



Terms of References for the Biodiversity Task Force under the Regional Working Group on Environment

June 2019

1. Rationale

The Regional Cooperation Council established a Regional Working Group of high-level representatives of South East Europe (SEE) ministries responsible for environment, water resources, land, energy and climate change (hereinafter referred to as “Regional Working Group on Environment” or “RWG Env”) to guide the implementation of the Environment Dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy. The RWG Env operates under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat with the main responsibility for programming, overseeing and monitoring the activities within the Environment Dimension. In accordance with the foreseen tasks of the RWG Env, determined in Point 1 of ToR, the RWG Env may “*propose and/or develop additional mechanisms and tools for effective implementation of activities under the Dimension J – Environment of the SEE 2020 Strategy*”.

Based on the initiative of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe (ORF SEE) Biodiversity project (GIZ / ORF BD), the RCC Secretariat presented to SEE economies a proposal to establish a regional Biodiversity Task Force (BD TF) at the 4th RWG Env meeting held on 9th of December 2016 in Belgrade. Participants of the 5th RWG Env meeting held on 20th of June 2017 in Belgrade took note of the interest of the International Union for Conservation of Nature - Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO) to act as a Secretariat responsible for facilitating BD TF related activities, including preparing and convening BD TF meetings, preparing reports, liaising with the RWG Env and partners, etc. Following the endorsement of the Minutes of the Meeting and the BD TF Terms of Reference by the RWG Env in August 2017, the regional BD TF has been established with the initial term of one year with possibility of prolongation.

The Bonn Ministerial Declaration issued on the occasion of the 2nd High Level Panel on Environment and Climate Action in the Western Balkans recognised the significant importance of the biodiversity for the region and called upon the BD TF to provide a mechanism for regular monitoring and half-yearly reporting on the implementation and main developments through the RWG Env.

2. Objectives

The objective of the regional Biodiversity Task Force is to advise the RWG Env on how to mainstream biodiversity concerns in the overall and specific targets of the 2020 SEE Strategy and in particular into the Environment Dimension. Furthermore, the BD TF will stimulate regional cooperation and enable the SEE economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and The Republic of North Macedonia) progress towards international biodiversity commitments, including the Strategic Plan

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCP 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

for Biodiversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as implementation of EU biodiversity related directives.

3. Mandate

BD TF mandate was extended until the end of 2020 at the occasion of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Action in the Western Balkans.

4. Tasks

BD TF performs the following tasks:

- a. Conveys the best available strategic, scientific and technical advice to the RWG Env and other cross-sectoral regional working groups on how to integrate biodiversity into development planning and activities, in particular under the Environment Dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy;
- b. Works toward identification of regional cooperation priorities and development of new regional initiatives and projects related to biodiversity;
- c. Identifies trends in biodiversity conservation and advise on emerging issues impacting regional cooperation;
- d. Discusses and considers for endorsement deliverables from regional biodiversity initiatives upon request, including verification of produced documents, guidelines, recommendations, position, papers, etc.;
- e. Agrees on mechanisms and indicators for effective monitoring of key regional biodiversity initiatives and programmes;
- f. Reports to the RWG Env on BD TF activities and informs about regional biodiversity issues and priorities;
- g. Liaises with other local, regional and global biodiversity initiatives and partners contributing to the SEE 2020 Strategy.

5. Composition and Mode of Operation

- a. The BD TF is composed of focal points and deputy focal points with expertise in biodiversity and related intervention fields, nominated by the economies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and The Republic of North Macedonia;
- b. Agencies, organizations, bodies and individuals qualified in fields relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity can apply to non-voting membership to BD TF;
- c. Representatives of GIZ / ORF BD follow up project GIZ/ORF BDU are considered associate members;
- d. The BD TF may agree to invite other agencies, organizations, bodies and individuals to attend meetings and participate in the process, as appropriate;
- e. BD TF Chair is elected from among participating economies on a rotational basis;
- f. The Chair is the spokesperson of the BD TF and ensures effective liaison and communication with the RWG Env in conjunction with the BD TF Secretariat. The Chair represents BD TF at RWG Env meetings and shall report the implementation of the BD TF work plan and accomplishments to the RWG Env;
- g. The BD TF convenes in person regularly two times a year. Additional meetings shall be organized by the BD TF Secretariat, as appropriate, following the Biodiversity Task Force Rules of Procedure. Participants of the BD TF shall exercise the best of their ability to participate in meetings and conclude matters on a consensual basis;

- h. The BD TF shall operate on the basis of a commonly agreed action plan, subject to availability of resources. The work plan shall be adopted for the period of the mandate. The BD TF Secretariat shall report the progress of the work plan during regular meetings of the BD TF;
- i. Official working language of the BD TF is English. The use of translation services will be assessed on a case-by-case basis;
- j. Operation of the BD TF is regulated by the Rules of Procedures. The Rules of Procedure may be reviewed upon request of the majority of the BD TF voting members;

6. Secretariat

IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO) acts as the BD TF Secretariat. Its functions shall be:

- a. To arrange for and service meetings of the BD TF;
- b. To coordinate with other relevant international bodies and, in particular to enter into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions;
- c. To provide support to the Chair on all matters related to BD TF operations; and
- d. To perform the functions assigned to the BD TF.

7. Partners and Support

- a. The BD TF is funded by the Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU). The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is financing Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU). The ORF BDU project follows the ORF BD and runs from August 2018 until December 2020. The ORF BDU is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The GIZ ORF BDU project aims to contribute to regional efforts for EU-integration processes and achieving progress towards international obligations for the preservation of biodiversity by strengthening capacities of relevant governmental administration at all levels as well as academia, civil and private sector actors.

Therefore, through the ORF BDU project GIZ continues providing financial assistance and support to the BD TF Secretariat and overall BD TF mechanisms as done by the ORF BD.

- b. The BD TF in conjunction with the RCC, IUCN ECARO and GIZ ORF BDU shall develop a BD TF sustainability plan.