

# MEETING REPORT

## 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee

14-16 June 2023, Mszana Dolna, Poland

### *Session I - Special session on interregional cooperation*

#### **Opening of the 14<sup>th</sup> CCIC meeting by the Secretariat and welcome remarks by the Polish Presidency**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) meeting was opened by Mr. Harald Egerer, the Head of the UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, welcoming the participants and thanking the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention for great organizing the meeting. Mr. Lukasz Rejt, Ministry of Climate and Environment of Poland – the representative of the Polish Presidency and the Chair of the 14<sup>th</sup> CCIC meeting delivered short welcome remarks.

#### **From the Carpathians to the Andes – exchange on regional approaches to sustainable mountain development**

A global programme “**Adaptation at Altitude – Taking Action in the Mountains**” (2019-23, funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) foster interregional exchange and opens the opportunity to learn from each other aims to inspire key mountain actors from different mountain regions and support respective governance processes. In June 2022 UNEP and the Adaptation at Altitude (A@A) programme, supported by the University of Geneva, convened the [Mountains CONNECT workshop](#) for interregional exchange and action learning, and set up the [www.mountains-connect.org](#) online space. As a follow up activity, a more specific regional exchange was organized between the Andean Mountain Initiative and the only two in the world legally binding instruments for sustainable mountain development – the Carpathian and the Alpine Conventions

The **Iniciativa Andina de Montañas (IAM)** is a political platform formed by the seven Andean countries, its aim is to strengthen regional dialogue and to promote coordinated actions for the conservation and sustainable development of Andean mountain areas. In February 2023, the Regional Coordination was passed from Perú to Colombia, and CONDESAN acts as the Technical Secretariat. In the last few years, the IAM has made significant progress in its consolidation, with the activation of permanent working groups, the generation of an active communication strategy (including the new web portal [www.iam-andes.org](#)) and the publication of a Roadmap for Strengthening Governance and a 5 years Action Plan (with the support of the A@A programme).

In this context, UNEP, CONDESAN, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (PSAC) and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention organized a study trip of representatives from the IAM to the Alpine Convention and Carpathian Convention. The objectives of this study visit included:

- **Foster interregional exchange between mountain regions and learn together** through collaborative formats, shadowing, presentations and participatory learning.
- **Support the IAM and its seven member countries to further implement the Action Plan 2022-2026 and Governance Roadmap** within the mandate of climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation.
- **Co-create knowledge and learning** from the Alpine, Andean, and Carpathian experiences as mechanisms of regional cooperation, through in-person exchanges and shadowing
- **Build capacity with the new Regional Coordination** of the IAM (2023-25) and transfer knowledge as well as experiences between the IAM, the PSAC and the Alpine Convention member states and the Carpathian Convention and its member states.
- **Identify opportunities and mechanisms for sustained interregional cooperation** (e.g. experience exchange strategies, interregional science-policy dialogue, joint project implementation, etc.) and for making mountain ecosystems more visible/ prominent in the political agenda (national/ regional/ international)

During the special session at the 14<sup>th</sup> CCIC meeting, the Secretariat presented detailed information about the Carpathian Convention process, the structures and operations of the Convention – [see the presentation](#), while the IAM representatives presented the process taking place in the Andes – [see the presentation](#). The presentations were followed by lively exchange on the various aspects of the CC functioning, as well as on opportunities for cooperation and further exchange between the mountain regions, including a possible development of a joint memorandum of cooperation between the mountain regions.

### *Session II - Reporting on progress in the implementation and inputs from the stakeholders*

#### **Adoption of the meeting agenda**

The Agenda was adopted without any changes.

#### **Report on status of ratification of the Protocols to the Carpathian Convention and the Article 12bis**

The Secretariat gave a short overview on the status of ratifications, encouraging the Parties to take necessary actions to fulfil the ratification obligations. Serbia informed about the ongoing process of ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as of the Article 12bis on climate change – [see the presentation](#).

## Updates from the Science for the Carpathians: Recommendations and Forum Carpaticum 2023

Mr. Paweł Kroh, on behalf of the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) presented updates and relevant information, including on the new [Research Agenda for the Carpathians 2022-2030](#) that is based on the results of the Forum Carpaticum 2021 and was developed to move the S4C initiative from research planning to concrete action. Furthermore, detailed information about the upcoming [Forum Carpaticum 2023](#), to be held on 25-28 September 2023 in Krakow, Poland, were provided – [see the presentation](#).

## Implementation of the Carpathian Convention: Progress Reports

- Report by the WG Biodiversity Chair

Ms. Eliška Rolfová, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, in the capacity of the WG Biodiversity Chair delivered a short presentation on the main activities undertaken by the WG Biodiversity within the current implementation period (2020-2023), including mainly the activities related to the implementation of the International Action Plan on conservation of large carnivores and ensuring ecological connectivity in the Carpathians (new project LECA and NaturaConnect), and cooperation and contribution to the Global Biodiversity Framework process – [see the presentation](#).

- Report by the CNPA Steering Committee Chair

Mr. Mircea Verghet, Director of the Piatra Craiului NP in Romania, in the capacity of the Chair of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) Steering Committee delivered a presentation on the latest activities of the CNPA, including on the idea of establishing an CNPA association – [see the presentation](#).

- Report by the Carpathian Wetland Initiative Coordinator

Mr. Ján Kadlečík, in the capacity of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI) Coordinator, delivered a presentation on the latest activities of the CWI. Mr. Ján Kadlečík highlighted voluntary contributions provided by the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary and the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic to the work of the CWI and invited other partners to support the CWI work financially or in-kind – [see the presentation](#).

- Report by the WG SARD

Ms. Liliana Virtopeanu, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania, on behalf of the WG SARD Chair, delivered a speech on the ongoing activities within the WG SARD, stressing that with the National Agency of Mountain Areas as the main driver of the work two meetings of WG SARD were held, respectively the first one took place in an online format and the last one in a hybrid format, 17 March 2022. The second meeting benefited from wider participation organized on 26-27 April 2023 in Vatra Dornei with an online presence of a few participants. For both meetings, various experts joined forces to identify concrete joint actions bringing the provisions of the Protocol into implementation. In this respect, Romania as the Chair of the WG SARD leads the discussion on priority actions, which are largely based on the Romania's extensive experience including on the mountain products and cooperation of farmers and food producers in the mountain areas.

The topics set for the WG reunited in 2022 included the following topics:

1. Best practices models: Short food supply chains – Farm to fork;
2. Quality schemes and certification of „Mountain Products“;
3. Associations for farmers and food producers in the mountain area - benefits and best practice models.

To these topics for the WG which took place this April was added the topic of pastoralism, also in the light of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists which is going to be celebrated in 2026. During the meeting, the participants identified the main challenges and gaps related to this topic, mainly:

- ✓ the lack of subsidies or the wrong direction of these- often they are addressed to the landowners, and do not reach/ benefit herders and shepherds working on land that is not owned by them. Another issue related to the subsidies can be damaging to the traditional silvopastoral system when the herders are paid by livestock owners who care about subsidies and not about the quality of pastures;
- ✓ the life of herders is very challenging and despite existing support systems, they are not always easy to access, and not all herders are aware of them. If better conditions are not created for them, these traditions will disappear;
- ✓ the lack of systematic connection and contacts or events for exchange and cooperation for herders, and promoting pastoralism period;
- ✓ Gaps in knowledge working with youth, women, exchange programs between Convention countries and the challenge for the younger generation to continue with pastoralist livelihood because often parents prefer to send their children to university in order to ensure them an easier and better life;
- ✓ The languages (lack of a common language among Carpathian shepherds) were mentioned several times as an important barrier. But despite all these challenges, the participants in the meeting expressed their willingness to continue working on Pastoralism as one of its priorities.  
In this regard, they established priorities for the short and long term, from which I am going to highlight only a few:
- ✓ The need to set opportunities for exchange between practitioners from different Carpathian countries should be organized, including local authorities associations and farmers, building and strengthening the networking;
- ✓ Advocate for a European support mechanism for Mountain producers, differentiated on altitude radiance which constitutes natural our handicaps for producers who are working at higher altitude (including subsidies, Tax cuts, funds) or promoting income support for herders through the CAP, in collaboration with Euromontana, EU commission and the Carpathian Convention;
- ✓ Developing educational activities targeting pastoralists, herders, the younger generation and women pastoralists and promoting activities on awareness raising about the importance of pastoralism.
- ✓ WG SARD should closely cooperate with other WGs, including withWG on Biodiversity and WG on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge
- ✓ Important topic to address in the near future is the conflict between wildlife and pastoralists.
- ✓ Development of project supporting the various activities and aspects relevant for the Carpathian pastoralism is strongly recommended.
- ✓ Pastoralism should be integrated into the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework.

- Report by the WG Forest

The Secretariat deliver a short presentation on behalf of the WG Forest Chair – Forest informing about the latest developments including the process of finalization of the Inventory of virgin forests of the Carpathians (the latest version enriched by the new information provided by Poland and Ukraine will be shared soon for the final approval by the Parties), as well as the process of developing a new criteria and indicators for natura or quasi-virgin forest, which shall serve for extending the Carpathian forest inventory. The consultations on the criteria and indicators are still ongoing within the WG Forest – [see the presentation](#).

- Report by the WG Tourism Chair

Ms. Anna Buk, on behalf of Mr. Dawid Lasek, Coordinator of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform, Secretary General of the Association Carpathian Euroregion – Poland, presented the latest activities within the WG Tourism, which are currently focus on operationalizing the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform. Furthermore, Ms. Buk presented a new project [CentralMountians](#) which will be crucial for CSTP, as well as for strengthening governance mechanism in the Carpathians, particularly with an active involvement of citizens – [see the presentation](#).

- General presentation (remining topics) on progress of work since COP6

The Secretariat delivered a general presentation on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention since the COP6 based on the draft Progress Report for COP7 that was prepared in advance to the 14th CCIC meeting. The presentation made by the Secretariat did not include the reports on progress made within the relevant WGs Chairs or initiative's Coordinator, as per above – see the presentation.

### Expedition throughout the Carpathian mountains

Mr. Krzysztof Cibor, Greenpeace, made a presentation on the expedition throughout the Carpathian mountains, which aimed at showcasing the value of the Carpathian ecosystem and its remarkable biodiversity for Europe – see the presentation.  
In addition, the Greenpeace organized an exhibition presenting the impressions from the expedition and engaging the CCIC participants in discussion about protection of the Carpathian ecosystems.

### Session III – Reading of the draft COP7 Decisions and related documents

#### Reading of the draft COP7 Decisions and related documents

The session moderated by the Polish Presidency representative, Mr. Łukasz Rejt, Ministry of Climate and Environment of Poland, focused on reviewing the comments received from the Parties and Observers to the COP7 decisions. It allowed to reach a common understanding on most of the open topics relevant for the finalization of the COP7 Decisions. The results of the discussions are presented in the 3rd draft of the COP7 Decisions that is prepared by the Secretariat. Along the COP7 Decisions, the relevant documents for COP7 adoption/approval were discussed, while the Secretariat provided updates on the statuses of their finalization. The documents include: the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (to be finalized), the Set of measures to address the environmental consequences of the direct and indirect impacts of the war in Ukraine on the Carpathians (finalized), the Joint Declaration/Memorandum of Cooperation between UNIDO and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (to be finalized), the (MoC between the CBD, the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention (finalized), Centnralparks project results (finalized), the Inventory of Virgin Forests in the Carpathians (to be finalized), the Criteria and indicators for selection of natural/quasi virgin forests in the Carpathians (to be finalized), the Assessment of climate change risks and impacts on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services (to be finalized), the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Secretariat and the CSTP Centre Slovakia (to be finalized).

As agreed, the Secretariat will send the 3<sup>rd</sup> draft of the COP7 Decisions for further consultation with instructions.

#### Updates on preparations for the CC COP7

Ms. Aleksandra Doslic, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, provided relevant updates regarding the organization of the Carpathian Convention COP7 in Belgrade, Serbia to be held on 11-13 October 2023 – [see the presentation](#). Ms. Doslic informed that the second invitation with all relevant logistic information, including the registration, as well as the provisional programme of the COP7 will be sent by the Ministry by the end of June, if possible.

#### Any Other Business

In order to strengthen visibility and raise awareness about the Carpathian Convention and its valuable activities for the region, the Secretariat proposed to Focal Point to undergo consultation an inclusion of the Carpathian Convention logo and, if feasible, information note in all protected areas within the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA). To start the consultative process, the Secretariat will first check the policy of use of the Carpathian Convention.

#### Conclusions and next steps and closure of the 14th CCIC meeting

The Chair of the meeting thanked the meeting participants for active and constructive contribution to the meeting discussion, particularly to the negotiations of the COP7 decisions. Furthermore, the Chair command the Secretariat for its excellent work preparing the CCIC and the COP7 documents, which allowed for smooth consultation process. Furthermore, the Focal Points asked for demonstrating a constructive approach in finalization of the last open paragraphs of the COP7 Decisions and asked the Secretariat to facilitate the process, including on the finalization of the relevant documents.

The Secretariat informed that the 3rd draft of the COP7 Decisions will be sent as soon as possible with further instructions for the next round of consultations.

The Chair announced the meeting closed.