

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentleman,

It is with great pleasure that I wish you a warm welcome to Belgrade.

On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Environmental protection and myself, I want to express our appreciation for joining us at this 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (CC COP7).

We are most pleased that Belgrade is the host of this year's CC COP7, especially having in mind that this is the year when we celebrate 20th anniversary of our joint efforts towards preservation of the environment, the biodiversity and natural beauty of the Carpathians conserved, restored and wisely used providing a healthy environment and essential ecosystem services for all people in our region and beyond.

It was a pleasure collaborating with everyone involved in environmental protection, because we are all gathered with the same strategic goal which is environmental protection and sustainable development of our countries.

The CC COP7 is a great opportunity for all of us to look back, and to assess the progress we made during the last 20 years of implementation, while we were facing the challenges of the several planetary crisis. We must remain determined to also face coming challenges, in order to achieve the Carpathian Vision 2050, whose goals we are all very committed to.

In line with that strategic goal, the Parties are expected to adopt an ambitious set of decisions during this Conference, including the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework - a comprehensive instrument supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the Carpathian level, and translating the global goals and target into transformative actions by various stakeholders at the regional level.



Thus, I'm honored to have the opportunity to personally take part in this important event and to give personal contribution to promoting activities related to strengthening the relatedness between conserving our Carpathians and building a more sustainable future. Let me reiterate that the unique partnership between countries that share the Carpathians provides a solid basis for cooperation and joint action.

The Republic of Serbia is a mélange of different cultures, captivating landscapes and great wealth of biological and landscape diversity. Development of comprehensive environmental policies is one of our country's priorities. In this year only, we have established 5 new protected areas, and the total area under protection increased to 8.3% of the country's territory. We recognize the importance of afforestation in addressing climate change and environmental issues, therefore, we provide state aid which gradually increases every year.

Considering the adoption of the new global strategic plan for biodiversity, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Nature Protection Programme of the Republic of Serbia will be updated so as to facilitate implementation of global action aimed at bringing transformation in our societies' relationship with biodiversity by 2030.

In the light of adoption of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, Serbia makes all its resources available to catalyze urgent and transformative action by seven Carpathian States with the involvement of all of society, in order to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Remaining committed to supporting the ongoing EU and international processes and other multilateral conventions, primarily those addressing biodiversity and climate change issues, this Conference brings together a large number of participants with the aim of establishing an agenda for the implementation of activities in the field of protection and the sustainable development of the Carpathian region in the years ahead.

It is my sincere hope that with joint efforts and with the support of the EU, we will continue to develop and foster partnerships and involvement of the professional institutions, in order to in order to achieve the Carpathian Vision 2050. That's why we will continue to implement strategies, programmes and activities and guarantee the protection and conservation of the Carpathians in many years to come.

Thank you all for your contribution and support. I look forward to seeing you soon.

MINISTER

Irena Vujovic