

The CEE region joins other parties of Convention in recognizing the importance of the multiple linkages between biodiversity and human health. Among the people of our region, this deep-rooted understanding do not even speaks about linkages, then about direct dependance of human health on the healthy ecosystems in our environment.

We believe that this topic is not a new one to other parts of the world either. It has been embeded in different civilizations since their beginnings. It has always been present, but in various forms, from „traditional medicine“, to the need for mental health supported by healthy environment.

However, accelerated urban development and living far from nature, puts us today in a need to re-learn the importance of biodiversity for our lifes.

In this regard, the countries of our region, strongly affected by the current pandemic, welcome the revival and strengthening of the One Health initiative, as well as the conclusions of the Workshop on Biodiversity and Pandemics. We are aware that One Health initiative, without integrative reduction of drivers on biodiversity, cannot bring satisfactory results on its own.

Reduction and effective regulation of direct drivers of biodiversity loss is impossible to achieve without comprehensive work to reduce indirect drivers. Among them, poverty, social insecurity and transition, the state of human, technical, administrative and other capacities for sustainable nature management, as well as insufficient regional connections, affect a large part of our region.

The Convention can significantly contribute to a sustainable response to COVID-19 and possible other pandemics, through the strengthening of regional and subregional platforms for cooperation. For example, a Green recovery for the CEE Region should be defined to provide support for efforts to meet existing threats and challenges to nature, not just promoting immediate economic growth, then ensuring healthy environment and people's livelihood in the longer-term. It implies that the recovery from COVID-19 is, at the same time, an opportunity to promote policy change that can restructure regional and global society.

Another, subregional example is just adopted the Sofia Declaration which aims to promote and implement a new growth strategy towards a modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy under the framework of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. This refers to Biodiversity Task Force of the South Eastern Europe (BDTF SEE) as a mechanism to strengthen regional cooperation and strategic planning on biodiversity conservation and implementation of commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

At this time, when the world is connected by a pandemic, as a consequence of unsustainable development, we consider the establishment of a new Global Biodiversity Framework as an opportunity for a long-term shift in human behaviour towards nature. We strongly call for the unity of the parties of the Convention in the development of an efficient and long-lasting framework, which will not neglect the efforts made so far, but should also be feasible for all of us.

We believe that such a shift in human behaviour cannot be qualitatively and permanently achieved without systemic changes in the education on biodiversity and on regulatory, material, and nonmaterial NCP. Development of appropriate knowledge should be given more space and better quality, especially for youth.

We are witnessing a situation where classical education in biology and other natural sciences is not functional, for the purpose of good understanding and awareness of the importance of nature for human life. We believe that the Convention on Biodiversity, by GBF, should bring together and lead partner organizations and institutions in the change of education on biodiversity. Joint action in this regard should be implemented on a global, regional and national scale.

The pandemic is a major global health and economic challenge. Nevertheless, challenges served civilizations as an opportunity for learning and progress. We hope it will be the same this time as well.