

STATEMENT
of the NGO meeting convened by CEEWEB,
organized by Green Balkans in preparation for the
Ministerial Meeting “Environment for Europe”
in Kyiv, Ukraine, 21-23 May, 2003

In the course of the Regional Preparatory NGO Conference on Biodiversity held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria on April 10-11, 2003, 45 delegates from the countries as follows: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine endorsed the following statements addressed to the governments of the Central and Eastern European countries:

Considering the vital contribution of NGOs to the protection of biological diversity;

Acknowledging the legislation reform completed in most of the CEE countries, but requiring further institutional reforms for enhancing the capacity of governments to fulfill their responsibilities;

Recognizing the role of NGOs to engage in critical analysis of governmental activities with regard to complying with their commitments in the field of biodiversity protection and to applying pressure on the Convention Secretariats to evaluate national reports;

Stating that the Secretariats should employ more stringent criterion in the evaluation of national reports and provide public access to these evaluations;

Taking note of the lack of intersectoral integration at the highest state level mandated by Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

Requesting governments to give biological diversity and its value a higher priority at all levels of their activities;

Our recommendations concerning biodiversity related international agreements:

1. We urge all countries to become party and ratify all relevant environmental conventions and agreements to achieve a truly Pan-European coverage.
2. With the act of ratification and for all already ratified conventions the government should have an action plan together with financial resources identified.
3. Environmental and other relevant ministries and authorities have to be supported by governments and international institutions in order to fulfill relevant obligations in the spirit of the Environment for Europe process.

4. It is imperative to involve representatives of civil society in the formulation and development of plan for implementation from the inception phase.
5. The plan of implementation should consider and build upon already ratified agreements in order to enhance synergy and to avoid overlaps.
6. National steering committees, representing governmental and non-governmental sectors, should be established in order to ensure the implementation of international agreements.
7. The ministries should ensure that NGOs are included in government delegations to Conferences of the Parties.
8. It is necessary to establish and to facilitate regular consultation, exchange of information and closer cooperation between different national focal points.

Our recommendations concerning the preparation and implementation of National Development Plans:

1. It is imperative to involve representatives of civil society in the formulation and development of National and Regional Development Plans from the inception phase, and to ensure a mechanism, which enables all members of civil society to effectively interact with the agencies developing such plans.
2. National Development Plans should be subjected to Strategic Environmental Assessment prior to approval.
3. NATURA 2000 sites and landscapes considered by PEBLDS should be excluded from any harmful development, especially in those pre-accession countries, where these sites are not yet legally protected.
4. Planning and development of the PEEN has to be recognized as an important integrative tool with respect to different biodiversity issues, and for the incorporation of biodiversity considerations into economics and land use planning.
5. Sustainable use of biodiversity within the carrying capacity of ecosystems should be an integral part of all development strategies, considering the plans of implementation and guidelines of Conventions.
6. National Development Plans should be subjected and fully contribute to the implementation of National Sustainable Development Plans/Strategies.
7. A set of indicators should be developed to form the basis of monitoring the effects of the National Development Plans on biodiversity, and an action plan should be

in place together with an emergency fund to mitigate any negative impact of implementation on environment.

8. Compile and analyze existing best practices and lessons learnt from other plans and projects to draw recommendations for the elaboration and realization of National Development Plans.