



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة · 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT · PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ



Distr.: General
UNEP/CC/COP1/18
25 October 2006

Original: English

Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians

First meeting

Kyiv, Ukraine, 11-13 December 2006

Item 11 of the provisional annotated agenda

Secretariat note on preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade Conference)

Introduction

1. The Carpathian Convention was adopted and signed on 22 May 2003 at the Fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (EfE) in Kyiv.
2. UNEP ROE has submitted a draft category II (information) paper on “Mountain Initiatives” to the 3rd meeting of the UNECE Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) (12-13 October 2006) as a contribution to the item “Mountain initiatives” of the draft agenda of the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” to be held in Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007. The draft document is contained in the Annex to the present note.
3. UNEP will remain available to further assist Governments in developing and finalizing the paper by collecting and presenting further relevant information, supporting the Belgrade Conference and its preparations in addressing the issue of protection and sustainable development of mountain regions.

Possible action by the Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

1. welcome the inclusion of the Agenda item on “Mountain initiatives” into the draft agenda of the Belgrade Conference, and
2. welcome initiatives undertaken in other regions aiming at the protection and sustainable development of trans-boundary mountain ranges, and to reiterate the readiness of the Carpathian Convention partners to continue to share experiences in the development of mountain related partnerships and frameworks.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

Annex

Version 03.10.06

Mountain Initiatives Input to the Belgrade Conference 2007

Provided by United Nations Environment Programme - Regional Office for Europe (UNEP-ROE)

Background

Following the discussions at the 2nd meeting of the WGSO (29-30 June 2006) regarding the possible activities that could provide input to the agenda of the Belgrade Conference, UNEP was invited to provide updates, as appropriate, on new activities that fall under the 'Documents of Category I and II' in accordance with the documents on the possible framework for the Agenda of Belgrade, to be submitted for consideration at the 3rd meeting of the WGSO (12-13 October 2006).

Available information and country inputs were compiled and informally consulted. Further inputs were invited of the Second Preparatory Meeting for the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (11-12 September 2006 in Vienna), and of the 33rd Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alpine Convention (Innsbruck, 20-21 September 2006). Upon request, UNEP will further assist governments in developing a Category II paper "Mountain Initiatives", supporting the Belgrade Conference and its preparations in addressing protection and sustainable development of mountain regions, by collecting and presenting further relevant information.

Introduction

The UN General Assembly Resolution 53/24 of November 1998 declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IYM), with the goal of raising international awareness about mountains, their global importance, fragility of their resources and the necessity of sustainable approaches to mountain development.

Mountain initiatives build on the process initiated by the 1992 UNCED, or the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Chapter 13 of UNCED's major outcome, Agenda 21, highlights the urgency for action to achieve sustainable mountain development.

The most detailed reference to and international mandate for the elaboration of regional mountain instruments are contained in the recently adopted Work Programme on Mountain biodiversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The Work Programme aims to establish "regional and trans-boundary collaboration and the establishment of cooperative agreements" on mountains.

UNEP is one of the leading UN agencies to support the diverse mountain initiatives by means of providing its expertise, services and assistance for mountain regions worldwide, and has a lead role in promoting Chapter 15 of Agenda 21 of the CBD. UNEP has initiated and/or facilitated negotiations for many multilateral environmental conventions, which address major environmental issues of today, including agreements on protection and sustainable mountain development.

Mountain Partnership

The Mountain Partnership, launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, is a broad alliance of countries, intergovernmental organizations and major groups working towards improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. Its Secretariat is hosted by the FAO in Rome, with the participation of UNEP. The Merano Conference in October 2003 was a landmark event for the Mountain Partnership: it was the first

global meeting of members and a unique forum aimed to identify common needs, priorities and concerns and to explore key issues related to the structure, membership and governance of the Partnership. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Central Asia have taken this opportunity to propose initiatives for the protection and sustainable management of major trans-boundary mountain ranges in Europe and Central Asia. In 2004 the Second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership at Cusco Conference reconfirmed the initiatives directed towards declaring mountain challenges as a priority issue to be addressed at the international level.

The Alpine Convention, adopted in 1991, which brought all Alpine countries to work together on mountain development and protection, has provided much inspiration in this regard, particularly in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Already in the International Year of the Mountains 2002, UNEP launched the European Mountain Initiative, assisting Governments of various regions in facilitating increased cooperation for the protection and sustainable management of trans-boundary mountain ranges.

Carpathian Convention

In 2001, UNEP was requested by the Government of Ukraine to service a regional cooperation process for the Carpathians, a major trans-boundary mountain range shared by seven countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2002, the Alpine-Carpathian partnership has been initiated by the Ministry of the Environment and Territory of Italy. At the Fifth Ministerial Conference EfE held in Kyiv in May 2003, the Carpathian countries adopted the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians consequently signed by all seven countries. Austria hosts and supports the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention provided by UNEP.

The Carpathian Convention entered into force on 4 January 2006 and consequently, has turned to the implementation phase. UNEP is currently preparing the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the Carpathian Convention to be held in December 2006. The COP 1 will adopt the future Work Programme of the Carpathian Convention.

With the support of the EU under the INTERREG IIIB CADSES Neighbourhood Programme, the "Carpathian Project" led by UNEP Vienna ISCC as a major multi-partner initiative, aims to demonstrate that mountain ecosystems can offer considerable potentials, including economic ones, for sustainable development respecting the rich cultural and natural heritage and its preservation for the future, and that a transnational legal framework can support the extension of EU environmental standards to EU neighbours.

Benefiting of the Convention's platform, a Carpathian Environment Outlook (KEO) as an integrated environmental assessment is currently being prepared with the support of UNEP. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) supports the SARD-M Project on sustainable agriculture and rural development policies in mountain regions. A REC and European Academy (EURAC) project resulted in national assessments of the policy, legislative and institutional frameworks related to the Carpathian Convention and national stakeholder meetings in each Carpathian country. Significant progress has been achieved in developing the Handbook on the Carpathian Convention.

Currently, the cooperation between the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions as equal partners is growing steadily; a Memorandum of Cooperation between the two Conventions is under preparation and expected to be signed at the margins of the Alpine Ministerial Conference in November 2006.

South Eastern Europe

Significant steps towards closer cooperation in the South Eastern Europe (SEE) region are being

made within the context of the Mountain Partnership on the proposal and official request of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to UNEP to facilitate the intergovernmental consultation aimed at enhanced regional cooperation, based on the experience of UNEP together with Italy and EURAC. Italy pledged to support this initiative. The process started at the Second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership at Cusco Conference in 2004 with discussion of the opportunities to develop a collaborative mechanism for countries in the SEE (or Balkan peninsula region) that would be inspired by those already existing for the Alpine and Carpathian regions.

UNEP organized a meeting held in December 2005 in Bolzano, Italy, where experts and government representatives from the SEE countries were extensively briefed on the ongoing activities in the Carpathians in order to share the experience in launching a formal sub-regional process leading to closer mountain region cooperation.

The Pelister Statement, adopted during the SEE Intergovernmental Consultation, held in May 2006 in the FYR Macedonia, recognized that a legal framework for cooperation in SEE is feasible; it also constituted that a draft text of a possible legal instrument should be prepared for the consideration of a first negotiating meeting, scheduled for November 2006 at the premises of the European Academy (EURAC) in Bolzano.

UNEP is currently implementing the programme “Improving regional cooperation for risk management from pollution hotspots as well as the trans-boundary management of shared natural resources” in SEE in the framework of the UNDP-UNEP-OSCE Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative.

The Belgrade Conference 2007 is expected to be a landmark event for facilitating and launching the formal process of cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions in South Eastern Europe.

Caucasus

On the initiative of Armenia, a first Meeting of the Authorized Representatives on the Development of a Legal Instrument for the Protection of the Caucasus Mountain Ecosystem was held from 26 - 27 June 2001 in Yerevan. The Meeting adopted a resolution, recognizing the need of a legal instrument, e.g. Caucasus Convention, and requesting UNEP's further assistance in the development of such an instrument. The initiative of the Caucasus countries was reaffirmed at the Meeting organized by UNEP in the framework of Mountain Partnership, “Sharing experience: Capacity Building on Legal Instruments for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Mountain Regions in the Caucasus” and confirmed in the Bolzano Declaration. It was agreed that the follow-up at the international level with UNEP as the facilitator, would focus on coordinating activities to support and service regional and sub-regional initiatives in the Caucasus.

An assessment of existing programmes and initiatives, which foster the protection of the Caucasus mountain ecosystem through regional cooperation, is currently undertaken by ENVSEC in preparation for a legal instrument. The Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for the Caucasus and the Russian REC are implementing the Mountain Programme under their Sustainable Development Programme involving the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Programme aims to elaborate, in the long-term, a Local Agenda 21 version. Currently eight villages have been chosen for a pilot scheme and their inhabitants are being trained to participate in the local planning process and sustainable development.

In the biodiversity sector, the Council for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Resource Use brings government and NGO representatives of all six Caucasian countries (Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran) together in an effort to cooperate in the protection of the unique biodiversity of the entire region. With the assistance of the WWF it has set out to implement the Ecoregional Conservation Plan (ECP), a long-term strategy to create a

network of protected areas across the entire region. Similar efforts are undertaken by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) also with the support of the WWF, which targets specific species and intends to set up protective corridors in hotspot areas. Countdown 2010 under the umbrella of IUCN aims to support the implementation of all existing international and regional agreements related to biodiversity.

In the water sector, USAID is implementing the South Caucasus Water Program, a joint effort of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan to tackle water pollution and introduce sustainable management practices.

Other mountain regions

Within the framework of the global Mountain Partnership, UNEP is also sharing its experience on the Carpathian Convention with other mountain regions such as the Andes, Central Asia and Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya. The Mountain Partnership will continue to be the suitable framework for further sharing of experience with other mountain regions of the world. The partner organization Mountain Forum (MF) helps to provide the required communication infrastructure for such exchange. UNEP – in both its roles as the Carpathian Convention Interim Secretariat and as the environmental Focal Point within the Mountain Partnership Secretariat – supports mountain cooperation within and between mountain regions through various activities.

Suggestions for the way forward

The promotion of sustainable mountain development requires regional and sub-regional mountain cooperation and joint actions. Innovative regional and local development approaches are now implemented in the Carpathians with EU structural funds supporting the Carpathian Mountain Range cooperation, which can provide food for thought and experience sharing with other mountain regions, such as in South Eastern Europe, Caucasus or Central Asia. It is proposed to further consider the development of partnerships and frameworks, taking into account the Alpine-Carpathian and other experiences, along with their environmental and economic benefits. UNEP reaffirms its support to governmental consultations on concrete achievements and policy discussions up to and during the Conference, and, in response to the identified country proposals and in consultation with the Governments, will further assist in the development of partnerships and negotiating of frameworks for the protection and sustainable development of transboundary mountain ranges. Such action will also directly contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its programme of work on mountains; assist in the achievement of the 2010 target to halt the loss of biological diversity of the Pan European Ecological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS); as well as support European nature conservation policies in mountain ecosystems.