

Biodiversity Stakeholders' Roundtable

Intervention of Serbian NGO representative

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguish delegates,

Non-governmental organizations in Serbia which are active in protection, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity have gathered to exchange experiences, express opinions and plan future activities. In this intervention, I will present a part of their statement.

It is noticeable that there are numerous examples of good practices, connecting all stakeholders in biodiversity protection in Serbia:

- Some NGOs are managers of protected areas;
- Valuable progress has been made in the field of organic farming;
- Development of the Emerald Network of the Bern Convention has enhanced processes in Serbia and South-East European region;
- Environmental NGOs are initiators and developers of biodiversity protection in many projects, and
- Civil society organizations are active in awareness rising and capacity building.

However, the NGOs have high expectations to enactment and implementation of the new Law on Nature Protection of Republic of Serbia, and hope that public participation will be strengthened in the framework of this Law.

But, we stress the need that the Government of the Republic of Serbia should be involved in the further development of the environmental legal framework and enable the implementation of European Nature protection standards.

We want to express great concern about forest fires, which have caused big damage to biodiversity in the region. Due to that, we welcome and support the establishment of Sub-regional Climate Change related Centre in Belgrade and the development of a Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the South-East European Mountain Region.

Supported by adequate financial mechanisms those initiatives could bring us closer to Pan European commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity and prevent future damages to nature and humans.

Realizing the value of South-East European biodiversity, we confirm our strong commitment to cooperation, especially on regional and institutional level and our commitment to take more active part in biodiversity related decision-making processes.

At the same time, we expect that the process of the association of the South-East European countries to European Union will improve cooperation. And that the Governments of South-East European countries won't repeat mistakes done in biodiversity conservation in EU10.

Finally, we hope that Belgrade conference and initiatives taken here will lead us closer to expected results in biodiversity protection.