



Photo: Miroslav Brandt



Joint Statement by the Carpathian Convention welcoming the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

On the occasion of launching the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) 2021 – 2030 on 5 June 2021, the [World Environment Day](#), the Parties to the Carpathian Convention and its Observers would like to reaffirm the commitment to international cooperation for ensuring an environmentally sustainable future and preservation of the exceptional natural values of the Carpathian region, thus, supporting the long-term objective of the UN Decade to ensure healthy ecosystems for the benefit of people and nature.

The Carpathians are one of the largest mountain regions of Europe constituting home to stunning ecosystems with exceptional richness of biodiversity, that are crucial for providing essential ecosystem services for millions of inhabitants of the region and maintenance of well-being of the human and natural environment.

Arching across 7 countries, from the Czech Republic, across Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary, and down to Romania and the tip of Serbia, the Carpathians are Europe's last great wilderness area - a bastion for large carnivores, with over half of the continent's population of brown bears, wolves and lynx, and home to the greatest remaining reserve of old-growth forests outside of Russia.

Considering its uniqueness, countries within the Carpathian region decided to join forces under an umbrella of an international treaty – [Carpathian Convention](#) - with a vision to cooperate on addressing environmental challenges, improving the quality of life and strengthening the local economies and communities with consideration of the well-being of current and future generations. Signed in 2003,

the Carpathian Convention aims at conserving fragile and precious ecosystems and promoting sustainable development in the Carpathian region by providing an important platform for cooperation between various partners and constituting a solid political framework for undertaking activities necessary for tackling biodiversity loss, climate change impacts as well as undertaking restoration actions.

In this respect, the Carpathian Convention would like to welcome the new UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030 declared by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 March 2019, that aims at massively scaling up the restoration efforts that breathe new life into degraded and destroyed ecosystems for the healthier planet and its people.

Preventing, halting and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide, including mountains, is the objective of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. The conservation of mountains is a key factor for sustainable development, especially Sustainable Development Goal 15. Mountains, their biodiversity, and the vital ecosystem services they provide are key for the planet's and people's well-being. They occupy about a quarter of the Earth's land, host most of its biodiversity hotspots and supply fresh water and natural sources for the needs of everyday life to half of humanity. However, they face many challenges, including climate change, pollution and nature loss.

As our planet continues to heat up, unique plants and animals in mountain habitats struggle to survive. Globally, around 1 million plant and animal species are now threatened with extinction, driven by our actions. The Carpathian Convention through UNEP as well as other relevant platforms and networks will continue to work closely with other mountain regions seeking to promote exchange of best-practices on ecosystem restoration and scaling up interventions, such as the Vanishing Treasures programme, in support of the UN Decade, the future Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Outcome, the UN General Assembly Resolution on sustainable mountain development and other relevant global instruments.

Recalling the decision of the Carpathian Convention COP6 (November 2020) welcoming the new UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration 2021, the Parties shall commit themselves to contribute` to the UN Decade with its ambitious objectives of conservation of mountain ecosystem of the Carpathians, including their biodiversity, to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development, in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 15 Life on Land and its target 15.4 on mountain biodiversity.

In this respect, the Carpathian Convention will continue undertaking various activities including:

- Undertaking relevant measures for combating climate change in the Carpathian region.
- Safeguarding and increasing ecological connectivity between natural habitats, especially between Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas of transnational relevance in the Carpathian ecoregion with support of relevant partners and project, and for this reason using the results of the ConnectGREEN and SaveGREEN, TRANSGREEN projects, funded by the EU Interreg Danube Transnational Programme.
- Fulfilling the objectives of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians in close cooperation with key partners, including WWF CEE, WWF Romania and International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation.

- Improving management capacities of Carpathian protected areas and strengthening cooperation within the Carpathian Networks of Protected Areas, among others, through the EU Interreg Central Europe project – Centralparks led by Eurac Research.
- Protecting the outstanding environmental value of Carpathian forests that represent some of Europe’s most significant remaining areas of old growth-forest and wilderness, by implementing the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management to the Carpathian Convention and establishing an Inventory of the Virgin Forests of the Carpathians.
- Further supporting cooperation and transboundary approaches in respect to biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use, that have been acknowledging by United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled "Nature knows no borders: transboundary cooperation – a key factor for biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use" that was recently adopted by its 75th session held on 16 April 2021.
- Continue contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the upcoming Post - 2020 biodiversity framework and other global frameworks and policies by translating the global goals at the regional level, giving that the Carpathian Convention as the regional mechanism for implementation can reflect characteristics and challenges of the regions more precisely than the global ones, and can offer joint approaches in addressing regional needs.
- Continuing mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors giving the holistic approach of the Convention and various thematic sectors relevant for sustainable development of the region.
- Continue strengthening science – policy – practice interface, to enhance the implementation of the Carpathian Convention via creating synergies between its stakeholders and promoting inter-sectoral cooperation, including through stronger collaboration with the Science for the Carpathians network.
- Continue working closely with the Alpine Biodiversity Board of the Alpine Convention seeking to raise awareness on the importance of mountain biodiversity and its monitoring, to promote exchange of best-practices and to scale-up joint initiatives.

The Carpathian Convention would like to invite various stakeholders to join in using a momentum created by the UN Decade for restoring the natural environment of the Carpathians and encourage the UNEP and other actors to support our efforts to maximize the positive impacts of the UN Decade on globally important mountain ecosystems, and welcome the initiative of UNEP in Europe to develop the framework programme “Let’s Revive our mountains – Europe’s ecological backbone. Programme for mountain ecosystems restoration in the Carpathians, the Caucasus, the Balkans / the Dinaric Arc and Central Asia”.



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2021-2030



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