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The future of the Dinaric Arc economy lies in its natural richness

CAPLJINA, BiH, 29 June - State representatives of 5 Dinaric Arc countries, local authorities, protected area managers, nature conservation experts, private sector, NGOs, as well as a number of international organizations are meeting today in Capljina at the International Conference on Transboundary Cooperation in the Dinaric Arc. This is the first time that such a wide group of experts and decision makers from the region have convened to enhance stronger cooperation across borders for the continued well-being of both local communities and nature.

"We believe this is just the beginning of a process that will valorize natural beauty and bring the prosperity to the communities in these often remote and less developed regions", said Deni Porej, Head of Conservation at WWF Mediterranean. Pieter de Baan, SNV Regional Director for the Balkans added: "Creating cross-border dynamics benefits the people on both sides of the border and protects their common interests; 1+1=3!"

In 2008 governments of countries of South Eastern Europe united around the Big Win¹ statement, committing to improve the network of protected areas by joining efforts across borders. Following up on this statement and based upon the Dinaric Arc Initiative, IUCN, WWF and SNV developed the project "Environment for people in the Dinaric Arc" that gathers today in Capljina many environmentalists and decision makers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. The event is kindly supported by the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the NGO "Lijepa nasa".

The "Environment for people in the Dinaric Arc" project covers 6 areas from 5 countries - NP Plitvicka jezera-NP Una, NP Durmitor-NP Sutjeska, NP Tara-Drina, Neretva delta, Mountain Dinara, and NP Prokletije / Bjeshkët e Namuna. On those sites assessments of natural and cultural values were made, suggesting the way forward for improved regional cooperation and strengthened environmental governance. Some of the conclusions from the assessments are that there is a great potential and plenty of opportunities for the sustainable management of cross-border protected areas in the Dinaric Arc where cooperation is already existing but joint actions and planning are missing. A demonstration of the willingness for cooperation are the two Memoranda of Understandings between cross-border partners showing the support and shared interests of local actors.

"Now that the Dinaric Arc becomes a model for cross-border cooperation at the regional level, it is instrumental to agree upon joint actions that will ensure long-lasting conservation of its natural resources", said Boris Erg, Director of IUCN's Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe. "Helping the development of the local economy while keeping biodiversity values unspoiled is a challenge but also an opportunity for the entire region".

"During the International Year of Biodiversity Finland stresses that we must do more for the conservation and promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity.", says Dr. Matti Nummelin, Senior Environmental Adviser at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. "Transboundary collaboration in conservation is a good example of how we can promote the objectives of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity. Finland has long traditions in this work with our neighbors and we are glad that we can support this work also in Dinaric Arc."

¹ The "Big Win" - The Dinaric Arc initiative is backed up by the commitments made by the governments of the Dinaric Arc countries at the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 9) – the so called "Big Win" joint statement. Following this statement the countries have come up with a list of priorities for conservation.

For further information:

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Photos (audio/video material) as well as assessments download are available at:
<http://www.dinaricarc.net/>

Notes for editors:

The Dinaric Arc is a region of South-Eastern Europe encompassing a large portion of the Western Balkans between the Adriatic Sea and the Danube Plain. It covers an area of approximately 100 000 km² land surface and more than 6000 km of coastline. The Dinaric Alps form the backbone of the region, which is endowed with a natural and cultural heritage whose richness and variety are almost unparalleled in Europe. The Dinaric Arc hosts important freshwater ecosystems, including subterranean river and lakes, large well-preserved forests with a lot of endemic plant species, unique karst and cave habitats, wetlands, coastal and marine habitats. It is home to populations of large carnivores – lynx, brown bear, wolf serving as a corridor for these species between the Alps and mountains of the South-East Europe. It is a place of long interaction between human settlements and their natural settings

The Dinaric Arc Initiative is a broad framework of collaboration between WWF, UNESCO-BRESCE, IUCN, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, Euronatur, SNV, REC, and ECNC. These organisations are active in the region of Dinaric Arc with projects and initiatives to secure the preservation of wealth and integrity of the of the region through establishment of network of protected areas, cultural diversity, empowering local societies in their efforts for sustainable development, integrate environmental standards in the other sectoral policies and practices. The initiative serves as a cross-sectoral framework of cooperation, where natural and cultural assets are harmonised with common territorial development.

Environment for People - Sustaining Rural communities in Their Traditional Landscapes Through Strengthened Environmental Governance in Trans-boundary Protected Areas of the Dinaric Arc (Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc) is a project set up by a IUCN, SNV and WWF and it is designed to promote the natural and cultural values of the area, while enhancing local livelihoods through improved regional cooperation and strengthened environmental governance. It runs for 3 years - from 2009 to 2011 and covers 6 pilot areas in 5 countries – NP Plitvicka jezera-NP Una, NP Durmitor-NP Sutjeska, NP Tara- Drina, Neretva delta, Mountain Dinara, and Prokletije / Bjeshkët e Namuna.

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.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

About WWF

WWF, the global conservation organization, is one of the world's largest and most respected independent environmental conservation organizations. WWF has a global network active in over 100 countries with some 5 million supporters.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. WWF is known only by its initials.

www.panda.org/mediterranean

About SNV

SNV is an International development organisation with almost half a century of world-wide experience. Working in over 30 countries across four continents, SNV combines the inspiration of the development worker with professional management and advisory services, strengthening the capacity of local organisations in order to create real and lasting impact in economic development. SNV offers high quality professional services and knowledge to groups and individuals to build strong, stable and successful organisations that create the conditions in which people and communities are able to flourish.

In the region, SNV has been active for over 15 years, working in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and, most recently, Kosovo.

www.snvworld.org

About Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The ministry performs administrative, expert and other tasks falling under competence of the Federation BiH related to: air, water and soil protection; drafting environmental strategy and policy; air, water and soil quality standards; ecological monitoring and control of air, water and soil; drafting of development strategies and policies in the area of tourism and catering activity; monitoring of tourist flows and trends in local and international markets; directing the long-term development of tourism within the economic system and other tasks as set out by the applicable legislation.

www.fmoit.gov.ba

About NGO Lijepa Naša

Lijepa Nasa is dedicated to promoting environmental knowledge, especially among children and adolescents, about the need and ways of protecting environment, developing environmental consciousness of adults, especially employees in the sector of economy, and promote growth of the economy on the principles of balanced and sustainable development, protection and organization of actions to improve the quality of environment independently and in collaboration with other organizations; promote natural beauty and value of the Herzegovina-Neretva County, and promote patriotic consciousness, as well as other activities prescribed by the Statute law.

