

Response to the request for submission of relevant information on Mainstreaming of biodiversity and other strategic actions to enhance implementation for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (9-13 July 2018 in Montreal, Canada) on agenda item 5, on the topic of “Mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across sectors and other strategic actions to enhance implementation.”

From: secretariat of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

With respect to mainstreaming of biodiversity, inputs on the following were invited:

- Case studies and effective practices, guidelines, methodologies, experiences and tools on biodiversity mainstreaming in the relevant sectors, as well as cross-cutting policies (e.g., development plans and budgets);

The Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus in the Drina River Basin (available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47750>), shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, demonstrates the application of a participatory methodology for assessing intersectoral links, trade-offs and benefits developed in the framework of the Convention on the Protection and Used of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention):

<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41427>

The process allowed for identification of the main intersectoral issues in the management of water, ecosystem, energy and land resources, as well as a host of possible solutions to them.

The Drina Basin hosts a diversity of habitats, from mountains and glaciers, to canyons, forest, meadows, wetlands and underground rivers. Consequently, there is great biodiversity in the basin and a significant number of endemic species, as well as species that are threatened throughout the rest of Europe. The basin has continuously provided benefits in terms of scenic value, biodiversity conservation and fishing (both wild and farm-raised) and is considered to have high potential for tourism and recreation, which could provide significant sources of income for rural communities. Measures to cooperate to protect the Drina’s biodiversity would obviously generate environmental benefits (in the form of biodiversity conservation), but would also support the marketing of Drina products and services (such as tourism) and the generation of the associated economic and social benefits.

- Examples of laws, policy frameworks, or administrative measures that were introduced or strengthened in order to further the mainstreaming of biodiversity (either aimed at the relevant sectors or that have broad application across sectors);

The nexus assessment of the Drina River Basin can serve as reference for development of strategic documents and actions.

The assessment highlights the value of ecosystem services and protection of biodiversity as a crucial asset for sustainable development in a rural border region of the Drina Basin.

The assessment calls for a careful consideration of the trade-offs related to development in the basin, notably of hydropower.

The assessment draws attention to the potential of concrete actions such as the following to improve sustainability, well-being and livelihoods:

- Strengthen as agricultural orientation to preserve nature, environment and biodiversity, and emphasis on high-quality traditional products or organic products. Expanding traditional biodiversity-friendly agriculture which has as the main benefit the increase in agricultural production but also biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.
- Environmental flow regulation needs to be developed. Increased water flows in the dry season would have positive effects on biodiversity, fisheries and agriculture.
- Develop tourism infrastructure, such as paths for tourists to reach important biodiversity areas, balancing supporting local communities and nature conservation.
- Extend the existing national conservation efforts to advance towards the establishment of transboundary protected areas, notably the Tara-Drina.

Overall, the assessment underlines that significant benefits can be gained from protecting biodiversity in a collaborative manner across sectors, but this requires e.g. addressing the pollution sources.

- Lessons learned as well as remaining gaps and challenges associated with biodiversity mainstreaming;
 1. The interest in “nexus” approaches to look at trade-offs related to development can help to better reconcile different resource management and environmental protection objectives, but commonly the ecosystem and biodiversity aspects do not get enough attention in the nexus discussions. Under the Water Convention, an effort has been made to give prominence to them.
 2. Biodiversity conservation’s impact can be reinforced by transboundary cooperation.¹
 3. Biodiversity conservation would benefit from closer linking to and coordination with water management, as a good environmental status of waters is commonly among the objectives and the dependent ecosystems are also considered. Nature-based solutions have potential as water management measures.² Institutions (joint bodies) for transboundary water cooperation, promoted by the Water Convention, provide helpful platforms between riparian countries for coordination, replication and up-scaling.
 4. Eco-tourism in the Drina Basin can have positive linkages with the agricultural sector (agro-tourism, marketing of organic agriculture) and income generated can be used partly to invest in nature conservation. Guidelines for the promotion of eco-tourism at the level

¹ Various challenges but also the value of cooperation in pan-Europe is illustrated in the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters (UNECE, 2011; available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=26343>)

² In the basin of the Sava River to which the Drina is a tributary, the implementation of nature-based solutions is also generating several co-benefits through ecosystem services, from flood mitigation and the protection of biodiversity to economic growth related to ecotourism and improved navigation. This is show-cased in the 2018 edition of the UN World Water Development Report “Nature-based solutions for water”, including how transboundary cooperation is crucial for achieving such benefits.

of the Sava basin constitute a valuable reference.³ Raising awareness of local communities on how to preserve environmental quality and how to take advantage of business opportunities, as well as developing supportive infrastructure managing its potential negative impacts are important accompanying measures.

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³ Available from:
http://www.savacommission.org/dms/docs/dokumenti/documents_publications/publications/other_publications/transboundary_eco_tourism_guidelines.pdf