

FINAL DECLARATION

Council of Europe Member States for the Sustainable Development of European Mountain Regions

UZHGOROD (UKRAINE), 8-10 SEPTEMBER 2010

We, participants of the International Conference «Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and Other European Mountain Regions», that was held under patronage of the President of Ukraine and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of the Europe in the City of Uzhgorod on September 8-10, 2010

1. Note, that mountainous regions cover over 35% of the territory of Europe, and these regions are inhabited by 25% of the population of the Council of Europe member-states, therefore being in serious demand of the attention from state and local authorities and international institutions of the united Europe.
2. Recognize the particular role of the mountainous regions, as an origin of natural resources, biodiversity and a powerful recreational potential, which ensures the preservation of the global climate balance. Virtually a half of Europe's population is dependant on the ecological situation changes to take place in the mountainous regions.
3. Realize, that the mountainous regions, as a rule, are peripheral territories of countries with complicated natural conditions and for that reason the economic development of mountainous regions is lagging behind the planes.
4. High-light, that the mountainous regions are often a multicultural space, where representatives of various nationalities live together. Same while these people are feeling the impact of difficult climate conditions same as periphery.
5. State, that the mountain ecosystems are particularly sensible to the civilization impact and the outcomes of changes, taking place there, are causing problems of economic, social, ecological and of other nature, which are crossing the state frontiers and gain the nationwide and international significance.
6. Taking into account last global climatic changes and cataclysms in Europe and world, considers that for all level of authority from local to national, shall be urgently implemented measures on improving management of the mountain territories aiming at supporting their socio-economic development and ecological balance preservation.
7. Stress, that local and regional authorities have to play the key role in realization of the sustainable development policy. They also have to demonstrate leadership in the preparation of the programs for territorial planning, stimulate transfrontier and interregional cooperation, fostering socio-economic development and raising the level of competitiveness of mountain territories.
8. Recognize, that particularly attention in the issues of mountain territories development has to be pay to implementation of the principles of sustainable spatial development and transparent, public and adequate to the existing tasks management.

And therefore

9. Recognizing

Unique contribution of mountain regions in the maintenance of the world climatic balance, prevention of natural cataclysms and respectively providing acceptable living conditions on

the Earth that is enhanced by the Declaration on Environment and Development ("Agenda for the 21st Century ", Rio-de-Janeiro, 1992), Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Carpathian and Danube regions (Bucharest, 2001), Action Plan adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesbourg, 2002) and many other international documents, scientific researches and reports.

10. Recalling:

a. Recommendation 14 (1995) on European Mountain Regions Charter, Recommendation 75 (2000) on Draft European Mountain Regions Framework Convention, Recommendation 130 (2003) on European Mountain Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of the Europe;

b. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1638 (2003) on Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions;

c. Opinion of the CoR for a Green Paper 'Towards a European Union policy for upland regions: a European vision for upland regions' (CoR 23/2008).

11. Considering:

a. approval by the 14th Congress plenary session of Ukraine's appeal on drafting of thematic Resolution and Recommendation concerning ecological situation in the Carpathian region, its social consequences and ways of improvement;

b. decision of the Committee on Sustainable Development of the Congress of the Council of Europe on preparation in 2009-2010 years of the report "Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions and the Experience of the Carpathian Region";

c. provisions of framework conventions on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention), "On the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians", "Charter of Mountain Peoples-2000", EU programme Natura 2000, the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, directives adopted by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and other international agreements;

d. guiding principles for sustainable development of the European continent (GPSSDEC - CEMAT) and provisions of the Initiative on the sustainable development of the Tisza River basin (Ljubjana, 2003).

12. Note that:

a. mountain regions are unique natural, socio-economic and ethno-cultural heritage for humanity and unique origin of natural resources, water and air regeneration and a key climate-forming factor on the Earth;

b. European mountain regions and upland territories are the place of residence for a third of European population;

c. the Carpathian region, as one of the largest European mountain massifs, with population of about 20 million people and a third of European flora species plays significant social and

economic role as well as has a great impact on climate formation and water balance in Europe.

13. **State:**

a. *global trends of mountain regions destructive development* and in particular: decrease of flora and fauna species, development of large-scale soil erosion, breach of hydrological balance, the drying out of small rivers and mountain streams, reduction of fresh water storage and worsening of water's quality and consequently decline of recreational power of mountain regions, on the one hand, and worsening of living conditions for their inhabitants, on the other;

b. *more frequent ecological calamities and catastrophes in European mountain regions* and, in particular, in the Carpathian region: more frequent of mud flows and landslides, submergence of large territories, graveyards and mortality digesters, chemical storages, in no small measure due to unqualified economic activity on these territories;

c. *spending of enormous European, national, local and regional financial and material resources* on elimination of the consequences of social, economic and ecological disbalance in mountain regions and consequences of the cataclysms caused by it;

d. *high unemployment and poverty rate, insufficient level of consumer services and health care* and consequently strong migration among the native population of mountain regions;

e. *absence of effective co-ordination* of mountain regions development policy and legislation, including the acts of international law, on the possible economic activity types and special limitations of economic activities for these territories;

f. *its concern that the authorities of the Carpathian countries, compared with the Alpine region, do not spare enough attention to sustainable spatial planning and socio-economic development* and increasing of competitiveness of mountain territories.

14. **Underline that:**

a. *ecological stability and sustainable development of the mountain regions of Europe can't be achieved through the efforts of only one or a few states*, but require joining of the abilities, close international, transfrontier cooperation;

b. *delay in drafting and implementation of mountain regions sustainable development programmes is fraught with ecological cataclysms and worsening of the health of European population*, on the one hand, and aggravation of economic problems, increase of unemployment, lowering of living standards of population and apparition of other social consequences in mountain regions, on the other;

c. *local authorities should play a key role* in realizing sustainable development of mountain regions.

15. **Resolve to strengthen and steer our international relations and intergovernmental co-operation towards a number of essential goals to be pursued jointly:**

a. *implementation of EU ecological standards* in the legislative acts of Council of Europe member countries at the national, local and regional levels;

b. *working out and implementation of international and state programmes* on mountain territories development in accordance with the requirements of framework conventions and other international agreements on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians and Alps;

c. *implementation of the guiding principles for sustainable development of the European continent (GPSSDEC - CEMAT) and “three E” of sustainable development* – ecological, economical and ethno-cultural – at all levels of spatial planning of mountain regions development;

d. *inserting into international and national legislative acts and programmes the provisions* determining mountain regions sustainable development policy realization and stipulating:

- providing real institutional and financial support for the development of transfrontier cooperation;
- implementation of flexible policy of support of local initiatives and plans on socio-economic development of mountain districts;
- compulsory consideration of the interests and peculiarities of mountain regions and their inhabitants, and also rational use of their resource potential;
- recognition of international and national value of mountain regions natural and cultural potential.

16. Calls on the national, regional and local authorities of the countries where mountain regions are located with the aim of their sustainable development:

a. in socio-economic sphere:

- *to transform mountain regions* and, in particular, the Carpathian region into tourist and resort centers preserving original cultural inheritance of the territories and creating modern infrastructure for the rest and health treatment of people, and also conditions for planting and processing of ecologically clean agroproducts;
- *to restructure ecologically harmful industrial fields*, first of all mining and forest harvesting, taking into account ecological state of the territory by introduction of modern technologies, and also re-orientation to light industry, service sector, tourism and attendant types of economic activity;
- *to provide just, effective and sustainable management of water resources*, modernization of water-supply services and sewage system, services on the protection of water resources from contamination;
- *to strengthen social protection of mountain regions population*, activate measures on the development of social and transport infrastructure;
- *to promote socio-economic development of mountain regions* by stimulation of investment activity, private enterprise and farming;

– to encourage the application in mountain regions of ecologically clean energy sources, including wind and hydroelectric stations;

b. in ecological sphere:

– to accomplish national ecological networks designation as components of European ecological network;

– to organize long-term monitoring of mountain regions ecological state;

– to elaborate and implement together with proper CoE member-states institutions and EU bodies of technologies and programmes for mountain river basins and forest lands protection, operative warning and elimination of the consequences of natural and industrial catastrophes on mountain territories;

– to create ecological information database for the Carpathian and other mountain regions that should serve as basis for the development of ecologically critical localities maps and computerized system of territories ecological protection;

– to implement measures aimed to enlarge forested areas, improve water-regulating function of mountain forests and prevent unauthorized deforestation;

– to realize programmes of mountain agrolands fertility improving and erosion prevention;

– to create adapted to mountain conditions system of effective collecting, utilizing and recycling domestic and industrial wastes, as well as assist to the initiatives of local and regional authorities, NGO's as concerns the acceleration in works on the disposal of chemical, biological and domestic wastes, development of scientific research targeted at finding ecologically safe waste disposal sites and reduction of the environment pollution, renewal of the ecosystems;

c. in ethno-cultural sphere:

– to encourage ethno-cultural diversity of mountain regions under globalization challenges;

– to support and develop cultural uniqueness of mountain population;

– to implement measures on promotion of traditional household culture and crafts;

– to provide preservation of mountain regions architectural styles, harmonious combination of the environment and modern handmade objects;

d. in socio-political sphere:

– to support NGO's initiatives oriented to environmental protection;

– to provide proper possibilities for participation of population in the decision-making process on territorial planning, protection and use of natural resources of the mountains;

– *to strengthen legal responsibility* of enterprises and citizens for environmental contamination;

– *to start up a systemic education and awareness rising process* aimed for people's ecological responsibility formation;

e. in international activity:

– *to develop transfrontier cooperation between the local self-government authorities of mountain regions* on sustainable spatial planning, tourism and recreation development, protection of the environment and cultural inheritance, including through the support of the euroregions and creation of transborder biosphere reserves;

– *to strengthen coordination of measures, including those under the guidance of the Council of Europe*, directed to ecological and socio-economic problems solution, concentration for this purpose of financial resources;

– *to establish* a Permanent Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, based in one of the Carpathian region states;

– *to support* the establishment of the Carpathian Space EU Territorial Programme, following the success of the Alpine Space Programme;

– *to elaborate* the Carpathian Strategy under the auspices of the Carpathian Convention;

– *to recommend* the governments of the Carpathian Convention member states to take measures on acceleration of visa-free regime implementation for citizens of the Carpathian region states.

17. With the aim of developing a joint strategy for solving of the problems of sustainable development in the Carpathian and other mountain regions call on:

a. the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe:

– to hold in 2011 a session of the Conference of Ministers for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) with participation also the Ministers for Environment for determining possible solving ways of the main ecological and other mountain regions sustainable development problems;

– to authorize the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) to conduct a monitoring and prepare a report on the fulfillment of the international legislative acts on nature conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian and other mountain regions of the Council of Europe member countries;

– to take into account the Council of Europe Congress recommendations on sustainable development of mountain regions during preparatory work and elaboration of recommendations for the next European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) in 2010;

– to call upon the European Commission to promote European mountain regions development programmes, in particular the Carpathian region, including projects on introduction of modern water-supply and sewage systems, water purification, collecting and utilizing of domestic wastes, establishment of recreational centers, protection of natural and cultural heritage;

– to initiate, with the aim to raise funds available in the European countries and international organizations, the establishment of the Ecological Mountain Fund of Europe that should be available for reimbursement of damages caused to the environment by natural and industrial catastrophes;

b. the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe:

– to authorize the Congress Working Group on Inter-regional Co-operation to draft a report on good practices of mountain regions sustainable development within the framework of euroregional and international cooperation;

– to request the European Forum on Local and Regional Disaster Management to include in the priorities of its activities the issue on the prevention of natural and industrial catastrophes in mountain regions and preparation of annual report on this issue;

– within the framework of the Congress priorities preparation for 2010-2011 to consider the issue on preparation of Ecological Constitution of Europe elaboration as an important step towards realization of Ukraine's proposition at the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly concerning preparation of Ecological Constitution of the Earth and establishment under an aegis of United Nations of a body for the environmental protection of the planet;

– to establish within the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities a special task force on European mountain regions sustainable development naming it “The Alpine-Carpathian Ecological Commission” and authorize it:

· to conduct of long-term monitoring of European mountain regions development, including their ecological state;

· to assist in generalization and dissemination of mountain regions sustainable development practices in order to secure their ecological safety;

· to assist in unification of nature protection legislation, including in the Carpathian countries, and bringing it up to the EU standards;

· to create the informational database, computerized system of ecological protection and annual map of ecologically critical localities in the mountain regions of Europe, including territories that require recovery of the forest cover, creation of anti-flood hydrotechnical constructions system, soil recultivation

c. the central authorities of the member-states of the Council of Europe to assist and support system scientific researches in the sphere of sustainable development of mountain regions as well as to realize on local and regional level the policy of supporting to the

territorial authorities in realization their responsibilities concerning social and economic development of the mountain regions;

d. **the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** to support cooperation with the congress concerning mountain regions sustainable development, foster exchange of experience in the sphere of mountain territories development, and also while considering legislative measures approved in different European countries.

18. The Conference supports and passes for a further revision and adoption by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe the preliminary drafts of the recommendation and resolution of the Congress on sustainable development of mountain regions and experience of Carpathian region (appendix 1 and 2), that was drafted on the base of this Declaration.