



Minutes of the meeting of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative 6th July 2012, Palace of the Parliament, Bucharest, Romania

Participants: CWI Board members - representatives of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine/WWF-DCP; Partners – T. Salathé, Ramsar Secretariat; observers - 9

Programme:

1. **Introduction** (*Ján Kadlečík, CWI coordinator*)
2. **Report** on CWI work during last triennium (*Ján Kadlečík, State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic*)
3. Presentation **Carpathian Integrated Assessment of Vulnerability to Climate Change and Ecosystem Based Adaptation Measures (CARPIVIA)** (*Henk Zingstra, Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands*), discussion
4. Presentation **WWF New Conservation Strategy in the Carpathian Ecoregion** and its relevance to CWI (*Bohdan Prots, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme*), discussion
5. Presentation on **BioREGIO Project** (Integrated management of Biological and Landscape Diversity for Sustainable Regional Development and Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians) and involvement of CWI (*Ján Kadlečík, SNC SR, CWI*), discussion
6. Discussion on **CWI priorities and challenges** for the next triennium.
7. Discussion and comments to the Draft Resolution **XI.5 Regional Initiatives 2013-2015** in the framework of the Ramsar Convention.
8. Closure of the meeting

The meeting was held back to back to the European Ramsar Meeting, prior to the opening ceremony of the 11th Meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP11) inside the COP11 venue, N. Iorga Hall, Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, Romania.

Presentations and discussion

Coordinator of the CWI Ján Kadlečík (SK) welcomed the participants and presented achievements of this Ramsar regional initiative between 2009-2012 (especially endorsement by the Ramsar SC in 2009, recognition by the Carpathian Convention, adoption of Terms of Reference, strategy development, political and financial support, transborder cooperation, annual conferences and workshops, wetland inventory, Ramsar sites designation, training, involvement in projects etc.). Contact details of CWI Board members were updated.

Henk Zingstra (Centre for Development Innovation, NL) presented the vulnerability, impacts and adaptation measures to climate change (with a focus on wetlands) in the Carpathians (CARPIVIA project). Knowledge gaps (CARPATHCC) study should be ready by March 2013. There is no coherent overview of wetlands in the Carpathians. Wetlands in the Carpathians are usually small, but their diversity is high. Peatlands are especially vulnerable to climate change. Wetlands play a key role in mitigating climate change impacts. Project REFRESH suggests an on-line decision support system integrating impacts of climate change and land-use change to enable freshwater managers to design cost-effective restoration programmes for freshwater ecosystems. However, climatological and water resources maps for the whole Carpathian region are not available, especially at intermediary and high-resolution scale. Based on data provided by CWI H. Zingstra made an overview of the most relevant wetland types in the Carpathians, the impact of climate change and potential adaptation and this is attached to this document. The CWI members are kindly asked to review the table to see whether the listed impacts and adaptation measures are complete and communicate and coordinate filling in the questionnaire of the BioREGIO project on Common Integrated Management Measures for Key Natural Assets in the Carpathians with the experts of the CARPIVIA/CARPATHCC project.

Bohdan Prots (State Museum of natural History, National Academy of Sciences, Lviv, UA / WWF-DCP) presented the new WWF conservation strategy in the Carpathian Ecoregion. The vision is that biodiversity in Europe's greatest wetland, forest and wilderness areas is enhanced, healthy ecosystems are resilient providing goods and services. In the Green Heart of Europe people will take action to preserve natural treasures both within and outside of the region. Conservation priorities include close to nature forest management, maintaining of healthy populations of large carnivores, Carpathian protected area clearing house mechanism, wetland conservation and restoration, inventory of wetlands, etc. Possible fields of joint cooperation and efforts include activities in: conservation of old growth forests (floodplain forests), high conservation value forests, carbon sequestration, ecological networks (river systems), wetlands restoration, protected area/Ramsar sites designation and inventory, capacity development, awareness raising, regional management planning, campaigns (e.g. natural streams protection), stakeholder involvement, participative management in protected areas.

Ján Kadlečík made a presentation on BioREGIO Carpathians project and involvement of CWI. The project aims at implementing the main provisions of the Carpathian Convention. Biodiversity Protocol. Relevant work packages include database development, integrated management of Carpathian natural assets and protected areas, continuity and connectivity and pilot projects (incl. Ipel/Ipoly river valley transborder Ramsar Site and Iron Gates RS with Djerdap). Within this project will be developed Carpathian Wetland Handbook, report on methodology for wetland integrated management, and maintenance of CWI web site will be supported. Developed and distributed was also the questionnaire of the Working Group on Wetlands on assessment of wetlands in the Carpathians, strategy and management and monitoring for development of Common Integrated Management Measures (key characteristics and types of wetlands, they range and conservation status in the Carpathians and their values, on management of wetlands and their types, main threats and issues affecting maintenance of wetlands, management requirements, targets and management objectives, management measures needed, measures required for monitoring wetlands and their types) with request to provide examples of good practices from the region. The results of this questionnaire can be used also for the project on climate change. The deadline for sending back the questionnaire is end of August 2012 and all delegates are invited to support this work with their knowledge and data.

Participants discussed priorities and challenges of the CWI for 2013-2015 with decreased financial support for activities in the next triennium. The challenges include further funding, capacity for coordination of the initiative in the future, active participation of members, partnerships and working groups and turn into actions on the ground. On the other hand there are opportunities for the work of the initiative like established structures, running projects, involvement of the Carpathian Convention with joint projects and programming and possibility to use the Ramsar tools and experience of other regional initiatives that can be adapted in national languages. Participants discussed also options for further governance of the CWI and functioning of the Carpathian Wetland Centre (establish it as legal entity?, functioning under the national governmental institution?, international NGO?). Establishment of the Carpathian Wetland Centre is possible in Banská Bystrica (SK) in a facility of the Slovak State Nature Conservancy (SNC) in central Slovakia in next few months, with partial funding from Slovak government. Participants agreed with continuation of CWI coordination under SNC SR in next triennium and they did not support the idea of rotation chairmanship or establishment of permanent "secretariat".

Conclusions and recommendations:

Participants expressed their interest in continuation of the work of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative and in continuing support from the Ramsar core budget in the next triennium for specific activities and the Carpathian Wetland Centre because CWI includes EU and non-EU members and funding opportunities and possibilities for voluntary contributions are limited. They support relevant improvements in the draft resolution XI.5 on regional initiatives 2013-2015 to enable this. The CWI should benefit from the coordination with the Carpathian Convention (CC) and coordinator was instructed to communicate with the CC interim secretariat on possibilities for improved cooperation and financial support and to consult possible minimal operational structures of CWI within the Carpathian Convention.

In the next triennium the CWI should focus on:

- Improved projects implementation, information sharing (BioREGIO, CARPATHCC project, ...)
- Taking steps for practical measures in small projects (small grants for restoration of wetlands, e.g. measures in peatlands, riparian zones – seek for funding opportunities, including private sector)

- Synergies with other initiatives (Protocol on Biodiversity to the Carpathian Convention and its Strategic Action Plan, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, ICPDR, DANUBEPARKS, International Water Assessment Centre...)
- Transborder cooperation on shared wetlands
- CEPA, trainings, campaigns
- Carpathian Wetland Centre development and its further funding.

Involvement of dedicated people, relevant agencies and experts is a key for the successful turn into practical actions in the field. For implementation of running projects activities it is important to get relevant data and information requested, if possible by the end of August 2012.

In closing remarks J. Kadlečík thanked to participants for their active participation, to T. Salathé and the Ramsar Secretariat for their continuing support and arrangements for the meeting and asked all CWI members to support its work, to identify possible funding sources and to help in providing data in questionnaires distributed.

Presentations from the meeting will be available at the CWI web site (www.cwi.sk).