

## Germany's Statement as Observer at the Ministerial Segment

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*Florian Carius, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)*

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Dear Secretariat Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Also on behalf of the German Environment Ministry, let me first take this opportunity to congratulate all the contributors on the achievements made in terms of sustainable development in the Carpathians under the Slovak Presidency and at this 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties. I thank the Government of the Czech Republic and the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention for hosting this Conference here in Mikulov and for their kind hospitality that we enjoyed during the last days.

The German Government especially welcomes the efforts of the seven Parties to the Convention for adopting the Protocol and the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism. In this regard, we highly appreciate the commitment of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism of the Carpathian Convention, the governmental bodies, UNEP-ISCC, WWF Danube Carpathian Programme, CEEweb for Biodiversity, the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA), Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE), and the many further conservation and tourism experts that contributed to these achievements. In total, more than 1200 people were consulted on the elaboration of the strategy, a remarkable number.

You have agreed on the vision to develop the Carpathians as “a top competitive sustainable tourism destination in Europe, based on its unique natural and cultural heritage preserved and maintained on large integral areas”. Also Germany is convinced that the region has a great potential to attract increased numbers of tourists. Transboundary cooperation will be a major success factor to achieve the objectives. Germany can be considered as a potent and potential source market. Last year, German citizens carried out 150 million tours spending 83 billion Euros. 70% of the tours targeted destinations abroad.

The German Government is aware of its responsibility for outbound tourism and its impact on destinations. This was one factor that motivated the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) to support the development of the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism in cooperation with the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA) with funds from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).

We consider the new strategy as an important instrument for joint planning and management of tourism in the Carpathians. Moreover, it will form a basis for multi-lateral and multi-level cooperation in this field and has a great potential for strengthening relationships across borders not only among stakeholders from the tourism sector but also among the people living in the different Carpathian countries. It will increase their awareness and their pride for the common cultural and natural heritage and contribute to the maintenance of local traditions. We should not hesitate to promote tourism as a tool for enabling intercultural exchange and mutual respect to lead societies to further build the social capital of Europe.

It is quite unique in the world to have a multi-level governance mechanism for a transboundary region which provides an umbrella for adopting a tourism development strategy that determines common objectives, actions, arrangements for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This can be a model for other mountain regions.

The strategy provides a very good basis, but its actual implementation will be the key for success. In this context, we want to emphasise the need to provide adequate logistical and financial resources for governing implementation in order to ensure the institutional sustainability of the intellectual and financial investments made during the elaboration process. With cordial greetings from the German Environment Ministry, we wish you the best of success for developing tourism sustainably in the Carpathians.

Germany will hold the presidency of the Alpine Convention in 2015 and 2016 and we are very much looking forward to the further cooperation with the Carpathian Convention.

Thank you for your kind attention.