

Montenegro and IUCN unite efforts to protect nature

The creation of marine protected areas to safeguard biodiversity has been identified as a first step to meet international standards

Malaga, Spain, 13 March, 2008 (IUCN) – Under the leadership of Montenegro's Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the 2nd Round Table on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Montenegrin Coast (Kotor, 28-29 February) has convened relevant national and Mediterranean organizations including IUCN to identify nature conservation priorities of the country.

Being recently established as an independent state, Montenegro is facing many challenges to nature conservation. By bringing together and allying with regional organizations, experts and policy makers, MNE is identifying ways of action to promote sustainable development of the coasts, while respecting the natural environment and complying with international conventions and standards.

Amongst the priorities identified for 2008, Montenegro is moving forward with:

- The alignment of environmental laws with international standards, including EU directives, The Convention of Biological Diversity and IUCN recommendations;
- The revision of the status of existing protected areas and the establishment of new ones, starting with areas around Katić Isle, the Old Ulcinj and Platamuni;
- The adoption of new management plans with new managing entities for protected areas and strengthening the capacities of current institutions;
- The development of action plans for endangered species (sea turtles, cartilaginous fishes, pelicans and halophyte vegetation) and Red Listing of marine species;
- The definition of indicators and biodiversity monitoring in protected areas;
- Capacity building through training and professional development programmes; and
- Awareness raising campaigns amongst the local populations.

*The environment, and in particular the coastal environment, is the dynamo in the engine that is driving economic development in Montenegro and the Balkans, says **Dr. Ameer Abdulla**, from the **IUCN Global Marine Programme and Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation**. Therefore, it is clear that safeguarding and maintaining this critical component is essential for the long-term well-being of Montenegro.*

IUCN aims to strengthen the links with this region and has committed to technically supporting the country to:

1. Review the Montenegrin Law on Nature Protection to integrate biodiversity concerns
2. Organize a Balkan Workshop on Benefits, Categorization, and Process of Designating Marine Protected Areas in line with IUCN best practice Protected Area guidelines
3. Provide technical support to assess the marine biodiversity of a Montenegrin site and state of knowledge for possible designation of a Marine Protected Area.
4. Identify and engage on other relevant issues such as coastal forests and aquaculture.

*Balkan biodiversity is unique, significant and very much interconnected, yet vulnerable. One area can be easily affected by activities in any of the other connected areas, underlines **Mr. Boris Erg** of the **IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe**.*

Considering the unique features of the Adriatic Region and current activities to designate the Adriatic as a particularly sensitive marine environment, the establishment of marine and coastal protected areas is deemed particularly important, says Ms. Ana Pajevik, Senior Advisor at the Montenegro Ministry of Tourism and Environment. In this regard, all the elements - hydrological, geomorphologic, climate, environmental, social, economic and cultural - should be considered in order to prevent a negative impact.

The Mediterranean is a unique sea that that accounts for 0.3 % of the world's ocean area yet hosts more than 7% of all marine species identified globally. Although there are 94 marine protected areas in the Mediterranean, approximately 4% of the sea is directly managed and less than 0.01 % is fully protected.

Notes to editors

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About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN's work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

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About Montenegro Ministry of Tourism and Environment

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment was established in late 2006 by the new organisational structure of the Government of Montenegro. Thus, the scope of tasks and competences of the Ministry of Tourism was greatly extended. In addition to tourism law and policy making and enforcement, planning and guiding tourism development of the country, promotion, coordination of activities of the Government, local authorities, private sector and other stakeholders, administrative and inspection control in the field, now the environment also falls under direct competences of this Ministry.

Environment policy, as a part of overall integration of Montenegro into relevant frameworks of international cooperation, in particular in the context of EU integration and the adoption of acquis, initiates policy changes in the area of natural resources sustainable use and management, institutional reforms and accompanying capacity building, harmonisation of national regulations with EU legislation and establishment of their efficient enforcement.

<http://www.vlada.cg.yu/eng/mintur/index.php>