

DECLARATION
FOR JOINT REGIONAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN
THE BALKAN AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS WITH SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND IN CLIMATE CHANGE CONDITIONS

We, the ministers and high-level officials responsible for the environment of the Balkan and neighbouring regions, observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, the European Union Delegation–Skopje, scientific institutions and NGOs, having met in Mavrovo on June 28, 2010, adopt the following Declaration:

Considering that biodiversity in the Balkan region is among the richest in Europe, that the Balkan Peninsula is a speciation centre for many genera, and that some ecosystems are still well preserved and represent important resources for local populations and livelihoods;

Aware that traditional, environmentally sustainable land-use and agricultural practices have contributed to the preservation of the biodiversity that exists in parts of the Balkan region;

Convinced that only through applying a holistic and integrated, sectoral approach in transboundary initiatives can we conserve and maintain the biodiversity, the key functions of ecosystems and, therefore, the benefits for people in the Balkan region;

Recognising that conservation and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems are vital for all of society as they not only render services to nature but also create opportunities for sustainable economic development in the Balkan region;

Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of international legal instruments for enforcement in the field of nature protection to which we are Parties or Signatories;

Acknowledging the experience, good practices and achievements gained from bilateral and regional cooperation for conservation of transboundary protected areas (Prespa Park, Ohrid Lake Conservation, Dinaric Arc Initiative, Neretva Delta, West Stara Planina, European Green Belt Initiative, Skodra Lake, Drina River Basin, etc.) from which lessons learnt and successful models shall be transposed and practiced more widely in the Balkan region;

Recalling, building upon and striving to strengthen our political support for the implementation of important initiatives, including the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in October 2007 in Belgrade, conclusions and recommendations from the Changing Climate, Changing Biodiversity in South-East Europe Conference in June 2008 in Belgrade and the strategic focus for biodiversity and ecosystems of the South East European Climate

Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation adopted in November 2008 in Sarajevo;

Wishing to enhance cooperation among competent authorities and stakeholders in the Balkan region as a prerequisite for transboundary maintenance and protection of the unique natural values of the Balkan region and prevention of the causes of its habitat degradation:

We agree that fulfilment of the EU legal requirements in the area of biodiversity and nature conservation is amongst the highest priorities on our political agendas.

We underline the necessity of increasing capacities in terms of knowledge and human and financial resources for addressing conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development through enforcement of national policies and implementation of international legal instruments. We strongly encourage the donor countries and international organisations to further support the conservation of biodiversity in the Balkan region, recognising that efforts by individual countries should be complemented by regional cooperation to help reach global biodiversity targets.

We support the definition of the New 2020 Biodiversity Target, planned for adoption at the CBD/COP10 in Nagoya in October 2010. In this context, the development, drafting and adoption of a Regional Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation and Action Plan would provide a tool to implement the New 2020 Biodiversity Target, complementing the following joint activities in the Balkan region:

- maintaining and protecting the biodiversity of the Balkan region through an appropriate legal framework and strengthened institutional capacities for monitoring and enforcement;
- making efforts to establish a coherent ecological network with protected areas at its core and defined corridors that will allow it to function;
- raising awareness among all stakeholders of the importance of biodiversity; and
- promoting an inter-sectoral approach to biodiversity conservation, especially by carrying out environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments for transboundary projects.

We express our gratitude to the Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, H.E Nexhati Jakupi for initiating and hosting the conference and to the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea and United Nations Development Programme for their support. We agree this Declaration should be further communicated to the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Union during upcoming meetings and through other channels.

Mavrovo, June 28, 2010