

## **THE PODGORICA INITIATIVE**

### **Declaration of Ministers and High-Level Representatives**

**on the occasion of**

**the 1st High-level Ministerial Panel on Responding to Climate**

**and Environmental Challenges in SEE**

We, the Ministers and high-level representatives of the Environment Ministries of South East Europe, gathered to re-affirm our commitment to the implementation of the Environment dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy, endorsed and adopted by the Governments of SEE in November 2013, agree to:

1. Express strong appreciation to the aspirations of the SEE2020 Strategy and the Berlin Process that demonstrate willingness and political support for the European perspective of the region;
2. Recognize the role and progress of the Regional Working Group for Environment under the auspices of the SEE 2020 Strategy, in programming, overseeing, and monitoring the Environment dimension;
3. Commend our cooperation with RCC in steering the SEE 2020 Strategy and the REC in coordinating the Environment dimension in cooperation with the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group and all other partners;
4. Integrate the environmental protection in the RCC Strategy and Work Program 2017-2019 taking into consideration the respective national priorities.
5. Call for mainstreaming the Environment Dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy into the programming of the EC assistance in line with our jointly discussed and identified priorities;
6. Commit ourselves to shared regional vision for sustainable development thus jointly embarking on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement, as well as the EU 2050 Road Map and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and by transposing them into national sustainable development and climate change policies;
7. Increase efforts to address the environmental concerns and effects of climate change through mitigation and adaptation measures in SEE in the context of

integrated, smart and sustainable growth as to improve the prosperity of all citizens;

8. Foster enhanced governance system, partnerships and cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development in SEE region in line with the national priorities under the EU accession process, especially through efforts to strengthen environmental governance,
9. Encourage integration of the protection and sustainable management of natural resources - air, land, rivers lakes, coastal and marine ecosystems, biodiversity, forest and mountain ecosystems, including protection of ecosystems and sustainable use of ecosystem services towards sustainability of economic growth;
10. Stress the need for coherent policy implementation in the region by strengthening efficient administrative and financing structures and relevant institutions tasked with enforcement, environmental monitoring and reporting, while recognising the importance of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information for knowledge-based policy and decision making;
11. Take the action to reduce anthropogenic effects to ecosystems of the Adriatic Sea and its Coast and to support integrated coastal zone management;
12. Take an action to promote and when possible foster application of clean technologies that are climate sensitive and promote the patterns of sustainable consumption and production in the context of green economy and sustainable management of the green corridors supporting connectivity over SEE region;
13. Increase our attention to Energy Efficiency in our region as a way of creating jobs, fighting climate change and reducing energy poverty;
14. Highlight importance of contribution of the civil society, the international organizations and other relevant stakeholders in the region;
15. We agree to annually convene a high-level panel of Environment Ministers of SEE with the aim of providing guidance on programming and implementation of the Environment dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy and we request the RCC and REC to organize it with other relevant partners;
16. We express gratitude to the Government of Montenegro for hosting this 1st High-level Panel of Environment Ministers of SEE;
17. We call upon the Government of Montenegro to convey this declaration to the attention of the Paris Western Balkans Summit in 2016.

Podgorica, 1 April 2016