

## Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians<sup>1</sup> (CC COP7)

11 - 13 October 2023  
Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

### 1. Opening of the Technical Segment of the CC COP7

The Technical Segment of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP7) was opened by Mr. Harald Egerer, the Head of the UNEP Vienna Office - Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, who welcomed the participants and invited Mr. Łukasz Rejt, Director of the Department of Nature Conservation of the Minister for Climate and Environment of Poland, in his capacity as the COP6 President, to make opening remarks on behalf of the outgoing Polish Presidency. Furthermore, Mr. Rejt invited the representatives of the incoming Serbian Presidency, Ms. Aleksandra Došlić, Head of the Unit for Protected Areas in the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, and Ms. Jelena Dučić, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, to welcome the meeting participants.

### SESSION I – ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

#### 2. Organizational matters

##### 2.1 Election of Officers

In accordance with the Rules of Procedures for the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, the meeting elected the following Bureau:

- **Serbia** – Ms. Sara Pavkov, State Secretary, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia – **President**
- **Ukraine** – Mr. Eduard Arustamian, Director of the Department of Nature Reserve Fund of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine – **Vice President**
- **Slovakia** – Ms. Zlatica Csontos Šimoňakova, National Focal Point, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic – **Rapporteur**
- **Czech Republic** – Ms. Eliška Rolfová, Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic
- **Hungary** – Mr. Dániel Gether, Head of Unit for International Relations, Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary

<sup>1</sup> COP7 serves also as the Meeting of the Parties to the: Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management, Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, Protocol on Sustainable Transport Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

- **Poland** – Mr. Łukasz Rejt, Director of the Department of Nature Conservation of the Minister for Climate and Environment of Poland
- **Romania** – Ms. Liliana Virtopeanu, Counsellor, Biodiversity Department, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania

Ms. Jelena Dučić on behalf of the Serbian Presidency with support of the Secretariat chaired the Technical Segment of the CC COP7.

## 2.2 Review of credentials

The Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Harald Egerer, reported on the submission of the credentials for the Parties' official delegations, allowing for decision-making at the COP7.

## 2.3 Adoption of the agenda

The COP7 Agenda was adopted without any changes. The Final COP7 Agenda (CC/COP7/DOC1) is available [here](#).

## 3. Status of ratifications and contributions

The Secretariat provided a detailed overview of the statuses of ratifications of the Protocols to the Carpathian Conventions, including on the Protocol on Biodiversity, the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management, the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, the Protocol on Sustainable Transport, and the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as the Article 12bis on Climate Change. Updated information on the statuses of ratifications is available on the [Carpathian Convention website](#).

Serbia described the ongoing process of ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and the Article 12bis on Climate Change.

The Secretariat informed the meeting about the status of contributions to the Carpathian Convention Trust Fund and thanked the Parties for the timely payments.

## 4. Implementation of the Carpathian Convention: progress and prospects

The Secretariat delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining the progress and main achievements in implementing the Carpathian Convention since the COP6 in 2020, while also reflecting on the celebration of 20 years of the Carpathian Convention. [The Report by the Secretariat is available here](#).

## 5. Formal reading and finalizing the COP7 Decisions

Thanks to the highly efficient negotiation process of the COP7 Decisions between the Parties leading up to the COP7, and the successful finalization of the COP7 Decision text at the COP7 Bureau meeting preceding the Technical Segment, the COP7 Presidency opted against a formal reading of the COP7 Decisions during this stage of the Technical Segment. The finalized draft of the COP7 Decisions was distributed for review prior to the commencement of the Technical Segment, and notably, no reservations were expressed regarding the content.

## 6. Initiatives within the Carpathian Convention – relevant inputs for implementation

The following initiatives were presented, providing recent updates on activities that support and contribute to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention:

- Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP) | Mr. Dawid Lasek, CSTP Coordinator and Secretary General of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland  
[The presentation is available here.](#)
- Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI) | Mr. Ján Kadlečík, CWI Coordinator  
[The presentation is available here.](#)
- Carpathian Network of Protected Areas | Mr. Mircea Verghelet, CNPA Steering Committee Chair  
[The presentation is available here.](#)
- Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Expert Network | Ms. Tamara Mitrofanenko, the ESD Network Coordinator, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention  
[The presentation is available here.](#)

## 7. Inputs by the Observers

Upon request, the project [Clima Carpathia, regional vision of global importance](#) was presented by Mr. Toby Aykroyd, Wild Europe representing Wild Europe.

## 8. AOB

No other business was raised.

## 9. Closing of the Technical Segment

Ms. Jelena Dučić, together with Mr. Harald Egerer, officially closed the Technical Segment of the COP7, thanking the Parties for their excellent cooperation in the preparations for the Conference of the Parties, the participants for their active contributions, and the organizers for their outstanding organization of the meeting. The Secretariat invited all participants to the next session, which focused on stakeholders and their engagement in activities relevant to the Carpathian region.

## SESSION II - STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT

### 10. Stakeholders' consultations on establishing the Trans-European Nature Network – NaturaConnect

The session facilitated stakeholder consultations on the establishment of the Trans-European Nature Network, aimed at strengthening collaboration within the Carpathian Convention to build a transboundary functional ecological network and integrate ecological corridors across relevant sectors. The consultations were organized as part of the implementation of the NaturaConnect project.

The [report of the consultations is available here](#), along with the [presentations](#) delivered by World Wildlife Fund Central and Eastern Europe (WWF CEE).

### 11. Carpathian Expo

The consultations were followed by the Carpathian Expo, which was a space for the stakeholders to present their relevant projects and activities.

The programme of the Carpathian Expo is available [here](#), while the presentations are available on the COP7 website under [CARPATHIAN EXPO Programme and project info](#).

## SESSION III – OPENING

### 12. Opening of the High-Level Segment of the CC COP7

The High-Level Segment (HLS) of the COP7 was opened by the COP7 President, Ms. Sara Pavkov, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, who welcomed the COP7 participants, as well as the honorable guests and speakers of the HLS. The COP7 President emphasized the importance of the COP7 as the most significant environmental conference in the region in 2023.

The COP7 President then invited the following speakers to deliver opening remarks.

- Ms. Francoise Jacob, UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia
- Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, UNEP, Deputy Executive Director
- Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat
- Mr. Adam Guibourgé-Czetwertyński, Deputy Minister of Climate and Environment of Poland – outgoing Presidency. The welcoming address by the outgoing presidency can be found [here](#).

Following the welcoming address by Poland, the outgoing Presidency, a symbolic handover of the Carpathian Convention Presidency took place. This was followed by a welcome address from the incoming Presidency, represented by Ms. Irena Vujović, Minister of Environmental Protection of Serbia. You can find the full welcoming address by the outgoing Presidency [here](#).

### 13. Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration COP7

The Secretariat introduced the COP7 Ministerial Declaration, a key document aimed at strengthening the Carpathian Convention's work and advancing the Carpathian Vision 2050, which focuses on living in

harmony with nature in the region. The declaration was presented for adoption at COP7. The full text of the COP7 Ministerial Declaration is available [here](#).

After the Secretariat's presentation, the President invited the Heads of Delegation of the Carpathian Convention to adopt the declaration by acclamation. The Ministerial Declaration was successfully adopted, and the President thanked the Parties, acknowledging it as a significant milestone in the history of the Carpathian Convention.

## SESSION IV – PANEL DISCUSSION

### 14. "20 Years of the Carpathian Convention: Assessing Progress, Inspiring Action, and Shaping the Future in times of triple planetary crisis" - High-Level panel discussion

The panel discussion was attended by the Ministers and Heads of Delegations (HoDs) from the Carpathian Convention Parties. In their interventions, they elaborated on key achievements and milestones accomplished by the Carpathian Convention over the past two decades, which have positively impacted the region's sustainability and resilience. They also discussed how the Carpathian Convention should evolve and adapt over the next 30 years to effectively address the challenges posed by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The interventions given by the Ministers and HoDs can be found on the [COP7 website](#). Representatives of the Carpathian Convention Parties in the High-Level panel discussion included:

- **Serbia:** Ms. Irena Vujović, Minister of Environmental Protection
- **Romania:** Mr. Mircea Fechet, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests
- **Ukraine:** Mr. Oleksandr Krasnolutsnyi, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of environmental protection and natural resources
- **Czech Republic:** Mr. Jiří Lehejček, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment
- **Poland:** Mr. Adam Guibourge-Czetwerynski, Deputy Minister of Climate and Environment
- **Slovakia:** Mr. Fedor Rosocha, Ambassador, Embassy of the Slovak Republic
- **Hungary:** Mr. Oszkár Ökrös, Deputy State Secretary for International Relations Ministry of Agriculture

Following the Ministerial representatives, key Observers provided brief interventions, including:

- Mr. Arnold Kreilhuber, Regional Director of UNEP Europe Office, who elaborated on the achievements of the Carpathian Convention over the past 20 years and outlined UNEP's future focus within the Carpathian Convention;
- Ms. Musonda Mumba, Secretary General of the Ramsar Wetland Convention Secretariat, who highlighted the longstanding collaboration between the Ramsar Convention and the Carpathian Convention, discussing key accomplishments of this partnership and sharing her vision for elevating cooperation in the coming years;
- Ms. Alenka Smerkolj, Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, who emphasized the strategic partnership between the Alpine and the Carpathian Conventions, given their specific status as the only two mountain conventions in the world. She also shared her vision for joint efforts to strengthen the role of mountains and mountain biodiversity in European and global environmental agendas;

- Mr. Arno von Wimpffen, Deputy Director General of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, who discussed ongoing cooperation with the Carpathian Convention and identified priorities for future collaboration.
- Mr. Andreas Beckmann, Regional CEO of WWF CEE, who elaborated on how the Carpathian Convention can actively inspire and engage stakeholders to take meaningful actions that contribute to shaping a resilient and ecologically sustainable future for the Carpathian region.
- Ms. Rosalaura Romeo, Coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat – FAO, who provided insights on potential areas for strengthening cooperation between FAO and the Carpathian Convention in the future.
- Mr. Paolo Angelini, Head of Delegation Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention and Chair of the Alpine Biodiversity Board, representing Italy as a longstanding supporter of the Carpathian Convention, reflected on the achievements of the Carpathian Convention over the past 20 years and discussed potential areas for future cooperation with Italy.

## SESSION V – SUBSTANTIVE INPUTS

### 15. Addressing the triple planetary crisis in the Carpathians

Invited speakers provided substantive contributions to the COP7, focusing on the triple planetary crisis in the Carpathians and the initiatives, instruments, and projects being developed within the framework of the Carpathian Convention to address these challenges. The invited speakers included:

- Ms. Joanna Zawiejska, Chair of the Science for the Carpathians (S4C), who highlighted the critical scientific contributions made by the S4C network, which has supported the Convention's work since 2008.

[The presentation is available here.](#)

The President acknowledged the essential role of science in the decision-making process, emphasizing the importance of the S4C Network, which connects scientists across disciplines and national borders, promotes research focused on the specific needs of the Carpathian region, and fosters dialogue between research, policy, and practice.

- Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova, CBD Secretariat, who presented the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its role in driving global, European and regional implementation through stakeholders' actions.

[The presentation is available here.](#)

- Ms. Klaudia Kuraś, Carpathian Convention Secretariat, who presented the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, which is a new tool developed under the Carpathian Convention to support the implementation of the GBF in the Carpathians.

[The presentation is available here.](#)

- Mr. William Keeton, University of Vermont, who presented key findings and recommendations of the *Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation options for the Carpathian forests ecosystems and their services*, which is a newly elaborated report under the Carpathian Convention, which shall drive critical work of the Convention on addressing the climate change crisis in the Carpathians.

[The presentation is available here.](#)

- Mr. Gergely Hankó, Hungarian Association of Environmental Enterprises Pollution, who provided a presentation on tackling riverine plastic pollution in the Danube-Carpathian region and the Association's related projects.

[The presentation is available here.](#)

## 16. Strengthening partnerships in the framework of the Carpathian Convention

The President stressed the importance of enhancing and building new partnerships that allow for establishing synergies to tackle the challenges facing the region and beyond. The Carpathian Convention already has a broad portfolio of strategic partnerships; however, the COP7 provided an opportunity to reinforce existing partnerships and welcome new ones. The following memoranda of cooperation were signed:

- **Renewing the Memorandum of Cooperation between the CBD, Alpine and Carpathian Conventions**

After a short presentation introducing the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) and its background, the representatives of the Conventions—Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova, CBD Secretariat, Ms. Alenka Smerkoltj, Alpine Convention Permanent Secretariat, and Mr. Harald Egerer, Carpathian Convention Secretariat—provided short interventions on behalf of their respective Secretariats on the relevance of the cooperation within the MoC, which was followed by the exchange of the signed MoC.

- **Signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Carpathian Convention Secretariat and UNIDO**

Mr. Harald Egerer, on behalf of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, and Mr. Josef-Christoph Karl Pelikan, Chief of Cabinet and Special Representative for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of UNIDO, on behalf of UNIDO, delivered short interventions on the importance of the newly established cooperation for strengthening the role of sustainable industrial development in the Carpathian region.

- **Signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Carpathian Convention Secretariat and EUROMONTANA**

After a short presentation of EUROMONTANA's work and their recent and planned activities that are relevant for the Carpathian region, Mr. Radu-Adrian Rey, Vice President of EUROMONTANA, together with Mr. Harald Egerer, on behalf of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, made brief interventions on the relevance of strengthening cooperation and proceeded with signing the MoC.

- **Signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Carpathian Convention and the Global International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 Coalition**

Mr. Harald Egerer, Carpathian Convention Secretariat, and Francesca Pasetti, Regional International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Support Group- Europe, briefly spoke about the new cooperation framework being developed under the Convention and its importance for the region and proceeded with signing the MoC.



- **Announcing the new Transboundary Ramsar site in the Carpathians**

The COP7 participants were informed that the Letter of Designation of Transboundary Ramsar site Iron Gates Natural Park – Djerdap between Romania and the Republic of Serbia was signed during the COP7 during the bilateral meeting of Serbian and Romanian ministers.

This designation, in line with Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention regarding governance of wetlands extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party, will further support the implementation of several multilateral environmental agreements: the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Carpathian Convention and the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, ultimately contributing to the implementation of the GBF. The designation of this transboundary site will allow for improved management and conservation of wildlife and their habitats, with the aim of safeguarding biological diversity, as well as facilitating the development of joint research programs and the exchange of knowledge and information.

## **SESSION VI – ADOPTION OF THE COP7 DECISIONS**

### **17. Brief report on the COP7 Technical Segment by the Rapporteur and adoption of the COP7 Decisions**

The COP7 Rapporteur, Ms. Zlatica Csontos Šimoňakova, National Focal Point, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, delivered a brief report of the COP7 Technical Segment. The Report is available on the [COP7 website](#).

Following the report, the President proceeded with the adoption of the COP7 Decisions. The President reminded the Parties that they had access to the complete set of critical decisions and accompanying documents, which would be adopted as a package. Emphasizing their importance for the sustainable future of the Carpathian region, the President reiterated that the Serbian Presidency would fully support their implementation, including through its Presidency priorities. The [COP7 Decisions](#) were adopted by acclamation, after which the President officially announced their adoption.

In conclusion, the President expressed gratitude to the Parties for their excellent cooperation and congratulated them on the successful adoption of the COP7 Decisions.

### **18. Closure of the COP7**

Following brief closing remarks, the President officially declared the closure of COP7.

On 13 October 2023, the host organized an excursion to Djerdap National Park for COP7 participants.