Convention itself has even become a subject of academic research. Its results show it as a web of several hundreds of actors, all connected through a single dot represented by the Secretariat. We can indeed use the insights provided by this study and make sure, among other, that this structure remains open to new partners, that we focus on building bridging connections and guarantee that local voices are properly heard.

In my opinion, the true value of the Convention cannot be measured only by the number of involved stakeholders, but also by the richness and diversity of the network, connecting different countries, different sectors and topics as well as different actors from science, policy or practice. In this regard, we welcome the always closer cooperation with Science for the Carpathians and Eurac Research, as it allows the decision-makers to establish policies based on sound scientific findings. And we also express our gratitude to all the partners who then help to translate these policies into practice. Their number is now so high that you will kindly excuse me for not even starting naming them. And above all, it is the continuous dedication, ownership and enthusiasm of all the actors involved, that is crucial for delivering on our goals.

What we have also witnessed in recent past, is that the Convention is strengthening its position within ongoing EU and international processes and among other multilateral conventions dealing with issues such as biodiversity or climate change, as was also recognised this morning in the opening remarks by the UNEP Executive Director Ms. Inger Andersen. The Convention seems to be perfectly placed to play an important role in translating the goals established at global level into regional actions.

So, let us use all this concerted strength to build further on the acknowledged role of the Convention and to continue in promoting the sustainable development of our

Carpathian Region. As we know, it is the COP decisions that guide us in our work and this is the moment where I would like to thank everybody who was involved in designing them so that we could have a truly solid base for our future work. We appreciate all the inputs provided by the Parties as well as their flexibility in negotiating and fine-tuning the decisions until the very last day. Last but not least, I would like to thank Hungary as the outgoing presidency for their excellent leadership in the past three years and I remain confident that Poland, who has symbolically taken charge of the Carpathian baton today, will take up its role successfully.

For a brief moment during the closing segment of COP5 in 2017, we could live the experience of where our joint efforts could lead us, thanks to the speech by Mr. Andreas Beckmann, Managing Director of WWF Central and Eastern Europe. He depicted the Carpathians in 2050 as Europe's green heart, home of rich cultures and traditions, yet also one of the most dynamic regions in Europe, and a favoured place to live. Let us continue in our work, let us accelerate the implementation of the Convention as the next joint step on the path of fulfilling this vision.

Rest assured that the Czech Republic remains committed to continue in supporting the work of the Carpathian Convention. We are looking forward to our future cooperation and we hope to meet each other soon, at the latest at the ministerial conference, which Poland kindly offered to organise.

Thank you for your attention.