

Distinguished delegates,

„Let me say some more words on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic as the main coordinator of the activities under the Carpathian Convention in the Czech Republic:

I would like to seize the opportunity to **share with you the priorities of the Czech presidency to the Convention**. As for what I have just heard, some of them reflect the needs and views expressed by you as well and I hope we could support each other in achieving our common goals.

The Convention cannot ever be fully implemented without the **engagement and cooperation of regional and local administrations**. They are the key actors and our key partners.

To be able to support them in their efforts with an appropriate funding, it is crucial to ensure the **inclusion of the Carpathian Convention into existing EU funding programs and Macro-regional Strategies** such as the Danube Strategy and the Danube Operational Programme or the Baltic Sea Region Strategy in the case of Poland and I hope we can count on your full support.

I also believe that a very important and common topic for all of us is the **sustainable use of the Carpathian landscapes, their ecological connectivity and green infrastructure**. Carpathian landscape and its ecological connectivity cannot be dealt with in isolation but has to be dealt with in a transboundary context. It requires the cooperation of all of us. I hope that we can join our forces and together take action on the ground.

I appreciate the **cooperation and experience sharing with the Alpine Convention** that has taken place up to date and I hope for closer cooperation especially on adaptation to climate change in mountain areas.

I would like to thank the **Secretary of the Convention and its team for the great support in the implementation** of the Convention they have been providing. I would like to reassure them about the determination of the Czech presidency to work closely with the secretariat on the review of the processes and activities under the Convention. The presidency is aiming at the **highest possible efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the COP4 decisions and programme of work**.

During our presidency, we also **aim at pursuing the implementation of the activities that were already initiated such as the Strategic Action Plan to the Forest Protocol and Declaration on Cultural Heritage**. Both natural forests and cultural heritage are valuable assets of the Carpathians and their sustainable use and protection has the potential to generate local revenues, especially through sustainable tourism.