

## MEETING REPORT

### 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group

#### on Sustainable Forest Management (WG Forest)

28-29 April 2025

All the presentations delivered during the WG Forest meeting are available on the Carpathian Convention website<sup>1</sup>

#### 1) Opening of the meeting – Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

The 10th meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management (WG Forest) was opened by Harald Egerer, Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. Mr. Egerer welcomed the participants of the WG Forest and thanked the co-chairs for hosting and co-organizing the meeting, notably Ms. Zlatica Csontos Šimoňáková, representative of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and Focal Point of Slovakia to the Carpathian Convention, as well as Mr. Boris Greguška, representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Harald Egerer opened the meeting by recalling the adoption of the Forest Protocol at COP3 in Bratislava and highlighting the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation, as exemplified by the Alpine-Carpathian corridor initiative. He emphasized a strong mandate of Slovakia as Chair of the Working Group and underlined the role of the WG Forests in advancing regional forest governance, particularly on virgin forest inventory, climate risks, EU-aligned initiatives, and support to Ukraine. Mr. Egerer welcomed the involvement of key partners and noted the Working Group continued progress in fulfilling its COP7 mandate.

#### 2) Welcome remarks by the Working Group Sustainable Forestry Management Co-Chairs: Zlatica Csontos Šimoňáková, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, and Boris Greguška, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

The meeting was opened by Ms. Zlatica Csontos Šimoňáková, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, and by Mr. Boris Greguška, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic. Ms. Šimoňáková thanked participants of the WG meeting and underlined the importance of continued collaboration in the realm of the WG Forest to develop further the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) and the Forest Protocol by the Convention Parties. Co-Chair of the meeting, Mr. Greguška, highlighted the importance of all the agenda points and specifically the strategic objective on support to forests and forestry in Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2025/03/27/10th-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-sustainable-forest-management/>

### **3) Remarks by the Serbian Presidency, Mr. Aleksandar Stanojević, National Focal Point of Serbia to the Carpathian Convention, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia**

On behalf of the Serbian Presidency of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Aleksandar Stanojević welcomed the meeting participants and addressed the pressing topics of the precious Carpathian forests. Mr. Stanojević emphasized the ecological importance of Carpathian forests and assured that the Republic of Serbia and its Ministry of Environmental Protection remain committed to supporting the activities of the Working Group and fostering intersectoral cooperation with other Carpathian Convention bodies, particularly the Working Group on Climate Change. Mr. Stanojević highlighted the development of the Inventory of Virgin Forests, which was developed in cooperation with the European Environment Agency, and noted the climate risks facing the region and encouraged action on the COP7-endorsed climate assessment. Mr. Stanojević confirmed that Serbia supports the implementation of key global and EU environmental policies, including the EU Biodiversity and Forest Strategies for 2030, the European Green Deal, the Nature Restoration Law, and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

### **4) Adoption of the agenda – Zlatica Csontos Šimoňáková, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic; Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

Mr. Harald Egerer introduced the draft agenda for the meeting. Ms. Ganna Lobchenko, WWF-CEE and WWF-Ukraine representative, proposed the addition of a presentation titled “Support Without Harm: Preventing Environmental Violations in Ukraine” under the Support to Ukraine session on the second day of the meeting. As there were no objections, the proposal was accepted, and the final agenda was adopted as amended.

[The final adopted agenda is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

### **5) Report on the Outcomes of the Carpathian Convention COP7 and the Mandate of the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management, based on the Work Plan on Sustainable Forest Management (2023-2026) – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention presented the outcomes of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP7), with a focus on decisions relevant to sustainable forest management. The Secretariat reviewed the strategic objectives, mandate, and responsibilities of the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management, as well as the ongoing activities outlined in the Work Plan for 2023–2026.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

### **6) Presentation and update of the Inventory of the virgin forest in the Carpathians – Eleonora Musco, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

Ms. Eleonora Musco, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, presented the steps that led to the development of the Inventory of Virgin Forests in the Carpathians, in cooperation with the EEA, including related updates and the current status.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **7) Presentation of the criteria and indicators for identifying quasi-virgin forests adopted at COP7 – Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

Mr. Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, presented indicators and definitions for identifying quasi-virgin forests adopted at COP7. At the discussion on the definition and criteria of the natural forests in the Carpathians and related extension of the inventory, it was noted that:

- The WG Forests requested the Secretariat to send a message to the EEA, expressing appreciation for their continued support and inviting the EEA to continue the cooperation and jointly explore possible joint work on the implementation of the currently proposed EU Forest Monitoring Law in the Carpathian region.
- Countries and observers were asked to check the current Inventory of Virgin Forests in the Carpathians and provide feedback to the Secretariat. It was noted that it is necessary for countries to initiate the process of identifying new forests in accordance with the updated criteria to continue with the process of enlargement the Inventory of virgin forest in the Carpathians, which is based on the definition outlined in the Forest Protocol. Countries and observers noted that further development of the inventory and data gathering, and updates are needed. Additional support by the Presidency of WG Forests and the WG Forests partners is needed regarding the extension of the Virgin Forest Inventory.
- With a focus on Ukraine, the Secretariat would endeavor to collect the most recent inventories of virgin and quasi-virgin natural forests in the Carpathians and prepare a comparison of Ukraine's national definitions with the definitions of the Carpathian Convention.
- Regarding the topic of quasi-virgin forests, the Forest WG recommends to initiate the preparation of Guidelines on how to collect information on quasi-virgin forests step-by-step, comparing existing national definitions, and considering the definitions of important ongoing processes (e.g. EU Guidelines for Defining, Mapping, Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary and Old-Growth Forests, 21 March 2023), and possibly collect national estimation of the percentage share of quasi-virgin forests in specific regions and promote the actual protection of such forests. A workshop could be organized to facilitate the work of the Countries on this.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **8) Presentation of the final report of the Assessment of climate change risks and impacts on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services – Tamara Mitrofanenko, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

Ms. Tamara Mitrofanenko, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, provided an outline of the final report on "Assessment of climate change risks and impacts on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services". Ms. Mitrofanenko provided an overview of the study's methodology and outlined seven key thematic areas identified as priority concerns:

- Forest Growth & Productivity

- Biomass & Carbon Stocks
- Tree Mortality
- Changes In Species Range & Abundance and Habitat Shifts
- Invasion By Non-native Species
- Forest Ecosystem Services
- Forest-Water Interactions, Including Hydrologic Regulation & Riparian Dynamics

Ms. Mitrofanenko shared 6 priority risks identified based on the abovementioned 7 key themes:

- Altered Disturbance Regimes
- Altered Hydrologic Regimes and Flood Impacts
- Invasive Species
- Declines in Forest Growth and Productivity
- Altered Species Composition and Distribution
- Feedback Mechanisms and Effects on Ecosystem Services, including Carbon Storage

The discussion on the next steps of the launch and further dissemination of the final report of the study proposed the following steps with regard to the finalization of the Assessment:

- The WG Forest highly welcomed the report and requested the Secretariat to explore ways and means to prepare a summary version of the assessment in a popular language, with the possibility of being **further translated into the Carpathian national languages** for community outreach.
- A **high-level EU launch** was proposed, potentially via the EU Climate Adapt Platform.
- The Forest Europe representative expressed willingness to assist with dissemination through their networks and partners, as well as Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (CBR) representatives proposed to include the Assessment in the CBR journal in both English and Ukrainian.
- It was noted that further dissemination among forest agencies and environmental ministries is needed.
- Organizing **local workshops** was discussed as a follow-up step with the support proposed by the Czech Republic, as well as dissemination through social networks.
- It was proposed to include activities connected to the Climate Assessment under the SNaP LIFE project.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### 9) **Presentation of National biodiversity and action plan and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) till 2030 – Eva Viestová, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic**

Eva Viestová, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, presented the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan till 2030 of the Slovak Republic. Ms. Viestová gave an introduction to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and explained the preparation of the updated NBSAP till 2030 with the connection to the new EU Biodiversity Strategy and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Strategy.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### **10) Presentation with the new EU Nature Restoration Law – Jozef Dóczy, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic**

Mr. Jozef Dóczy, the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Endangered Species Trade Regulation, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, presented the key provisions of the newly adopted EU Nature Restoration Law, with a focus on its implications for forest ecosystems. He outlined the Slovak legislative procedure, obligations under the regulation, and ongoing processes related to the preparation of the National Restoration Plan. Mr. Dóczy introduced the forest ecosystem indicators set by the regulation and the uniform reporting format for forest ecosystems with forestry-related measures required under the regulation.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### **11) Presentation of the EU Forest Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Boris Greguška, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic**

Mr. Boris Greguška, Chief State Counsellor, the Section of Forestry and Wood Processing, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, presented an overview of the EU Forest Strategy for 2030, its strategic framework, and interlinkages with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Mr. Boris Greguška outlined national competencies related to sustainable forest management in the EU and the role and positioning of the strategy in the broader EU policy framework, highlighting the strategy's key components. Mr. Greguška also presented details of Slovakia's National Forest Programme 2030 – "Forests for the Society", recently adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### **12) Restoration of Close to Nature Forests in the Carpathians - experience exchange (feedback from all countries)**

The session could not be held due to time constraints.

#### **13) Forest Europe Ministerial Conference Bonn 2024 and the establishment of the Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK) – Mr. Bernhard Wolfslehner, European Forest Institute Forest Europe, FoRISK**

Mr. Bernhard Wolfslehner, Head of the Governance Programme at the European Forest Institute, reported on the outcomes of the 2024 Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Bonn. He highlighted the adoption of the **Bonn Ministerial Declaration, "Forest Europe – Keeping Sustainable Forest Management Fit for the Future,"** and the **Ministerial Decision, "Sustainable Forest Management as a Tool to Enhance Forest Resilience"**.

Mr. Wolfslehner also presented the 2025–2026 Work Programme of the Liaison Unit Sweden and introduced the structure and objectives of the newly **established Pan-European Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK)**. The initiative aims to serve as a science-based knowledge hub, connecting national and international actors to strengthen forest risk monitoring, cooperation, and regional resilience.

Further information on Forest Europe and FoRISK is available at the following links: <https://forisk.org/>

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

**14) Presentation of “Development of the transnational Carpathian LIFE SNaP (Strategic Nature Project): Contributions related to Forestry” – Dorothea H. Palenberg, blue! advancing European projects and the Secretariat**

Ms. Dorothea H. Palenberg, on behalf of blue! advancing European projects, presented the Strategic Nature Project (SNaP), currently under preparation with the Secretariat’s support. The project aims to secure long-term (2027–2036), large-scale funding (up to EUR 50 million) under the LIFE programme to implement key priorities of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, including:

- Enhancing the coherence of the protected area network through ecological corridors;
- Implementing EU nature restoration targets for species and habitats;
- Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests;
- Promoting nature restoration on agricultural land.

Ms. Palenberg underscored the strategic role of the forestry sector and the potential integration of WG Forest activities into the SNaP framework. Ms. Palenberg facilitated an interactive session to collect feedback on national priorities and potential activities for inclusion in the SNaP Concept Note.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

**15) Overview of the activities and cooperation with support to Ukraine – Liudmyla Sirychenko, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

Ms. Liudmyla (Mila) Sirychenko, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, provided an overview of the Secretariat’s ongoing activities in support of the Ukrainian Carpathians, strategic projects, and institutional cooperation.

Policy efforts and declarations include:

- The Carpathian Ministerial Conference 2022 Ministerial Declaration of the Carpathian Convention on the impact of war in Ukraine on the environment and the need for cooperation and assistance
- Report on the impact of war on the natural environment of the Carpathians in Ukraine – background document for the Ministerial Conference and commissioned by the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention
- The COP7 Ministerial Declaration (Empowering the Carpathian Vision 2050) calls for a unified effort to assist Ukraine in addressing the war’s environmental consequences on the Carpathians in Ukraine.
- COP7 Decisions containing multiple provisions for targeted support to Ukraine.

Key strategic initiatives include:



- Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project “Enhanced protected areas network for biodiversity conservation and development in Ukraine”.
- “Green industrial recovery through municipality-based development in Ukraine” project in cooperation with UNIDO.
- Facilitation of the Carpathian Peace Park initiative (Ukraine–Romania).
- Engagement through the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) and Carpathian ESD Expert Network.
- Support via the LIFE Strategic Nature Project for the Carpathians.

The Secretariat actively fosters collaboration with partners such as Eurac Research, EEA, Forest Europe, UNIDO, local stakeholders, and Ukrainian institutions, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources and the State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### **16) Presentation of the Peace Park Initiative – Gabriel Paun, Agent Green, and Daria Kholiavchuk, Chernivtsi National University**

Mr. Gabriel Paun, Agent Green, and Ms. Daria Kholiavchuk, Chernivtsi National University, presented the Peace Park Initiative, a transboundary conservation effort on the Ukraine–Romania border. The initiative aims to establish a living natural sanctuary promoting regeneration, resilience, and cooperation between the two nations, while serving as a model of cross-border harmony and ecological stewardship. Mr. Paun and Ms. Kholiavchuk also introduced the concept of the Carpathian Peace Trail, a proposed 1,500 km route linking communities across Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia, with the goal of fostering connection and shared identity throughout the Carpathians. An official photo opportunity was held to mark the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between Agent Green, GeoConcept, Community Development Center “Idea, Action, Result”, Science and Nature, and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention.

[The signed version of the Memorandum of Cooperation for the Peace Park initiative is available through the following link.](#)

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

#### **17) Presentation “War and climate change are threatening Ukraine’s forests. Ukrainian foresters are calling for support to implement close-to-nature forestry in the Carpathians,” – Mariana Ostrovska, the State Forest Resource Agency of Ukraine**

Ms. Mariana Ostrovska, State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, delivered a presentation on the severe impacts of war and climate change on the forests of Ukraine, with a particular focus on the Carpathian region. The presentation began with a moment of silence in memory of Denys Zelenyi, the late author of the iconic Serebrianskyi Forest photograph, who died defending Ukraine. **Ms. Ostrovska reported that 30% of Ukraine’s forests have been damaged, including over 1 million hectares located in temporarily occupied territories.**

**Ms. Ostrovska stressed that war and climate change represent twin threats to forest ecosystems in the Ukrainian Carpathians.** Ms. Ostrovska presented ongoing efforts by the State Forest Resources Agency to enhance forest resilience through close-to-nature sustainable forest management, including legislative reforms such as the ban on main-use clear-cutting in the Carpathian region, and the promotion of afforestation and reforestation.

**On behalf of the Agency, Ms. Ostrovska called on the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the UNEP Vienna Office to urgently initiate a Dedicated Support Programme for Carpathian Forestry, addressing the following priorities:**

- Technical cooperation for forest management, forest restoration, and forest management planning.
- Support for the transition to close-to-nature sustainable forest management in the Carpathians.
- Joint research and monitoring to understand how war and climate are affecting our forests and how to respond.
- Policy coordination to integrate Ukraine into European forest policy efforts.
- Support for the protection of biodiversity, including the protection of virgin forests in the Carpathians.

More information about the State Forest Resource Agency of Ukraine can be found at:  
<https://forest.gov.ua/en>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

**18) Presentation of the “Corine Land Cover Carpathian land use mapping and monitoring of landscape fires in the region” – Sergiy Zibtsev, National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, Regional Eastern Europe Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC)**

Mr. Sergiy Zibtsev, National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine and Regional Eastern Europe Fire Monitoring Center, joined the meeting online and presented the results of land use mapping and wildfire monitoring in the Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, using the CORINE Land Cover methodology. Mr. Zibtsev emphasized the importance of a **landscape-level approach for assessing land use dynamics, wildfire impacts, and climate-related risks in the Ukrainian Carpathians**. Mr. Zibtsev underlined the relevance of this work to EU environmental standards and disaster risk reduction efforts.

Key findings can be found in the presentation. [Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

More information on the Regional Eastern Europe Fire Monitoring Center (REEFMC) of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine can be found at: <https://nubip.edu.ua/en/reefmc>.



## 19) Review of the recommendations of the international roundtable “Ecological and Legal, Scientific-Educational and Cross-Border Aspects of Implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its Protocols” held in Rahiv, Ukraine, in October 2024 – Fedir Hamor and Iryna Jonash, Carpathian Biosphere Reserve

Mr. Fedir Hamor, Deputy Director, Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, and Ms. Iryna Jonash presented the outcomes of the international roundtable titled “Ecological and Legal, Scientific-Educational and Cross-Border Aspects of Implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its Protocols,” held in Rahiv, Ukraine, in October 2024, commemorating the anniversary of the Carpathian Convention’s establishment. Mr. Hamor **emphasized Ukraine’s historical role in initiating the Convention and long-standing cooperation with the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention.** He shared the roundtable’s key recommendations, which included **proposals addressed to the Ministry of Environment of Ukraine, suggestions for the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, and identified priorities for strengthening implementation and urgency of awareness raising of the Carpathian Convention in the Ukrainian Carpathian region.**

More information about the work of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve can be found at: <https://kbz.in.ua/en/about-us/about-reserve/>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## 20) Presentation of the WWF-CEE and WWF-UA “Support Without Harm: Preventing Environmental Violations in Ukraine” – Ganna Lobchenko, Senior Expert Forests, WWF-Ukraine

Ms. Ganna Lobchenko, WWF-Ukraine, gave the presentation titled “Support Without Harm: Preventing Environmental Violations in Ukraine”, focusing on the protection of virgin, quasi-virgin, and natural forests in Ukraine in line with the Carpathian Convention protocols and compliance with Ukraine’s national legislation.

Ms. Lobchenko highlighted the case of **Perechyn Forestry**, where alleged logging of virgin and quasi-virgin forests occurred for forest road construction. She outlined the response from civil society, including formal complaints and letters, which led to a criminal investigation initiated by the Ukrainian Prosecutor’s Office. The case involves efforts to revoke logging permits and seek legal consent for the establishment of a Virgin Forest Nature Monument in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on the Protection of Virgin Forests" and the Carpathian Convention. Ms. Lobchenko emphasized the need for continued investigation, formal protection of primeval forests, and the application of the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle in all forest-related activities.

More information on the work of WWF-CEE and WWF-Ukraine can be found at: <https://wwfcee.org/>  
<https://wwf.ua/en/>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **21) Moderated discussion on support to the Ukrainian forest sector within WG Sustainable Forest Management – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**

The Forest WG recommended the development of a flexible support program of cooperative activities on sustainable forest management for the Ukrainian Carpathians, in the broader context of the cooperative activities of the Carpathian Convention in support of the Carpathian region of Ukraine. The elements could include technical cooperation, the promotion of close-to-nature forest management in line with European principles, research and education, policy coordination, and deepening EU integration. Such a program can also have a wider significance and usefulness as a model for the dissemination and experience sharing of good practices with other regions of Ukraine.

## **22) ForestConnect project presentation “Resilience-based Forest Management in Protected Areas” – Kostadin Valchev, Senior Forest Expert, WWF Bulgaria**

Mr. Kostadin Valchev, WWF Bulgaria, presented the ForestConnect **“Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian Region”** project. The project spans across seven countries, including Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine, and covers nine pilot areas such as Natura 2000 sites, national and nature parks, and a biosphere reserve. Mr. Valchev provided an overview of the project’s objectives, key outputs, and relevance. He highlighted the development of a **Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience-Enhancing Forest Management in Ecological Corridors for Large Carnivores**. WG Forests participants provided feedback on current and planned measures to improve forest connectivity and climate adaptation, and mitigation.

More information on the ForestConnect project development can be found at: <https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/forestconnect>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **23) NaturaConnect project update “Valuation and mapping of recreational benefits provided by forests” – Marek Giergiczny, University of Warsaw, Department of Microeconomics, Warsaw Centre of Ecological Economics**

Mr. Marek Giergiczny, University of Warsaw, joined the meeting online and provided an update on the EU Horizon Project NaturaConnect – “Towards a future coherent Trans- European Nature Network (TEN-N)”, which started in July 2022 and will end in June 2026. Mr. Giergiczny presented the findings of the study “Valuation and mapping of recreational benefits provided by forests”.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **24) Presentation of the activities of the Working Group of Alpine Convention on Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry (WG MAMF) – Giorgio Matteucci, Institute of BioEconomy (IBE)**

Mr. Giorgio Matteucci, Institute of BioEconomy (IBE), joined the meeting online and presented the activities of the Alpine Convention's Working Group on Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry (WG MAMF). The activities of WG MAMF relate to mountain agriculture and the sustainable management of mountain forests and their respective value chains.

Mr. Matteucci provided background on the Working Group's mandate and methodology, outlining the three **key priorities for the 2025–2026 period**:

- Sustainable management of water resources in mountain areas
- Advancing Agriculture 4.0 and Climate-Smart Forestry, including digital innovation opportunities and limitations
- Addressing land ownership fragmentation and generational change in Alpine areas, with emphasis on cooperative and inclusive solutions

More information on the work of the Working Group on Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry of the Alpine Convention can be found at: <https://www.alpconv.org/en/home/organisation/thematic-working-bodies/detail/mountain-agriculture-and-mountain-forestry-working-group/>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **25) Presentation of the Permanent Secretariat of "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" – Jana Baumgartner, E.C.O. Institute of Ecology**

Ms. Jana Baumgartner, E.C.O. Institute of Ecology, presented the work of the **Permanent Secretariat of the UNESCO World Heritage site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe."** The site comprises 93 components across 18 countries, forming a unique transnational serial designation. Ms. Baumgartner provided an overview of the governance structure and mission of the Permanent Secretariat, which currently consists of members from three State Parties: Slovakia, Belgium, and Austria. The main workstreams of the Permanent Secretariat for 2025 include:

- **Training and capacity building** (training needs catalogue, webinars, summer schools, funding possibilities for PA management)
- **Research and monitoring** (developing a list of indicators according to OUVs, survey for monitoring data, analysis of forest cover change, GIS-aided database)

Ms. Baumgartner invited informal cooperation with the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention to strengthen joint activities, knowledge exchange, and community-level collaboration. More information about the Permanent Secretariat of "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" can be found at: [www.europeanbeechforests.org](http://www.europeanbeechforests.org).

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **26) Overview of Forum Carpaticum 2025 – Jakub Csabay, Comenius University**

Mr. Jakub Csabay, Comenius University, presented the upcoming **Forum Carpaticum 2025**, to be held **9–11 September 2025** in **Bratislava**, hosted by Comenius University. Under the theme **“Taking stock and building partnership for sustainable development of the mountain and rural areas,”** the Forum will serve as a platform for interdisciplinary exchange and science-policy dialogue. Mr. Csabay highlighted alignment of FC2025 with the **S4C Research Agenda 2030** and **Carpathian Convention priorities**.

The 2025 edition will include two key sub-themes:

- Sub-theme I: **“Building capabilities and facilitating participation of vulnerable groups** in rural and mountain regions in multi-level sustainable development policy.”
- Sub-theme II: **“Bridging natural and social sciences** for sustainable development through **transdisciplinary approaches.”**

Mr. Csabay encouraged participants from the WG Forest to register at the upcoming forum and emphasized its role as a platform for interdisciplinary exchange and science-policy dialogue. More information about FC2025 can be found at: <https://fses.uniba.sk/zahranicne-vztahy/forum-carpaticum-2025>.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website.](#)

## **27) Conclusions, next steps, and closing of the 10th WG Sustainable Forestry Management meeting**

Ms. Zlatica Csontos Šimoňáková closed the meeting by thanking participants for their active contributions and Slovakia’s role as co-chair. The Secretariat summarized the main outcomes and the next steps.

As the next steps of the 10<sup>th</sup> Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management Meeting, the following were agreed:

- The Forest WG requests the Secretariat to send a message to the EEA, highly appreciating the past and ongoing support on virgin, quasi-virgin and natural forests in the Carpathians, and inviting the EEA to continue the joint work on piloting concrete application and implementation of the principles of the currently-proposed EU Forest Monitoring Law in the Carpathian region and continue the development and expansion of the virgin and quasi-virgin forest inventory.
- The Forest WG highly values the final version and recommends the preparation and dissemination of the official launch of the “Assessment of climate change risks and impacts on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services”, as well as the potential translation of the assessment to simplified language and Carpathian languages for improved outreach.
- With a focus on Ukraine, the Secretariat will endeavour to collect the most recent inventories of virgin and quasi-virgin / natural forests in the Carpathians and prepare a comparison of Ukraine’s national definitions with the definitions of the Carpathian Convention. The Secretariat is requested to develop a forest-related support program for Ukraine as a part of a more general program of the Convention in support of Ukraine.



- Regarding the topic of quasi-virgin forests, the Forest WG recommends initiating the preparation of Guidelines on how to collect information on quasi-virgin forests step-by-step, comparing existing national definitions, considering the definitions of important ongoing processes (e.g. EU Guidelines for Defining, Mapping, Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary and Old-Growth Forests, 21 March 2023), possibly collect national estimation of the percentage share of quasi-virgin forests in specific regions and promote the actual protection of such forests.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the Slovak authorities and Secretariat for hosting and co-organizing the meeting. WG Forest participants reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable forest management in the Carpathians.