



JOINT CSO STATEMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN AGENDA IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Sarajevo, June 2, 2022

We, the civil-society organisations, gathered at the conference “Through Regional Cooperation Towards Sustainable Protected Areas” (May 31st-June 3rd, 2022, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) hereby issue this statement for the implementation of the Green Agenda in the Western Balkan countries.

Recalling that:

- Western Balkan countries share many challenges in the field of environment and climate change.
- Despite some positive examples, policy and decision making is largely done in a non-transparent way with limited opportunities for involvement of the civil sector and independent experts.
- The governments show commitment to the environmental agenda mostly in a declarative manner, but the adoption of new strategies and decisions toward green transition is still very slow and implementation is lacking, which shows lack of political will.
- Water and air pollution, inadequate waste management, unsustainable and uncontrolled use of natural resources, and coal-based energy production remain the biggest environmental challenges in the Western Balkans region.
- Nature protection is not recognised by other sectoral policies and is not considered as a priority and lacks significant funding to support sustainable practices and protected area management.

Noting that:

- There is lack of clarity about the process and funding around the Green Agenda both on a regional and national level.
- Although civil society has been recognized as one of the key actors in the planning and implementation of the Green Agenda, effective engagement of CSO is still not enabled.
- In most countries in the region, there is very little information and understanding about the purpose and goal of the Green Agenda, at the same time, the processes led by Governments related to the preparation of the project lists are behind closed doors.



- Some projects proposed under the Green Agenda involve road, gas, coal infrastructures and developments, which are in contrast to the objectives of decarbonisation of the region.
- Lack of interest from governments and businesses for environmental protection.
- Although Governments signed the Sofia declaration, we note the lack of political will and capacities to implement Green Agenda.

Declaring that:

- In a time of climate crisis, energy crisis and war we strongly believe that all efforts must be placed on understanding what transformation of economies and ecosystems truly mean so that we can all accelerate these processes and actions and help societies and the Planet recover.
- Therefore, we ask the European Commission to provide guidance to the Governments in the region for appropriate identification and implementation of potential Green Agenda projects and action plans.
- In this respect, a clear criteria check-list linked to the main objectives of the Green Agenda would provide the necessary steps and methods for decision makers. CSOs should take part in the creation of these criteria and check lists for projects.
- Regional CSO consultation should be enabled via a wide Forum that enables involvement of relevant CSOs with a consultative and monitoring role. This Forum should directly correlate to the work of the biodiversity Task Force.
- Public participation should be ensured at all levels of decision making- local, central and regional in order to address the needs of local communities, but also cross-border and transboundary challenges. Timely, inclusive and meaningful participation of CSOs need to be a pre-condition to the approval of Green Agenda projects and plans proposed by national governments.
- A wide public information campaign of the process, its steps and benefits to society is needed.
- Capacity building for governments and CSOs need to be provided especially for the five pillars of the Green Agenda in order to ensure knowledge, skills and ability to successfully implement the projects.

With this statement we, the undersigned CSOs, demand a transparent, participatory and meaningful process for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Green Agenda in the Western Balkan countries.



Supported by:

1. Association for nature, environment and sustainable development Sunce - Republic of Croatia
2. Association IZVOR Kratovo - Republic of North Macedonia
3. Belgrade Open School - Republic of Serbia
4. Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia - Republic of Serbia
5. BIRN Macedonia - Republic of North Macedonia
6. Brodsko ekološko društvo (BED) - Republic of Croatia
7. Centar za okolišno održivi razvoj (COOR) - Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD) - Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. Center for climate change - Republic of North Macedonia
10. Center for education and development (CED) - Republic of North Macedonia
11. Center for Educational Initiatives "Step by Step" - Bosnia and Herzegovina
12. Center for Environment - Bosnia and Herzegovina
13. Center for Strategic Litigation - Group for Legal and Political Studies - Kosovo
14. CISP (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli) - Bosnia and Herzegovina
15. Eko Akcija - Bosnia and Herzegovina
16. Eko forum Zenica - Bosnia and Herzegovina
17. Eko-svest, Republic of North Macedonia
18. Exploring Society "Ursus Speleos" - Republic of North Macedonia
19. FINCH Prizren - Kosovo
20. Foundation Muharem Berbic - Bosnia and Herzegovina
21. Green key - Republic of Serbia
22. Greenways - Bosnia and Herzegovina
23. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka - Bosnia and Herzegovina
24. Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania
25. Institute for Development Policy (INDEP) - Kosovo
26. Lets Do It Kosovo - Kosovo
27. Macedonian ecological society (MES) - Republic of North Macedonia
28. Montenegrin ecologist society (MES) - Republic of Montenegro
29. Natura MK - Republic of North Macedonia
30. NGO Green Home - Republic of Montenegro
31. Ornithological society "Naše ptice" - Bosnia and Herzegovina
32. Policy and Strategy Creating Center - Republic of Serbia
33. PPNEA - Republic of Albania
34. Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute (RERI) - Republic of Serbia
35. Society for Research and Protection of Biodiversity - Bosnia and Herzegovina
36. Society Stara planina - Republic of Serbia



37. Sokobanjsko ekološko društvo/The Ecological Society of Sokobanja - Republic of Serbia
38. The Association for the Protection of Great Bustard - Republic of Serbia
39. Udruženje za zaštitu šuma / Pokret "Odbranimo šume Fruške gore" - Republic of Serbia
40. UG Fojničani / SNIK Atom - Bosnia and Herzegovina
41. Young Researchers of Serbia - Republic of Serbia
42. WWF Adria