

Terms of References for the Biodiversity Task Force under the Regional Environmental Working Group

September 2017

1. Rationale

The Regional Cooperation Council established a Regional Working Group of high-level representatives of South-East Europe (SEE) ministries responsible for environment, water resources, land, energy and climate change (hereinafter referred to as “Regional Working Group on Environment” or “RWG Env”) to guide the implementation of the Dimension Environment of the SEE 2020 Strategy. The RWG Env operates under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat with the main responsibility for programming, overseeing and monitoring the activities within the Dimension Environment. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is the Dimension Coordinator in cooperation with Global Water Partnerships–Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development (SWG). In accordance with foreseen tasks of the RWG Env, determined in Point 1 of ToR, the Group “*Propose and/or develop additional mechanisms and tools for effective implementation of activities under the Dimension J – Environment of the SEE 2020 Strategy*”.

Based on the initiative of the regional GIZ-ORF SEE Biodiversity project, the RCC Secretariat presented to SEE governments a proposal to establish a regional Biodiversity Task Force (hereinafter BD TF) at the 4th RWG Env meeting held on 9th of December 2016 in Belgrade. Participants of the 5th RWG Env meeting held on 20th of June 2017 in Belgrade took note of the interest of the International Union for Conservation of Nature-Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO) to act as a Secretariat responsible for convening meetings and facilitating other BD TF-related activities. Following the endorsement of the meeting minutes a regional BD TF has been established with initial term of one year. The RGW Env shall decide on a possible extension before the initial mandate of the BD TF expires.

2. Objectives

The objective of the regional Biodiversity Task Force is to advise the RWG Env on how to mainstream biodiversity concerns in the overall and specific targets of the 2020 SEE Strategy and in particular into the Dimension J – Environment. Furthermore, BD TF will stimulate regional cooperation and enable the SEE economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia,¹ Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) progress towards international biodiversity commitments, including the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity and implementation of EU biodiversity related directives.

¹ Croatia has the observer status.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCP 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

3. Tasks

BD TF performs the following tasks:

- a. Conveys the best available strategic, scientific and technical advice to RWG Env and other cross-sectoral regional working groups on how to integrate biodiversity into development planning and activities, in particular under the Dimension J – Environment of the SEE 2020 Strategy;
- b. Works toward identification of regional cooperation priorities and development of new regional initiatives and projects related to biodiversity;
- c. Identifies trends in biodiversity conservation and advise on emerging issues impacting regional cooperation;
- d. Discusses and considers for endorsement deliverables from regional biodiversity initiatives upon request, including verification of produced documents, guidelines, recommendations, position, papers, etc.;
- e. Agrees on mechanisms and indicators for effective monitoring of key regional biodiversity initiatives and programmes;
- f. Reports to RWG Env on BD TF activities and informs about regional biodiversity issues and priorities;
- g. Liaises with other local, regional and global biodiversity initiatives and partners contributing to the SEE 2020 Strategy.

4. Composition and Mode of Operation

- a. The BD TF is composed of focal points and deputy focal points with specialized expertise in biodiversity and related intervention fields, nominated by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- b. Representatives of the Government of Croatia with expertise in biodiversity and related intervention fields and the GIZ ORF BD have the observer status in the BD TF;
- c. BD TF may agree to invite other regional partners, organizations, stakeholders and external experts to attend the meetings and participate in the process, as appropriate;
- d. BD TF Chair is elected from among participating economies on a rotational basis;
- e. Chair is spokesperson of BD TF and ensures effective liaison and communication with RWG Env. Chair represents BD TF at RWG Env meetings and reports to RWG Env;
- f. BD TF convenes in person, up to two times a year. Additional meetings shall be organized by the BD TF Secretariat in a form of online consultations, as appropriate. Participants of BD TF exercise the best of their ability to participate in meetings and conclude matters on a consensual basis;
- g. BD TF operates on the basis of an annual action plan. The first action plan will be adopted during the first meeting. Subsequent plans will be adopted for each year in the future;
- h. Correspondence to the BD TF is in English as official working language. The use of translation services is assessed on a case-by-case basis;
- i. IUCN ECARO acts as the BD TF Secretariat responsible for convening meetings and providing support to Chair on all matters related to BD TF operations;
- j. The first meeting of the BD TF shall adopt the detailed rules of procedure of the BD Task Force;
- k. Financial support for the BD TF and the Secretariat is provided by GIZ-ORF BD for the first year.

5. Partners and Support

Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South-East Europe – Biodiversity

The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is financing a regional project Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South-East Europe – Biodiversity. The ORF Biodiversity (ORF BD) project runs from 08/2015 to 08/2018 and is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The GIZ ORF BD Project aims to contribute to regional efforts for EU-integration processes and to increase the first knowledge of relevant governmental administration at all levels as well as academia, civil and private sector actors in the region regarding the (i) economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services; (ii) to improve the skills of regional network partners particularly of environment ministries and agencies to report on biodiversity status and protection, and (iii) to initiate measures for transboundary management of ecosystems and the protection of priority species in identified transboundary habitats.

Therefore, the GIZ ORF BD project assures financial assistance and support the BD TF Secretariat and overall BD TF mechanisms in period August 2017 – August 2018.

The signatories of the BD TF, in particular RCC, IUCN ECARO and GIZ ORF BD are committed to assist the BD TF in identifying and securing funding should its mandate be extended beyond the initial period of one year.