

**Observer remarks to the Carpathian Convention Fourth Conference of the Parties,
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The Carpathian Convention is 10 years old. We are stepping forward into a new era – a new era not only for the Convention, but for the world around us. Our world today is much different than the one a decade ago into which the Convention was born. It is a very different world in which the challenges facing us are now coming into much sharper, often more painful, focus.

In our first decade, much of the focus, quite naturally, was on biodiversity and protected areas. No doubt, we need to continue this work. Among other things, we need to secure the further functioning of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, and we need to further develop the Red List of Species.

But moving forward, the real challenge and opportunity – also for biodiversity – will lie in integrating biodiversity and environment in other sectors. We have started this work with forests, and now transport and tourism, and have made another step toward culture. Agriculture and spatial planning is already on the horizon, and energy and other infrastructure is certainly needed as well.

We need to find sustainable solutions that can secure livelihoods on a long-term basis. We need to find win-win solutions wherever possible. And where this is not possible -- and there will indeed be those cases -- we need to find solutions that come at least cost, economically, socially and ecologically.

We need to ensure that our transport arteries do not cut off the circulation through our ecological corridors. We need to ensure that the Trans-European Networks for Transportation (TEN-T) do not cut off the Trans-European Networks of Green Infrastructure (TEN-G).

For the European Union, for Ukraine, for all countries of our region, there is an increasing focus on securing the supply of energy and resources. This is an opportunity. It gives greater value to the rich store of resources we have. And it pushes us finally to wean ourselves off fossil fuels and find long-term sustainable solutions.

But it is also a great challenge. Our first step has to be to vastly improve the efficiency of the way we use resources, to do more with less. But beyond that, our choices will have impacts. Developing hydropower can yield clean and renewable energy. But it can also destroy water courses and the myriad ecosystem services that they provide. We need to be smart, to ensure that our investments have net benefits, not costs.

The guidelines for development of hydropower that were facilitated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and adopted by all Danube countries are not only highly relevant for Carpathian areas, but also provide a good model and example for us in seeking solutions for example for development of motorways and other infrastructure.

The Carpathian Convention used to be populated overwhelmingly by environmentalists – by representatives of environmental ministries and by greens and quasi-greens like me. This is changing. Here today, we also have representatives from ministries of forests and agriculture, transportation, tourism and regional development, and a growing range of stakeholders, including regional governments.

Together, we need to find a common vision and common solutions. We need to communicate better and cooperate better, between ministries and sectors, not just between countries but also within countries. This is not an abstract observation but directly relevant to many of you here today who participate in working groups and implementation committees.

I would like to note the opportunity provided us by Ukraine's commitment in the Association Agreement it has signed with the European Union to adopt key pieces of EU legislation, from the Habitats and Birds Directive to the Water Framework Directive and Energy Performance in Buildings Directive – the same legislation that Serbia has committed itself to implementing as a candidate country, and which the other Carpathian countries already have. For the first time, the 7 Carpathian countries share “hard” laws, providing a common and useful basis for cooperation and implementing the objectives of the Carpathian Convention. Let's use this.

We need to constantly ask ourselves: are we making a difference? Is what we are discussing and doing making a real, tangible difference for the people living in the Carpathians, like those who visited us today, or for the natural treasures of the region?

It is critically important that we make a difference. Last week, at the Climate Conference in New York, US President Obama said: “We are the first generation to experience climate change, and we are the last generation to be able to do something about it.”

Next week, WWF will publish the Living Planet Report – a health check for our planet. The news are not good – at our current rate, we are consuming 1.5 planets. We are consuming our natural capital, drawing down not just the interest but also the principal of our natural capital. You don't have to be a banker, let alone an ecologist or rocket scientist, to recognize that this cannot go on indefinitely.

In the Carpathians, we are fortunate to still have many natural treasures. But we have to take care lest we lose them. We at WWF estimate that in the last 10 years since the Carpathian Convention was signed, we have lost about half of the area of virgin forests we had in 2002. These areas are gone forever.

So – let's work together, let's create that vision and find those solutions, so that we, our children and our children's children can continue enjoying full lives in this very special part of Europe and the world.

Thank you.