

Hamburg Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

We, the participants from the Western Balkans Six (WB6) gathered in Hamburg on 8 October 2024 for the First Ministerial Meeting within the framework of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), and the 2024 Berlin Process:

RECALLING the 2020 *Sofia Declaration on the GAWB*, envisioning us to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, and RECOGNISING the urgency of bold and accelerated action to meet our climate neutrality goals, address biodiversity loss and reduce pollution, as outlined in the GAWB;

ACKNOWLEDGING the critical role of the GAWB and its 2021-2030 Action Plan in driving environmental and climate progress, fostering EU integration, and creating socio-economic opportunities through green transition;

COGNISANT of the significant impacts of climate change on the region—threatening human health, food security, water resources, and ecosystems—while recognising the potential for these challenges to be transformed into opportunities for sustainable development;

RECOGNISING the importance of regional cooperation and commending the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) for its leadership in coordinating GAWB processes, while COMMITTING to annually support and provide necessary information for effective monitoring and reporting of progress;

RECALLING the updated *Note on Governance, Coordination, Monitoring, and Reporting of the GAWB Action Plan*, agreed in April 2023, formalising the Regional Working Group on GAWB, and COMMENDING the contributions of the RCC and all other regional coordinators in ensuring effective implementation of the Action Plan;

RECOGNISING the *EU-Western Balkans Summit Brussels Declaration*, of December 2023, in which the EU reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the region in implementing the Green Agenda and achieving climate goals, and WELCOMING the EU's Reform and Growth Facility in providing financial support to accelerate EU accession, energy market integration, and decarbonisation, contingent upon key reforms;

ACKNOWLEDGING the *2023 Berlin Process Summit*, which underscored environmental awareness and green transition, and resulted in the establishment of the *Regional Climate Partnership with Germany*, aimed at enhancing cooperation on GAWB;

RECALLING the 2023 Tirana Berlin Process Summit's endorsement of the *Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, Including Marine Litter*, led by the RCC, which demonstrates the region's commitment to biodiversity protection and addressing plastic pollution through circular economy initiatives;

RECALLING the 2022 *Declaration on Energy Security and Green Transition in the Western Balkans* which reinforces the region's commitment to green transition objectives within the Energy Community Decarbonisation Roadmap and the GAWB; and ACKNOWLEDGING the conclusions of the 21st Energy Community Ministerial Council held on 14 December 2023;

RECOGNISING the outcomes of the Ministerial Meetings of Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for agriculture and rural development in South East Europe in 2022 and 2023, which established the Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture Regional Task Force and the Regional Soil Partnership, and the 2024 *Berlin Process Declaration on Food and Agriculture*;

ACKNOWLEDGING the significance of the *Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans*, endorsed by the Transport Community Ministerial Council on 4 July 2021, as a key framework for creating sustainable, digital, inclusive, and climate-resilient transport infrastructure;

HAVE today agreed on the Declaration by which we:

IN LINE with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, REITERATE our commitment to full and timely implementation of the GAWB and its Action Plan 2021-2030, recognising the need for acceleration, cross-sectoral collaboration, and multi-level governance;

PRAISE the active role of RWG GAWB in fostering ongoing policy dialogue on the GAWB; ACKNOWLEDGE the importance of finalising the GAWB Action Plan - Implementation Report 2023 which assesses the progress across all seven components of the Action Plan, identifies challenges, and proposes necessary adjustments, and REAFFIRM commitment to addressing these challenges to ensure full achievement of the Action Plan's objectives;

COMMIT to initiating a revision of the GAWB Action Plan together with RCC and regional partners, through RWG GAWB.

WELCOME the establishment of annual ministerial meetings on GAWB, and ENCOURAGE leveraging regional processes, such as Berlin Process, as appropriate, to strengthen political significance of GAWB;

RECOMMEND finalising the Western Balkans Six Climate Adaptation Roadmap in alignment with the GAWB AP targets and CALL on the RCC to coordinate this effort with the RWG GAWB. RECOGNISE the roadmap's significance as a foundation for developing a Regional Adaptation Strategy by 2026, and INVITE relevant regional stakeholders to support this initiative, including in the framework of the Regional Climate Partnership;

INVITE the inclusion of the WB6 in the *EU Climate- ADAPT Platform*, aligning efforts with EU climate adaptation monitoring and actions;

CONSIDER establishing carbon pricing mechanisms by 2030, and RECOGNISE the need for robust emission data in compliance with EU Monitoring, Reporting, Verification, and Accreditation (MRVA) standards;

ARE DETERMINED to establish the necessary rules governing the fundamental building blocks of MRVA by 2025, ensuring emission monitoring begins in 2026. We emphasize the NEED for enhanced administrative capacity to meet these goals and CALL for EU and international support;

RECOGNISE the critical connection between the challenges of decarbonising, phasing out coal, and complying with environmental legislation under the Energy Community framework, and energy security, and COMMIT to addressing the existing breaches and compliance gaps related to environmental legislation within the Energy Community. In particular, we are dedicated to upholding air quality standards and ensuring strict adherence to legal obligations;

RECOGNISE that financing the reduction of carbon emissions through revenues from carbon pricing mechanisms presents a crucial opportunity. In this context, we emphasize the critical role of the just transition governance processes and plans and the establishment of individual mechanisms in the WB6 for dedicated finance of actions pooled with EU support, including the Instrument for Pre-Accession and the Reform and Growth Facility, and additional EU support for decarbonisation;

CALL for the extension of *EU's Just Transition Mechanism* to the region, ensuring a fair and inclusive transition to climate-neutral economy, supporting the most affected regions, and leaving no one behind;

UNDERSCORE the critical need to strengthen partnerships with the private and commercial sectors to unlock the full potential of renewable energy development, drive electrification of transport, and advance broader decarbonisation of our economies. Special emphasis is placed on the sustainable phasing out of coal, while creating enabling conditions that attract both private and public investments for a just and sustainable energy transition;

WELCOME the *Declaration for Green Mobility of South East European Parties and Observing Participants*, endorsed at the Green Mobility Summit in 2024, which includes the *Clean Bus and Clean Fleet Platform for South East European Parties and Observing Participants* and the *Declaration on Cycling as a Sustainable Mode of Transport*, promoting zero-emission, smart mobility and climate resilience in transport networks, while fostering regional cooperation for sustainable transport;

RECOMMEND finalising the ***Regional Action Plan on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, Including Marine Litter***, emphasizing circular economy approaches;

WELCOME the work of relevant environmental authorities and Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture, ACKNOWLEDGE and SUPPORT the need for transforming food systems to meet EU standards and address climate change impacts, ensuring sustainable food production and consumer protection;

WELCOME the strategic guidance provided in the Analytical Paper for the development of the ***Western Balkans 2030 Biodiversity Strategy Plan (BSP)***, and COMMIT to proceed with the development of BSP through the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF) and RWG GAWB, including with biodiversity-related EU acquis/Chapter 27 to support the WB6 in their alignment process towards EU accession;

UNDERSCORE that Nature-based Solutions serve as critical strategies for tackling the climate crisis throughout the region and are essential for the preservation of biodiversity;

RECOGNISE that comprehensive reforestation, afforestation, and restoration of degraded forests are essential for sustainably mitigating climate change risks, including water stress, flooding, drought, erosion, and landslides and for enhancing the contributions of Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry sectors;

SUPPORT the continued dialogue with the private sector on green transition through the ***Western Balkans Green and Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform***, established with the support of the RCC and Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum. We recommend its integration into the ***European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform*** to strengthen partnerships and collaboration at regional and EU levels;

EXPRESS our strong conviction that the Green Agenda requires a joint effort from local self-governments, private sector, civil society, and citizens, and COMMIT to design a coherent institutional, policy, and financial frameworks to support the green transition and benefit all citizens, and further strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation.

In Hamburg, 8 October 2024

Bosnia and Herzegovina will consider the proposed activities in accordance with the constitutional division of competences of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions, entities and cantons, that is, the cooperation of all relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the coordination mechanism.