

Joint Statement
by the Ministers responsible for environment of the Republic of Albania,
Bosnia and Herzegovina, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia
on combating climate change in South East Europe

Sarajevo, November 14, 2008

The Ministers responsible for environment of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia – observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and NGOs – met in Sarajevo to discuss and agree upon the voluntary participation in **South East European Climate Change Framework Action Plan For Adaptation** under the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

The Ministers acknowledged that:

- Addressing climate change problems that threaten the future well being of the citizens of the region is a matter of urgency. Climate change is projected to worsen conditions in increased frequencies, magnitudes and damages caused by floods, droughts, forest fires, heat waves and other climate related hazards, reductions in crop yields, decreased water availability, reduced hydropower potential, increased number of people exposed to vector and water-borne diseases, etc. Adaptation could significantly reduce these effects.
- There are numerous climate change related international agreements and initiatives at global level that have to be implemented in the South East European (SEE) region, e.g. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol, Millennium Development Goals, Bali Action Plan, and many others.
- Environmental cooperation between the SEE countries under the framework of the RCC will give higher priority of combating climate change at national and regional agendas.
- The comprehensive process within the framework of the RCC offers a unique opportunity to integrate environmental and human health concerns into the economic sectors, thus contributing to the implementation of the concept of sustainable development.
- The work done by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) within the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, followed by the Belgrade Initiative launched in 2007 on enhancing regional cooperation of interested South East European countries in the field of climate change, provide a good strategic framework for future work.

The Ministers supported the **South East European Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation** (SEE/CCFAP-A) document as presented at this meeting. The SEE/CCFAP-A sets out a framework for achieving key adaptation priorities that address the short term needs as well as long term objectives of the region in a cost effective manner. The Ministers welcome SEE/CCFAP-A greater focus on capacity building and its linkage with UNFCCC wider climate change agenda.

The **overall coordination** of the SEE/CCFAP-A implementation will be done by an ad-hoc working group comprising representatives and nominated experts from the interested SEE countries. The REC and SEE Sub-regional Virtual Climate Change Centre (SEE/VCCC), hosted by the Republic Hydrometeorological Service of the Republic of Serbia, will provide the secretariat and technical support to this group. The SEE/VCCC expressed interest to perform variety of other tasks related to maintaining the web site, fundraising, draft correspondence, reports preparation, news releases, brochures, fact sheets, expert opinions etc.

The coordination of the specific work under Chapter 4 “Continuous update of SEE climate change perspective” will be done by SEE/VCCC. The projects and activities under Chapter 5 “Development and implementation of programmes for adaptation” will be directed by different interested countries. During the SEE/CCFAP-A preparatory process countries expressed preliminary views on the leadership. The Republic of Albania expressed intention to coordinate sub-regional projects and activities in the field of adaptation in hydropower sector which has a mitigation potential as well. Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed intention to coordinate sub-regional projects and activities in the field of adaptation in energy and agriculture sector. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia expressed intention for coordination of sub-regional projects and activities in the field of adaptation in water management and agriculture sectors. Montenegro expressed intention to coordinate sub-regional projects and activities in the field of adaptation in tourism and coastal zones. The Republic of Serbia expressed intention to coordinate the sub-regional projects and the activities in the field of adaptation in water management, forestry, agriculture, public health, land use, biodiversity and buildings. The REC in cooperation with the SEE/VCCC expressed interest to coordinate projects and activities under SEE/CCFAP-A Chapter 6 “Cross-cutting issues”.

Montenegro is also interested to support the establishment of the Balkan Regional Climate Change Forum (BRCCF) for political and policy dialogue to facilitate the coordination of the activities on adaptation and mitigation in the region. This Forum should be used by the UNFCCC focal points and the informal Open Balkan Group to get endorsement from the Ministers for joint regional actions in the global climate change process as well as for better understanding of policies they need to develop and implement with involvement of other ministries (energy, economy, agriculture, etc.).

The Ministers stressed that the SEE/CCFAP-A will be a living document, responding to the changing needs and circumstances in the region and agree to work together to develop it further and implement it. The scope and the magnitude of the SEE/CCFAP-A will further develop in the light of the EU accession process.

The process of the implementation of the SEE/CCFAP-A including the work on its future revisions should be open to all countries including countries beyond SEE, international organisations, institutions and NGOs, which can make a contribution to its success. Ministers invited SEE and neighbouring countries to discuss modalities for cooperation.

The Ministers encouraged establishment of Working Group "Climate Change" under the Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA).

The Ministers invited the donor countries and the European Community to consider urgent support for the implementation of SEE/CCFAP-A.

In order to strengthen the negotiating position of the SEE countries at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC the Ministers agreed to:

- Consider using Open Balkan Group to unify efforts of SEE countries in order to facilitate their participation in negotiations under the umbrella of UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. The Ministers invite Bosnia and Herzegovina to act as the first coordinator of the Open Balkan Group.
- Invite the Republic of Serbia to present this Statement, SEE/CCFAP-A, Executive Summary and Action Plan to the COP-14 of the UNFCCC in Poznan in December 2008.

The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway for their support in the development of the SEE/CCFAP-A.

The Ministers congratulated the host, Regional Cooperation Council and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe for bringing forward the framework programme “Roadmap for environmental cooperation in South Eastern Europe” and in particular this first Ministerial thematic conference on combating climate change.

The Ministers congratulated SEE governmental officials and nominated experts, the SEE Sub-Regional Virtual Climate Change Centre and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe for excellent work in developing the SEE/CCFAP-A.

Ministers expressed gratitude to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina for hosting this meeting and creating a constructive atmosphere for fruitful discussions.