

Minutes of the  
2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment, held in Pržno, Montenegro  
on October 8, 2015

This meeting was convened by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro. This meeting was held in the Hotel “Maestral”, in Pržno, Montenegro on October 8, 2015.

List of participants of this meeting is appended to this document in Annexes 1.

The meeting was opened at 10:00 AM with Ms. VOJNOVIC (Montenegro) and Mr. SUSIC (RCC) as co-chairs.

Opening remarks and welcome remarks were given by Ms. VOJNOVIC (Montenegro) and Mr. SUSIC (RCC). Expressing honor being for the second time host of the meeting of the WG and commitment to contribute to its further work, Ms. VOJNOVIC congratulated RCC on the progress achieved during the second year of implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy and appreciation for the work done so far in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Center as Coordinator of the Dimension Environment, and the coordination partners Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean and Standing Working Group for Rural Development. Ms. VOJNOVIC also conveyed the invitation of HE Mr. Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister for Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro to organize a ministerial level meeting on environmental issues in SEE in spring 2016. The presentations on the state of affairs concerning initiatives in the SEE region in the domain of environment were delivered by the following invited speakers:

- Mr. Nicholas Bonvoisin, Acting Chief, Transboundary Cooperation Section, Environment Division, UNECE
- Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei, Programme Officer, UNEP – Vienna Office
- Ms. Nino Malashkhia, Associate Environmental Affairs Officer, OSCE
- Ms. Gabriele Rechbauer, Sector Fund Manager-Biodiversity, Open Regional Funds for South East Europe
- Ms. Tanja Popovicki, Component Leader Policy Advice, GIZ DKTI Program: “Development of a sustainable bioenergy market in Serbia”

Mr. SUSIC (RCC) presented an update concerning the implementation of the Regional Program on Environment of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy – Job and Prosperity in a European Perspective (SEE 2020).

The Representatives of the Regional Dimension Coordinator organizations presented additional information concerning their regional activities concerning the implementation of the Regional Program on Environment of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. Mr. FALOUTSOS (GWP-Med) informed the meeting during his presentation that the Austrian Development Agency currently assess the full proposal for the GWP-Med/REC/UNECE

project “Promoting Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in South East Europe, through the use of the Nexus approach” that is prepared to support the implementation of the Nexus and Transboundary Water Management (TWM) objectives under the Dimension “Environment” of the SEE 2020. The current budget is at the level of 3 million Euros. A decision from ADA is expected until the end of the year. Further, the meeting was informed that the Ministry of Environment of Germany will support through the German Environment Agency the Nexus Dialogue in SEE. Ms. KOZHUHAROVA (REC) informed the RWG participant about current activities of the REC in the region particularly presenting one important initiative ENVSEC and current 5 year project “Building local Community RESilience for Sustainable development in International watersheds such as the Drini and DrinA river Watersheds” (CRESSIDA). She also brought to the attention of participants planned ministerial conference "Towards the Climate Summit in Paris in 2015, Challenges for CEI Member States" to be held in November 2015 in Skopje, FYR Macedonia. In addition, representative of CEFTA presented their planned activity on the SEED+ program.

Further interventions from the floor were the following:

- Representative of UNECE informed the RWG about the “Environment for Europe” process and the Ministerial Conference scheduled for June 2016 in Batumi, Georgia, focusing in particular on the possible Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy. He also described the UNECE environmental performance review programme, and the recent reviews of both Montenegro and Serbia, before turning to the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements. He noted the importance of addressing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in SEE’s transboundary water resources;
- Representative of UNEP informed the RWG about their regional activities concerning the Carpathian and Alpine Conventions, including their plans to hold the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, Kenya in June 2016. Additionally, Representative of UNEP presented their project concept “Enhancing Environmental Performance Through Climate Proofing of Infrastructure Investments in the Western Balkans Region from an EU integration perspective” and informed RWG that UNEP has already obtained letters of support/consent from most of SEE governments;
- Representative of OSCE informed the RWG about the process that should lead to the ministerial declaration to be adopted at the upcoming ministerial meeting to be held in Belgrade, Serbia in December, 2015;
- Representative of GIZ ORF Biodiversity informed the RWG about the inception of their program and overall plans, including their prospective activities concerning RWG and its potential political role in this process;
- Representative of GIZ Biomass Project informed the RWG about the planned workshop on perspectives of biomass utilization in Serbia and SEE regional planned to be held in Belgrade, Serbia in November 2015, including the tentative plan to organize a regional conference on biomass utilization and environmental planning in SEE in April 2016.

Following the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, Ms. FILIPOVIC the representative of Serbia in RWG Env, volunteered to act as the co-chair of the of the Regional Working Group on Environment for the period 14 May 2016 to 13 May 2017.

The decision was taken to organize the next meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment at the ministerial level in SEE in March or April 2016. Further, it was decided that the second Roundtable of the Nexus Dialogue in SEE may be organized back to back with the Regional Working Group on Environment at ministerial level. It was emphasized that the further coordination of

activities for this period of 2016 is of utmost importance. Possible coupling of different activities was suggested to be considered.

Mr. SANDEI (UNEP) suggested that the momentum to continue joint regional efforts in the domain of environment should be used to its full potential in order to keep the current motivation of stakeholders and continue with the activity thread in this regard.

Mr. FALOUTSOS (GWP-Med), responding to the call and suggestion of GIZ ORF Biodiversity representatives for coordination, invited the representatives of organizations and initiatives present in the meeting to coordinate their supported activities with the already approved Regional Programme on Environment under SEE2020.

Ms. KOZHUHAROVA (REC) emphasized the fact that initiative for annual ministerial meeting conveyed by HE Mr. Branimir Gvozdenovic on the occasion of REC 25th anniversary celebration in June 2015 was supported by several SEE representatives. Based on the mandate, long-standing cooperation, available expertise and presence in the region she reaffirmed the commitment of the REC to co-organize and host ministerial level meeting in spring 2016, suggesting identification of key priorities and challenges that might be themes of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.