

MEETING REPORT

14th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity 22–24 May 2023, Vsetín, Czech Republic

All the presentations delivered during the Biodiversity WG meeting are available on the Carpathian Convention website¹

Day 1 – 22 May

Session I – Introduction

1) Opening of the WG Biodiversity meeting and opening remarks by the WG Biodiversity Chair

Mr. Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, formally opened the meeting and invited Ms. Eliška Rolfová, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic and Chair of the Working Group on Biodiversity, to take the floor to welcome all the participants in Vsetín, Czech Republic.

2) Welcome remarks by the Polish Presidency

Ms. Bożena Haczek, Ministry of Climate and Environment of Poland welcomed all participants on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention.

3) Adoption of the agenda

The meeting agenda was presented by the Chair and adopted without any amendments.

4) Celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity & 20 years since the signature of the Carpathian Convention

The Chair reminded participants of the 20 years anniversary since the signature of the Carpathian Convention. Mr. Harald Egerer recalled moments and atmosphere that accompanied the adoption of the Convention, as well as the importance of cooperation with other Conventions. The Carpathian Convention will finish the first full cycle of seven Conferences of the Parties with the COP7 in Serbia, so this is a historic period for the Carpathian Convention. The Carpathian Environment Outlook was also recalled as an important milestone in the work of the Carpathian Convention. Mr. Egerer also mentioned the challenges that Parties of the Carpathian Convention are facing including limited capacities of the Secretariat and the war in Ukraine. The future will bring stronger implementation through partnerships at international, national, and local levels. Mr. Egerer also expressed a wish for the COP8 meeting of the Carpathian Convention to take place in Ukraine.

Session II – GBF implementation in the Carpathian region – developing the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework

5) Presentation of the draft Carpathian Biodiversity Framework

Mr. Harald Egerer delivered a presentation focused on the connection between the Carpathian Convention and the Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Carpathian Convention builds on the commitments from the Rzeszow Ministerial Conference (Nov 2022) and should result in the adoption of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework at the COP7 in Serbia.

He introduced the individual elements of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, which is designed to harmonize with the Global Biodiversity Framework, envisioning the Carpathians as a model region for

¹ <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-biodiversity/events/fourteen-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-biodiversity.html> (to be added soon)

sustainable development and preservation of natural environments. It is intended to drive transformative action across sectors and to connect with global and European processes.

The next steps include continuing consultations with the CBD and CC National Focal Points, as well as other CC Working Groups, to finalize the CBF well in time for its adoption at COP7 in Serbia.

Comments from Serbia, the incoming Presidency were presented at the meeting, as follows:

"In the light of the meeting on the GBF implementation in the Carpathian region, held on March 30th, Serbia strongly supports the concept of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework that will support the Parties in translating the GBF targets in the Carpathian region and promote the region as a pioneer and a role model for the GBF implementation. The holistic approach of the document proposed by the Secretariat, which considers relevant provisions of the GBF and related provisions of the Carpathian Convention and its Protocol, is appreciated as an innovative and comprehensive approach assisting in mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors. Given that the proposed text of the CBF refers mostly to the already agreed Carpathian Convention Provisions and the Ministerial Declaration on Carpathian Commitments for the implementation of the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework, Serbia supports the draft."

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

6) Mainstreaming the Carpathian Convention activities into the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs)

Ms. Eliška Rolfová introduced the agenda item and recalled the importance of the joint implementation of different international commitments, and especially the role of the Carpathian Convention in the upcoming update of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to reflect the new goals and targets of the GBF.

Ms. Eliška Rolfová informed about the discussion on mainstreaming the Carpathian Convention activities into NBSAPs, held during an online meeting on 30 March 2023 involving Carpathian Convention and CBD focal points. The meeting underlined the need for synergy and streamlining of processes for efficient implementation. Discussions also focused on reflecting the Carpathian Convention within national strategies and action plans, a necessary step considering the need to update NBSAPs in line with the new global biodiversity framework. The challenge lies in adopting more specific measures related to the Convention while implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

7) Increasing synergies for the GBF implementation – Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between the CBD, the Alpine Convention, and the Carpathian Convention in the light of the new global biodiversity framework

Mr. Harald Egerer delivered a presentation on the process of the preparation of a memorandum of cooperation between the CBD, Carpathian, and Alpine Conventions. He recalled the long-lasting cooperation, especially between the Carpathian and Alpine Conventions and the potential to strengthen the cooperation at the global level represented by the CBD. The Carpathian Convention also aspires to cooperate with other mountain regions around the world through a joint platform. The new memorandum should be signed at COP7 in Serbia in the presence of the representatives of the CBD and Alpine Convention.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

8) Discussion

Parties expressed broad support for the draft Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and its adoption at COP7 in Serbia. Most of the Parties also strongly supported an explicit reference to the GBF as the Carpathian Convention is an important regional instrument for the implementation of the global commitments from the CBD. There was a discussion on editorial proposals by several Parties which were generally supported. With regards to the proposal on the introduction of the new goal/priority area on water resources, most Parties preferred to keep the number of goals/ priority areas at the current number

and integrate the issue of water protection into already proposed ones, e.g., referring to wetlands in the area of Biodiversity.

There was a consensus that the Annex is too long. The Secretariat proposed a solution to shorten the annexe, e.g., relevant actions should be listed with a column referencing the CBD GBF targets and to the CC and its Protocols, without quoting the full wording of these provisions.

The discussion on finalizing the CBF will continue at the upcoming 14th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee.

Session III – Large Carnivores’ Conservation and ecological connectivity in the Carpathians – project implementation and cooperation opportunities

9) Presentation of projects supporting the Implementation of the Action Plan on large carnivores’ conservation and ecological connectivity, followed by discussion:

a. SaveGREEN – Safeguarding the functionality of transnationally important ecological corridors in the Danube basin.

Ms. Hildegard Meyer, WWF CEE, presented the results of the EU INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme SaveGREEN project aimed at improving, restoring, and preserving the functionality of key ecological corridors in the Danube basin. The project, which ended on December 31, 2022, facilitated cross-sectoral cooperation between the transnational and local levels. The project involved various partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, including eight NGOs, three research institutions, one environment authority, and one consultancy company.

The SaveGREEN project developed a standardized methodology for monitoring structural and functional connectivity, especially focusing on bottleneck areas. The project team also implemented local protection plans in collaboration with stakeholders and developed a capacity-building program, including a toolkit for strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments. The project was also successful in developing a declaration on “Achieving functional biodiversity in the Danube-Carpathian Region by mainstreaming ecological connectivity” endorsed by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) ‘Water Quality’ Priority Area (PA) 4, ‘Environmental Risks’ PA 5, ‘Biodiversity, Landscapes, Quality of Air and Soils’ PA 6, the Carpathian Convention, and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).

The project has reportedly increased collaboration between ministries and project partners on the implementation of ecological corridors. It also resulted in the inclusion of more mitigation measures in highway planning in Ukraine and Romania, and the consideration of ecological corridors in land use planning laws in Slovakia.

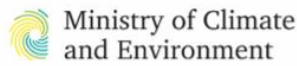
Ms. Meyer emphasized the importance of long-term collaboration, respectful engagement with stakeholders, improved awareness and understanding of relevant laws, and the necessity for cross-sector collaboration. The experience of the project also revealed the effectiveness of personal meetings and the potential for voluntary contributions to establish ecological connectivity.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

b. LECA – Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores – presenting the new project.

Mr. Martin Dula, representing the project lead partner - Mendel University in Brno - as well as the EU INTERREG Central Europe LECA project consortium, presented the project's general objectives, which focus on harmonizing monitoring of large carnivores, strengthening conflict prevention and poaching investigation of large carnivores in the Carpathians. The selected pilot areas are Beskydy-Kysuce, Tatra Mountains, Eastern Carpathians, Slovak Karst-Aggtelek NP/Bukk NP.

The main expected results include: 1) 3 Adopted Thematic Guidance (on monitoring, conflict prevention and poaching), 2) 4 participatory stakeholder platforms established in the pilot areas, 3)



4 endorsed cross-border strategies, 4) revision of Carpathian Convention "Action Plan on conservation of LCs".

Eliška Rolfová mentioned that the Biodiversity WG will be regularly consulted throughout the implementation of the project to ensure alignment with the International Action Plan on LC and ecological connectivity and the work of the Biodiversity WG.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

c. Information about the international summit - Achieving Coexistence between Humans and Large Carnivores, Bucharest, Romania on 27-29 September 2023

Ms. Liliana Virtopeanu, Ministry of Environment, Waters, and Forests of Romania, informed participants about the International Summit titled "Achieving Coexistence between Humans and Large Carnivores", to be held in Bucharest, Romania. The dates of the summit have been postponed to 25-27 October 2023.

The venue for the conference remains unchanged and it is the House of the Parliament. All prospective presenters have been requested to submit an abstract or a summary of their work for review during their registration for participation in the conference. In addition, a webpage linked to the event will be created and regularly updated with information regarding the summit.

10) Presentations of initiatives from other regions:

a. Presentation of the EU Large Carnivores Platform

Ms. Katrina Marsden, Adelphi, presented the EU Large Carnivores Platform. Ms. Marsden informed participants about the platform's ongoing activities, and potential links with the Carpathian Convention, and offered an update about EU platforms' activities aimed at minimizing conflicts between people and large carnivores.

Ms. Marsden also introduced the concept of regional-to-local large carnivore platforms which are groupings of representative stakeholders on a regional-to-local level, that follow a similar model to the EU Platform and act as a support tool for minimising conflict by focusing on cooperation, where the topical focus of the dialogue is defined by participants. Members have committed themselves to listening to each other and trying to understand one another's positions better and agree on "concrete solutions". Solutions vary from communication actions to financing protective fences.

Finally, Ms. Marsden presented a toolkit based on their experiences with setting up these platforms, capturing factors leading to success and failure.

Ms. Marsden proposed the following possible steps for cooperation with the Carpathian Convention:

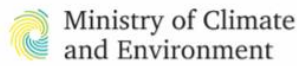
- Joint regional meetings (potential with the Romanian Conference),
- Exchange and updates at each other's meetings,
- Exchange of information collected/using each other's networks for information collection and awareness raising,
- Collaboration in projects with platform members and/or organisers.

The Biodiversity Working Group welcomed this proposal.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

b. Presentation of the Large Carnivore Platform in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Region

Ms. Katrina Marsden, Adelphi introduced the Large Carnivore Platform in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region. She emphasized the benefits of regular meetings of various managing authorities and



stakeholders. The platform supports thematic and capacity-building meetings and encourages countries to establish their own large carnivore councils.

Marsden spoke about the aspiration to establish a platform agreement, providing an institutionalized framework for the platform. This is supported by an Advisory Board and a dedicated website for information exchange and learning.

The platform aims to understand and improve transnational exchange, establish bear teams, and improve general management plans. It focuses on creating an international agreement on large carnivore management and implementing practical large carnivore management measures.

Plans include an upcoming meeting in Albania and a platform meeting in Serbia. The platform encourages collaboration, data exchange, and joint efforts towards effective management of large carnivores in the region.

Ms. Marsden proposes the following areas of potential collaboration with the Carpathian Convention:

- LC populations join – collaboration makes sense from a species perspective,
- Regions face similar challenges,
- Convention attended the last two meetings, giving valuable input on how an international agreement could be structured,
- An exchange between Secretariats – advice from Carpathian Convention Secretariat,
- Collaboration on the next meetings.

This proposal was welcomed by the Working Group.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

c. Presentation of WISO (Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society) Platform of the Alpine Convention – Mr. Rok Černe, Slovenia Forest Service

Mr. Rok Černe, Slovenia Forest Service, presented the WISO Platform of the Alpine Convention. This working group specifically deals with large carnivores, providing a management-focused forum for nominated experts from contracting parties.

The platform, under the current chairmanship of Slovenia, aims to address management issues for large carnivores and wild ungulates, striving for greater connectivity and damage prevention. They have already developed strategic documents for bear and wolf management, along with guidelines translated into national legislation.

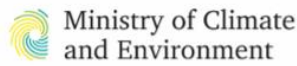
An important part of the platform's mandate is the exchange of experiences and regular updates. They plan to prepare a detailed map showing the distribution of large carnivores in the Alpine region and continue their work on utilizing European funds for damage prevention.

The Biodiversity Working Group welcomed the cooperation with the WISO Platform.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

d. Information about the proposal for listing the Eurasian Lynx on the CMS Appendix – Mr. Urs Breitenmoser, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group (online)

The proposal for listing the Eurasian Lynx and the Balkan Lynx on the CMS Appendices was set to be presented by Mr. Urs Breitenmoser, a member of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group. The presentation was about the listing of the Balkan Lynx in Annex 1 and the Eurasian Lynx in Annex 2 under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), which could bring benefits to species protection and conservation. The proposal has been backed by North Macedonia and other countries and is to be discussed at the Conference of the Parties of the CMS. A concerted action of IUCN, along with the Secretariat of



Capacity and Convention, was also discussed. They plan to submit a recovery and conservation strategy for the Eurasian Lynx. Lastly, the meeting addressed the role of the EU countries and the Secretariat in this proposal. The EU countries would need to have a coordinated position within the EU working groups.

The Biodiversity Working Group took note of the Secretariat's active involvement in sponsoring a Concerted Action on the lynx under CMS.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

11) NaturaConnect – Designing a resilient and coherent Trans-European Network for Nature and People:

➤ Presentation of the NaturaConnect project

Mr. Piero Visconti, IIASA, presented relevant EU policies that are part of the EU Green Deal and then delivered a presentation on the EU Horizon NaturaConnect project. The European Union (EU) has initiated a comprehensive plan to protect and restore its environment. This includes legally protecting 30% of the EU's land and sea, with one-third of these areas strictly safeguarded. Restoration efforts will target 20% of EU land, with specific segments highlighted. The Farm 2 Fork Strategy will reduce chemical pesticide use by 50% and aims for 25% of EU agriculture to be organic. The "Fit for 55 climate mitigation packages" targets a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990.

In support of these initiatives, the EU plans to define a blueprint for TEN-N that addresses gaps in ecological representation in the protected area network and provides capacity-building measures to enhance the use of NaturaConnect data, methods, and tools. Efforts will also be made to designate corridors at various scales, and the conservation and restoration efforts will be prioritized to increase the network's resilience.

The proposal includes support for monitoring and reporting TEN-N performance, protecting, and restoring multifunctional connectivity at all levels, and developing guidelines, data, and tools for connectivity conservation.

The consideration of and contributions to the Carpathian Convention by NaturaConnect were highly welcomed by the Biodiversity Working Group.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

➤ Interactive session with the meeting participants* (on spot and virtually) – Ms. Hildegard Meyer, WWF CEE

Participants took part in the workshop organized by Ms. Hildegard Meyer focused on the protected areas and their connectivity. The results of the workshop will be shared once received by the WWF CEE colleagues.

Session IV – Cooperation with other organizations and bodies

12) Presentation of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative

Mr. Lukáš Záhorec, Carpathian Wetland Initiative, informed about the recent activities of the CWI and the current plan of activities for the years 2022/23.

The Biodiversity Working Group highly welcomed the cooperation with the CWI.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website - [LINK](#).

13) Presentation of the Science for the Carpathians

Mr. Lubos Halada, Institute of Landscape Ecology, SAS, presented recent activities of the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) network. S4C is focused on enhancing research and collaboration in the Carpathian region.

The major points discussed in the presentation are as follows:

- Forum Carpaticum 2021, whose abstracts are available on the conference web page. The first Winter School that S4C held in 2022 was mentioned, along with the S4C Memorandum of Understanding with the Carpathian Convention.
- Ongoing Activities: S4C has been engaging with other institutions and promoting programs for Ukrainian researchers. They have been discussing the impacts of war in Ukraine on Mountain communities and biodiversity.
- Future Activities: Looking ahead, S4C is preparing for the International Mountain Conference in October. It aims at strengthening regional scientific networks and discussing good family practices for sustainable development. The conference will be held again in 2025.
- Collaborations and Discussions: S4C had a networking meeting in November 2022 to discuss mountain socio-ecological systems with other regional scientific networks. Also, they have been focusing on education for sustainable development.
- Research Agenda: Mr. Halada presented the new research agenda which includes topics such as cultural heritage, participatory research, and renewable energy.
- Recommendations: Recommendations from the previous conference were highlighted, which include strong protection of natural habitats, pursuing restoration and conservation of significant areas, and minimizing vehicle collisions with wildlife.

The Biodiversity Working Group highly welcomed the cooperation with S4C.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

14) Presentation of the Alpine Convention – Alpine Biodiversity Board, Mr. Paolo Angelini, Ministry Minister of Environment and Energy Security, Italy

Mr. Paolo Angelini presented the Alpine Convention Biodiversity Board's activities and outcomes, including a brief overview of the work in 2023 and 2024. The board aims to contribute to the knowledge of mountain biodiversity, and its specificities at the international and national levels, and support its integration into global and national policies. They also aim to achieve the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets, specifically in the Alps.

The Alpine Biodiversity Board is engaged in implementing the Climate Action Plan's biodiversity pathway, focusing on the protection and management of the Alpine-specific landscape and ecosystem, and transboundary cooperation and ecological connectivity. They are also looking to support the global ecosystem restoration efforts and position the Alps as a model region in this field.

The Alpine Biodiversity Board in cooperation with the Carpathian Convention Secretariat and Mountain Partnership Secretariat organized several international conferences and workshops, including the Alpine and Carpathian Biodiversity Forum in December 2021 and the International Forum on Mountain Biodiversity in September 2022. The ABB has been working on the development of a project proposal concerning biodiversity mapping and monitoring. The project aims at developing an IT tool for the cartographic representation and monitoring of alpine biodiversity, to be used also as an early warning system of endangered species and for spatial planning in the Alps and other mountain regions like the Carpathians. The Carpathian Convention is welcomed to contribute to the development of the project proposal.

Under the mandate of the ABB, there is also cooperation with other Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention (ACB, WISO and MAMF) but also the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the three Conventions (CBD, AC, CC) and the strengthening of the collaboration with the Carpathian Convention, UNEP, Mountain Partnership FAO, EUSALP, UNDER.



The cooperation with the Alpine Biodiversity Board was highly appreciated by the Biodiversity Working Group.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

15) Presentation of the Carpathian Research Network / Follow-up to the Biogeography of the Carpathians

Mr. Patrik Mráz, Charles University, presented the work of the Carpathian Research Network, established in 2017. The objective of the Network is to deliver better knowledge about species diversity distribution and evolution in the Carpathian region. The network has developed a comprehensive database on the region's endemic plant and animal species. Efforts have been made to collate and harmonize different taxonomic concepts and strategies from the participating countries.

The network also seeks to determine and analyze biodiversity hotspots, compare current knowledge about the distribution of endemic taxa with protected areas, and propose new areas for conservation if necessary. Plans include modelling past and future distribution under different climate change scenarios.

In 2021, a seed bank was established with three main objectives: long-term conservation of the Carpathian flora, conducting biosystematic studies on specific groups of taxa, and continuing work on the distribution and diversity of endemic species.

The network also seeks funding for a biodiversity project, with the main objectives being the conducting of a biodiversity survey using the Metabarcoding approach, and specifically concentrating on developing a comprehensive distributional and taxonomic database.

Poland referred to the database of endemic species and proposed to continue the preparation of the list of endemic species under the Carpathian Convention Biodiversity Protocol.

The Biodiversity WG welcomed the cooperation with the Carpathian Research Network. The Secretariat proposed to consider organizing a workshop together, possibly at Forum Carpaticum 2023. The Chair concluded that the revised Biodiversity WG work plan should also include a reference to the work on endemic species.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

16) Presentation of the Support to Ukraine in the Framework of the Carpathian Convention:

➤ Ministerial Declaration of the Carpathian Convention on the impact of war in Ukraine on the environment and the need for cooperation and assistance and its implementation

Mr. Egerer presented the results of the Carpathian Convention Ministerial Conference, which took place Rzeszów, Poland in November 2022. The conference aimed at addressing the region's most urgent issues, with the conflict in Ukraine being one of the most significant among them. At the conference, Parties discussed also how the Carpathian Convention could provide support to Ukraine. During the conference two Ministerial Declarations were adopted, one of them "on the impact of war on the environment in Ukraine and the need for cooperation and assistance", giving the mandate to the Carpathian Convention to facilitate the consultation with relevant actors, partners, and stakeholders to contribute to the process of green recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

Main Points:

- Situation in Ukraine: The Ukraine crisis poses a significant challenge, not just for the country itself, but also for the Carpathian Convention. The Convention, which Ukraine was instrumental in initiating in 2001, is now trying to contribute to making a positive impact and maintaining solidarity with Ukraine.
- Impacts of War: The war has led to indirect socioeconomic effects in the Carpathians. Displacement of people, waste management issues, abandonment of services like protected

area services, and the loss of equipment vital to the natural protection sector have become prominent challenges.

- Cooperation: The Carpathian Convention is committed to maintaining strong ties with Ukraine and aiding in various fields, such as forest management, nature protection, and capacity building. Notably, efforts are underway to create a Ukrainian land cover for the Carpathian area in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Environmental Agency.
- Meeting Ukraine's Needs: Consultations with Ukraine's Ministry of Protection Natural Resources revealed various needs, including equipment, training for protected areas, and aid in the planning and management of protected areas. The Secretariat is actively working to address these needs.
- Global Environment Facility Project: Currently, there is a project concept under review for submission to the Global Environment Facility. This project, if approved, would significantly boost interventions in the protected areas network of the Ukrainian Carpathians.

This presentation emphasized the Convention's commitment to keeping Ukraine fully involved and informed while addressing the direct and indirect effects of the conflict. The future hope lies in cooperative efforts to help rebuild and sustain Ukraine's environment and natural resources.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

➤ **Build Back Better for Ukraine – Mr. Iaroslav Teleshun**

Mr. Iaroslav Teleshun, WWF Ukraine, presented a plan for a sustainable recovery in Ukraine under the initiative "Build Back Better" (BBB) and later renamed "Regenerate Ukraine".

He began with an overview of the environmental damage due to military aggression. As of January 2021, there were 8,633 protected areas in Ukraine covering almost 4.5 million hectares, of which 20% have been affected by the military conflict. An estimated 3 million hectares of forest have been damaged and nearly 500,000 hectares are in the war zone or under temporary occupation. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine assessed the environmental damage at approximately 50 billion euros.

He emphasized two factors that would contribute to Ukraine's sustainable recovery: the country's aspirations to join the European Union and funding from international donors. The Ukrainian government estimates the 10-year cost of reconstruction at \$7.5 billion.

Mr. Teleshun outlined the goals and objectives of WWF Ukraine, focusing on advocacy activities at the national and local levels, supporting actions of other organizations and state institutions, and launching their own initiatives.

WWF Ukraine plans to implement four main programs under "Regenerate Ukraine": Mainstreaming Nature, Greening Infrastructure, Incubating the Future, and Safeguarding Ukraine's Heritage.

These programs aim to inform policymakers about sustainability, foster inclusive recovery, stimulate nature and climate-positive infrastructure investment, accelerate nature-based solutions, develop bankable projects for communities and businesses, promote financial innovation, and preserve Ukraine's iconic ecosystems and species.

Mr. Teleshun invited the participants to an event in Berlin on 26th May to see the progress of the "Regenerate Ukraine" initiative.

Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website – [LINK](#).

Session V – Institutional aspects

17) Review of the progress in the implementation of the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2021 – 2023 and preparation of the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2024 – 2026

The chair of the WG introduced the issue of the status of the WG Biodiversity work plan and suggested continuing with the implementation of the current work plan also in the upcoming inter-sessional period, ensuring a close link to the implementation of the CBF. This proposal was supported by the Parties.

18) Updates on COP7 organization – relevant next steps for the WG Biodiversity; reading of the draft COP7 Decisions relevant for the WG Biodiversity

Mr. Harald Egerer provided an update on the status of preparations for the COP7 and on the draft COP decisions regarding biodiversity. Mr. Egerer announced that the logistical note is currently being prepared and will be circulated shortly. There will be a Gala dinner on the evening of 11 October and a High-Level Segment on 12 October. Aleksandra Doslic, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia and Carpathian Convention National Focal Point, informed participants of the status of preparations for the COP7 from the side of the host country and announced that the meeting will take place in the Palace of Serbia. Ms. Doslic also announced the ongoing development of the priorities of the Serbian presidency, which will include biodiversity.

The chair of the WG announced that the draft of the COP7 decisions has been shared with the participants of the WG and as there has been only a short time to consider them before the meeting, a detailed discussion is then expected at the CCIC meeting on 14-16 June and therefore Parties are invited to provide comments by 5 June 2023.

19) AOB

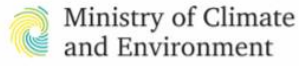
There were no AOB points proposed.

20) Conclusions, next steps and closing of the meeting.

Ms. Rolfová thanked all the participants for attending the meeting of the Working Group and summarised the next steps and upcoming deadlines. Poland invited all Participants to the CCIC meeting that will take place in Mszana Dolna in Poland from 14-16 June 2023.

Conclusions:

- The anniversary celebration was a resounding success, sparking fresh momentum, innovative ideas, and renewed motivation.
- Significant progress was made regarding approaches for the regional implementation of the GBF, particularly the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, as well as the cooperation opportunities in light of the new MoU with the CBD, the Alpine Convention, and the Carpathian Convention.
- A thorough review of initiatives on large carnivores was conducted, with a great and timely impetus given by two new projects LECA and NaturaConnect, among other related projects. The enthusiasm for ongoing cooperation is palpable, and there is anticipation for further engagement with other platforms to exchange experiences.
- The commitment to continue cooperation with other organizations, Conventions and initiatives remains strong, with excitement building over the new connections established (e.g., the Carpathian Research Network).
- The NaturaConnect workshop provided a relevant space for discussion on the main barriers and enablers for the implementation of a well-connected protected areas network, anticipating the impact of the project on the Carpathians and other relevant regions.
- Attention was also directed towards Carpathian Wetland Initiative, S4C, work on endemic species by the Carpathian Research Network, the Alpine Convention, and the support for Ukraine.



Next Steps:

- The CBF draft will be revised according to the meeting discussion and submitted for review. This will be a topic of discussion at the forthcoming CCIC meeting, in view of its adoption at the COP7.
- The draft COP7 decisions will be revised, especially considering the outcomes of this meeting. The deadline for sending comments has been set for 5th June, in preparation for the CCIC meeting scheduled for 14-16 June.
- The outcomes of the NaturaConnect workshop will be shared once received from WWF CEE.
- The outcomes of this meeting will be reflected in the update of the work plan of the Biodiversity Working Group for the next inter-sessional period 2024 – 2026.