

MEETING REPORT

12th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity 19 – 20 May 2021, ONLINE MEETING

Session I – Introduction

1) Opening of the WG Biodiversity meeting and welcome remarks by the Polish Presidency

The 12th meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity (WG Biodiversity) was opened by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, welcoming the participants and giving technical instructions for smooth running of the online meeting. The Secretariat welcomed and introduced Ms. Eliška Rolfová, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, the Chair of the WG Biodiversity, as well as Ms. Bożena Haczek, Ministry of Climate and Environment of Poland, representing the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention. Ms. Haczek delivered the opening remarks on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention.

2) Introductory remarks by the WG Biodiversity Chair

Ms. Eliška Rolfová, the Chair of the WG Biodiversity, highlighted the importance of the WG Biodiversity work contributing to the global efforts to put biodiversity on the path to recovery, acknowledging the vast portfolio of activities undertaken for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Biodiversity since its adoption in 2008.

3) Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair of the WG Biodiversity introduced the meeting agenda, which was then adopted without any changes.

4) Consideration on the updated Terms of Reference for the WG Biodiversity

The Chair briefly introduced the updated Terms of Reference for the WG Biodiversity, explaining that the need for updating the document derives from the Carpathian Convention COP6 Decisions and is related to the new role of WGs Chair introduced at the last COP6. The Chair noted that no written comments to the draft ToRs circulated on 21 April 2021 were received. Opening the floor for comments and exchange on slight modification of the ToRs text, the Chair invited receiving comments in writing. After the meeting, the Secretariat will circulate the revised version for final approval by the WG Biodiversity. After agreeing on the final version, the ToRs will be submitted to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee for its consideration.

5) Presentation of a draft WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2021 – 2023 and the analysis of relevant documents for the WG Biodiversity activities¹

The Chair briefly introduced the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2021 – 2023 informing that comments to the document can be made during the entire meeting based on the topic of discussion. The comments were also invited in writing. As in the case of the Terms of Reference for the WG Biodiversity, after receiving the comments, the Secretariat will circulate the revised version for final approval by the WG Biodiversity.

Session II – Large carnivores and ecological connectivity

6) Presentation of the Report on population status of large carnivores and monitoring methods in the Carpathians by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)/BOKU University

Mr. Klaus Hackländer representing the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)/BOKU University presented the very first Carpathian-wide Report on Large Carnivore Monitoring in the Carpathian Mountains, which is a result of great cooperation between the WG Biodiversity, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences of Vienna and the Secretariat. Follow the

¹ Link to the draft Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity - Work Plan 2021 – 2023

link to the [Report on Large Carnivore Monitoring in the Carpathian Mountains](#) and the [presentation](#) delivered by Mr. Hackländer.

7) **Presentation of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity**

The Secretariat represented by Ms. Klaudia Kuraś, made a short presentation of the [International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians](#) that was adopted at the last Carpathian Convention COP6. The [presentation](#) is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

8) **Presentation of the projects relevant for the implementation of the Action Plan**

➤ **ConnectGREEN and SaveGREEN with focus on ecological connectivity – Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (WWF)**

The [ConnectGREEN](#) project (EU Interreg DTP Programme) lead partner WWF Romania represented by Mr. Cristian Remus Papp presented an overview of the ongoing project activities that are most relevant for the WG Biodiversity, including the Guidelines for identification, conservation, restoration and management of ecological corridors in the Carpathians.

Next, the [SaveGREEN](#) project (EU Interreg DTP Programme) lead partner, WWF CEE represented by Ms. Hildegard Mayer was invited to present the project activities and updates that are relevant for the WG Biodiversity. The [presentation](#) delivered by Ms. Mayer is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

➤ **Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe (SWIPE) EU LIFE Project (WWF)**

Furthermore, Ms. Roselina Stoeva, WWF Bulgaria, presented the [SWIPE project – Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe](#) (funded by the EU LIFE Programme) and its activities that might be relevant for the WG Biodiversity. The presentation was made in cooperation with Piotr Chmielewski, WWF Poland, also project partner to SWIPE project. The [presentation on SWIPE project](#) is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

9) **Discussion on priority actions for implementation by the WG Biodiversity deriving from the recently adopted Action Plans and relevant COP 6 Decisions**

➤ **Harmonization of large carnivores monitoring in the Carpathians as one of the priority topics. How to realize it?**

Based on the guiding questions² circulated prior to the WG Biodiversity meeting, as well as the reaction on presented Report on Large Carnivore Monitoring, the Chair opened the floor for comments on harmonization of large carnivores monitoring. Given rich contributions by the meeting participants, the Chair invited comments in writing by 11 June 2021. Please see below some of the comments that have been summarized by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair:

- Need for agreeing on common approaches to be done in a constructive and participatory process.
- Need for developing harmonised monitoring systems with agreed common minimum standards for each of the species, based on scientific and transparent methods which would also allow for flexibility with regard to different conditions in Carpathian countries.

²) In your opinion, what should be the elements of the harmonised monitoring system, considering that it needs to be accurate and scientifically robust and at the same time it should respect different conditions in Carpathian countries (in terms of population size / area / monitoring capacities)?

2) Is the desired outcome feasible for your country? If not, what needs to be changed or improved in order to fill these gaps? (Please distinguish between what can be done within the remits of the WG Biodiversity / the Carpathian Convention and what needs to be addressed at national level.)

- Need for proper inclusion of key stakeholders in consultation on large carnivores monitoring and related activities. Some stakeholders stressed that they and/or the result of their work/projects are not included or considered within the relevant national process related to monitoring of large carnivores. For instance, the national contributions to the presented Report on Large Carnivore Monitoring in the Carpathians were in some cases not consulted with stakeholders working in the field of monitoring.
 - Need for organizing a dedicated workshop on harmonization of large carnivores monitoring in the Carpathians, which will allow for more detailed exchange between the governmental experts and key stakeholders.
 - Need for revitalization of the WG Biodiversity subgroup on Large Carnivores and monitoring that should include the Parties' representative (ideally with scientific background suitable for discussion) and stakeholders working in the field of monitoring.
 - Need for compiling the already existing publications and project results relevant for the topic and for establishing a database for a sustainable data management.
 - Importance of the linkages of the Carpathian Convention work on large carnivores monitoring to reporting under the EU Habitats Directive.
 - Need for establishing regular communication with the EU Large Carnivore Platform.
- **Other priority topics to be identified, with consideration of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**

Moving to the different priority topics for the implementation of the Action Plan on Large Carnivores and Connectivity, the Chair made short presentation on the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#), underlining that the WG Biodiversity activities are already contributing to the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, however further consideration on how to better align the ongoing and future activities of the WG Biodiversity for the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy is needed.

Furthermore, the Secretariat represented by Mr. Harald Egerer, made intervention on the upcoming new UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030, declared by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 March 2019, that aims at massively scaling up the restoration efforts and shall inspire a global movement for preventing, halting and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide, including mountains. In this respect, Mr. Egerer informed the meeting participants about the idea of the Joint Statement by the Carpathian Convention welcoming the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The statement is supposed to support promoting the Carpathians within the UN Decade Ecosystem Restoration for the better recognition of the region for possible future joint activities under the UN Decade! For this reason, the Secretariat encouraged the Parties and the Observers to promote the Joint Carpathian Convention Statement on and/or around 5 June 2021, which is the date of official launching of the new UN Decade. It was agreed that separate email on this topic will be sent to the Focal Points and the WG Biodiversity with a draft statement open for comments and further instructions.

Session III – Cooperation with other organizations and bodies

10) Post – 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

➤ Updates on the Post-2020 GBF process

The Chair provided the overview and the latest updates on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Post-2020 GBF) that is currently being negotiated under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The new framework builds on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and sets out an ambitious plan to implement broad-based action to bring about a transformation in society's relationship with biodiversity and to ensure that, by 2050, the shared vision of living in harmony with nature is fulfilled. The framework aims to galvanize urgent and transformative action by governments and all of society, including indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society and businesses, to achieve the outcomes it sets out in its vision, mission, goals and targets, and thereby contribute to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other biodiversity related multilateral

agreements, processes and instruments. Underlining the importance of the Carpathian Convention in the process and its future implementation, the Chair invited the Secretariat to further elaborate on the topic.

- **Role and contribution of the Carpathian Convention – presentation and discussion**
- **Trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation between the CBD, the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention – updates by the Secretariat**

The Secretariat, represented by Ms. Klaudia Kuraś, delivered a short presentation on the role and contribution of CC to the Post-2020 GBF based on the document prepared and circulated by the Secretariat. Based on the mandate received by the COP6 to engage and contribute to the Post-2020 GBF, the Secretariat identified several topics on the relevance of the Carpathian Convention and particular contribution to the Post-2020 GBF and its future implementation, including:

- Being regional mechanism for implementation of the CBD and the Post-2020 GBF on regional scale by translating the global goals and targets at the regional level, which reflect characteristics and challenges of the respective regions more precisely than the global ones and can offer joint approaches in addressing regional needs,
- Acknowledging and empowering the Post-2020 GBF by other conventions by adopting the COP Decisions, increasing the awareness about the Post-2020 GBF and its mission among the Carpathian stakeholders,
- Developing regional commitments for implementation of the Post-2020 GBF,
- Enhancing synergies among different biodiversity-related conventions, e.g. preparing the trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation between the Carpathian Convention the Alpine Convention and the CBD the light of the new Global Biodiversity Framework,
- Considering review of implementation and reporting under the Post-2020 GBF,
- Mainstreaming mountain biodiversity into the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework,
- Acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge,
- Contributing to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

For more information about then and contribution of Carpathian Convention to the Post-2020 GBF please follow the [document](#) on this topic produced by the Secretariat and the [presentation](#) delivered during the WG Biodiversity meeting.

- **“Building national biodiversity information supply and demand in Pan Europe to support implementation & progress review of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework” (UNEP/EU project) - presentation of the project and its implementation in Ukraine**

The Secretariat, represented by Ms. Eleonora Musco, informed that with the financial support of the European Commission-DG Environment, UNEP, in cooperation with its technical project partner UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), have started the project “Building national biodiversity information supply and demand in Pan Europe to support implementation and progress review of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” in four target countries (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). The project will build capacity among national government agencies responsible for biodiversity to design, organize and promote biodiversity information systems and indicators, to support national biodiversity policy-making, implementation, and reporting. In Ukraine, project activities will be coordinated with the ongoing biodiversity reporting efforts foreseen under the Carpathian Convention. A workshop is planned to be organized, in coordination with the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, focused on the Ukrainian case as a model on the production and dissemination of biodiversity information for government decision-making contribution to the Post-2020 GBF and MEAs implementation.

- **Possibilities of reporting on the implementation of the Biodiversity Protocol under the Data Reporting Tool for the MEAs – discussion**

The Chair mentioned about the challenges related to the reporting on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Biodiversity due to the complexity of the Protocol but also its scope that should cover only the Carpathian region. Furthermore, Ms. Rolfova briefly introduced the The Data Reporting Tool for MEAs (DaRT), a

new tool which aims at supporting Parties to effectively use synergies in the field of knowledge and information management for national reporting to biodiversity-related conventions. DaRT is being currently developed by the UNEP with support of the CBD in partnership with InforMEA and financially supported by the European Union (EU) and Switzerland.

DaRT provides Parties to MEAs with a private and secure working space to organize, share, and maintain information, data and knowledge across conventions and reporting processes. By providing Parties with a single national working space, DaRT facilitates the re-use of information in the spirit of “enter once, re-use several times”, relieving the reporting burden and fosters communication and cooperation across ministries.

The DaRT was introduced to the meeting participants of the 11th Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (October 2020). Furthermore, the COP6 by its Decisions (DECISION COP6/1 para 3-4) encouraged the Parties to make use of DaRT, as appropriate.

If the Parties are interested, the Secretariat can provide further assistance from the UNEP DaRT team e.g., in a form of a hand-on workshop, which could help to better understand the functions and benefit of using DaRT.

11) Alpine Convention and its Alpine Biodiversity Board

- **Sharing information and best practices by the Alpine Biodiversity Board**
- **Cooperation activities – discussion**

Mr. Paolo Angelini, Italian Ministry for the Ecological Transition, Chair of the Italian Delegation of the Alpine Convention and Chair of the Alpine Biodiversity Board made an intervention on the ongoing activities on biodiversity within the Alpine Convention, including 1) identification of a series of indicators relevant to mountain biodiversity, 2) work on a potential target for the Alpine Convention that includes vulnerable/threatened ecosystems such as mountains, also through the planning of a specific funded project (e.g. LIFE project), 3) organization of actions at several institutional levels to urge the importance of a specificity of mountain biodiversity both in international and national strategies. The [presentation](#) with detailed information is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

12) Carpathian Network of Protected Areas

- **Updates on CNPA activities, including on the 3rd CNPA Conference by the CNPA Chair**

Mr. Mircea Verghelet, Director of the Piatra Craiului National Park, Chair of the CNPA updated the participants on the current CNPA activities and news, including the organization of the CNPA Round Table within the Forum Carpaticum, organization of the 3rd CNPA Conference in September 2021 in Visegrad, Hungary, and modernization of the CNPA website. The [presentation](#) with detailed information is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

- **Centralparks project (Interreg Central Europe) – presentation of relevant project activities**

The Chair invited the [Centralparks project](#) Lead Partner – Eurac Research represented by Mr. Isidoro De Bortoli to share information about ongoing project activities that are relevant for the WG Biodiversity, including a brief presentation of the draft Carpathian strategy for biodiversity and landscape conservation developed under the Centralparks project. More information about the draft Strategy will be circulated after the meeting. The [presentation of the Centralparks project](#) with detailed information is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

- **Citizen Science in the Carpathians (Visegrad project) – presentation of relevant project activities**

The Chair invited Mr. Matyáš Adam, Tamas Bata University, to present the project - Citizen Science in the Carpathians on building capacity of protected areas managers. The [presentation of the project](#) with detailed information is available on the Carpathian Convention website.

13) Carpathian Wetland Initiative

➤ Updates on CWI activities by the CWI Coordinator

Mr. Jan Kadelcik, Carpathian Wetland Initiative Coordinator delivered a short presentation on the ongoing CWI activities. Mr. Kadlecik informed about the recently submitted in cooperation with partner organizations projects: WE.PEAT – Green New Deal for Peatland submitted under the Horizon 2020, and CARPWET- "Carpathian wetlands as the nature-based solution for climate change mitigation" – project outline submitted in January 2021 within 5th call of EUKI. Mr.

Mr. Kadlecik informed as well about the preparation of the International Training Course on Wetlands Restoration with the Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic and the Czech Ramsar Committee, which originally was supposed to take place in October 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be held in autumn 2021. More detailed information about the ongoing and planned CWI activities can be found in the [presentation](#) delivered during the WG Biodiversity meeting.

14) Forum Carpaticum 2021

➤ Updates from the Science for the Carpathians on the organization of the conference and relevant session for the WG Biodiversity

Mr. Lubos Halada, the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Republic and the Member of the Science for the Carpathians, delivered a presentation about the Forum Carpaticum 2021 (21-25 June in online or hybrid format) and biodiversity relevant sessions that will take place during the conference. The Conference aims at advancing Carpathian research, exchange ideas, knowledges and research results and promote new inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaborations. The full list of session and workshops relevant for the WG Biodiversity is available in Mr. [Halada's presentation](#), while further information on the Forum Carpaticum 2021 on its [website](#).

15) AOB

No topics were raised under Any Other Business.

16) Conclusions, next steps and closing of the meeting

In the conclusions, the Chair underlined that the current rich portfolio of the WG Biodiversity activities would not be possible without very active and dedicated contribution by the WG Biodiversity members and observers. The Chair and the Secretariat thanked for the two days of active engagement in the discussion and encouraged the WG Biodiversity members and observers to continue supporting the activities of the Carpathian Convention on biodiversity, underlining that next decade will be crucial for halting the biodiversity loss and restoring essential ecosystems. As for the next steps it was agreed that:

- 1) The Secretariat will shortly after the meeting will circulate an email regarding the written comments to the meeting documents and discussion held during the meeting (written comments on Work Plan 2021-2023 requested by 27 May 2021, comments on the topic of Harmonization of large carnivores monitoring in the Carpathians requested by 11 June 2021)
- 2) The Secretariat will share a draft Joint Statement by the Carpathian Convention welcoming the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration for comments, providing as well further instruction.
- 3) The Secretariat will send a meeting report with updated version of the Terms of Reference for the WG Biodiversity and the updated Work Plan 2021-2030 that will include the comments received.

The Chair announced the 12th meeting of the WG Biodiversity closed.