

Memorandum of Cooperation between Ramsar and the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention



Memorandum of Cooperation

between

the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention)

and

**the United Nations Environment Programme Vienna - Interim Secretariat of
the Carpathian Convention (UNEP Vienna ISCC)**

Preamble

Since its inception in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) has provided the single most important intergovernmental forum on wetland conservation issues. According to the Convention's mission statement, the Contracting Parties agree to "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

The Convention is founded on three pillars of:

- promoting wise use of wetlands,
- developing international cooperation, and
- developing a network of Wetland sites of International Importance.

The conservation and wise management of wetlands through the designation of wetlands for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, especially the obligation to maintain the ecological character of designated sites, deserves special recognition. This obligation recognizes the importance of wetlands for the maintenance of healthy and productive inland freshwater and coastal

systems. In the context of water and wetlands, the Convention on Wetlands thus addresses issues which guide its Contracting Parties on ways to achieve sustainable development.

Within the general obligations set out by the treaty, Contracting Parties, meeting as the Conference of the Parties (COP), identify priorities for action through a Strategic Plan. Implementation of this Memorandum of Cooperation shall be through joint actions within the framework of the Strategic Plan, detailed in the attached annex.

The Carpathian region - which spans the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine - is one of Europe's largest mountain ranges, harbouring a unique natural and cultural heritage, providing a haven for wildlife and acting as an ecological link within Europe. The diversity of the natural heritage is one of the biggest assets of the Carpathian region with a view to sustainable development. The Carpathians are a living environment for millions of people in the heart of Europe, yet their biodiversity and natural heritage are subject to a variety of threats and adverse impacts from land abandonment, habitat conversion and fragmentation, deforestation, large scale migration on the one hand, and from industrialisation, pollution and overexploitation of natural resources on the other.

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians enshrines a common vision, integrates developmental and environmental goals, provides objectives for action and constitutes the strategic framework for cooperation to address these challenges in a transnational context. The Carpathian Convention provides the legal framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies, projects and programmes for sustainable development, and a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved.

On 22 May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine, the Ministers of the Environment of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine signed the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The Carpathian Convention entered into force on 4 January 2006. UNEP Vienna ISCC has been requested by the Carpathian Convention countries to service the Carpathian Convention as its interim Secretariat. On behalf of the Parties and Signatories to the Carpathian Convention, the UNEP Vienna ISCC leads the Carpathian Project of the EU INTERREG III B CADSES Programme.

The Carpathian Convention, in its Article 4, paragraph 6, provides for the integration "of the objective of conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity into sectoral policies, such as mountain agriculture, mountain forestry, river basin management, tourism, transport and energy, industry and mining activities". In its Article 6 (c), the Carpathian Convention calls upon Parties to pursue policies aiming at conserving natural watercourses, springs, lakes and groundwater resources as well as preserving and protecting wetlands and wetland ecosystems, and protecting against natural and anthropogenic detrimental effects such as flooding and accidental water pollution.

The Convention on Wetlands and the Carpathian Convention recognize the fundamental role played by wetlands in regulating and providing water, in supporting maintenance of cultural and biological diversity, in ensuring high ecosystem productivity, and in providing services and benefits for people and the planet.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the UNEP Vienna ISCC agree the following:

Article 1. Mechanisms for Programme Cooperation

A -The Secretariats of the Convention on Wetlands and Carpathian Convention will develop a collaborative programme for sustainable wetland and water resource conservation and management in the Carpathian region - the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative (CWI).

B -The Secretariats of the Convention on Wetlands and Carpathian Convention will inform their focal points at regional and national levels of their co-operative activities. For general matters, the focal points for the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and Carpathian Convention are respectively the Secretary General and the Head of UNEP Vienna - UNEP Vienna ISCC, or their assigned delegates.

C -The focal points, or their assigned delegates, may meet from time to time to assess the implementation of this Memorandum, exchange documents and review on-going activities.

Article 2. Joint Activities

A -Common areas for joint activities will be identified in an Annex to this Memorandum of Cooperation and will be reviewed annually or at the request of either party.

B -The UNEP Vienna ISCC and the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands will communicate agreement on common areas with their respective networks, and the UNEP Vienna ISCC will endeavour to mobilise the expertise available on wetlands and water resources within its organisation in support of these activities.

C -The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the UNEP Vienna ISCC will ensure harmonisation of activities at global, regional and country levels.

D -The extent to which the collaborative programme and the joint conservation activities are implemented will be subject to the availability of resources.

Article 3. Obligation, Review and Termination

A -This Memorandum of Cooperation constitutes an expression of a shared objective and vision. However, each party's actions will be considered to be that party's sole and separate action, for all purposes, and neither party shall claim to be acting on behalf of, or as agent for the other party to this Memorandum of Cooperation.

B -This Memorandum of Cooperation has permanent validity, and may be reviewed at the request of either party (usually annually). It might be terminated by six months notice in writing.

Peter Bridgewater
Secretary General
Convention on Wetlands
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Frits Schlingemann
Director, UNEP Regional Office for
Europe
On behalf of
UNEP Vienna - ISCC



Done at: Kyiv, 13 December 2006

Annex

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat and UNEP Vienna ISCC will work together:

1. To improve the information base on wetland ecosystems;
2. To improve exchange of wetland-related information, inter-sectoral cooperation and international collaboration;
3. To ensure the network of globally important Ramsar sites is complete and representative;

4. To integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including wetlands, into river basin management;
5. To identify and develop specific wetland restoration projects in major Carpathian river catchments;
6. To identify potential transboundary wetland ecosystems and possibilities for their joint management;
7. To facilitate cooperation in species and habitat monitoring; and
8. To facilitate communication and information exchange aiming at capacity building and public awareness on the role of wetland ecosystem services in human wellbeing in the Carpathians.

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