

**Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Ukrainian Delegation congratulates all participants of the 6th session and wishes you and your families good health in this difficult time of the pandemic!

Against the backdrop of prominent trends of climate change, devastating floods and prolonged droughts, rapid changes in lifestyle and economy, which we have clearly seen this year, there is no time to defend the positions of specific economy sectors or individual countries. Working together on the thematic areas currently requires the best expertise, strong leadership and willingness from each of the Contracting Parties. To counter these challenges, Ukraine is ready to share knowledge about forestry and experience in preserving virgin forests. At the same time, we are seeking knowledge and expertise for settlement of wildlife conflicts, creation of compensation and financial systems, planning constructions of transport infrastructure, prevention of negative impacts of small hydroelectric power stations and wind power plants, etc. We are interested in active work of all working groups of the Carpathian Convention, especially on climate, biodiversity, transport, tourism and forestry.

During the past three years, special attention was paid to the progress in the improvement of sustainable forestry and issues of biodiversity conservation in Ukraine.

Significant work has been done in the direction of applying methods of close-to-nature forestry. Much effort is also made to create transparency in forest management and increasing area of FSC certified forests, which is especially important in the Carpathians.

National legislation on the identification and conservation of virgin and natural forests, based on the requirements of the Carpathian Convention, was adopted in 2018. During this time, more than 40 thousand hectares of virgin forests have been identified. Part of these forests is located within protected areas. However, more than half of them belongs to state forest enterprises.

Other 28 thousand hectares of virgin forests are protected within the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe". The Government of Ukraine approved the "Action Plan for the preservation of the Ukrainian part of the Site and of sustainable development of the adjacent areas" in November 2018.

An essential step for the development of cross-border and international cooperation on environmental issues is the inclusion of 7 Carpathian Wetlands in the list of Ramsar sites, and the inclusion in the Emerald Network of 33 sites with the area of 702 thousand hectares which is almost 30 per cent of the Ukrainian Carpathians.

The Ukrainian Delegation would like to thank many organizations and stakeholders to whom we owe these successes, especially we would like to underline role of WWF, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds, NGO Danube-Carpathian Program, and the European Wilderness Society for organizing many conservation measures and identification of virgin and natural forests, as well as the Government of Germany for funding much of these activities through various funds and grants.

Systemic changes in the legislation of Ukraine are taking place in connection with the implementation of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. In recent years, the laws regarding Environmental Impact Assessment (2017), Strategic Environmental Assessment (2018), Basic Principles (Strategy) of State Environmental Policy of Ukraine till 2030 (2019) were adopted.

More specific to the Carpathian Convention, the Government of Ukraine adopted the State Program for the Development of the Ukrainian Carpathian Region for 2020-2022 in October 2019. The main objectives of this program correspond to the thematic focuses of the Carpathian Convention protocols. The program is more aimed at stimulating local authorities, sectoral and regional activities and serve as a sound basis for ensuring further implementation of the Convention.

The Ukrainian delegation welcomes the initiative of the Republic of Poland to establish a new EU macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian region, which aims to promote the effective sustainable development of the Carpathian region and cooperation between EU countries and other countries in the region.

Currently, we pay a lot of attention to the development of sustainable tourism, especially in national parks and rural areas in the Carpathians. This year, the State Agency for Tourism Development has been established in Ukraine, and a corresponding state budget program is being under preparation. It is planned to develop tourist and transport infrastructure, create appropriate information campaigns and adopt legislation.

Ukraine intends to join the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in the nearest future, which is especially important for us in the context of the implementation of expanded rights for newly established territorial communities and obtaining better funding in the enactment of decentralization policy.

We have high hopes for the support of the Contracting Parties of the Convention on this path, and we can see excellent prospects in the approximation of Ukrainian legislation to the European Union's. The adoption of the European Green Deal is promising and can lead to major changes also in non-European Union countries. We also want to emphasize the visible synergy and the need for deeper further cooperation in achieving the goals of several multilateral environmental agreements and the Carpathian Convention.

The Ukrainian Delegation would like to thank the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties for their joint work and mutual support. We are supporting the statements of all Contracting Parties and stakeholders that we have already heard today and support the need to strengthen our cooperation .

We sincerely wish to all participants good health, strength and energy for fruitful work for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians.

We are sure that this virtual format will create additional benefits, but it will not wholly replace live meetings forever. During the next Conference, we will see the stunning landscape of the Carpathians together, breathe the crystal mountain air and hear the twinkling songs of the forest birds.

Thank you for your attention and support once again!