

# Terms of References for the Biodiversity Task Force under the Regional Working Group on Environment

November 2018

## 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 Environment Dimension 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 Environment Dimension. 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 the foreseen tasks of the RWG Env, determined in Point 1 of ToR, the RWG Env may “*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 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe (ORF SEE) Biodiversity project (GIZ / ORF BD), the RCC Secretariat presented to SEE governments a proposal to establish a regional Biodiversity Task Force (BD TF) at the 4<sup>th</sup> RWG Env meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 in Belgrade. Participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> RWG Env meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> 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 facilitating BD TF related activities, including preparing and convening BD TF meetings, preparing reports, liaising with the RWG Env and partners, etc. Following the endorsement of the Minutes of the Meeting and the BD TF Terms of Reference by the RWG Env in August 2017, the regional BD TF has been established with the initial term of one year with possibility of prolongation.

The Bonn Ministerial Declaration issued on the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Panel on Environment and Climate Action in the Western Balkans recognises the significant importance of the biodiversity for the region and calls upon the BD TF to provide a mechanism for regular monitoring and half-yearly reporting on the implementation and main developments through the RWG Env.

In order to address the Ministerial Declaration, and after one year of successful operation, the mandate of the regional BD TF needs to be extended by 2020 and aligned with the timeframe of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

## 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 Environment Dimension. Furthermore, the BD TF will stimulate regional cooperation and enable the

SEE economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia,<sup>1</sup> 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 as well as implementation of EU biodiversity related directives.

### 3. Tasks

BD TF performs the following tasks:

- a. Conveys the best available strategic, scientific and technical advice to the RWG Env and other cross-sectoral regional working groups on how to integrate biodiversity into development planning and activities, in particular under the Environment Dimension 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 the 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 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 have the possibility to participate as observers. Representatives of GIZ / ORF BD and the follow up project ORF BDU have the status of non-voting members;
- c. The BD TF may agree to invite other regional partners, organisations, 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. The Chair is spokesperson of the BD TF and ensures effective liaison and communication with the RWG Env. The Chair represents BD TF at RWG Env meetings and reports to the RWG Env;
- f. The BD TF convenes in person regularly two times a year. Additional meetings shall be organised by the BD TF Secretariat in a form of online consultations, as appropriate. Participants of the BD TF exercise the best of their ability to participate in meetings and conclude matters on a consensual basis;
- g. The BD TF operates on the basis of a prepared and adopted action plan. The next action plan will be adopted for the period until 2020 and reviewed yearly in the future;
- h. Official working language of the BD TF is English. The use of translation services is assessed on a case-by-case basis;

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia has the possibility to participate as observer.

\* 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

- i. IUCN ECARO acts as the BD TF Secretariat responsible for convening meetings and providing support to the Chair on all matters related to BD TF operations;
- j. Operation of the BD TF is regulated by the Rules of Procedures adopted at its Constitutional Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The Rules of Procedure may be reviewed upon request of majority of the BD TF participants;
- k. Financial support for the BD TF and its Secretariat is provided by GIZ / ORF BDU until 2020.

## 5. Partners and Support

### **Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU)**

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is financing Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU). The ORF BDU project follows the ORF BD and runs from August 2018 till December 2020. The ORF BDU is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The GIZ ORF BDU project aims to contribute to regional efforts for EU-integration processes and achieving progress towards international obligations for the preservation of biodiversity by strengthening capacities of relevant governmental administration at all levels as well as academia, civil and private sector actors.

Therefore, through the ORF BDU project GIZ continues providing financial assistance and support to the BD TF Secretariat and overall BD TF mechanisms as done by the ORF BD.

All partners (RCC, IUCN ECARO and GIZ ORF BDU) are committed to assist the BD TF in identifying and securing additional resources for its functioning in the future.