

Sarajevo, 12th July 2019

**Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the
Regional Working Group on Environment
(Tirana, 02nd July 2019)**

The 9th meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment was convened by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania, in Tirana on 2nd July 2019.

The meeting convened representatives of all WB economies (with the exception of Montenegro), and many other relevant partner organizations and projects active in the area of environment in the WB region: Austrian Development Agency, Austrian Environment Agency, Energy Community, Environmental Partnership Program for Accession, Delegation of the European Union to Albania, Energy Community Secretariat, GIZ ORF, Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean, IUCN, SPIDER WEB project, UN Environment, etc.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Gazmend Turdiu, RCC Deputy Secretary General and Ms. Ornela Çuçi Deputy Minister of Tourism and Environment.

Mr. Turdiu welcomed the participants on behalf of RCC and thanked Deputy Minister Çuçi and her team for cooperation and co-hosting the meeting. He also thanked the RWG Env participants for their engagement which lead to concrete results achieved in the previous four years. Mr. Turdiu expressed satisfaction with the progress in the implementation of regional projects and initiatives emphasizing the results achieved in the last six months.

Ms. Çuçi welcomed the participants and stressed that we in the region have already enough strategies, but we need more concrete cooperation, more labs, and to be able to generate and exchange relevant data in the area of environment.

During the meeting the participants presented the main developments in the implementation of relevant regional projects, while representatives of the WB economies reflected on the progress in the alignment process and achievements in the area of environmental policy development in each WB economy. The participants of the meeting also discussed the next Co-Chair of the RWG Env and possible dates for the organization of the next Ministerial Meeting, to be held in autumn under Albanian co-chairmanship.

CONCLUSIONS:

- The RWG Env participants thanked to RCC and The Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania for organizing and hosting today's meeting;
- The Co-Chairs thanked to all partners and donors for their commitments, efforts and support they provide to the WB economies;
- The Co-Chairs invited all the participants of the RWG Env for active and regular participation in the work, including timely registration for future meetings at agreed and adequate level;

- The RWG Env welcomed the EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession managed by the EC (DG Environment) and took note on the established structure, performed activities and plans for the future;
- RWG Env proposed bringing EPPA outcomes including positions taken by the beneficiaries to the attention of Ministers and reflecting EPPA in the Ministerial Declaration upon agreement with the European Commission;
- The RWG Env kindly requested information on outcomes of regional cooperation activities in transboundary context in the field of environment to be shared through the RWG Env;
- The RWG Env took note on the proposal of GWP Med for the forthcoming 3rd Regional Nexus Roundtable to discuss in more detail the scope and characteristics of the Regional Nexus Roadmap, aiming to have a decision during the next operational meeting of the RWG Env (by mid-2020);
- The RWG Env solicited an active involvement and consultations at operational and ministerial levels during the preparation of the Green Agenda for Western Balkans and strengthening cooperation with the European Commission (DG ENV, DG CLIMA and DG NEAR);
- Participants welcomed the outcomes of the Sustainability Forum and Informal Ministerial of the Energy Community and took note of the future adoption of the Clean Energy Package as well as support offered through the work of the Energy Community Secretariat;
- Participants welcomed and appreciated the SPIDER WEB project with its practical focus on detection and disruption of environmental crime in Western Balkans and took note on the activities performed so far and plans by the end of the year;
- Participants took note on the proposed changes in the Terms of References of Biodiversity Task Force. In communication with IUCN, RCC will share the new proposal of the ToR with the participants of the RWG Env by the end of this week for comments and possible adoption;
- The participants welcomed the idea presented by UN Environment on establishing the regional Platform to beat pollution in South East Europe;
- The participants shared information on possible dates for the next Ministerial Meeting being held probably by first part of November 2019;
- RCC will officially approach the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and offer to Bosnia and Herzegovina (following the alphabetical order) the opportunity to co-chair the RWG Env in 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 16:15 PM

RWG Env Secretariat