

Fourth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change

30 September – 2 October 2015

Szolnok, Hungary

Draft Meeting Report

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention with a generous support of the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, the Szent Istvan University and in gratitude for the hospitality of the Middle Tisza District Water Directorate – Tisza Office, organized the fourth meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change, held in Szolnok, Hungary from 30 September to 2 October 2015.

Opening of the meeting, election of the Chair, adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Attila Lovas, Director of the Middle Tisza District Water Directorate – Tisza Office together with Ms. Klara Szeker, Carpathian Convention Focal Point for Hungary, Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary and Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the UNEP Vienna – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

Mr. Sandor Szalai, Szent Istvan University, was unanimously elected as the Chair of the meeting and then the Agenda was adopted without any changes.

Mr. Egerer informed the participants about the workshop “Climate Change Adaptation in Mountain Regions” organized by the current Carpathian Convention Presidency – the Czech Republic (2014 – 2017) at the Expo 2015. More information about the workshop will be provided by the Czech Presidency later on.

Cooperation Session

Taking into account that mountain regions, such as the Carpathians, are particularly affected by climate change and will face specific challenges, the actors involved need to respond and react to these challenges at a national and transnational level. The Secretariat has prepared an Action plan based on the Strategic Agenda accepted by COP4 in Mikulov 2014. During its discussion and as for the meeting objectives, it was stressed that the Working Group need to set clear priorities, learn from and build on experiences of other mountain regions, like the Alps. In addition, strengthening partnerships between relevant stakeholders is very important for future activities in the region. Possible cooperation between Carpathian and Baltic regions was presented as a good partnership possibility which will bring together the two regions and let them exchange experience and lessons learnt in the field of climate change.

The representative of the Italian Delegation for the Alpine Convention, Mr. Luca Cetara presented some activities of the Alpine Convention on climate change with a special focus on the Guidelines for Climate Change Adaptation at the local level in the Alps.* Mr. Cetera stated that the Alpine Convention has realized many projects on climate change, however the main challenge is the implementation of their results in an effective and practical way. It was stressed that the Alps has enjoyed the privilege of being funded by the Alpine Space programme giving great support to projects on climate change. This kind of support in the Carpathians is still missing. Mr. Cetara informed the participants that the points of the Guidelines, that might be relevant to the Carpathian region, could be provided to the Working Group.

The representative of the European Environment Agency (EEA), Mr. Kati Mattern presented the EEA information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. Ms. Mattern introduced as well the European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate-ADAPT), which is the European Commission initiative aiming to support Europe in adapting to climate change by providing/sharing available information on the topic.* Ms. Mattern informed also about a possible Carpathian Convention contribution to the Climate-ADAPT. As agreed, the Working Group will decide on case studies and on content to be provided to the Climate-ADAPT. The Secretariat will coordinate the preparations, which includes contacting the Parties to obtain required information, if necessary. In addition, the Secretariat will be the contact point for the Climate-ADAPT.

Representative of the ICPDR – Tisza Group, Ms. Diana Heilmann presented the framework of cooperation and ongoing activities of the Tisza Group, as well as informed about the Tisza Project concept to be submitted for the first call for proposals under the Danube Transnational Programme. Ms. Heilmann invited the Working Group to participate in the Stakeholders Conference in Budapest on 19-20 November 2015 on the funding opportunities in the water sector, which will be organized by the Priority Area Water Quality (PA4) together with Priority Area Environmental Risks (PA5).*

The representative of the Drought Management Center for South and Eastern Europe, Ms. Andreja Susnik presented its activities and proposed opportunities for future cooperation with the Carpathian Convention such as collaboration on early drought warning in South Eastern Europe.*

The representative of the Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWPC EE), Ms. Sabina Bokal delivered a presentation on GWPC EE activities such as the Integrated Drought Management Programme in Central and Eastern Europe which aim at increasing the capacity of the CEE region to adapt to climatic variability by enhancing resilience to drought.*

The representative of the Institute for Soil and Agriculture Chemistry Centre of Agricultural Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Ms. Eszter Toth presented measurement and modelling of the soil water and carbon-dioxide regime and the Institute's activities.*

The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and the EUSDR national coordination office, Mr. Gabor Jenei presented EU funding programmes available in the Carpathian region, which could be used for the future project on climate change, as well in the other fields. Mr. Jenei drew the participants' attention to the Hungary Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme (<http://www.huskroua-cbc.net/en>).*

On the margin of that presentation, Mr. Egerer brought to the attention of the participants that the 20% ERDF Project Partner rule¹ is not applicable for the current call for proposals under the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) and that the re-entry of 20% rule for the second call should be discussed by the Monitoring Committee of DTP². Mr. Egerer encouraged the participants to lobby for the change.

The representative of the WWF DCP Freshwater Programme, Ms. Laurice Ereifej informed the participants about a brochure on EU funding opportunities for wetlands and floodplain restoration, which has been prepared by WWF. The brochure can be found on the WWF website³, as well as on the Carpathian Convention website⁴.

Furthermore, Mr. Egerer presented current cooperation of the Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change with other Carpathian Convention Working Groups and beyond, as well as activities in other mountain regions being implemented by UNEP.*

¹ 20% ERDF Project Partner is a Project Partner from the EU territory but outside the programme area, who participates directly in the project with a separate budget as financial partner.

² Monitoring committee: representatives of member states on national and regional level. It takes common decision - reviews the implementation of the programme and progress towards achieving its objectives, selects and approves applications to be financed

³ http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/danube_carpathian/media/publications/?248615/EU-funding-opportunities-for-wetland-and-floodplain-restoration

⁴ <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/wg-climate-change.html>

Project session

The Parties, as well as the observers, presented ongoing or realized projects related to the climate change in order to share experiences and update each other on project's activities that could be used for future projects to be developed by the Working Group.

The representative of Ukraine, Mr. Volodymyr Korzhov informed the participants about the project "HYDROFOR: Systems of optimal forest management for enhancing the hydrological role of forests in preventing the floods in Bodrog river catchment" being implemented in Ukraine and Slovakia in the framework of Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI CBC Programme 2007-2013, Priority 2: Enhance environmental quality, Measure 2.2. Emergency preparedness. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the harmonised prevention of flood risks in Bodrog river catchment through enhancement of hydrological effect of forests and improved forest management practice. Currently, a monograph and practical manual on strengthening of the hydrological role of forest territories and guidelines for demonstration watersheds is being finalized by the project partners.

Mr. Korzhov presented as well a movie which was created with the support of an entrepreneur Stefan Valio (citizen of Slovakia), who is the owner of wood-working plant near Uzhorod. In Ukraine, he collaborates with NGO Forza and UkrRIMF and created a number of water-regulating ponds on the territory of his plant. In the movie, the reasons of climate change are analyzed on regional level, and suggestions for its mitigation are given. They include: decreasing the effect of agricultural and forest machines on soil, improving forest transport network and recultivation of the skidways, which are not used anymore.

Next, the representative of Slovakia, Mr. Libor Ulrych gave short overview of Slovakian projects and activities on climate change, such as the Strategy of adaptation to negative effects of climate changes in Slovakia and GLORIA project - The European dimension of the Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments*.

The representative of Poland, Mr. Lukasz Wrobel shortly informed about the Polish National Strategy for adaptation to climate change with the perspective to 2030. The Strategy contains well developed sector on forestry, which is underlining the importance of forests for the climate change issues. Mr. Wrobel briefed as well about a national project on small water retention. More information about the project will be provided to the Secretariat.

Working session

Strengthening cooperation between the main actors in the region should be one of the top priorities of the Working Group.

It was also suggested that chairs of the Carpathian Convention Working Groups should meet periodically and present activities of the respective WGs with the aim to improve horizontal cooperation considering all cross-cutting issues and discuss overlapping activities. The Alpine Convention experience confirms that the initiatives developed during joint workshops of all the Working Groups of Alpine Convention, were much more specific than those undertaken individually.

Organization of the second meeting of the Eger Group was suggested and welcomed by the meeting participants. It will allow to continue the exchange of information and good practices from different regions.

The WG Climate Change should also work on good case studies in all sectors involving experts for all specific issues. Positive output could be brought to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP5) and to the larger audience.

With regards to the Climate – ADAPT and Carpathian Convention contribution to it, successful case studies from the region shall be presented to the Working Group that will agree which of them should be uploaded to the Climate – ADAPT Platform.

Mr. Egerer informed about UNEP Vienna Office activities planned for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 21 in Paris, France. More information together with an invitation will follow soon.

The participants raised the problem of lack of sufficient monitoring in the mountain regions, which could be a subject of a possible future project with a focus on the Protected Areas (monitoring and adaptation in the PAs). Some good examples could be used from a similar project - GLORIA - The European dimension of the Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments.

The Parties, as well as the observers, will explore within their own countries funding opportunities for future projects. Since EU Life Programme offers great support for the climate change adaptation project, the participants were requested to enquire more information about the Life Programme and to receive answers for some specific questions, such as :

- Are Ministries eligible as a project partners?
- Are international organization eligible as partners?
- How to deal with co-financing? Who can co-finance a project?
- Can non-EU countries be involved in a project?

The Working Group shall organized a phone conference to exchange information of funding opportunities by the end of November.

Based on the draft Action Plan for development of project ideas in the Carpathian region, the Working Group identified some priorities for future WG's work such as:

- Contribution to the Climate – ADAPT should be a top priority for the Working Group
- The Working Group should use existing data for development of monitoring system and identification of indicators for climate change. These activities should be done in close cooperation with the Science for the Carpathians (S4C)
- Ecosystem management
- Harmonization of climate adaptation strategies and inclusion of the Strategic Agenda into national policies
- Work of Kravchik (Slovakia) on adaptation as case study and develop an approach for the Carpathians
- Raise awareness of the Carpathian Convention activities, especially of the Working Group on Climate Change; to improve profile of the Carpathian Convention in the region
- Catchment based adaptation of land use (agriculture, forestry, etc.) to climate change into adaptation plans
- The Working Group should focus more on integrated approach while planning new activities

Based on the list of projects and case studies from CarpathCC project, to be provided by Aquaprofit, the Working Group will decide which of them will be included in the Climate-ADAPT. The representative of Aquaprofit will investigate the distribution of the long list of collected case studies and measures. It was kindly offered by Mr. Zingstra to do the first selection of the case studies.

As agreed by the Working Group, the Secretariat will prepare short description of the region, policy framework and climate change activities to be display on the Climate – ADAPT website. The content will be consulted with the Working Group.

Terms of Reference for the Working Group were slightly changed. The modified version (in track changes) will be circulated by the Secretariat seeking the final approval by the Parties. The final version of the ToRs will be submitted to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee, to be held on 24 November 2015 in Brussels, Belgium, for its approval.

The Working Group should meet at least once a year, according to the financial resource availability. However, online sessions are encouraged to take place between the physical meetings of the Working Groups.

Mr. Egerer proposed to prepare an overview of national adaptation strategies to climate change in the Carpathians. More information on these activities will be circulated in due course by the Secretariat.

Mr. Szalai made the concluding remark and together with Mr. Harald Egerer thanked the participants for their contribution to and involvement in the meeting discussion.

* More information on presented activities are available on the Carpathian Convention under <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-124/events/fourth-meeting-of-the-wg-adaptation-to-climate-change.html>