



## MEETING REPORT

7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change

15 May 2020 - ONLINE MEETING

*All the background documents and presentations delivered during the WG Climate Change meeting are available on the Carpathian Convention website<sup>1</sup>*

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the physical meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change set to take place in Budapest, Hungary on 15 May, was shifted to an online format. Members of the Working Group (WG), national focal points, and observers from research institutions and NGOs met online to discuss elevating the Mandate of the WG and exchange on ideas for future activities and cooperation related to climate change under the Carpathian Convention.

### **Item 1: Opening of the meeting and background information**

The online meeting of the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change was chaired by Dr. Sándor Szalai, Professor at Szent István University. Opening remarks were offered on behalf of the Hungarian Presidency by Mr. Zsolt Belánszky-Demko, Deputy State Secretary for International Relations in Hungary's Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, offered welcoming remarks and thanked all the Parties and stakeholders connected for their participation in the meeting.

### **Item 2: Introduction to the Meeting Agenda and its Adoption**

After a short round of introduction of the meeting participants, the Agenda was briefly presented by Dr. Szalai and adopted with two additional agenda items. The Final Agenda is annexed to the meeting report (Annex 1). Concerning the participation of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and Ukraine were present at the meeting, together with various partners and stakeholders.

Referring to the status of ratification of Article 12bis of the Carpathian Convention the following updates have been given by the national representatives:

Hungary has already ratified the Article and Poland indicated that ratification is within Parliament and they are awaiting a decision. Romania indicated that the procedure of ratification is still ongoing at the governmental level and is on track to pass through Parliament. Ukraine indicated that the bill has been approved by the new acting Minister and that there is confidence about ratification of the article in the near future. Slovak Republic

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<sup>1</sup> [Link to the website](#)

is still in the processing stage and had no update. The Czech Republic also had no update and expressed that the topic already has high visibility without being ratified as an Article to Convention. Serbia did not have a representative in attendance, so no update was provided.

With regard to the second additional agenda item, Mr. Henk Zingstra of the NGO Wetlands International on behalf of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI) provided an overview of a project proposal to improve and strengthen the management of wetlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts in the Carpathian region. A short discussion followed on the scope of the project and the need for identifying project partners as well as funding applicable to non-EU Member States and accession countries. Mr. Zingstra was requested to provide more information about the project proposal in order to share with the WG CC.

**Item 3: Presentation, finalization and adoption of the advanced presidency paper on *Elevating the Mandate of the CC Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change***

Ms. Sabine McCallum chaired this agenda item and provided an overview of the advanced presidency paper and the incorporation of comments received thus far. Ms. McCallum sought further input from participants with the aim of finalizing the document. Helmut Hojesky, Chair of the Alpine Climate Board (ACB), provided comments and concrete suggestions for re-formulation mainly in relation to the policy framework section of the document. Further comments referred to adding the broader context on addressing climate change under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), re-phrasing the section on Strategic objectives and considering adding socio-economic effects as well as nature-based solutions, spatial planning, the need for an overarching vision of the Working Group.

**Item 4: Updating the Terms of Reference for the WG Climate Change-discussion (based on draft updated ToR)**

Ms. McCallum provided an overview of the updated Draft Terms of Reference for the WG. Mr. Jan Kadlečík submitted comments on the importance of wetlands and discussion followed on whether particular sectors and/or ecosystems should be specified in the document.

The need to address cross-sectoral interaction was expressed and support was given for stronger wording regarding the collaboration section. It was determined that specific sectors could also be addressed in this section along with the potential for collaboration with other potential institutions and organizations. No further objections were offered.

**Item 5: Composition of the WG Climate Change – What should be the appropriate composition of the WG Climate Change based on the updated ToR? – discussion**

Ms. McCallum chaired this session and began with a round table from the countries on their availability to contribute to the WG. Ms. Božena Haczek proposed that as with other working groups, there should be no formal composition, but experts are invited to participate as needed. Experts would be nominated and invited

based on the necessary expertise based on the required activities for the WG to fulfill its Mandate. Focal points from the Czech Republic and Hungary expressed support for this approach.

The Slovak Republic identified colleagues to contribute and Romania will follow up after the meeting. Ukraine indicated that there is a higher level of ambition and interest in adaptation to climate change due to their ongoing Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) process.

Hungary introduced the possibility of applying the lead country approach wherein one country serves as chair for a given WG. Ms. Klaudia Kuraś of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention pointed out that the idea of having chairs for each WG, which was brought up in December 2019, is fairly new and requires more consultation between the Secretariat and Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC). She indicated that it could potentially be a good approach to mainstreaming climate change to other sectors and ensuring sharing of activities and supporting holistic implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

Ms. McCallum expressed support for the subject-specific expert approach and Mr. Szalai suggested having a minimum number of participants to ensure effectiveness.

Mr. Helmut Hojesky, Chair of the Alpine Climate Board (ACB), shared his experience surrounding the composition of the Alpine Climate Board. It includes board members, members from NGOs and institutions, and one employed consultant. He advised for participation to be as open as possible.

There was discussion calling for more joint and smaller online sessions between regular WG meetings. Mr. Egerer highlighted recent positive experiences with small WG meetings between larger sessions and pointed to the recent joint WG meetings on biodiversity and transport.

**Item 6: Promoting climate change mainstreaming across all the Carpathian Convention Working Groups' topics and activities – What are the appropriate mechanisms for exchanging and collaborating with other thematic Working Groups? What could be concrete topics for cooperation with other WGs? – discussion**

Ms. McCallum delivered a presentation on initial ideas for areas of cooperation with other WGs established under the Carpathian Convention (Annex 2). Ms. Olesya Petrovych, Chief Specialist at the Ministry of Energy and Environmental Protection of Ukraine, highlighted that climate change is of importance to biodiversity and wetlands due to changes in distribution of species as well as to tourism due to a loss of resources.

Mr. Piotr Czarnocki, Head of Unit at the Ministry of Climate of Poland, stressed the importance of establishing good cooperation mechanism with other thematic Working Groups, especially the WG Forest.

Dr. William Keeton, Professor at the University of Vermont, highlighted the link with forestry and indicated that a special climate change session will be held at the next Forum Carpaticum, which is a scientific conference organized by the Science for the Carpathian initiative (S4C). A short description of the session is attached to the

Meeting report as Annex 3). The Secretariat will follow up with Mr. Keeton and S4C on organization of the climate change session and share more information with the WG.

Mr. Hojesky shared his experience regarding a prioritization exercise within the Alpine Climate Board on topics of the implementation pathways elaborated for the Alpine Climate Target System 2050.

Mr. Ovidiu Ionescu raised the issue of overgrazing impacting biodiversity and the limited effectiveness of protected areas at present. Mr. Libor Ulrych indicated that undergrazing also represents an issue in other regions and emphasized the importance of water management for the forestry and agriculture sectors. Mr. Szalai described a project being developed on the Tisza river.

### **Item 7: Cooperation with other stakeholders and other mountain and neighbouring areas – What are the best approaches in this respect? – discussion**

Mr. Matthias Jurek, Programme Management Officer at UNEP, delivered a presentation on global mountain adaptation to climate change. He outlined previous projects and activities provided an overview of the new programme on “Climate Change Adaptation in Mountains” (CCA in Mountains) funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). UNEP is, inter alia, responsible for the inter-regional exchange component and will organize a comprehensive workshop (3 days) to foster inter-regional action learning with representatives from various mountain regions (Andes, East Africa, Hindukush Himalayas and South Caucasus) as well as regional bodies and conventions (Carpathian and Alpine Convention, Arctic Council, etc.). The workshop will possibly be held back-to-back to a meeting of the Alpine Climate Board of the Alpine Convention end of 2021 in Vienna (dates and venue to be confirmed). This workshop shall also provide a great opportunity for the WG to meet and exchange with other mountain regions on their approaches and concerns.

Mr. Luca Cetara of EURAC Research then delivered a presentation on preliminary research regarding governance of climate change adaptation in mountain regions. Dr. Keeton asked about the receptivity of local municipalities to the process and how meaningful changes were made on the ground. Mr. Cetara indicated that support was found in many instances but raised the point that a clear financial incentive for local and regional governments to enhance adaptation is often lacking.

Mr. Egerer highlighted that a joint statement on adaptation was issued in 2014 with the Alpine Convention. Further collaboration with the Alpine Convention was identified as a path forward.

Ms. Hildegard Meyer of WWF CEE indicated that WWF Slovakia recently submitted a project on climate smart adaptation for central and eastern Europe. She also pointed out that the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) included more climate change adaptation issues in their new river basin management plans.

### Item 8: Conclusion and next steps

Mr. Egerer offered a summary of the meeting. He indicated the need for smaller, informal meetings in the future. The desire for more cross/joint WG meetings in the future was reaffirmed. The importance of forestry in relation to adaptation to climate change was clear during this meeting, and other priority topic will be addressed through further consultations and cooperation with other WG. The importance of international and local levels of work was stressed. There will be a follow up meeting between the Chairman of Alpine Climate Board and the Chair of the Carpathian Convention WG on Climate Change in order to discuss potential common activities on climate change between the two Conventions and their bodies.

Ms. Kuraś offered a summary of the next steps after the meeting. The Secretariat will update and circulate the presidency paper and the WG Draft Terms of Reference to reflect comments received during the meeting. In addition, a document will be distributed listing all the proposed ideas for potential cooperation with other WGs, asking for feedback and additional ideas in writing to include for further consideration. Developments regarding the climate change session at the next Forum Carpathicum will be kept updated. In due course, the Secretariat will provide also further information regarding a joint workshop to be organized in 2021 under the programme on “Climate Change Adaptation in Mountains” supported by UNEP.

Ms. Eleonora Musco of EURAC Research-Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention indicated that she will follow up with Mr. Cetara and Ms. McCallum to see if the presented methodology can be applied to future projects in the Carpathians.

Mr. Szalai provided thanks for the organization of the meeting along with the high level of participation and closed the meeting.



## FINAL AGENDA

7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group  
on Adaptation to Climate Change

**15 May 2020 – ONLINE MEETING**

### SESSION 1 - 10:00 - 12:00 AM

- 1) Opening of the meeting and welcome remarks by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the Hungarian Presidency
- 2) Introduction to the meeting Agenda and its adoption
- 3) Updates on the ratification process of the Article 12bis on Climate Change
- 4) Presentation, finalization and adoption of the advanced presidency paper on *Elevating the Mandate of the CC Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change*
- 5) Presentation of a project proposal to improve and strengthen the management of wetlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts in the Carpathian region
- 6) Updating the Terms of Reference for the WG Climate Change- discussion (based on draft updated ToR)

Lunch break (12:00 – 13:00)

### SESSION 2 - 13:00 - 15:00 PM

- 7) Composition of the WG Climate Change – What should be the appropriate composition of the WG Climate change based on the updated ToR? – discussion
- 8) Promoting climate change mainstreaming across all the Carpathian Convention Working Groups' topics and activities – What are the appropriate mechanisms for exchanging and collaborating with other thematic Working Groups? What could be concrete topics for cooperation with other WGs? – discussion

Coffee break (15:00 15:15)

### SESSION 3 15:15 – 16:30

- 9) Cooperation with other stakeholders and other mountain and neighboring areas – What are the best approaches in this respect? – discussion
- 10) Conclusion and next steps
- 11) Closure of the meeting

**ORGANIZED SESSION – FORUM CARPATICUM 2021**

**Brno, Czech Republic**

**Convener:**

William Keeton, PhD.  
Professor of Forest Ecology and Forestry,  
Director, Carbon Dynamics Laboratory  
Fellow, Gund Institute for Environment  
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405 USA

**Title:**

Forest ecosystem and resource vulnerabilities to climate change in the  
Carpathian Mountain Region

**Session description:**

A number of recent pan-European assessments have mapped and identified vulnerabilities to climate change across a wide range of environmental infrastructure concerns and natural resources. In this session we will lay the groundwork for follow-up work focused specifically on forest ecosystems in the Carpathian Mountain region. Forest ecosystems in the Carpathians will continue to change into the future as compounded stresses from climate disruption, invasive species, land use pressures, and other factors increase. With changes in ecosystem dynamics will come alterations in the mix of ecosystem goods and services those forests provide. Foresters, scientists, and policy makers alike are challenged to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines in addressing questions of climate change. This session will take an expansive approach to these cutting edge topics. Talks from a range of disciplines are welcomed, particularly those addressing: 1) criteria and methodologies for determining the most at risk forest resources, functions, and biological diversity, and 2) the challenge of sustaining forest ecosystems into an uncertain future. Research on system attributes conferring resilience or adaptability to climate change will be of keen interest. Collectively, the research presented in this session will begin the process of identifying key vulnerabilities in forest resources that could be integrated into a comprehensive regional assessment in the near future.

**The title of the presentation of the convener (proposer):**

Forest ecosystem vulnerabilities to climate change and natural disturbances in relation to forest age, structure, and management: reconciling competing views