



Report from Stakeholder Meeting and project progress in Poland

I. INTRODUCTION

Monika Ochwat is the Project's Coordinator on behalf of the Polish Green Network. In Poland, the project has focused on the main areas relating to the Carpathian Convention, which were identified after having familiarised ourselves with the situation in Poland. The most important factors directing our activities were the following:

- The lack of information on the Carpathian Convention, even in NGO's dealing with protection and development of the Carpathians.
- The non-ratified status of the Carpathian Convention within Poland.
- The lack of co-ordination of activities related to the protection and development of the Carpathians. Lack of integrated strategies and programmes.

Many initiatives for integrating interest groups around joint activities in the Carpathian region have been undertaken in Poland since the 1990s. Some valuable expert analysis and programmes have been created, such as the Carpathian Memorial and Mountain Area Memorial. We (Polish organisations) were involved in the first Carpathian Eco-region Initiative.

In 1997 a conference of delegates of Carpathian Country governments "Carpathians Connect" was held, initiated by the Senate Commission for Environmental Protection. The participants developed a common standpoint, however activities have not been pursued.

In 2004, as a result of the international science conference "Carpathians and Other Euroregions – Psychological Attitudes to Environmental Protection", an informal Green Carpathians Initiative Group was established. The Group is composed of such NGO's as: the Polish Ecological Club, the Environmental Partnership Foundation, the League for Protection of Nature, and the Polish Society for the Development of Mountain Areas.

The group's objective is to bring about the signing of an agreement on the sustainable development and protection of the Carpathians. Initially, the signatories of the Agreement will be the Carpathian Marshal Offices (of the Małopolska province, Podkarpackie province and Silesian province), the Ministry of Environment, the National Fund for Environmental Protection and the Water Management and Provincial Funds for Environmental Protection and Water Management. Other interested organisations and institutions would be encouraged to enter the agreement at a later date, until finally the Green Carpathian Foundation is established.

The effect of the Initiative Group's activity was a meeting of representatives of the Marshal's Offices and the Ministry of Environment in November 2005 in the building of the Ministry of Environment. The output of the meeting was the final preparation of the Agreement, work plan and budget. The main objective of the Agreement pertains to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. One of the meeting's conclusions is to take measures to merge the Agreement office with the office of the Executive Secretary of the Carpathian Convention in Poland.

As for the ratification of the Convention, it was interrupted by the change of Government. Now the process has been resumed and on the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs examined the notification by the Prime Minister of his intention of submitting the Framework Convention on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, prepared in Kiev on 22nd May 2003, without the approval expressed in the act, to the President of the Republic of Poland. (This would result in the Poland's ratification of the Carpathian Convention).

The presented standpoint gave the "Strengthening Public Participation in the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention" project a concrete direction. We focused on the following tasks:

1. Reporting on the Carpathian Convention.
2. Gathering information on the region and its problems through the 'Carpathian region' questionnaire which was sent to NGO's and to the project's participants.
3. Organising Consultations on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention's assumptions. So far two such meetings have taken place, their scope and results shall be described below.

II. CONSULTATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION

MEETING IN KRAKOW, 21st OCTOBER 2005.

The Marshal's Office in Małopolska province was the co-organiser of the meeting; the consultations took place in its building. The meeting had the character of an official launch of the project and an invitation for the Ministry of Environment, Marshal's Office, and UNEP/GRID to cooperate.

Maria KŁOKOCKA, Head of the Committee on Environmental Conventions in the Ministry of Environment, described in her speech the Carpathian Convention in terms of its history, its organisation and the process of ratification. The meeting's participants were concerned about the lack of the Convention ratification in Poland, and the lack of plans for the implementation of its assumptions in the future.

Ms Kłokocka proposed that the participants of this and future meeting should create the Strategy of Green Carpathians Sustainable Development. This strategy has been included in the future plans of the Ministry of Environment for year 2006.

Furthermore, she expressed an opinion, that it is possible for the Secretariat of the Convention to be located outside of Warsaw and that this consideration should not be abandoned.

One of Ms. Kłokocka's conclusions was that at present in Poland there is no distinct act which would protect mountain areas in a special way. Thus, the Convention will take a special place among deeds protecting the environment by pertaining to a precise mountain area.

Summing up Ms. Kłokocka's speech:

- Ratification of the Convention will bring a range of benefits by securing a unique region of exceptional beauty and environmental value, which serves as support for biological diversity, main rivers water-head area and habitat support for a number of endangered species of plants and animals.
- The Convention is a confirmation of feasibility of sub-regional co-operation in the context of the 'Environment for Europe' process, while simultaneously allowing protective activities, which a single country could not cope with because cross-border co-operation ensures higher efficiency in achieving ecological integrity.
- Signing the Convention provides easier access to international assistance in conducting projects in this area, for example by utilising structural funds, or the LIFE fund.

Marek Baranowski, UNEP/GRID, described the structure of the CEO (Carpathian Environment Outlook) report. He also informed on plans for the future and on the possibility of joining in the process of making the report. The participants were interested both in practical utilisation of this compilation and the process of gathering information.

The Marshal's Office representative, Jacek Pijanowski introduced the assumptions of a project conducted by the "Owca PLUS" Office – a programme of economic stimulation and protection of heritage of the Małopolskie Carpathians. A number of solutions included in the project are inscribed in the idea of sustainable development and protection of mountain areas. This project is a good example of a national office's initiative and it's co-operation with NGO's and the local community. Mr. Pijanowski summed up the project and the Marshal's Office plans in the Carpathian region pertaining to the main issues of the region:

- Creation of a tourist infrastructure of vantage points.
- Promotion of natural landscape and tourist values of the Carpathians.
- Promotion of folklore and culture of mountain areas as well as sheep products.
- Popularisation of culture of the mountain areas among children.
- Creation of a system encouraging the locals to graze sheep in places of particular natural landscape value and to breed local breeds of sheep.
- Tourist route sanitation.
- Creation and maintenance of cross-country skiing and ski-touring routes.

Rafał Serafin, Environmental Partnership Foundation, introduced an international outlook on the protection and development of the Carpathian region. One of the topics was the CERI (Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative) organisation and their own plans. Furthermore, Mr Serafin introduced the ideas of Greenways and Partnership groups as an effective way of stimulating local communities and resolving the Carpathian issues. He noticed the necessity for co-operation between provinces as well as NGO's.

DISCUSSION

A major part of the meeting was the discussion organised around the following themes:

- Implementation of the Convention on international, national and local levels.
- Developing a list of priority activities in the region.
- Activity proposals for the secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Polish Government, Province Office, and local self-governments with the intention of having a more effective execution of the Convention's assumptions.
- Proposals on the process of developing an international list of Mountain Area Objects of Cultural Heritage.
- Proposals on common projects, including the region's main needs and future funding possibilities in the Carpathian region.

The main conclusions of the discussion are that there is a lack of co-ordination of activities by public institutions and lack of a strong social partner. The need for signing the Green Carpathians Agreement and a swift ratification of the Convention in Poland was also emphasised. It was stated jointly that the main factor that has to be taken under consideration during the activities is the well-being of the Carpathian local people and improvement of their quality of life. We have to remember, though, that it was the environmental value of the Carpathians that decided its particular status and the creation of the Convention.

CONCLUSIONS

A) Carpathian region priorities:

Developing the region and improving the quality of life; ratifying the Carpathian Convention; creating a strategy for sustainable development of the region and the strategy implementation program; creating an institution coordinating and supervising the implementation of the Green Carpathians sustainable development strategy and the Carpathian Convention; Fundraising for the implementation of the Strategy and the Convention; stimulating the local communities in the course of creating the Convention implementation program (the Carpathian Convention is the first Convention to have been created on social initiative); utilising the surplus labour force of the rural areas; protecting local fruit trees; restitution of fruit-growing and soft fruit; creating a multisectoral partnership (marshal's offices, local self-governments, NGO's, community leaders, media, business and public institutions); creating a coherent program for the development of the three Carpathian provinces; integrating actions of the three provinces with particular emphasis on education of the local communities; creating possibilities for selling local products and promoting the region; cross-border co-operation in the scope of agriculture, forestry and transport; the Carpathian region should be a synonym for healthy food; developing agri-environmental programs with preferential agricultural subsidies for farmers living in the mountain areas; moving the executive secretariat of the Convention to the south of Poland; creating co-operation matrix in order to implement the Convention.

B) Activity recommendations on an international level:

Creation of a section within the Carpathian Convention dealing with regional programs; the Convention should be diversified among small regions in order to preserve their wealth; creation of economic mechanisms for the Convention which, in the course of its implementation, will initiate activities aimed at local communities; precede the implementation of the Convention with education of local communities

and involve them in the implementation of those activities; shaping of the EU funds disbursement policy by influencing the criteria of granting the funds to businesses and public administration (in order to protect the mountain areas from projects conflicting with their sustainable development); embodiment of activity plans related to the Convention and conducting an information campaign in the Carpathian Countries; creation of international tourist trails (e.g. railway trail, petroleum trail, geo-tourist trail, cross-cultural contact route, papal route); unification of tourist trail markings; development of proposals on the protocols to the Convention in each region; initiation of the creation of programs for the Carpathians in the European Union, e.g. in the field of creating an agritourist infrastructure.

C) Activity recommendations on a national level:

Ratification of the Convention; placing of the Carpathians as a priority area in the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013; keeping up the high quality of CEO and the Strategy towards Sustainable Development of the Carpathians; changing the law regulations pertaining to land utilisation; integration of activities related to the Carpathians – Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area as well as the Carpathian Convention; integration of the activity programs with NATURE 2000.

D) Activity recommendations on a regional and local level:

Signing of the Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area; meeting of the Marshals of the Carpathian provinces; initiation of the formation of the Green Carpathians Foundation in order to gain funds and integrate activities pertaining to development and protection of the Carpathian region; creation of a social support framework for activities pertaining to the Carpathian Convention; representation of the Carpathian interest in the Province Development Strategies; passing on information on good practices, e.g. Greenways; initiation of interregional co-operation in order to conserve mountain biodiversity through traditional grazing; organisation of regional conferences for local self-governments in order to identify issues and develop priorities in each province; development of a coherent position of the mountain areas based on regional conferences with recommendations for the implementation of the suggestions contained in them; development of projects and mechanisms of preferential fund disbursement in the mountain areas; creation of a list of ideas, which can be implemented; creation of subject groups, which will develop projects based on the list of ideas; creation of a Carpathians database (information on issues, investments, good practice, conflicts, gathering environmental and cultural data, database of existing expert analyses, evaluations, topographic maps etc.); registration of nature monuments; the Mazurski National Park expansion; promotion of tourism related to natural landscape parks; improvement of infrastructure in rural areas; education of local communities in order to utilise the ecological agriculture potential and agritourism as well as integrate the agriculturists in manufacturing groups; initiation of the development of rural areas, seen as a process of investment and implementation of the projects on a local level.

E) Further stages identified by the group:

Signing of the Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area, organisation of regional conferences in order to involve local communities and develop a list of priorities for the residents of the Carpathians, ratification of the Carpathian Convention.

MEETING IN RZESZÓW, 21st NOVEMBER 2005.

The meeting took place in the Podkarpackie Marshal's Office, who was the Consultation's co-organiser. Besides the principal part, group work was also planned. The meeting was opened by the Podkarpackie Province Marshal, Leszek Deptuła

Leszek Deptuła Podkarpackie Province Marshal in his speech emphasised the role of the Carpathians and their protection in the development of the Province. He expressed his commitment to further activities and the will to join the Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area. He asked the meeting's participants to remember the role of local communities in their work.

Monika Ochwat, ANPED, in her short appearance outlined the project and meeting objectives. She emphasised the significance of the Consultation's results, which will be introduced in a preparatory meeting at the 1st Conference of the Parties and at the Conference of the Parties in 2006 itself. She presented in brief the results of the meeting held in Krakow.

Dariusz Surma, Department of Agriculture and Environment of the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Province introduced the characteristics of the Province and existing programs and strategies. He gave information about the meeting which was held in Warsaw on 16th November 2001, and which was concerned with the Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area.

Katarzyna Stachowicz, Department for Regional Development of the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Province described the projects, funded from the INTERREG program, in which the Podkarpackie province will participate.

Pamela McCarthy, ANPED, gave information on the Carpathian Convention, its structure and the ratification stage. She described the official work schedule, which aims to prepare the implementation of the Convention, and the international outlook of this document.

Prof Zygmunt Wnuk, League for the Protection of Nature, and Rzeszów University, described the functional area of the Green Carpathians, along with its natural and landscape resources. He introduced organisational ideas for this area and the possibilities of solving some issues.

Przemysław Ołdakowski, Bieszczady Environmental Partnership Foundation, presented the benefits of working in the Partnership Groups, learned from the Bieszczady Environmental Partnership Foundation long experience in the region. He described the principles of formation and working of such groups, possibilities of funding their activities and possibilities they give the local communities. He described existing Partnership Groups operating in Poland and their connections to international projects. He emphasised that the strength of the Groups comes from the diversity of partners, focusing on the burning issues of the local community and of their taking the initiative with the issues that concern them.

DISCUSSION

The discussion was organised in seven tentative groups. The participants of the meeting chose a group according to their profession or interests. The working group's topics were analogous to the Convention's articles, that is: integrated approach to natural resources management and spatial planning, protection and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, sustainable and integrated basin water management, sustainable agriculture and forestry, sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as raising awareness, education and social participation.

The participants of the Consultation were very interested in the working groups. They developed a number of conclusions while not restricting themselves to the group's topic. They expressed willingness for further participation in the projects.

CONCLUSIONS

A) Carpathian region priorities:

Sustainable tourism: in order to implement sustainable tourism development strategies, it is necessary to apply appropriate regional policy and provide the legal conditions for its development; merging various types of tourism, e.g. agritourism with cultural tourism (creation of a cultural crafts park, folk music festival); creation of demand for regional products (including handicrafts, regional cuisine); stimulation of the development of tourism according to the specific local and cultural conditions as well as resources (based on local traditions and the skills of people); due to its instability and its seasonal character, tourism should be developed as a part of a general economic developmental strategy (national authorities should support mountain towns by investing in programs warranting the development of local communities. In turn, local self-governments should assist these communities in levelling their chances by educating them in the field of management of quality of the IT services); supporting initiatives originating from the region's residents themselves, which need state and local self-government financial support; creation of Tourist Information Centres, which will promote the region and give reliable information.

Sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy: building of dual carriageways (in the east-west direction, as an alternative to the proposed A4 motorway, which means Pilsen-Krościenko (border crossing), Gorlice-Jasło, and in the north-south direction, the 'Via Baltica' (S19) Kuźnica Białostocka – Rzeszów – Barwinek); building of additional roads to border crossings with high tourist movement on the Polish-Slovakian border and their takeover by a single supervisor; acceleration of the construction of the Podkarpackie Railway; putting existing airports (Arłamów, Krosno, Bezmiechowa) into operation for tourist and business traffic; building of water reservoirs in the basin of the Wisłoka, Jasiołka and Wisłok rivers; utilisation of existing petroleum post-mining headings for the production of thermal energy; increasing of the role of railway transport, conducive to improvement of the state of the environment (relieving road transit); creation of an asbestos waste management funding program.

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as awareness raising, education and social participation: diagnosis of situation pertaining to the cultural heritage; stocktaking of possessed resources; improvement of awareness of residents of the region on value and significance of possessed heritage (for their identity and development); definition of ways of common protection of cultural and environmental monuments; monitoring the state of cultural heritage objects and their effective protection; improvement of perception of cultural heritage value in the region; coordination of cultural heritage promotion in cooperation with other Carpathian countries (creation of common tourist products, exhibitions, expositions and common promotion); coordination of acquiring the funding for heritage by the region's authorities.

Sustainable and integrated basin water management: increase of artificial and natural retention by building of small retention basins and creation of polders; elimination of the flood hazard by e.g. building and modernising of river bunds (about 550km); modernisation of regulated rivers and torrents as well as regulation of river and stream beds in urban areas; reduction of amount of non-purified wastewater discharged into surface and underground waters; building of big, new reservoirs and simultaneous implementation of water provisioning systems and systems of sewage treatment – supplementation of investments pertaining to sewage treatment in areas lacking such treatment.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry: development of ecological agriculture; forming of optimal integrated agriculture; rebuilding of single-species tree stand in favour of species diversity; direction of appropriate rural tourism development; raising ecological awareness; funding of agricultural and forestry activities in this area; preparation (education) of rural community for the initiation of various activities in the field of sustainable agriculture and forestry in order to gain income; financial support for environmental and landscape protection.

B) Activity recommendations on an international level:

Sustainable tourism: faster and easier access to attractive areas for tourists and investors, utilisation of the EU – Ukraine – Romania exclusion zone and the internal borders of the EU.

Sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy: utilisation and expansion of rail infrastructure; expansion of industry, based on existing natural resources; building of dual carriageways with motorway characteristics and expansion of rail roads (it would shorten the crossing time, which would constrain emission of fumes, levels of noise as well as increase security)

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as raising awareness, education and social participation: development of common activities and strategies pertaining to protection and promotion of cultural heritage in the Carpathian Countries; facilitation of borderland cooperation as regards culture (at the border crossings, in the work of specialists); exposing common cultural roots and intertwining the cultures.

Sustainable and integrated basin water management: regulation of rules pertaining to management of borderland waters (monitoring, early flood warnings); creation of programs for funding activities pertaining to maintenance and conservation of existing retentions and watercourses.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry: merging of sustainable agriculture and forestry development programs as regards sustainable rural area development; monitoring of development of agriculture and forestry according to unified systems; creating a pressure group for the development and promotion of agriculture.

Integrated approach to natural resources management and spatial planning: introduction of regulations pertaining to urban areas and dual carriageways with motorway characteristics taking migrations of wildlife into account; introduction of obligatory building of safe passages and safeguards against the intrusion of wildlife existing near road and other places of infrastructure construction.

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as awareness raising, education and social participation: running a website containing current information on the Carpathian region with an Internet forum; systematic meetings (e.g. every half a year) with residents, institutions and NGO's of the Carpathian region; effective communication and information relay.

C) Activity recommendations on a national level:

Sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy: utilisation of advantageous circumstances and sources of renewable energy; expansion, modernisation and building of new domestic roads; modernisation and electrification of rail roads.

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as awareness raising, education and social participation: unified promotion of Polish cultural heritage; discovery and promotion of cultural objects and events, also in rural areas, not only in big cities; support of activities pertaining to acquiring funds for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage; support promotion of heritage e.g. by funding participation in subject fairs; training a standing staff of experts working in the Ministry of Culture, which will support NGO's and local self-governments.

Sustainable and integrated basin water management: adjusting water-sewage management system; adjusting the Water Law act in order to properly manage water resources; building water reservoirs in the upper basin of the rivers Wisłok, Jasiołka and Wisłoka, reducing the flood tide in the further course of rivers (creation of a drinking water supply, regulation of high tides, creation of conditions for production of electric energy and development of tourism); creation of programs on the funding of tasks pertaining to maintenance and conservation of existing retentions and watercourses.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry: merging of sustainable agriculture and forestry development programs as regards sustainable rural area development.

Integrated approach to natural resources management and spatial planning: creation of a funding system for the development of plans for spatial economy; expansion of roads in order to facilitate access for tourists and investors.

D) Activity recommendations on a regional and local level:

Sustainable tourism: acceptance of additional roads to border crossings of the 'small border traffic' by the Province board, which will adjust its legal status, accelerate repairs and raise standards; building of local roads will facilitate development of all forms of tourism, e.g. walking tourism, driving tourism, and particularly, religious and pilgrimage tours, trade tourism, culture tourism, landscape tourism, and business tourism; intensification of promotion of cultural heritage; creation of tourist brands and products; better coordination of cooperation between various levels of self-governments in the region in the scope of protection and promotion of culture.

Sustainable and integrated basin water management: supporting activities on tasks included in Podkarpackie province development strategy (2.4.4 – protection of waters and supporting investment priorities); developing of non built-up areas (reservoirs, built for the retention of flood waters) spatial management in local plans.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry: definition of target directions of development in this area; activities pertaining to the revitalisation and protection of landscape (with the exclusion of scattered housing patterns); adjusting of the water-sewage management system in the upper basin of the San and Wisłok rivers.

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as raising awareness, education and social participation: renewal and activities aimed at exposing and promoting cultural heritage in all of its aspects; promotion of trade, support for the development of local products and processes improving its quality, competitiveness and access to markets; support for the process of education and popularisation of the idea of sustainable tourism as well as commercialisation of services and tourist education offers; development of abilities of local communities pertaining to usage of new data communication technologies and modern techniques for tourist information management; diagnosis of situation of cultural heritage in the region (registration of possessed cultural heritage: monuments, traditions, movable property), development of strategy for monitoring, protection and promotion of objects of cultural heritage; raising awareness of the residents in the region on the value and significance of possessed heritage (for identity and development of the region); education of the residents (the youth in particular) as regards the protection of cultural heritage; supporting NGO's protecting local culture.

Sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy: expansion, modernisation and building of new local roads; maintenance of waste management by building waste utilisation plants; activating existing local airports (Krosno); creation of reliable system of communication connecting the proposed A4 motorway with the Carpathian region (composition of a convenient number of exits); undertaking common initiatives for the development of sustainable transport and

infrastructure as well as industry and energy, which will facilitate implementation of assumptions and executing respective investments.

Integrated approach to natural resources management and spatial planning: in order to preserve spatial order and protect local traditional and characteristic architecture it is necessary to work out principles in spatial planning as regards the development of buildings; composition of principles restricting creation of scattered housing patterns; as regards acquiring energy from renewable sources, give priority to geothermal, water and solar energies (wind energy has to be treated with particular caution because of landscape protection); enacting of the Spatial Economy Plans for the purpose of gathering investors and accelerating implementation of various investments; activating financial programs for execution of local spatial economy plans.

E) Further stages identified by the group:

Sustainable transport and infrastructure as well as industry and energy: building common driveways to border crossings through the regions in neighbouring countries; adjusting water-sewage management systems on borderland rivers; creating international tourist routes connecting various forms of tourism, e.g. religious, petroleum industry, historical places, i.e. the Carpathian Operation During the First World War; developing common tourist infrastructure; common projects on solving issues on areas of self-governments cooperating on the basis of partnership.

Cultural heritage and folk knowledge as well as awareness raising, education and social participation: common promotion of the Carpathian countries, e.g. in Brussels as regards cultural heritage; stocktaking of objects of culture; definition and promotion of culture routes; innovative forms of managing culture and monuments (composition of these forms and methods); promotion of good practices in the region, e.g. the Sanok cultural heritage park.

Sustainable and integrated basin water management: building and modernisation of bunding of rivers; building of the big reservoirs – 'Rudawka Rymanowska' on the river Wisłok, 'Kąty – Myscowa' on the river Wisłoka, 'Ropczyce' on Wielkopolska and 'Dukla' on the river Jasiołka.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry: package including educational activity in the scope of sustainable development of ecological agriculture and non-productive functionality of forests; package including a widely understood promotion of the mountain areas; package including promotion and marketing of ecological, traditional and regional products.

Integrated approach to natural resources management and spatial planning: improvement of systems of environmental and landscape protection; building of a system of retentions.

Suggestions for the Carpathian Convention Conference of the Parties Program, which will be introduced at the meeting in Bolzano in December 2005: invite the representatives of the local self-governments of the Carpathians; unify the system of grants for acquiring energy from renewable sources to the level of EU funds.

MEETING IN BIELSKO - BIAŁA 27TH JANUARY 2006.

Marian Jarosz, member of the government of the Silesian Province, characterised the province. He also described the role of the Carpathian Mountains in the Development Strategy of the Province. Referring to the colours used in the logo of the province, Mr Jarosz highlighted the natural and environmental values of the Carpathian region. He expressed his hope that the participants in the meeting would get involved in the initiatives integrating the protection of the Carpathian Mountains.

Monika Ochwat, ANPED, outlined the objectives of the project and of the meeting. She presented the position of the Ministry of Environment, which was sent by Maria Kłokocka, Head of the Committee on Environmental Conventions. She also drew the participants' attention to the role of the outcomes of the Consultation which will be presented at the 1st Conference of the Parties in 2006.

Pamela McCarthy, ANPED, described in her presentation the structure of the Carpathian Convention. She informed the participants in the meeting that the Convention had come into force on the 4th January 2006. She also characterised the official work plan, whose main objective is to prepare the realisation of the Convention and its international perspective.

Piotr Mikołajczyk from UNEP/GRID described the KEO (Carpathian Environment Outlook) report and the present stage of work. He informed the participants that Prof. Zbigniew Witkowski, the former Chief Nature Conservation Officer, was one of the authors of the report. Mr Mikołajczyk showed in his presentation the connections between the report and the Carpathian Convention.

Iwona Kukowka from the Workshop for All Beings, apart from the description of the organisation's functions presented the project "Monitoring Damaging Investments of Mass Tourism in the Carpathian Mountains. Natural Interventions," which is now being implemented by the organisation. The project will include the threats and chances of both mass and ecological tourism, and review of investments from an ecological, socio-economical and legal perspective. One of the crucial elements will be a report on the development of "good co-operation rules" between persons and organisations dealing with nature protection and tourism management.

DISCUSSION AND COURSE OF ACTIONS

The participants in the meeting brought up two issues in the discussion. The first one was the way of working of non-governmental organisations. Is using radical methods the only way for ecologists and activists to effectively fight for nature? Or perhaps it is that these organisations should adopt a more model of behaviour more to negotiation and compromise, which is, at the same time, directed at multi-faceted benefits. The other issue was "The Law of Snow"¹ and the threats resulting from considering the problems of the mountain areas narrowly, as in the case of the submitted projects of bills.

In the next stage of the consultation the participants split into two workgroups, which discussed the following issues: protection and sustainable use of biodiversity

¹ According to the Bill, if the owner of a ski lift does not reach an agreement with the owner of the land on which there is a ski run, the case shall be examined by the court. Under the "Law of Snow" the court can make the landowner allow the ski lift in the wintertime, in return for compensation.

and landscape diversity, sustainable agriculture and forestry, cultural heritage, folklore, as well as raising awareness, education and society's participation.

CONCLUSIONS

A) Priorities of the Carpathian region:

Cultural heritage and folklore, raising awareness, education and society's participation.

- Undertake research on the level of society's awareness of national heritage, analyse and document the phenomena which are common for different communities from the Carpathian region (Vlachs, migration of Čadca highlanders, etc.)

Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape diversity

- Prepare plans for the protection of protected areas (reserves, landscape parks, Natura 2000 sites),
- Develop programmes for the protection of habitats and species,
- Implement those programmes with the help of ecological organisations,
- Develop a system of protected areas,
- Revitalize technically developed streams and preventing their further development,
- Reintroduce species which have died out,
- Reduce tourist investments which may damage the environmental condition of the protected and naturally valuable areas,
- Reduce the development of residential and summer-resort buildings on naturally active areas (forest clearings, river valleys, buffer areas along forest complexes, etc.),
- Undertake forest stand reconstruction aimed at the conformity with the habitat and make the forest economy more ecological (leaving dead trees in percentage terms depending on the species composition),
- Develop a regional afforestation programme in consultation with environmental services and ecological organizations.

B) Recommendations for actions on the international level:

Cultural heritage and folklore, raising awareness, education and society's participation:

- Produce guidebooks containing the results of the research on cultural heritage,
- Create a database and using good practices of associations, institutions, organizing cultural meetings for the whole region,
- Raise funds for the implementation of programmes and projects (appoint a competent institutions for this purpose),
- Start educational processes enabling widespread cooperation in educating citizens;

Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape diversity:

- Develop a common strategy concerning the species protection and common plans for the protection of cross-boarder areas,
- Create an efficient system of information exchange about biodiversity and its threats,
- Develop an international strategy of catchment economy

C) Recommendations for actions on the national level:

Cultural heritage and folklore, raising awareness, education and society's participation:

- Undertake actions supporting the preservation of national identity by promoting regional products
- Develop a profitable financial system of culture (concessions and subsidies) also on the regional level

Sustainable agriculture and forestry:

- Promote sustainable and ecological agriculture,
- Promote traditional products,
- Support the development of sheep breeding,
- Undertake broad education on sustainable development

Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape diversity:

- Create an Poland-wide database about species, habitats and naturally valuable areas,
- Identify ecological corridors and ensure their protection and lack of obstructions,
- Monitor species and habitats which are rare or which are dying out,
- Create landscape programmes for the protection of the most endangered animal and plant species,
- Preserve and restore the proper biological condition of watercourses from from springs to the mouth,
- Work out standards for spatial planning in order to gain effective tools for the protection of biodiversity on all its levels,
- Introduce changes to the regulations in force so that they can enable a more effective realisation of the Carpathian Convention,
- Implementing good practices from other countries of the European Union.

D) Recommendations for actions on the regional and local level:

Cultural heritage and folklore, raising awareness, education and society's participation:

- Undertake research on the awareness of the inhabitants' cultural heritage (handicraft, architecture, nomenclature, ceremonies, tradition, local dialects),
- Create an inventory of cultural resources,
- Drawing up a regional education programme,
- Promoting culture, document competitions and strengthen cultural heritage.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry:

- Educate farmers in the field of ecological farming,
- Create an economical consultancy for farmers,
- Preserve culinary traditions, and restore sheep breeding,
- Supporting farm-food processing, by creating a market of ecological products, regional and traditional,
- Rebuild forest infrastructure,
- Improve the forest economy,
- Restoring craftsmanship on the basis of wood products

Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape diversity:

- Create databases about plant and animal species, as well as habitats, and education aimed at the popularisation of local natural values and the development of pro-ecological attitudes,
- Identify ecological corridors on the regional level and include them in the local plans for the development of provinces and communes,
- Develop a regional strategy for the realisation of the Carpathian Convention on the provincial level,
- Require to include the assumptions of the Carpathian Convention in strategies, plans and provincial programmes,
- Define regional priorities of the species and habitats protection,
- Monitoring species and habitats which are rare or which are dying out, including the species from regional red lists

E) Following stages identified by the group:**Cultural heritage and folklore, raising consciousness, education and society's participation:**

- Create a Carpathian Culture Centre on the basis of existing monuments,
- Organising common conferences and seminars supporting cultural heritage

Sustainable agriculture and forestry:

- Educate farmers in the field of ecological farming,
- Produce regional and traditional products,
- Educate rural population on environmental protection,
- Promote nature resources of the region,
- Return to the cultivation of regional plant species and breeding of regional animals, create economical conditions for the preservation of farms (system of subsidies, education, promoting products),
- Undertake education in the field of the positive impact of farming on natural environment

Protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape diversity:

- Create a programme for the protection of wet areas (landslide lakes, peat bogs, loam, heads-streams),

- Undertake a comprehensive programme for the preservation and restoration of ecological corridors,
- Undertake a comprehensive programme for the protection of river valleys, programme for the protection of non-forest ecosystems, programme for examining groups of plants and animals unrecognized in the Carpathian Mountains,
- Carry out educational projects for different professional and age groups, programmes for the protection and re-introduction of plant and animal species.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER ACTIVITY PLANS

At this stage of the 'Strengthening Public Participation in the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention' project, we have managed to build a co-operation and further activity assistance matrix.

Recently, the League for the Protection of Nature received funds from the Phare Co-operation Fund for the project 'Building A Coalition for Sustainable Development of the Carpathians', which will commence in February 2006 and finish in August 2006. Monika Ochwat will be the project's co-ordinator. This project will be coupled with existing activities within the 'Strengthening Public Participation in the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention' project and with the Carpathian Provinces Agreement on Co-operation towards Sustainable Development and Promotion of the Green Carpathians Area, as well as the Carpathian Convention.

In April 2006 the League for the Protection of Nature will submit another motion to the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management for education and awareness raising related to the cultural heritage.