

ENVSEC Regional Meeting for South Eastern Europe

April 1, 2014, Podgorica, Montenegro

Meeting Report

Opening session

Participants were welcomed to the meeting by an opening panel comprising Ms. Marta Szigeti Bonifert, executive director of the REC and chair of the ENVSEC Management Board; Mr. Branimir Gvozdenovic, minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Montenegro; Mr. Rastislav Vrbensky, UN resident coordinator/UNDP resident representative to Montenegro; and Mr. Waldemar Figaj, deputy head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. The members of the panel highlighted the experience gained by ENVSEC since 2003 in transforming shared environmental and security risks into opportunities for regional and cross-regional cooperation, thus laying the foundations for sustainable development in the region.

Special recognition and gratitude were expressed towards the Austrian Development Agency, which has been the main donor for ENVSEC activities in South Eastern Europe (SEE); as well as to Finland and Switzerland, which fund individual activities within the ENVSEC portfolio in SEE.

Minister Gvozdenovic acknowledged the achievements of ENVSEC in strengthening regional cooperation as a key generator of political stability and economic progress in the region, and in providing solid support towards meeting the goals of the demanding agenda of SEE countries on their path to EU membership. The opening panel noted that security in SEE is becoming more and more consolidated, although controversial environmental issues, such as the management of transboundary hazardous activities, the management of shared natural resources and the emergence of new and unexpected transboundary risks caused by the impacts of climate change, are threatening the growing cohesion between countries, necessitating the support of the donor community and the actions of ENVSEC.

Session 1: ENVSEC in South Eastern Europe

Ms. Gordana Kozhuharova, the REC's regional director for SEE and ENVSEC regional desk officer for SEE, Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei (UNEP), Ms. Esra Buttanri (OSCE) and Ms. Snezana Dragojevic (UNDP) provided an overview of ENVSEC activities in SEE. Challenges addressed by ENVSEC include the management of hazardous and toxic waste, industrial pollution, unsustainable agricultural and aquaculture practices, inadequate wastewater treatment technologies, lack of infrastructure, the adverse effects of climate change, and the management of shared natural resources. Priority fields of action for SEE were established in 2004 in close cooperation with representatives of national governments during regional meetings and have since been regularly reviewed.

The current ENVSEC programme in SEE focuses on: (a) the management and reduction of transboundary risks from hazardous activities; (b) the management of shared natural resources; (c) environmental governance through participatory and informed decision-making and implementation processes; and (d) adaptation to the impacts of climate change for reducing security risks. ENVSEC interventions have yielded key results in terms of improving the safety of abandoned mining sites through remediation work; building passive treatment systems for acid mine waters; supporting transboundary arrangements and management plans for protected areas; creating a regional network for cooperation on illegal logging; establishing Aarhus centres and further developing their capacities; and enhancing knowledge and capacities with respect to climate change impacts and their interrelation with security.

The ENVSEC national focal points highlighted activities undertaken in each country, either within the ENVSEC initiative or complementary to it.

Ms. Silvamina Alshabani, ENVSEC national focal point for Albania, stated that, according to the government programme for 2013–2017, the Ministry of Environment of Albania considers security to be closely linked to environmental issues. European Union integration is the main driving force for all processes in the country. Among the legal and institutional steps recently implemented by Albania, the importing of waste was banned in October 2013; a moratorium on hunting was introduced in February 2014; and the state environmental inspectorate was reorganised in February/March 2014.

Priorities for Albania include:

- the enforcement of waste management (to combat illegal dumping) and natural resources management (to combat illegal logging, forest fires and gravel extraction along riverbeds), with parallel, concrete clean-up actions and reforestation measures in tourist sites, protected areas and coastal zones;

- the transposition of the *acquis communautaire* and the completion of the legal framework, including amendments to the criminal code in order to address environmental crimes; and
- environmental education and public awareness raising, especially through public participation and school curricula, in order to promote citizens' responsibility for nature and environmental protection.

At regional level, the Ministry of Environment aims to continue or upscale its active contribution to, and interaction in, processes and initiatives such as ENVSEC, the Themis Network for Managing Natural Resources and Combating Environmental Crime, the Drin Dialogue, and regional mechanisms of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. The Ministry of Environment will continue to support ENVSEC by cooperating with ENVSEC partner organisations on implementing country programmes, as well as by actively participating in identifying and implementing bilateral and regional initiatives in the scope of ENVSEC.

Mr. Kosta Trajkovski, ENVSEC national focal point for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, highlighted the priorities of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, which include:

- the closure, conservation and remediation of hotspots in the mining and smelting industries through the elaboration of a programme of specific field activities, and capacity building for the technical documentation and remediation of hotspots;
- regional cooperation to protect transboundary natural resources, such as Prespa Park and Osogovo;
- biodiversity protection and the establishment of a monitoring network for the management of protected areas, also incorporating as a key element early hazard warning, primarily fire warning;
- the management of water resources for the prevention of all types of degradation and for the establishment of appropriate conditions for the sustainable development of countries and regions through mutual cooperation and the management of existing and unavoidable transboundary environmental impacts, and specific protection against flooding in the vicinity of rivers; and
- adaptation to, and the mitigation of, the negative impacts of climate change.

Mr. Trajkovski mentioned the process for designating the Sar Planina massif as a national park, which has been stagnating for the past four to five years. The possibility of establishing an Aarhus centre in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was also mentioned.

Mr. Ismail Hetemaj, ENVSEC national focal point for Kosovo^{*}, mentioned the two national parks located in Kosovo^{*} and informed the meeting that the government has prepared a strategy on climate change. Mr. Hetemaj identified as priorities the management of historical pollution related to mining; and moving ahead with the Natura 2000 process. With regard to ENVSEC, the priorities for Kosovo^{*} in terms of environmental protection in line with the Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 include:

- the implementation of national and international requirements in the field of nature protection and conservation through the establishment of protected areas and their effective management;
- capacity building for the effective management of protected areas and support to employees in drafting legislation and sub-legislation; using electronic registers and standard data forms; GIS management; and EU reporting activities and obligations;
- the implementation of EU Directive 2003/4/EC on Public Access to Environmental Information and the Aarhus Convention; and
- improved cooperation with and support for municipalities in implementing nature protection programmes.

Ms. Jelena Knezevic, ENVSEC national focal point for Montenegro, described how the most important priority in the country is the cleaning up of polluted mining sites and the establishment of proper waste management. Current activities include remediation, support to protected areas, combating illegal logging and environmental crimes, and supporting public participation in decision making through the establishment of three Aarhus centres in Montenegro.

In cooperation with ENVSEC, the following activities have been undertaken in Montenegro:

- a green technology water treatment system has been introduced to treat acid mine water in Mojkovac, in cooperation with Mojkovac municipality;
- a remediation action plan for the Brskovo mine in Mojkovac has been developed, providing a clear scheme for short-term, mid-term and long-term remediation measures; and
- a regional report on the management of contaminated sites in SEE countries has reached the final drafting phase.

Future activities and priorities in Montenegro include:

- developing detailed risk assessments, detailed technical designs and remediation actions for the former flotation plant at the Brskovo mine in Mojkovac;
- following up the regional report on contaminated site management in SEE countries by creating a comprehensive list of environmental hotspots in Montenegro (apart from sites included in the World Bank project), developing detailed risk assessments

^{*} This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

for selected locations, developing methodologies and guidelines for the management of contaminated sites, improving law enforcement and developing related capacities;

- developing a national contingency plan to treat marine and land-based sources of pollution;
- achieving good environmental status for BK Bay as an environmentally vulnerable area;
- addressing climate change impacts on coastal ecosystems; and
- developing a marine spatial plan.

Mr. Vladica Bozic, ENVSEC national focal point for Serbia, highlighted the implementation of the Aarhus Convention with the support of OSCE and the REC as the most important component of ENVSEC in Serbia. Other ENVSEC activities cover the management of shared resources, the protection of mountain regions, addressing transboundary risks from mining and industrial sites, combating illegal logging, and supporting the implementation of the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. Existing problems include the historical pollution of industrial sites. Regarding waste management, the process of building new landfill sites is very slow, especially for the treatment of hazardous waste. Serbia also lacks facilities for wastewater treatment and communal systems for producing drinking water.

Mr. Bozic also emphasised the following future priorities:

- regional cooperation to address water pollution, particularly in the Drina River basin and with regard to water management and adaptation to climate change;
- the reduction of transboundary risks from mining and other hazardous activities; and
- climate change mitigation and adaptation through the identification of sensitive and vulnerable zones and the definition of adaptation actions.

Session 2: Roundtable discussion with regional cooperation initiatives, programmes and partners

Ms. Szigeti Bonifert explained that the purpose of the panel was to identify synergies between the participating organisations and initiatives.

Mr. Fuad Bateh, senior advisor on environment and water at the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfM), briefed participants on the UfM's activities in the priority area of water and environment. Among the ENVSEC countries of operation in SEE, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The main regional priorities include the protection of the marine environment; the Horizon 2020 initiative for the depollution of the Mediterranean, which aims to tackle the sources of pollution that account for 80 percent of the pollution load in

the sea by 2020; as well as the UfM water agenda, designed around water governance, water and climate change adaptation, water demand management and water financing. Mr. Bateh emphasised water aspects in the promotion of sustainable production and consumption and resource efficiency, as well as the complementarities of the UfM and ENVSEC. Participants were informed about the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, scheduled for May 13, 2014, in Athens, Greece.

Mr. Johann Georg Goldammer, director of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), presented the work of his organisation and highlighted areas where cooperation could be sought with ENVSEC. In particular, Mr. Goldammer recommended using GFMC's expertise in the areas of fire management and soil protection in the SEE region. Mr. Erhan Turbedar, senior political advisor at the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), presented the preparation work for the SEE 2020 Strategy, for which the REC is regional dimension coordinator for environment under the "Sustainable Growth" pillar. Mr. Turbedar emphasised the importance of efforts towards climate change mitigation and adaptation within this pillar. The nexus of energy, water and food security is interesting to both the RCC and ENVSEC. Mr. Evzen Zeman, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Cluster director of the DHI Group, emphasised the need for risk reduction management in the region and DHI Group's common interests with ENVSEC. Mr. Zeman presented DHI's solutions to situations at all stages, from preparedness to reaction and after-treatment. He also described how floods can be better managed before disasters occur via the use of simulations for fire brigades. He summarised how ENVSEC can contribute at the level of both policy and technical expertise. Mr. Zeman highlighted the transference of technology to local people through trainings and with the help of universities. Ms. Szigeti Bonifert suggested that experiments and models should be rolled out, and in this process universities are good partners. Mr. Bateh identified similarities among the objectives and priorities of the RCC and the UfM and expressed interest in submitting proposals for cooperation to the RCC.

After the presentations, the floor was given to participants for questions and comments.

Ms. Jelena Knezevic, ENVSEC national focal point for Montenegro, stressed that the major environment and security issue in Montenegro is the establishment of efficient and sustainable waste management as well as the cleaning up of old polluted mining and industrial sites. She also mentioned the participation of the Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development at the ministerial meeting in Amman, Jordan, where environmental issues in Mediterranean countries were discussed.

Ms. Esra Buttanri, ENVSEC regional desk officer for the Southern Caucasus, expressed interest in cooperating in SEE with the fire monitoring centre, based on the good experience of ENVSEC with respect to joint actions in the Southern Caucasus. Mr.

Goldammer stated that one of the main tasks of the fire monitoring centres is to build capacities for disaster risk reduction and fire control. Universities are good partners in capacity building, for example in Mongolia, where the newest fire monitoring centre is located. Universities can create and raise awareness on a long-term basis. Civil society has to take the main responsibility, as governments lack capacity.

Ms. Sonja Popovic of the Aarhus Centre for South East Serbia stated that, in terms of environmental protection, the key stakeholders are institutions, universities and civil society, as well as local inhabitants. She also described how the Aarhus centre aims to engage key stakeholders in water protection in southern Serbia.

Ms. Katerina Spasovska, senior project manager at the head office/secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), presented the activities and regional initiatives of the SWG and expressed interest in cooperation.

Ms. Snezana Dragojevic of UNDP Montenegro highlighted the green technology pilot project for treating acid mine water in Montenegro, a regional demonstration of eco-friendly water treatment technologies that can be used at similar abandoned mining sites throughout SEE. In this respect, the need to exchange information, cooperate with universities and include vocational training in the ENVSEC programme for SEE was flagged.

Ms. Marika Palosaari, ENVSEC programme coordinator, stated that the role of the ENVSEC Secretariat is to turn the ideas shared in the roundtable and during the regional meeting into concrete partnerships. ENVSEC will decide, together with the countries, on the initiative's niche, combining the mandates of its partner organisations. Ms. Palosaari welcomed ideas about how ENVSEC can add further value in the countries and regions where the initiative operates. She suggested exploring opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPPs) in which ENVSEC could be a supporting partner, and, as an example of a PPP project, mentioned UNEP's Principles for Sustainable Insurance.

Ms. Szigeti Bonifert concluded the roundtable discussion by thanking participants for sharing their ideas and proposals for cooperation within ENVSEC, and by calling on them to come up with further proposals on how ENVSEC can contribute to their respective initiatives.

Session 3: ENVSEC SEE World Café

Participants were introduced to the ENVSEC SEE World Café and invited to contribute to the four discussion groups.

Session 4: ENVSEC in 2015 and beyond

Mr. Mihallaq Qirjo, director of REC Albania, summarised the outcomes of the discussion group “ENVSEC added value, benefits and impacts in SEE”. Each of the ENVSEC partner organisations brings its own expertise and networks to ENVSEC, while the ENVSEC national focal points enable further outreach to experts and groups with a national perspective. ENVSEC is responsive to needs, accessible to stakeholders, non-bureaucratic in its operations and efficient in delivery. ENVSEC has been able to successfully channel funds to SEE with a long-term approach to environment and security supported by an extensive portfolio of lessons learned. Interventions contribute to confidence building and decrease tensions between countries.

There is potential to more effectively harvest the benefits of ENVSEC by involving ministries of defence and foreign affairs in the region. The security dimension of ENVSEC in SEE should be strengthened and the involvement of ministries of foreign affairs enhanced, bearing in mind that ministries of environment are already broadly represented in ENVSEC in SEE. Cross-border and transboundary activities in the fields of water management, protected areas management, forest fires and other environmental challenges that do not respect political borders need to be increased. Spreading information about ENVSEC among national institutions and focal points was also recommended. Strengthening national cooperation/partnerships can be a way of gaining support and improving national consultations, while the use of national and international NGOs through support programmes or direct involvement can help to achieve ENVSEC goals. Sub-regions should be present within ENVSEC and exchanges should be sought between the regions of Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

Mr. Ventzislav Vassilev, director of REC Bulgaria, presented the outcomes of the discussion group “Reviewing environment and security priorities in SEE”. In general, all priority areas are still relevant to the region: the number of priorities should remain limited, while the language of the existing priorities could be adjusted. ENVSEC should achieve efficiency in all four priority areas before adding new areas that may lead to resources being spread too thinly. At the same time, it was underscored that the scope of activities should not become too broad, as this would impose coordination challenges among partners in their efforts to avoid overlaps. In regard to the priority to manage and reduce transboundary risks from hazardous activities, a division between technological and natural risks was proposed. Disaster risk reduction was understood as already being addressed through the current priorities.

Under the priority on strengthening regional cooperation for environmental governance through participatory and informed decision-making and implementation processes, establishing an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism with technical working groups was suggested as a way to support policy makers. The importance of raising public

awareness as well as involving CSOs into discussions was emphasised in all four priorities. It was also proposed to address the additional issues of nuclear contamination, electronic and military waste, pesticides and other chemicals. Not only forest fires but also wildfires should be addressed.

In addition, ENVSEC should reinforce general preparedness to tackle natural and industrial risks. It was proposed that ENVSEC should consider separating priorities in terms of reducing natural and human-made risks in a transboundary context. Regarding the risk nexus between climate change, water, energy and food, the question was raised as to whether ENVSEC is the ideal initiative to respond. Other relevant initiatives, such as FAO, should also be taken into consideration.

Ms. Lejla Suman, director of REC Bosnia and Herzegovina, summarised the suggestions arising from the discussion group “Further positioning ENVSEC in SEE”. The exchange of experience among ENVSEC partner organisations in terms of project design and implementation was emphasised as a key tool for ENVSEC. In external forums, ENVSEC should be represented as distinct from individual ENVSEC partner organisations. ENVSEC was encouraged to maintain its regional context and outlook, as effective mechanisms in sub-regional and bilateral terms are already in place.

Participants stressed the need for national ENVSEC meetings. Both technical assistance and political cooperation remain important areas for ENVSEC. Considering the limited budgets of ENVSEC interventions, greater value could be added in facilitating governmental decisions, memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements. Regional results should also be translated into national contexts by ENVSEC. Organisationally, it was recommended to enhance communication work by translating outputs, in particular ENVSEC websites targeted at SEE, into national languages; issuing press releases and newsletters on a monthly basis; integrating ENVSEC websites into the websites of the countries; maintaining a directory of regional contacts; and publishing a one-page promotional flyer describing key results for use by national partners.

Ms. Srna Sudar, director of REC Montenegro, presented the conclusions of the discussion group “Mapping potential partnerships and donor cooperation in SEE”. It was suggested that ENVSEC should collaborate with thematic networks in the region, such as the Regional Wildland Fire Network and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG), and should strengthen cooperation with the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as well as its structures for the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy. Initiatives relevant to ENVSEC, such as the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI) were recommended for advancing synergies.

ENVSEC should further engage in exchanges with CSOs to ensure rights to access to information, public participation and access to an impartial justice system, which are essential in enabling the public to demand environment and security solutions. Cooperation with universities and industries should also be sought in order to broaden ENVSEC's multi-stakeholder approach. Ideas such as the creation of clearinghouses in the countries for environment and security issues were brought up as a possible niche for ENVSEC. As regards the donor community, participants underlined the importance of coordination through regional meetings and consultations.

In a discussion facilitated by Ms. Kozhuharova and Mr. Sandei, the role of ENVSEC national focal points as ambassadors of ENVSEC in the countries was reiterated. In order to increase outreach and raise the profile of ENVSEC, national focal points need to inform their ministers and request the inclusion of good practices and key results on their national and regional agendas. In the future, national ENVSEC consultations could be undertaken by the national focal points. It was stressed that ENVSEC in SEE will seek a better balance of ministries of environment and ministries of foreign affairs, particularly with the involvement of the latter's multilateral departments. In conclusion, Ms. Kozhuharova described how the results of the regional meeting will be brought to the attention of the donor community and EU instruments. ENVSEC national focal points and partners will meet again at a thematic, regional meeting, and NATO focal points will also be engaged.

In the closing session, Ms. Sandra Wibmer of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) outlined the history of Austria's support to ENVSEC since 2003, first through the Ministry of Environment and from 2005 through ADA, acknowledging the fact that environment and security are cross-regional issues and that regional cooperation is therefore of critical importance. She stressed that the current programme was built on the previous achievements of ENVSEC in SEE, while at the same time allowing the flexibility to take into account the evolving needs of the region at any stage. While maintaining the programme's regional scope, national needs must be understood as a basis, thus national consultations and the structured, systematic involvement of national focal points are imperative. ENVSEC is advised to continue taking advantage of the strengths of its partner organisations rather than addressing additional priorities without sufficient capacities. ENVSEC also needs to enhance its outreach through communication with national focal points and partners, and to bring ENVSEC to a ministerial level.

Ms. Kozhuharova closed the meeting on behalf of Ms. Szigeti Bonifert and thanked all the participants for the fruitful discussions.

Annexes:

1. Final agenda
2. Updated list of participants