REPORT of the THIRD REGULAR MEETING

of the PRESPA PARK

CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Third Regular Meeting of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee

Korcha, 17-18 May 2002

Hosted by the Government of Albania - Ministry of Environment

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At the invitation of Mr.Zamir Dedej, Director of Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Department of the Ministry of Environment of Albania, representative of the Ministry to the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee (CC), the CC held its third regular meeting in the Grand Hotel, Korcha, on May 17-18, 2002.

Six out of the ten members (or alternate members) of the CC from the three countries involved and from Ramsar/MedWet, as well as observers from international and other organisations, attended the meeting (see the complete list of participants in Annex IV). Mr.Michael Modinos, representative of the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, was represented by Mr.Spyros Plessas of the same Ministry, and Mr.Spyros Kouvelis, MedWet Co-ordinator, by Mr.Thymio Papayannis, Senior Advisor on Mediterranean Wetlands, while Mrs.Myrsini Malakou of SPP and Mr.Aleko Miho of PPNEA were absent.

The meeting was opened by the Secretary General of the Korcha Prefecture, Mr.Niko Kondili, and by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment of Albania, Mr.Pellumb Shehaj, and chaired by Mr.Zamir Dedej.

Agenda

1. Opening session:

1.1. Welcome address by the Secretary General of the Korcha Prefecture
1.2. Welcome address by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment of Albania

2. Preparation of a GEF project proposal - PDF B request:

2.1. Presentation by Mr. Nick Remple, UNDP
2.2. Questions and discussion

3. Completion of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) study:

3.1. Presentation of the draft Strategic Action Plan by Mr. Spase Shumka, National Co-ordinator of the project
3.2. Discussion and approval

4. Preparation of a hydrogeological project:

4.1. Brief presentation by Mr. Spase Shumka on behalf of the Secretariat
4.2. Discussion

4. Implementation of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee Communication Plan:

5.1. Discussion of and decision on the issue of the Prespa Park Communication Officer

6. GTZ project proposals:

6.1. Brief presentation by Mr. Dieter Biallas, GTZ
6.2. Discussion

7. Any other business

7.1. Memory of Prof. Leke Gjiknuri
7.2. Building infrastructure project
7.3. Prespa/ Ohrid Biosphere Reserve

8. Closure of the meeting:

8.1. Adoption of decisions, recommendations and conclusions of the meeting
8.2. Date and place of the next meeting
8.3. Closing remarks

Summary Minutes

The Secretary General of the Korcha Prefecture, Mr.Niko Kondili, welcomed the participants and talked about the great interest of the Korcha Prefecture on the new developments at the Prespa Park area. As representative of the Central Government the Prefecture is giving a full support to the Prespa Park CC. He also stressed the will for a support in the further steps of Prespa Park CC. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment then on behalf of the Ministry of Environment congratulates the Prespa Park CC for the achievements and positive developments. Mentioning that the Albanian Government recently through the improvement of the legal framework for Albanian environment in general and protected areas particularly, he expressed the great interest of giving more attention to the issue of the Prespa Park. He concluded by wishing every success to the Committee's third regular meeting.

On the first issue on the agenda, namely the PDF B request to the GEF, the Chairman, Mr.Zamir Dedej, suggested that, despite the fact that the document was circulated to the CC members less than three days before the meeting, the CC should not postpone its adoption but proceed quickly in order to be able to secure some project preparation funds until the end of the year. He then asked Mr.Nick Remple (UNDP) to briefly present the PDF B document that was prepared by the external consultants. Mr.Remple did, in fact, present the document in brief. He, moreover, noted that some of the general comments included in a short note by the SPP's Director, Mrs.M.Malakou, that had been distributed to all participants were correct and could well be reflected in the text. In this context, the paragraphs on the alternative livelihoods study could be redrafted, and the terms of a broader hydrogeological study could indeed be funded by the PDF B. He then stressed that the detailed Terms of Reference appearing in the Annexes of the document should not be discussed in detail and finalised at this moment, since they would not be submitted to the GEF. They could thus be better elaborated in the next few months and finalised at the "inception workshop", which should take place immediately after the project is approved and

implementation starts. He then answered some questions posed by CC members regarding the structure of the organogram, the choice of Asamati as the location of the Project Unit and the method of appointment of the National Project Directors.

Mr. Matthias von Bechtolscheim (KfW) concurred with Mr.Remple and added that the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) study should really be taken into account in the PDF B planning, since it is the overriding document that should guide the Prespa Park activities; he further thought the terms of Reference would be greatly improved if they were redrafted to be task-oriented instead of expert-oriented.

Mr.Ioannis Germanidis (Mayor of Prespa, Greece) raised some objections regarding approval of the PDF document at this meeting, in view of the fact that the text had arrived very late and at least he – and probably all other local authority representatives to the Committee - had not been able to consider it at all since there was no time for translation in the national languages. He further stressed the importance of local participation in any activities planned, without which the project would have no impact on the ground and would not achieve its objectives. He also pointed out that the operation of the CC should evolve with time from exchange of opinions towards adoption of effective decisions, and this can only be done respecting the set procedures and allowing all CC members an equal opportunity for participation.

Mr. Bechtolscheim and Dedej agreed with all the points raised and suggested to approve the PDF document in principle and devote all the necessary time needed to the Terms of Reference of the PDF activities.

Mr.Branko Micevski (Secretariat/ MAP), referring to the question of how was the choice of Asamati made and to one of the SPP comments, according to which the project units in both Greece and the FYR of Macedonia should be located in the local authority premises, said that the Information Centre in Asamati is a very appropriate place to host the Project Unit and that this would not take anything from (i.e. be to the detriment of) the local authorities.

Mr.Remple expressed his agreement with Mr.Germanidis and said that improvement of local involvement in the project would be very welcome. Mr.Thymio Papayannis (Ramsar/ MedWet) added that local participation seems difficult even at the CC level and that should be addressed.

The Chairman then asked Mrs.Vivi Roumeliotou (Secretariat/ SPP) to present the SPP comments on the PDF B. She briefly referred to the main points raised therein and especially to the need for establishing a solid link between the results of the SAP study and the PDF activities, which is conspicuously missing right now. She added that the SPP could also suggest specific editing changes to the text and asked the Committee to allow for fifteen days, in which the document could be translated and some minor redrafting could be done. Mr.Papayannis suggested as a compromise to decide that the SAP is the guiding document and allow for ten days of comments and Mr.Remple agreed to collect the comments and send the CC the final text with the assistance of the Secretariat.

At that instance, Ms.Kaja Sukova (Ministry of Environment, FYR of Macedonia) arrived at the meeting. The Chairman briefed her on the previous discussion and asked whether she has any major comments. She noted that the Municipality of Resen has not been informed or seen any documents, including the SAP study and the PDF B request, and started making specific editing comments. In this context, she objected to the reference of the BSPSM as the manager of the Project Unit; Mr.Micevski reacted to that view. Another point of discussion that Ms.Sukova raised was whether the boundaries of the project need to be reconsidered or whether they are already set and coincide with the boundaries of the Prespa Park as defined in the SAP study.

The Chairman concluded the discussion saying that it should be made clear that apart from the changes specifically endorsed during the previous debate there should only be open a narrow path of amendments and that the Secretariat should collect all relevant comments

and forward them to Mr.Remple.

Then the second item on the agenda was discussed, namely the Strategic Action Plan study. Mr.Spase Shumka (Secretariat/ PPNEA) briefly talked about this first opportunity for collaboration between the NGOs participating in the Prespa Park and presented the results of the study. Mr.Dedej commented on the high quality of the study and said that, in view of the fact that the SAP text had only recently been circulated, the Secretariat should apply to the GTZ for funding that would make it possible to carry out appropriate consultations in all three countries. In that context, the production of an executive summary – of Chapter C in particular - that would make the long text of the study more manageable would also be very helpful.

Mr.Papayannis enquired whether any consultations have been carried out during the course of preparation of the study. Mr.Shumka replied that already in the guidelines for the study it was made clear that local involvement was a prerequisite and that, at least on the Albanian side, the Prespa Commune has been really closely involved in the formulation of proposals, and Mr.Micevski concurred. Ms.Sukova said that the Macedonian Ministry would need more time to revise the proposed measures

Mr.Dieter Biallas further asked to see specific terms of reference for these consultations before he could commit GTZ to actually fund this activity and the Chairman said he and the Secretariat could do this in the next few days.

Mr.Germanidis expressed the opinion that although the SAP as a whole and the axes of Chapter C in particular are very positive, they are rather unrealistic and the objectives of the have to be prioritised. A basic priority is to co-ordinate locally and at the regional and central level in each country. More specifically, a significant problem, at least for the side of the Greek Prespa, is the overlap of jurisdiction, since planning is done at three levels, i.e. by the local, regional and central government.

Answering a relevant question by the Chairman, Mrs.Roumeliotou said that the Greek SAP team has extensively consulted with the local municipality and the Region during drafting of its contribution; however, the Mayor has indeed not yet seen the SAP text in Greek but when he does he is certainly the competent person to put the right priorities in the planning contained therein. She also replied to a question by Mr.Papayannis regarding the contractual obligations of the SPP to the Ministry of Environment of Greece that as far as the Ministry is concerned the SAP project has been completed and of course there is no more funding available.

Mr. Bechtolscheim expressed the view that the SAP study is indeed a very good piece of work, which would benefit from prioritisation, as well as an indication of which is the responsible authority/ body for each action proposed.

Mr.Nasip Bekiri (Municipality of Resen, FYR of Macedonia) noted that there are many problems with the study from the Macedonian study, that the Municipality has given proposals on all areas of concern, which are not included, and that, despite good collaboration with Mr.Micevski, the local authority views seem to be excluded from the final result.

The discussion on SAP was wrapped up with the understanding that the necessary consultations in the three countries would be completed by the end of September 2002, so as to have the study endorsed by the time the PDF funds are approved too.

The next item on the agenda was the hydrogeological project. Mr.Shumka briefly recapped the steps that led to the existing hydrogeological proposal and Mr.Dedej expressed the opinion that the water issues are very important and that the PDF B phase should help the Committee prepare a better project proposal. Mr. Bechtolscheim agreed that there could be a feasibility study prepared with PDF funds and then consider how to fund the full hydrogeological project. Mrs.Roumeliotou added that according to the existing proposal too

the project is divided up in phases, the two first being preparatory for the full deployment of the project; these could indeed be funded by PDF B.

Mr.Dedej expressed the view that the issue was too urgent for the Committee to wait much longer, that the PDF B could be used to elaborate the proposal according to the donor's requirements and then take the project out of the GEF procedure and find the funds to implement measures of water management and at the same time provide solutions to the irrigation needs of thousands of farmers. Mr.Papayannis agreed that agricultural needs are important but the question is for what kind of agriculture and under what terms. He said that there should be a proper study and at the same time the three countries should proceed with urgent management measures, if needed. He concluded by saying that water issues should in fact be a permanent item on the CC's agenda. Ms.Sukova agreed that there should be immediate measures but she was not ready to propose any at this point.

Mr. Bechtolscheim said the KfW would like to channel its resources for the Prespa Park through the GEF project and not independently and suggested to incorporate the hydrogeological proposal as it stands in the Terms of Reference of the PDF and later elaborate the details of implementation.

Mr. Dedej then asked the representative of Agriculture sector (Ministry of Agriculture, Albania) to address the Committee. He said that 18,000 ha and 25,000 people are currently occupied in agriculture in the area of Korcha and that the problem of decreasing water level is a concern for all NGOs and governments. He added that the Albanian side had agreed to permanently stop pumping the Devoll River into Micro Prespa and, moreover, to try and resolve the irrigation problem of the area in other ways and not use Prespa waters. This is a big social problem for the Albanian side and other approaches to get round it are already under exploration; in any case, considerable funds would certainly be needed in order to implement any solution.

The Chairman then recapped the discussion concluding that the existing hydrogeological proposal would be included in the PDF B and then hope to achieve a much quicker pace in executing the necessary works.

At the beginning of the second day of the meeting, the first topic discussed was the Prespa Park Communication Plan funding proposal to the GTZ, and in particular the seat of the Communication Officer. Mr.Dedej presented the case for hosting this new Officer at the PPNEA offices in Tirana; the main reasons put forward were those of equitable geographical distribution between the three countries, in view of the fact that the seat of the Secretariat is in Ag. Germanos, Greece, and the GEF Project Unit will be located in the Asamati/ Resen area in the FYR of Macedonia, and the reduction of costs that would be achieved by moving the seat in Tirana instead of Athens.

Mr.Biallas noted that payment by GTZ could not be made to a Greek institution, although this problem could somehow be bypassed. In view of the fact that the CC chair changes every six months, he also thought the idea to locate the Communication Officer in a capital would not be a good idea and offered the GTZ facilities in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia as the seat of the officer. Mr.Dedej and Papayannis noted that the Communication Officer is in no way linked to the Chairman but rather to the Secretariat and arguably to the GEF structure; Mr.Papayannis put forward the idea that this person could be linked to and located near the PDF International Project Manager.

Ms.Sukova remarked that the initial question to be decided is what procedure should be followed for the selection of the Officer and not where the seat will be. She added that the Greek language should certainly be omitted by the required skills and she proposed to issue an international tender for the position. Mr.Dedej objected to having a westerner in that job and said it would be preferable to have somebody from the region and insisted that he/she should be based in Tirana and for practical reasons should speak Albanian. Subsequently, the position of the MAP representatives - who had been unfortunately obliged to leave the

meeting early – was read out, according to which there should be a transparent selection process in all three countries and choose the right person for the position, the nationality of whom would then determine the seat.

Mr.Papayannis and Germanidis supported the idea that the Officer be based in Albania, but Ms.Sukova insisted that she could only agree on a fair procedure that would lead to the selection of the appropriate person and then determine the seat. Mr.Papayannis and Remple maintained that the quality of the person to be recruited is the first issue to be considered and that it is reasonable to have the seat in Albania but not to determine the required nationality; in fact, nationality cannot be a criterion in any case when a transboundary co-operation system such as the Prespa Park advertises a job vacancy.

The Chairman wrapped up the discussion and the Committee agreed that the mandatory language skill that will be required will be English, while the knowledge of more than one national language will be an additional asset; the seat of the Communication Officer will be in Tirana; the Officer will be free to use the GTZ facilities in Korcha, Pogradec and Ohrid, and of course the Secretariat offices in Ag.Germanos; GTZ will provide funds for publishing advertisements for the position in the national press of the three countries; applications for the job will arrive in Ag. Germanos and the selection will be made by the Chairman with the assistance of the Secretariat and approved by the CC; and finally, the salary for the position will be €1,000 per month maximum in view of the fact that the ove rall ceiling for the implementation of the Communication Plan recently set by GTZ is €50,000.

The next issue discussed was the project proposals that the GTZ had distributed to the CC members some days before the meeting asking for their approval. The Chairman noted that probably nobody had the chance to read the proposals and, therefore, the Committee could not possibly approve or reject them during this meeting. Mr.Biallas briefly reminded the CC of the relevant GTZ programme first presented in the Psarades meeting and proposed to have the project presented in short and the CC members comment on them. For the following round of projects, he suggested that the CC forms a special panel that would work on the projects before meetings and make relevant recommendations. Mr.Papayannis expressed his appreciation to Germany, the GTZ and Mr.Biallas personally for showing the way forward and generously consulting the Committee for the projects they would like to fund, without being under any obligation to do so, and suggested that all donors to the Prespa Park area should follow their example. He suggested that a special panel should be formed to review the projects, composed of three persons, one from each country, that would have the authority to evaluate the projects on the Committee's behalf and then report back to the CC. Mrs.Roumeliotou reminded the concerns expressed by the SPP in the Psarades meeting regarding the still vague connection of the GTZ Prespa/ Ohrid project with the Prespa Park CC's scope and mandate and the need for specific criteria to be agreed before this Committee can give its approval for various projects. The Chairman concurred with Mr.Papayannis' view that this should not be an issue and that the generosity of the GTZ in coming before the Committee should be acknowledged and, therefore, the panel should be immediately determined. Mr.Shumka was designated as the panel member from Albania and Ms.Sukova from the FYR of Macedonia, while the Greek member was left to determine at a later date after the absent CC members from Greece are consulted. The panel was decided to meet in Ohrid on 28 May and report its findings to the Committee immediately after; the CC members will be asked to submit any major objections in a short notice.

Under the "any other business" item, Mr. Papayannis proposed to organise an appropriate activity to honour the memory of the late Prof.Leke Gjiknuri and the proposal was unanimously accepted.

Mr.Dedej asked to be informed on the fate of the infrastructure project that would be funded by the Greek Government and Mrs.Roumeliotou replied that there are unfortunately no developments to be reported since the Psarades meeting. Mr.Papayannis noted that it is

important that the Chairman contact all persons responsible for various tasks and report to the next CC meeting on the progress achieved.

Mr.Dedej subsequently said that his Government is very much interested in pushing the issue of designation of a Prespa/ Ohrid Biosphere Reserve and Ms.Sukova concurred. Mrs.Roumeliotou reminded the Committee of the reservations expressed by the Greek side when the idea was first put forward in the Skopje meeting; furthermore, in view of the fact that the SAP study treats this issue and recommends to postpone taking action to achieve this designation, she suggested to wait until the national consultations on the SAP are carried out before any drastic action is undertaken. Mr.Papayannis agreed that the Greek side must be given some time to consult on this issue on the basis of the SAP recommendations and Ms.Sukova said they could prepare information on the procedure to be followed for establishing the Biosphere Reserve for the next CC meeting.

Subsequently, the date and place of the next meeting were decided: The fourth ordinary meeting of the Committee will take place in Resen, the FYR of Macedonia, on 13-14 December 2002.

Finally the Chairman thanked all participants, on behalf of the Albanian Government, for their contribution to the fruitful work of the meeting, Mr.Papayannis, speaking for the Committee and all participants, thanked the Albanian Government, the local authorities and especially Mr.Spase Shumka for organising this meeting so successfully, and subsequently the meeting was declared closed.

Conclusions

1. At its third meeting, the CC approved the PDF B request document presented by the UNDP. The Committee asked UNDP to incorporate several suggestions to the effect that:

   a. The SAP will be the overriding document guiding PDF activities.

   b. The national project officers will be selected by the respective Ministry in due course following standard UNDP contracting procedures.

   c. The Terms of Reference appearing in the annexes will not be presented to the GEF Secretariat. They will be further elaborated before UNDP final approval for implementation.

   d. The strengthening of co-operation with the local authorities in planning and implementing the PDF activities.

   Until the end of May, the text of the document will be improved to also reflect some minor comments that have been submitted by the CC members and will possibly be submitted by the local authorities.

2. Concerning the SAP study, the CC expressed its appreciation for the very good work done by the collaborating NGOs and expert groups and decided to enter into a consultation process in all three countries at local, regional and central level. This process will continue for a period of four months and will be supported by the GTZ, up to 30,000€. The request to the GTZ will be prepared by the Secretariat within two weeks and submitted after approval by the Chairman.

3. The CC agreed that the hydrogeological study should be pursued as a matter of priority and to that effect it decided to incorporate the draft project proposal into the PDF B document. In this context, the Committee shared the Albanian concern for the critical situation of the water level in Micro Prespa and for the need of a solution to the problems that agriculture in the wider region is faced with.

4. On the question of the recruitment of a Communication Officer of the Prespa Park, the CC decided that:

   a. The Terms of Reference would be redrafted to reflect a change in the seat of the Officer, which will be in Tirana, Albania, at the PPNEA headquarters. Also in the Terms of Reference, the language requirement will be changed to English as a mandatory requirement and knowledge of more than one national language as a significant additional advantage.

   b. In one week, the Secretariat will prepare the necessary announcements for the position in the national press of the three countries and request the necessary funds from GTZ.

   c. Applications for the job will arrive at the Secretariat headquarters in Ag.Germanos, Greece, by mail with the requested documents within one month from the announcements.

   d. The Chairman assisted by the Secretariat will present a shortlist of the three best applications and their ranking to the CC for final approval.

   The Communication Plan project proposal that the Secretariat has prepared will be redrafted to respect a decrease in the budget available by the GTZ to 50,000€. The new budget has to be approved by the GTZ before proceeding with

the afore-mentioned job announcement.

5. The CC further agreed to create a small group that will be working on the proposed micro-projects to be funded by the GTZ. The group will be composed by three persons, one from each country. The CC designated Spase Shumka from Albania and Kaja Sukova from the FYR of Macedonia, while the Greek member will be designated later. The group will gather on 28 May in Ohrid to assess the existing proposals for micro-projects. The CC will then be informed and the CC members can submit major objections to the findings of the working group within three working days.

6. The CC agreed on having a remembrance day for the late Prof.L.Gjiknuri. A proposal for the organization of an appropriate activity is expected by the Secretariat.

7. The CC agreed that its fourth regular meeting will take place in Resen, the FYR of Macedonia, on 13-14 December 2002.

8. Finally, the CC expressed its gratitude to the donor community for their interest in the Prespa Park demonstrated by their active participation in its meetings, to all participants for their contribution, and to the organisers of the meeting, and especially the Ministry of Environment, the Prespa National Park authority and Spase Shumka from the CC Secretariat, for their effort and warm hospitality.

PDF-B Request to the Global Environment Facility

Countries: Republic of Albania
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[1]

Focal Area: Multiple Focal Area: Biodiversity and International Waters
Operational Programme OP#12 - Integrated Ecosystem and Natural Resources Management (also relevant to OP#9, OP#4 and OP#2)

Project Title: Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Transboundary Prespa Park Region

Funding Requested: US$ 388,000

Cofunding: US$ 319,000 - KfW
US$ 20,000 - Government of Albania
US$ 20,000 - Government of FYR of Macedonia
US$ 150,000 - Government of Greece (Strategic Action Plan)
US$ 44,000 - Government of Greece
US$ 10,000 - UNDP – Albania
US$ 10,000 - UNDP – FYR of Macedonia
US$ 24,000 - NGOs (PPNEA, BSPSM, SPP)

Estimated Full Project Cost: US$ 10 million (GEF US$ 6 million; KfW US$ 4 million)

Requesting Agency: UNDP

Block: Block B

Block A Grant Awarded: No[2]

Project Duration: 12 months

Full Project Summary

The Prespa Park region, situated in the Balkan Peninsula and encompassing parts of Albania, FYROM and Greece, is a high altitude basin that includes the interlinked Macro Prespa and Micro Prespa Lakes and their surrounding mountains. It is considered to be an ecosystem of global significance and has been identified as one of Europe's 24 major transboundary "ecological bricks". The entire Prespa region hosts unique biotopes that are important from a European and global conservation perspective. The lakes and wetlands are important wintering, breeding and feeding sites for numerous species of birds. The flora is composed of over 1,500 species, of which 19 are endemics. The aquatic ecosystems are also rich in endemic species and the avifauna is highly diverse, and includes the world's largest breeding colony of the globally endangered Dalmatian pelican and Pygmy cormorant. The lake area also hosts mammals, such as the bear, wolf and lynx, that are endangered in Europe. In addition, the lake region is considered to be of great cultural and historical importance.

[1] Greece is also a full partner in implementing the project. The participation of Greece and activities to be undertaken in the Greek part of the tri-national Prespa Park region will be fully supported by funding from the Greek government and other sources.

[2] The approved Concept Paper was prepared in 2001 using funding provided by KfW.

The unique values of this ecosystem, however, are being eroded at a rapid rate and threatened by increasing exploitation of natural resources, inappropriate land-use practices, and uncoordinated sectoral policies and development activities that result in progressive soil and water contamination and degradation. Since the Prespa Lakes Region extends across national boundaries, it is thereby subject to different and even conflicting management regimes and policies, which further exacerbate the threats to the ecosystem as a whole and make unilateral and piecemeal response measures ineffective. Thus the development and institution of a regional and integrated approach to the regions's conservation and management is essential.

The governments of the three countries have recognized the importance of conserving the region's biodiversity through the establishment of five protected areas and a stated commitment to the development of a tripartite cooperative approach to its management as expressed through the Prime Ministerial Declaration on the creation of the Transboundary Prespa Park and the environmental protection and sustainable development of the Prespa Lakes and their surroundings, signed the 2nd of February 2000.

The overall objective of the project is to promote integrated ecosystem management of the Transboundary Prespa Park region with the participation of all stakeholders, and by enhancing cooperation among the three participating countries. The full project will significantly strengthen the institutional capacity of national, regional and local authorities to adopt an integrated approach to the conservation and sustainable use of the Transboundary Prespa Park, while ensuring the optimization of ecological, economic and social benefits arising from the use of its natural resources. It will foster the development and implementation of transboundary, inter-sectoral and participatory approaches to land-use planning, rural development, water management, and natural resource utilization. In so doing, it will encourage synergy between efforts aimed at the conservation of the region's globally significant biodiversity and important ecosystem functions, and strengthening the capacity to conserve, sustainably use, and manage international water bodies on an ecosystem basis. It will also strengthen the management capacity of existing protected areas in the region.

The proposed project is fully in line with the intention of the three national governments to conserve the region's biodiversity and provide for its sustainable development as evidenced through the Prime Ministerial Declaration to establish the trilateral Transboundary Prespa Park, and the creation of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee to facilitate its establishment. The Committee's inclusion of national and local governments and NGOs from the three countries ensures the broad support of all stakeholders in the project, and the active and direct participation of the local population.

The approved Concept Paper is an integral part of this PDF request (see Annex 5).

List of Acronyms

BSPSM	Bird Study and Protection Society of Macedonia
EA	Executing Agency
EU	European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoA	Government of Albania
GoG	Government of Greece
GoFYROM	Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPM	International Project Manager
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MAP	Macedonian Alliance for Prespa
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MP	Management Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Park
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPD	National Project Director
OP	Operational Program (of GEF)
PA	Protected Area
PDF	Project Development Facility (of GEF)
PPCC	Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee
PPNEA	Preservation and Protection of Natural Environment in Albania
PSU	Project Support Unit
SAP	Strategic Action Plan (of PPCC for Prespa catchment)
SPP	Society for the Protection of Prespa
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PDF-B OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The requested PDF Block B phase of one year duration is necessary in order to undertake or complete essential baseline studies addressing scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of the full sized project. The ultimate objective of the PDF B is to design a full-sized GEF Project Brief. In addition to elaborating the technical basis of the full-sized project, the PDF B activities are strategically designed to establish the management structure, coordination mechanisms, and stakeholder participatory mechanisms required for the successful future implementation of the full-sized project.

Immediate Objective 1 **Establish PDF B implementation structure and coordination and support mechanisms.**

1.1 Establish project offices

The main project office will be centrally situated in Asamati, FYROM at the facility of the BSPSM. In Albania, subsidiary field offices will be located in the refurbished main offices of the Albanian Prespa National Park situated in Korca, and the park's field offices in Gorica e Madhe will also be made available for use during field work. The SPP will provide office space in its facility in Agios Germanos, Greece.

(Responsible parties: UNDP/GEF and Ministry of Agriculture/Forest Service in Albania, UNDP/GEF and BSPSM in FYROM, MoE and SPP in Greece)

1.2 Select and train personnel

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) in each country will appoint its respective National Project Director (NPD). UNDP, KfW, and the PPCC will jointly select the National Project Coordinators (NPCs) and the International Project Manager (IPM). Once appointed, the NPCs will proceed with the selection of their support staff.. The support staff in the main project office in Asamati will consist of one administrative assistant/accountant and a community liaison officer /social facilitator responsible for activities for FYROM. One community liason officer will also be situated in Korca/Gorica e Madhe, Albania and another one in Agios Germanos, Greece to ensure project presence and information exchange at the field site level in those countries The selection of project personnel will proceed on the basis of the TOR provided in Annex 4. To ensure that local capacity is at the level required by the project so as not to experience any delays at the beginning of the PDF B, targeted training will be provided at the outset to the hired personnel. One of the initial training themes will be the explanation of donor procedures and reporting requirements. Additional training needs will be identified as early as possible by the IPC and NPCs.

(Responsible parties: UNDP/GEF, KfW, PPCC, NPCs)

1.3 Review and update PDF-B workplan and TORs

The initial workplan presented as part of this proposal, and the preliminary TORs provided in Annex 4 , will be reviewed , revised if necessary, by the PPCC, IPM, NPDs and NPCs, and approved by the PPCC.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPDs, NPCs)

1.4 Strengthen PPCC (PDF B Project Steering Committee) and Secretariat

The PPCC and its Secretariat will have a key and central role in the undertaking of all PDF B activities (see TORs in Annex 4). The project will support the PPCC and its Secretariat in the performance of these project related tasks. The three Project Coordinators and Secretariat members will also be beneficiaries of the training to be provided at the outset of the PDF B.

(Responsible parties: UNDP/GEF in Albania and FYROM, MoE inGreece)

1.5 Establish stakeholder consultation mechanism

The project personnel will carry out regular consultations regarding the project, and natural resources management and sustainable development in Prespa area with the local populations and all other stakeholders. The dialogue will also focus upon the concept, process and implications of the Transboundary Prespa Park's establishment and management. These consultations are considered essential in order to provide the local population with a thorough understanding of and support for the project, as well as a way of directly including the local communities in the decision-making process. Two aspects are identified as being fundamental. First, establishing and implementing ongoing opportunities for communication and participation in planning, particularly a consultation process regarding the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) currently being prepared by the PPCC. Secondly, establishing a visible community outreach programme and capacity building opportunities for local stakeholders, including informing local populations on PDF B progress and accomplishments.

(Responsible parties: PSU social facilitators)

Immediate Objective 2 Determine project area boundary

The Transboundary Prespa Park is still not formally established. Thus, it does not have legal boundaries or an organisation with a mandate to manage it as a unit. During the PDF B phase, the establishment of the park should be taken a step further. Thus, the project will support the following actions:

2.1 Appraisal of catchment area versus ecosystem boundaries

The boundary of Transboundary Prespa Park has yet to be defined. Thus, the actual project site boundary will require resolution. The main point to be clarified is whether the project area will be defined on the basis of the Prespa Lakes' catchment area in a strict sense, or whether it should be defined on the basis of an ecosystem. The definition has to be logical and practical.

The need to define the boundary is most urgent in FYROM where two national parks, Galicica and Pelister, are only partially within the Prespa Lakes ' catchment. One half of the former is in the watershed and only approximately ten percent of the latter falls within the catchment boundary.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs, consultants)

2.2 Project site confirmation

The PPCC should play a particularly strong role and bring in national expertise in selecting the project boundary. Since the boundary of the project may be a possible theme of dispute, it is recommended that the national consultants should be assisted by an international consultant in this analysis and the formulation of the final project boundary recommendation.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs, consultants)

Immediate Objective 3 Improve required baseline information base

The following activities will be undertaken through consultancies. See Annex 4 for the TOR for the specific themes. The PDF B studies will build upon ongoing and completed studies to the fullest extent, including the KfW commissioned feasibility study for the Albanian National Park Prespa, as well as the Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of Prespa Park funded by the Ministry of Environment of Greece and undertaken by the PPCC that is expected to be completed in May 2002 (see Annex 6 for these and other references).

3.1 Biodiversity and ecosystems

3.1.1 In-depth threats definition and root causes analysis

Although a considerable amount of information on the region's biodiversity exists, some gaps and other deficiencies have also been noted. Most of the existing information is of the species presence-absence variety. Not much information exists on species movements or critical habitats, trends in fragmentation of habitats, and ecological processes sustaining biodiversity.

Thus, this study will focus on the compilation of existing information, the definition of critical gaps in knowledge, and the formulation of directly relevant and applied needs for upgrading the information base. An important part of this will be the detailed definition and analysis of threats to the region's biodiversity and their root causes so as to formulate effective interventions during the full sized project.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

3.1.2 Transboundary diagnostic ecosystem analysis

A qualified institution will perform a diagnostic analysis of transboundary biological and ecosystem diversity and issues or concerns related to their conservation and sustainable use. A threat/root cause analysis specific to transboundary issues will also be undertaken. Sites of special concern will be indicated and effective interventions for implementing effective transboundary management will be determined.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs, consultants)

3.2 Socio-economic conditions and trends

The inhabitants of the Prespa region are mainly occupied in the primary sector of production, with agriculture being the main source of income. Herding and fishing also contribute to the agricultural production of the area in varying degrees, depending on the country. The secondary sector is fairly developed only in the Resen area (FYROM), while the tertiary sector is largely confined to tourism, which represents an important economic activity, at least in the FYROM and Greece.

Large parts of the ecosystems of the Prespa Lakes region have been converted or transformed into agricultural systems of various kinds, or have been replaced by towns, villages and other man-made infrastructure. Nevertheless, many of the people in the area live in relatively poor conditions and exhibit a strong dependence on natural resources for subsistence.

A study will be undertaken to update and collate existing information on the region's socio-economic conditions and trends, including those in population, demography, occupation, and income. The dependence of local populations on natural resources will be of paramount interest. An assessment of the local population's actual uses of natural resources, their viability, and their cumulative impact on biodiversity will be undertaken as part of the study.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

3.3 Actual and alternative livelihoods

Options for alternative livelihoods and use of natural resources will be determined and assessed. The work will involve:

- Analysis of economic and environmental viability of current production systems in agriculture, fishery and forestry;
- Analysis of the use of natural vegetation for firewood and possible improvements towards the establishment of a sustainable system;
- Assessment of options and recommendations for the promotion of alternative

livelihoods (medicinal plants, animal husbandry, eco-tourism, communal forests); and,

- Definition of viable incentive mechanisms for promoting sustainable production in different sectors.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

3.4 Environmental/biodiversity awareness

Current levels of overall environmental awareness and concern for biodiversity conservation among the local population and other stakeholders are not high. The study will refine the understanding of the current levels of environmental awareness, determine what programmes are in place already, and will subsequently define the additional requirements, programming needs and delivery mechanisms to heighten the levels of awareness. All stakeholders in the region will be included in this study.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

3.5 Legislative/ regulatory and policy base, including compliance and enforcement options and mechanisms

The existing legislative, regulatory and policy base governing land, water and natural resource use in the region will be assessed for the three countries. The assessment will focus upon the definition of specific gaps and deficiencies that inhibit or preclude effective approaches to biodiversity conservation and the adoption of an integrated approach to the management of the region. As part of this assessment, existing compliance and enforcement mechanisms will also be analysed. Recommendations arising from this analysis will provide the basis for the formulation of institutional reforms that will be undertaken during the full project in order to realize the project's objectives.

(responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

3.6 Hydrogeological study

There has been a progressive lowering of the water level in the lakes over the last two decades. Besides this being a general concern among some stakeholders, it is now negatively affecting certain species (particularly, the pelican colonies in Micro Prespa Lake).

There is no clear understanding of what is happening with the water (for example, on aspects such as the diverted Devolli River, the water use for human consumption and agricultural uses, and the underground flow of Prespa Lake waters into Ohrid Lake). In order to arrive at an improved understanding and subsequent improved water management, the following steps will have to be taken:

1. definition and agreement between all involved stakeholders and the local population on the water management objectives;
2. assessment of actual information available to estimate the actual water balance (making a preliminary estimate of the water inflows and outflows of Micro and Macro Prespa Lakes);
3. recommendations for water management, and determination of further actions and potential investments to be undertaken during the full sized project.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs, consultants)

3.7 Institutional arrangements for a transboundary park management authority

The mandate of the PPCC is based on the Prime Ministerial Declaration, but it does not have a legal base, nor are the Transboundary Prespa Park and the Committee and its Secretariat legally established. In order to promote effective and integrated management in the Prespa Park region, the PDF B will provide an opportunity to examine and formulate possible institutional options for realizing effective management of the transboundary

protected area. Models available in the world, such as the Bodensee and the International Joint Commission for the Great Lakes, will be assessed, and recommendations will be formulated for the establishment of a high level inter-governmental management authority, involving all three Prespa countries, for the management of the area.

(*Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs, consultants)*

3.8 Social infrastructure investment needs

The Prespa region's local population is in dire need of essential social infrastructure. Without it, the lakes' waters and surrounding lands are being progressively polluted and remaining forests are being destroyed for firewood. The particular needs of the communities around the Prespa Lakes are different. The actual situation and needs will have to be assessed and quantified on a location specific basis. This work will be done by one team of national and international experts. Main aspects to be looked into will be solid waste, sewage, drinking water and alternative sources of energy.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

Immediate Objective 4 Strengthen the protected areas' management and management plans

The protected areas that have been established in the Prespa region are in different stages of development and at different stages of their operational and management capability. Pelister, the oldest, was created in 1948 and the newest is the Albanian Prespa National Park, established in 1999. The PDF B will support work on the following issues:

4.1 Analysis of the actual situation of the protected areas and support of the preparation/ completion of their management plans

First, an assessment of the actual situation of the protected areas[3] management capacity will be undertaken. Essential requirements to improve their management capacities will be identified. These may include infrastructure, equipment, staff and their training. In addition, assistance will be provided in the completion of started management plans in two of the areas, and the preparation of management plan frameworks in two others. The management plans will be streamlined in a similar framework and will take into account EU guidelines. The creation of a trust fund should be considered as an option for providing for a sustainable financing mechanism. Local communities or stakeholders will be directly involved in the preparation of the management plans.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultants)

4.2 Definition of activities and requirements in existing protected areas

On the basis of the management plans, future management activities and associated investments (infrastructure, management capacity, etc.) will be defined for implementation during the full project.

(Responsible parties: NPCs, consultant)

Immediate Objective 5 Identify and mobilize co-financing sources

At present, the principal co-financing source will be KfW, contributing approximately US$ 4 million directly to the full sized project, with an additional US$ 8.8 million in other programs in the Prespa region (see Annex 6 of the Concept Paper, in Annex 5 of this document). During the PDF B, additional assessment will focus upon the following:

[3] In fact there are 3 National Parks, Pelister and Galicica in FYROM and Prespa NP in Albania, Greece has the Prespa National Forest and FYROM also has the Strictly Protected Bird Reserve of Ezerani. Thus, there are currently five protected areas in the Prespa region.

5.1 Analysis of all existing donor programmes and activities in the Prespa region

All existing and planned programmes of all donors in the Prespa region will be identified and analysed in terms of their complementarity to the objectives of the project.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, NPCs)

5.2 Definition of potential donor sources

On the basis of the foregoing assessment, other potential donor sources and amounts of co-financing will be identified. Meetings with potential donors will be convened. Subsequently, negotiations will be entered into to secure additional amounts of co-financing.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, UNDP/GEF, KfW)

5.3 Assessment of options for establishing a trust fund

Taking into account examples elsewhere and the regional context of Transboundary Prespa Park, options for creating and operating a trust fund will be assessed. The fund would be used for financing the recurrent costs of managing the Transboundary Prespa Park.

(Responsible parties: PPCC, IPM, UNDP/GEF, KfW)

Immediate Objective 6 Prepare GEF Project Brief and draft Project Document

The GEF Project Brief and draft Project Document will be prepared under contract by an international GEF expert. The International Project Manager and the National Project Coordinators will also play an important role in the preparation of the following:

6.1 Logframe

A logical framework will be prepared focussing upon the outcomes of the project, indicators to be used in measuring success in achievement of the outcomes, means of verification, and the definition of project assumptions and risks.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs)

6.2 Outcomes and activities

Project outcomes and activities to be undertaken to achieve the outcomes will be identified by the GEF expert in consultation with the IPM, the National Project Coordinators, the PPCC and stakeholders.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs)

6.3 Budget and incremental cost analysis

An output-based budget will be formulated for the full sized project by the GEF expert in close consultation with the IPM, the National Project Coordinators and the PPCC. In doing so, the respective costs associated with the baseline activities and the sustainable baseline will be distinguished from the incremental costs required to achieve the full project's objectives. GEF funds will only be used to finance the project's incremental costs.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs)

6.4 Scheduling

The timeframe and associated workplan for the full project will be determined and approved by the PPCC. Consideration will be given to staging the project over two or three phases, each one with milestones that will have to be met prior to proceeding to the next stage.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs)

6.5 Implementation arrangements

The organizational structure for the full project's implementation will be determined and approved by the PPCC. It is possible that the implementation arrangements to be employed for the PDF B phase, if proven successful, will be utilized for the full project as well.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs, PPCC)

6.6 Preparation of GEF Project Brief

The GEF expert will prepare the Project Brief on the basis of the work conducted during the PDF B and in close consultation with the IPM, National Project Coordinators and the PPCC. A first draft will be circulated for review to the PPCC. The draft Project Brief will incorporate: a threats and root causes analysis; detailed institutional arrangements for project implementation that ensure the full and active participation of all stakeholders; the detailed design of all project objectives, outputs, and activities; a stakeholder participation plan; the incremental cost analysis; the logical framework for the project; and the project monitoring and evaluation plan.

The Project Brief's first draft will be discussed at meetings of the PPCC, and at regional centres in each of the three countries. On the basis of the foregoing discussions and reviews, the draft will be revised and submitted to UNDP/GEF and to KfW for technical review. Subsequently, it will be finalized and submitted to the GEF Secretariat for review and endorsement. The draft Project Document will be prepared by the GEF expert upon the Project Brief's endorsement by the GEF Secretariat.

(Responsible parties: GEF expert, IPM, NPCs)

2. OUTPUTS OF THE PDF-B

The main outputs of the PDF B are to include the following:

- establishment of the structure for implementation of the PDF B phase and a legalized PPCC and a strengthened Secretariat (Objective 1);
- initiation of a fully participatory and consultative process involving local level stakeholders, inter-sectoral consultations, and initial co-ordination with national, regional and international donors and partners (Objective 1);
- determination of boundaries for the Transboundary Prespa Park and the full project (Objective 2);
- preparation of a baseline biodiversity assessment and threat analysis (Objective 3);
- improved baseline information required for the design and implementation of the full project (Objective 3);
- preparation of a study of the threats to the Prespa lakes ecosystem and identification of measures to mitigate threats (Objective 3);
- identification of the specific transboundary problems affecting the Prespa Park region through a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (Objective 3);
- identification and examination of priorities for action through broad consultations among all stakeholders (Objective 3);
- strengthened protected area management capacity (Objective 4);
- definition of sources and mobilization of co-financing (Objective 5);
- appraisal and design of options for a trust fund for administration of recurrent costs and, if the recommendations are positive, the establishment of the fund (Objective 5); and
- development of a comprehensive GEF Project Brief and UNDP Project Document for

submission to the GEF Council in July 2003 (Objective 6).

3. NATIONAL LEVEL SUPPORT

In recognition of the ecological and historical/cultural significance of the transboundary Prespa Lakes region, the Prime Ministers of the three neighbouring countries (Albania, the FYR of Macedonia, and Greece) issued a Declaration on 2nd February 2000 announcing the creation of the "Prespa Park" as the first transboundary protected area in South Eastern Europe[4]. The Prime Ministerial Declaration proposes enhanced collaboration among the competent authorities of the three countries and outlines that the following joint actions should be undertaken: [5]

a) maintain and protect the unique ecological values of the "Prespa Park";

b) prevent and/or reverse the causes of the Park's habitat degradation ;

c) explore appropriate management methods for the sustainable use of the Prespa Lakes' waters;

d) spare no efforts so that "Prespa Park" becomes and remains a model of its kind as well as an additional reference to the peaceful collaboration among the countries.

As a follow-up to the Declaration of Prespa Park, the three states have established an interim "Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee" (PPCC) which includes representatives from the environmental authorities, local government, and NGO community in each country, as well as the Ramsar Convention Bureau/MedWet as observer[6]. The main responsibility of the Co-ordination Committee is to ensure co-ordination among the three countries and concerned stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of the trilateral Prespa Park, the protection of its ecosystems and the sustainable development of the region. The Committee has to become the formal body responsible for the implementation of the proposed transboundary, tri-lateral environmental and sustainable development program, benefiting the lake region. In other words, the PPCC should become a formally and legally established entity, capable of co-ordinating the full GEF project.

The proposed project is, therefore, completely in line with the priorities of the three countries and is driven by the representatives of the three countries through the PPCC.

In addition, the following supporting measures have been taken by the three countries:

In Albania:

- Prespa National Park was established in 1999 for the rehabilitation and sustainable protection of critical terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the Macro and Micro Prespa Lake area.
- The Council of Ministers ratified the Ramsar Convention in March 1996.
- The Ministry of Environment has been established in 2001 to replace the former National Environmental Agency.

In Greece:

- Prespa National Forest was designated in 1974 for the protection of Micro and Macro Prespa Lakes and their catchment area, and, in 1975, the same area was declared a "landscape of exceptional beauty".
- The Greek side of the wetland system is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EEC

4 See Map in Annex 3.
5 See Annex 2 of the Concept Paper for a full text of the Declaration of Prespa Park.
6 See Annex 3 of the Concept Paper for a full description of the composition and responsibilities of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee.

Birds Directive.

- The entire Prespa catchment area and the lakes have been included in the Greek National List of the NATURA 2000 protected sites network, according to the EEC Directive on Protection of Fauna, Flora and their Habitats, and the EEC Birds Directive.
- The Ramsar Convention was ratified in 1974 by Greece as one of the founding countries. The amendment was ratified through Law 1950 in 1991. Micro Prespa was declared a Ramsar site in 1974. Moreover, Greece has also recently applied for the recognition of the Macro Prespa Lake as a designated Ramsar site.

In the FYR of Macedonia:

- Pelister National Park was established in 1948 for the protection of a globally unique mountainous ecosystem to the east of Macro Prespa Lake.
- Galicica National Park was established in 1958 for the rehabilitation and protection of unique terrestrial ecosystems straddling the Galicica Mountain located between the Macro Prespa and Ohrid Lakes.
- Bird Sanctuary Ezerani was established in 1996 (declared Ramsar site), bordering the northern section of Macro Prespa Lake for the protection of migratory waterfowl and other water bird species.
- Macro Prespa Lake was declared a "Natural Monument" in 1977 (Official Gazettement 45/77).

Furthermore, a "Partnership Agreement" between the Albanian Prespa National Park and Galicica National Park in the FYR of Macedonia was signed on February 4, 2001, within the framework of the Europark Expertise Exchange Program.

The PDF B will build upon the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the Sustainable Development of Prespa Park funded by the Ministry of Environment of Greece with a grant of USD 150,000 for a first synthesis of the environmental and socio-economic status of the Prespa Park area, identification of gaps in knowledge, formulation of strategic policy and management axes, and assessment of priorities for specific projects and activities in the region. This Plan is co-ordinated by the PPCC and is scheduled to be completed around May 2002.

See Annex 1 for the letters of support from Government Officials.

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR PDF GRANT

This PDF B request was preceded by a study financed by the KfW that culminated in the preparation of the Concept Paper (Annex 5) that was approved by the GEF Secretariat in November 2001. The information gathered during this study nevertheless requires further elaboration and refinement in order to develop a full sized project. Albania and FYROM still have limited resources and experience in the preparation of internationally supported projects and thus will require international assistance in preparing the full sized project. In particular, the countries will require support to undertake the following critical activities:

- Preparation and conduct of key targeted baseline studies;
- Definition of threats and root causes of biodiversity loss and unsustainable utilization of natural resources;
- Definition of the project boundaries;
- Developing truly participatory mechanisms that are inclusive of all stakeholders;
- Assessment of alternative livelihood options;

- Determination of needs and preparation of proposals in social infrastructure and other investments necessary for a sustainable development of Prespa catchment;
- Development of options for a transboundary management regime;
- Definition of a sustainable financing mechanism (trust fund);
- Mobilizing and securing co-financing;
- Preparing GEF and UNDP documentation to required standards (logframe, Incremental Cost Analysis, Project Brief, draft Project Document);
- Undertaking an Incremental Cost Analysis.

Considering the spatial extent, the transboundary nature, as well as the regional and global significance of this complex and innovative project, the PDF B will be of utmost importance to enable the undertaking of the above activities.

5. ITEMS TO BE FINANCED

The following budget is organized by Objectives and Activities to be undertaken during the PDF B.

In the intervening time between the end of the PDF B phase and the beginning of the full project, there will be a period of reviews, negotiations, and approvals that may last several months. To ensure that momentum and stakeholder commitment and involvement in the region is maintained, a financial allocation should be reserved to permit the project offices to continue functioning during this critical time. To start with, an allocation for six months is budgeted for in order to maintain national project staff and regular PPCC meetings.

Objectives / Activities	Amount* / Contributing Organization							Administrative responsibility
	GEF	KfW	UNDP	GoA	GoFYROM	GoG**	NGOs***	
Objective 1 **Establish Basis for PDF B Implementation**								
• 3 NPDs and other government personnel				10,000	10,000	10,000		
• Project offices	3,000	3,000		6,000	6,000	4,000	18,000	KfW
• 3 NPCs	26,000					13,000		UNDP
• International Project Manager	40,000	40,000						UNDP/KfW
• Prespa Park Coordination Committee and Secretariat	17,000	6,000		4,000	4,000	10,000	6,000	KfW
• Project Office Administrator	6,000							KfW
• 3 Social Facilitators	14,000					7,000		KfW
• PPCC meetings	4,000	4,000						KfW
• Training	12,000		20,000					UNDP
Objective 2 **Project Boundary Definition**								
• International expert	10,000							UNDP
• National experts (3)	15,000							KfW
Objective 3 **Upgrading of Baseline Information**								
• Biodiversity Analysis (3)	16,000	14,000						UNDP
• Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis	13,000	7,000						UNDP
• Socio-economic Analysis (3)	9,000	11,000						KfW
• Actual and Alternative Livelihoods Analysis (3)	10,000	10,000						UNDP
• Environmental Awareness/ Education Analysis (3)	10,000	4,000						UNDP
• Legal/Regulatory Analysis (3)	12,000	4,000						UNDP
• Hydrogeological/Climatological Study	20,000	40,000						KfW
• Institutional Arrangements for a Management Authority	9,000							UNDP
• Infrastructure Investment Analysis		56,000						KfW
Objective 4 **Strengthening Protected Area Management and Management Plans**								KfW
• Analysis of management needs		44,000						KfW
• Completion of 2 MPs		22,000						KfW
• Frameworks for 2 MPs		10,000						
Objective 5 **Identification and Mobilization of Co-financing Sources**								
• 2 workshops for potential donors	6,000							UNDP
• National expert	4,000							UNDP
• Assessment trust fund options	10,000	5,000						UNDP
Objective 6 **GEF Project Brief and Draft Project Document Preparation**								
GEF expert (6 weeks and travel)	27,000							UNDP
National experts as required	3,000							UNDP
PPCC meetings and input	2,000							UNDP

Other								
Translation	15,000							KfW
Travel (Government officials, PPCC)	11,000							KfW
Project offices' communications	12,000							KfW
Publications	10,000							KfW
Project administration	12,000	9,000						KfW
Financial allocation to bridge gap until start of full project	30,000	30,000						UNDP/KfW
TOTAL	388,000	319,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	44,000	24,000	

* All costs are in US$, exchange rate applied for costs in euros: 1 US$ = 1,1 €

** The Government of Greece is already financing the preparation of the Strategic Action Plan for the Prespa region for the sum of $US 150,000

*** NGOs are: PPNEA, BSPSM, SPP

6. EXPECTED DATE OF PREPARATION COMPLETION

The PDF Block B implementation is anticipated to commence in August 2002 and to be completed in August 2003. The Full Project Brief is expected to be submitted to the GEF Council in July 2003.

7. SPECIAL FEATURES

The proposed project exhibits several innovative and significant features. One central theme of the project, and of the PDF B phase itself, is the strong commitment to ensuring the development and implementation of a truly participatory and grassroots level stakeholder involvement process. Every effort will be made to ensure that all stakeholders, and especially the local population, are not only aware of the project and its objectives, but also are given every opportunity to participate in its formulation and subsequent implementation. Every effort will be made to provide for direct stakeholder ongoing involvement, as opposed to mere consultation at selected intervals. The hiring and deployment of community liaison officers that will be on site in the region, and the location of project offices in the region will provide for increased involvement and a sense of direct ownership of the project by local stakeholders.

The project will also develop and strengthen hitherto relatively low levels of cooperation among the countries in the management of shared resources of global significance. In so doing, the project will help foster the implementation of shared approaches to management of the region, including the standardization of policies and regulatory regimes, management objectives, standards for resource use limits and practices, monitoring and reporting procedures and mechanisms, and land and water use planning. One other innovative feature will be the development of an inter-governmental management authority tasked with the management of the Transboundary Prespa Park. The Park's boundaries, in fact, will also be established through the project, and the definition of its management requirements at a landscape level will also be provided.

8. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The potential organizational arrangements to be employed for PDF B implementation were developed, and subsequently presented and modified in the course of discussion with all of the stakeholders. At the end, all stakeholders endorsed the organizational structure presented below as being viable and representing the most effective and efficient arrangement for PDF B execution. Moreover, if the structure will be deemed effective at the

conclusion of the PDF B, it was felt by all stakeholders that it should be maintained for the full project and it could serve as an effective mechanism for transboundary management in the future.

The organogram below illustrates how the PDF B implementation is to be structured. UNDP and KfW will formalize an arrangement between themselves and then with the recipient countries' (Albania and FYROM) Ministries of Environment (MoE). The two Ministries will also have to make an arrangement with their counterpart Ministry in Greece. UNDP will also make its own implementation arrangements with the two UNDP Country Offices for national execution of the PDF B. Each MoE will appoint a National Project Director (NPD) for each country. This will not be a position paid for from PDF B funds in Albania or FYROM.

The PPCC, in the role of Project Supervisory Committee, will ensure PDF B coordination. The MoE of Albania and FYROM will agree upon execution arrangements of the PDF B by the PPCC. The MoE designated NPDs will be *ex-officio* members of the PPCC. The Greek MoE is also expected to give this authorization to the Committee and its NPD will also be an *ex-officio* member of the PPCC. The existing PPCC Secretariat will assist the PPCC in performing its functions in the daily work. It is clear, however, that the incremental costs associated with the PPCC and Secretariat performing the above functions for the project will be covered through PDF B funds.

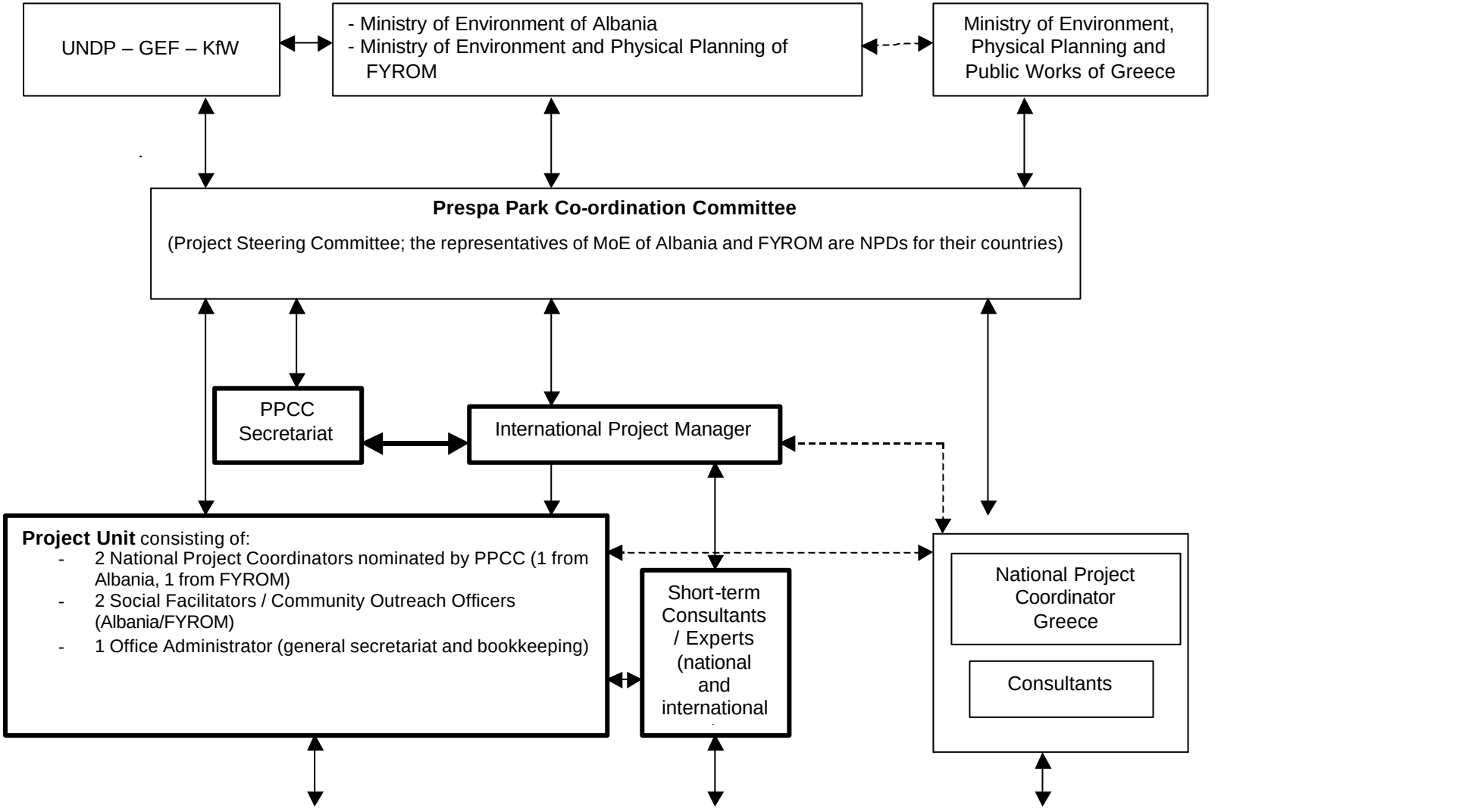
For each country there will be a National Project Coordinator (NPC). There will be a Project Support Unit (PSU) in Asamati, FYROM. The Project Support Unit will consist of one person responsible for day to day office operations and accounting, and one community outreach-communications officer or social facilitator to ensure close and ongoing contact with all local stakeholders in FYROM. One social facilitator will also be established in subsidiary project offices to be located in Korca/Gorica e Madhe in Albania, and another one in Agios Germanos, Greece. The main project office will be situated in the newly refurbished offices of the Bird Study and Protection Society of Macedonia (BSPSM) that are located in Asamati, just outside of the Ezerani Strict Nature Reserve. Each NPC will supervise the contracted expertise and will also be responsible for ensuring stakeholder involvement. Overseeing and coordinating the work in the three countries will be an overall International Project Manager (IPM). The three NPCs will report to the IPM. Because local expertise from the Prespa region will possibly be difficult to find for the duties associated with the NPC positions, these will be advertised nationally and the selected candidate will be able to divide his or her time between the project office in the region and his or her home base. This position will be advertised internationally. The IPM will report to the PPCC.

The location of the project offices in the three countries was discussed with stakeholders with a view to having the offices located in the Prespa region itself to build up project presence, contacts with the communities and local stakeholders, as well as local capacity. This desire had to be balanced by consideration of practicality and logistics of locating a project office in a given locale. The main project office will be situated in Asamati, FYROM. In Albania, the location of the field office will be in the facilities of the Prespa National Park in Korca and in Prespa National Park's visitor center in the village of Gorica e Madhe. In Greece, the project field office will be situated in the offices of the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) in Agios Germanos, which currently is also the seat of the Prespa Park Coordination Committee's Secretariat.

All project activities will be executed by national experts, assisted at times by international consultants. All contracted expertise will be recruited through established transparent and competitive selection processes that are in compliance with UNDP National Execution (NEX) procedures. Procurement and disbursement will also comply with established UNDP NEX procedures. The UNDP Country Offices in Albania and FYROM will provide the required support for the proper and effective execution of the project in Albania and FYROM using established procedures. They will also contribute to the training of project personnel in project execution procedures.

PROPOSED PRESPA PARK PDF-B IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

(Positions in **Bold Boxes** are Project Funded or Supported)



ANNEXES

Draft Strategic Action Plan Presentation

Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park:

A. Introduction:

Aim of the SAP

- To facilitate, provide and share information with stakeholders
- To outline the Prespa Park objectives in order to facilitate future discussions
- To describe in the clearest possible way the institutional, economic, management initiatives and procedures that should be taken in order to enable the accomplishment of these objectives

Objectives of the SAP

1. Description and assessment of the existing environmental and socio-economic status of the entire area
2. Identification of the trends and perspectives, which, in combination with the potential and ultimately the choices, will depict a future course for the region and produce a common vision for the PP
3. Outlining of this common vision, i.e. articulate the PP objectives in as much detail as possible
4. Putting forward specific institutional and practical measures and procedures for the implementation of the PP objectives

Designated Areas and Existing Management Regimes

ALBANIA:

- Prespa National Park (27,750ha)

GREECE:

- Prespa National Forest (9,470ha)
- Ramsar site
- Landscape of exceptional beauty
- Special Protection Area as an Area Important for Birds (SPA, 79/409/EEC)
- NATURA 2000 site (92/43/EEC, Habitats/ NATURA 2000 Directive)

FYR of MACEDONIA

- Strictly Protected Ornithological Reserve Ezerani (2080ha)
- Part of the National Parks of Pelister and Galichitsa
- Monument of Nature "Lake Prespa"
- Reserve of Fir, Reserve of Birch, and Reserve of Beech on Pelister Mt.

B. Outline and Analysis of the Study Area:

Abiotic Environment

- Geomorphology/Geology
- Climate
- Hydrology
- Water Quality and
- Hydrogeology
- Water level fluctuation of Micro and Macro Prespa

- Water management and interventions
- Water Quality
- Soils

Biotic Environment
- Vegetation and Flora
- Endemic, rare, interesting and threatened plant species
- Fauna (Invertebrates, Fish, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, Mammals)
  Important areas for the fauna and the rare species of flora

Anthropogenic Environment
- The Primary Sector (Agriculture, Stockbreeding, Fishing, Forestry, Mining)
- The Secondary Sector
  The Tertiary Sector

Social Parameters and Trends
- Demographic Data
- Residential Structure and Services
- Technical Infrastructure
- Networks Energy and Telecommunications
- Infrastructure
  Cultural Elements

C. Complete Appraisal and Evaluation of the Area and Synthesis of All Records:

Analysis of the Basic Strategic and Political Keystones for the Development and Protection of the Prespa

Basic Assumptions/ Results

1. Prespa is a single, uninterrupted ecosystem
2. Prespa, as a whole, constitutes one of the most valuable areas of the Balkans and Europe. The valuable features of the region, in the conservation of which we wish the PP to contribute are the following:
   - The beauty of the landscape
   - The lakes and rivers as wetlands
   - The various rare biotopes
   - The rich fauna as a whole, with special emphasis on rare and endemic species
   - The large populations of some species of rare waterfowl
   - The traditional settlements
   - Particularities of the local culture that are mainly related to the relationship between man and nature
   - The local varieties of breeding animals and cultivated plants
   - The large number of Byzantine and meta-Byzantine monuments for such a small area.
3. The area has great scientific interest both for the natural environment but also in all aspects of the man-nature relationship, in view of the fact that it has almost always been isolated.
4. Only co-ordination of management choices and activities in the three contiguous protected areas guarantees more effective management in each separate unit (e.g. water management).

5. The significance of the values that exist in each one of the three parts becomes much greater if they combine with the values of the other two parts in a single whole.
6. There is a need for comprehensive spatial planning of protection zones and related measures in all three countries, where currently separate management systems (rules +bodies) for national parks or larger or smaller protection zones are applied.
7. At present, the environment in Albania is highly degraded and in the FYR of Macedonia source and non-source pollution of the lakes and the rivers is a prevailing phenomenon. In Greece, degradation of the environment in many cases originates from lack of specific traditional human activities (e.g. degradation of wet meadows). However, it is evident that human activities in Greece are still quite intensive and problematic. As a result, in this study environmental problems are considered as having equal importance in all the Prespa area, i.e. the pollution of Stara Reka river due to wastewater of the town of Resen and adjacent villages (approx.17,000 inhabitants is considered of the same importance as the pollution of Ag.Germanos stream which receives the wastewater of Ag. Germanos and Lemos villages (400 inhabitants in total).
8. At present, implementation of conservation measures, management and sustainable exploitation of the natural resources in the three countries are still far below the biologically and socio-economic optimum limits.
9. Research, and especially monitoring, of basic natural or socio-economic parameters in Prespa in all three countries is limited to non-existent. An integrated monitoring system for the area should be established in all three countries.
10. In areas like Prespa, with immemorial human presence, preservation of natural values does not imply restrictions in the exploitation of natural resources or exclusion of the natural presence of people in certain locations, except in very few and small-scale cases. Thus, one of the challenges in the region is to organise appropriate cultural diversity conservation schemes.
11. Local misuse of resources is not the sole reason for habitat degradation. In many cases, state authorities, superficial planning or external factors are responsible for immense habitat destruction.
12. The productive system is not balanced and equally developed in all sectors. As a result, one of the main targets of the future development policy should be the promotion of structural changes in the existing productive structure by giving emphasis to the activities of the primary and tertiary sectors where the area's competitive advantages occur.
13. In each one of the three sections of the area, there is an intense need to enhance the living standard of the inhabitants and satisfy fundamental human needs.
14. Sustainable protected area management and development should not be limited to a stiff or inflexible specific strategy. Sustainable management should be more a driving force and an approach to understanding the complex ecological, socio-economic relationships.
15. In view of the character and the particularities of the region, large-scale or intensive development initiatives in the primary, secondary or tertiary sector are often incompatible with the preservation of the values of the area.
16. Alternative technology, renewable energy sources and new production methods should be used in order to facilitate the transition from intensive uses of natural resources to more sustainable ones.
17. One of the main challenges of the Prespa Park is to establish procedures for actual participation of stakeholders, share information equally, exchange opinions, set priorities and criteria in order to make the best choices, reach agreement and proceed with implementation
18. None of the three countries alone can raise the living standard of the Prespa inhabitants beyond a certain point, unless it comes to an agreement with the other two states on harmonised utilisation of natural resources under common term.
19. The key to success in transboundary co-operation in general, and the underlying

rationale of the Prespa Park process in particular, is the belief among stakeholders that the whole will be greater than the sum of its parts, i.e. the belief in "synergism". This, however, cannot be viewed as an axiom and rather has to be constantly demonstrated, if the process is to become meaningful and effective and make a difference in terms of real life.

What is the Exact Aim of the Prespa Park

"The preservation of the valuable natural and cultural characteristics of the whole of Prespa through management methods and development initiatives that enhance the standard of living of its inhabitants as well as promote peace and friendship between the three peoples, and lead to economic and social prosperity and convergence".

What are the Objectives of the Prespa Park

- Objective I: Conservation of ecological values, functions and of the biological diversity in the Prespa Park area.
- Objective II: Enhance opportunities for the sustainable economic and social development of the local societies and the wise use of the natural resources.
- Objective III: Preservation of cultural values such as monuments, traditional human activities and cultural elements that promote the sustainable management of the natural resources.
- Objective IV: Seek participation, co-operation and involvement in decision-making and in benefit or loss sharing of stakeholders in the three countries.

Difficulties Impeding Transboundary Co-operation in Prespa

- Different (sometimes conflicting) laws and policies and protected areas systems, as well as divergent participation in international environmental regimes
- Different political and administrative structure
- Different stages of economic development; incompatible policies related to resource utilisation
- National sovereignty and security considerations
- Difficult terrain; inaccessibility; lack of roads
- National, political, or cultural differences, which can cause misunderstandings
- The pending foreign policy issues between Greece and the FYR of Macedonia that prohibit formal adoption of new international agreements between the two countries.

Policy Keystones for the Development and Protection of the Prespa Park

<u>Objective I: Conservation of ecological values, functions and of the biological diversity in the Prespa Park area</u>

- Promotion of the concept of unity of the Prespa catchment basin beyond local or/ and national differences
- Wise water management in the basin
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Increase of existing knowledge and information on the condition of the natural environment
- Complete documentation, identification and assessment of the problems relating to the natural values of the catchment basin
- Adoption of a joint monitoring system
- Implementation of specific management interventions
- Linking of management interventions with human activities in the region
- Promotion of specific, thematic transboundary activities
- Promotion of exchange of information, knowledge, experience and know-how between the stakeholders
- Promotion of institutional reform in order to ensure the protection of the whole catchment

basin

Objective II: Enhance opportunities for the sustainable economic and social development

- Promotion of a common development philosophy for the whole region
- Promotion of balanced development planning
- Promotion of productive activities that will contribute to environmental protection
- Promotion of environment-friendly solutions with regard to energy production
- Use of modern or environment-friendly technologies
- Application of innovatory pilot programmes
- Construction or improvement of infrastructure
- Promotion of registered designations of origin and labelling of local products
- Mitigation of the large socio-economic differences between the three countries
- Promotion of intra-communication between the three countries
- Maintenance of the existing population figures
- Strengthening the local labour potential
- Lifting of isolation, increase of opportunities, enhancement of the social fibre
- Strengthening of the local labour potential with special training
- Promotion and institutional consolidation of business initiatives

Objective III: Preservation of cultural values such as monuments, traditional settlements and traditional human activities and cultural elements that promote the sustainable management of the natural resources

- Promotion of the concept of unity of the Prespa catchment basin beyond local or/ and national differences
- Protection of the Byzantine monuments and of the traditional settlements
- Listing of all traditional human activities and features in the area
- Linking of management interventions with human activities in the region

Objective IV: Seek participation, co-operation and involvement in decision-making and in benefit or loss sharing of stakeholders in the three countries

- Promotion of a culture of peace, contribution to conflict prevention and the building of trust, confidence and security in the area
- Promotion of exchange of information, knowledge, experience and know-how between the stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the protection and management of the area
- Increase participation of local stakeholders by introducing new participatory methods and approaches such as processes, where the focus is on cumulative learning and exchange of ideas end experience by all participants and diversity and different evaluation of situations is sought instead of suppressed.

Fundamental Management Issues that relate to All Three Countries and Require Co-ordination on a Catchment Basin Level

Objective I: Operational targets:

I. Preservation of Prespa water resources
II. Conservation of rare habitats, the variety and mosaic of biotopes, the rare or endemic flora and fauna species through research, monitoring and implementation of management regimes
III. Promotion of institutional framework for transborder co-operation for the management of protected areas in each country

Objective II: Operational targets:

I. Spatial planning and zoning of activities and uses
II. Energy
III. Development of the production system; Agriculture and stockbreeding
IV. Development of the production system; Fishing
V. Development of the production system; Forest exploitation
VII. Development of the production system; Promotion of sustainable tourism

VIII. Improvement of social infrastructure, transport and communications

Objective III: Operational target I

Activities in all three countries:

- Implementation of the peripheral road study to the extent it addresses promotion of monuments
- "Traditions in Prespa" project – study and plan for the conservation of cultural traditions, architecture, fishing, irrigation etc.
- Conservation of traditional local architecture and other cultural monuments
- Inventory and protection of traditional buildings
- Completion of archaeological excavations and promotion of Byzantine and metabyzantine monuments

Objective IV: Operational target I

Activities in all three countries:

- Organisation of awareness-raising/ information activities of the local population, public services, bodies etc. within and around the Prespa
- Promotion of public awareness using flagship species to highlight the need of nature conservation
- Exchange of experience in nature protection, forest and wildlife management and in sustainable development
- Creation of data bases with all scientists/ experts on Prespa and relevant publications
- Organisation of scientific conferences
- Implementation of the Prespa Park Communication Plan
- Joint environmental education and youth exchange programme
- Cultural interaction: open markets, festivals, sports events
- Integrated infrastructure for the visitors of the various protected areas, common printed information material in four languages
- Strengthen the capacity of protected area administrations in the three countries
- Organisation of training seminars, transfer of know-how and modernisation of production methods
- Empowering of local bodies with a view at taking initiatives for environmental protection

Identification of Specific Indicators for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

Environmental policy fields and indicators

- Water quantity: Lake level
- Water quality: Nitrogen and phosphorus used per hectare of agriculture land; Pesticides used per hectare of utilized agriculture land; Non-treated wastewater; Index of water quality; Bio-indicators
- Status of biodiversity: Important area loss/ damage % of specific habitats, ecosystems, species; Wetland area change; Forest area change; Fragmentation of landscapes; Specific land use changes
- Status of natural resources: Water use; Share of consumption of renewable energy (as a ratio of total); Nutrient balance of the soil; Timber balance; Fishing pressure
- Waste: Waste land filled

D. Specific Proposals and Technical Data Sheets on the Sustainable Development and Protection of the Prespa Park

Hydrogeological Project Proposal

Development of a monitoring infrastructure, establishment of an integrated water management system in the Prespa Park and reforestation activities

April 2002

Project Summary: Prespa is situated in the Balkans, at the borders of Albania, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia. Over the last years, due to anthropogenic reasons, the hydrological regime of the Micro and Macro Prespa has deteriorated. Degradation of natural resources is negatively influencing the socio-economic situation. Improvement of living standards is necessary for all people who live in the area. However, there is a prevailing opinion shared by stakeholders that improvement of the quality of life and development should be made with respect to the natural and cultural values of the area.

In order to promote the conservation of this Internationally Important Wetland it is regarded as a first priority to launch a study on its hydrological system and ecological functions. The aim of the study is to provide solutions in order to achieve the optimum water level balance of the lakes in the three countries and hence to ensure the long-term conservation of the ecosystems as well as of the rare wildlife species.

The study on the hydrological system will include an analysis and presentation of all existing information on the hydrology; ecological functioning; human interventions and their environmental impacts; socio-economic situation. Through the synthesis of the above-mentioned different components and taking into consideration the particularities of each state, the study will provide solutions and proposals for the restoration of the degraded habitats, as well as measures for the reimbursement of the local people or the activities that may be affected.

In addition, immediate actions should be taken in order to avert threats to important habitats such as forests, especially at the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa. These forests are heavily degraded due to overexploitation for fuel purposes and overgrazing. Erosion is prevailing resulting to irreversible negative impact to forest and water resources. Within this project, a series of measures towards the sustainable forest management are proposed.

Anticipated Lifetime of project: 3 years

Anticipated Results:

- Protection of natural resources of the Prespa Park area
- Improvement of the hydrological regime of the Prespa Park
- Cessation of forest and water resources degradation of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa

Indicators of success:

- Agreement of stakeholders on the optimum water level regime in Micro and Macro Prespa
- Special agreement between three governments on joint policy in the frame of management of water resources
- Promotion of activities for rehabilitation of wetland functions
- Increase of knowledge on the hydrology of the Prespa Park
- Co-operation of the three countries on the most important issue concerning wetland functioning targeted towards conservation of its natural resources.
- Regeneration of forests at the Albanian part of Macro and Micro Prespa
- Active participation of local people and local authorities in the management and conservation of the Prespa area

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Task Objectives:

Sub-Task a:

- Promotion of long-term conservation of the area through the accomplishment of a study on the hydrology and functioning of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa in the three states.

Sub-Task b:

- Promotion of sustainable forest management and restoration of degraded forests at the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa.

Justification: The Prespa area consists of two Lakes the Micro and Macro Prespa and their catchment area. Micro Prespa is shared between Albania (27%) and Greece (73%), though Macro Prespa is shared between Albania (8%), Greece (4%) and the FYR of Macedonia (88%).

The importance of Prespa has been widely recognised by national and international bodies because of its natural beauty, its high biodiversity, the populations of rare water birds, such as the Dalmatian pelican, a world vulnerable species, as well as for its cultural values including Byzantine monuments etc.

State authorities of the three countries have enforced the protection status of Prespa through the use of national and international legislative means. A large part of the lakes and their catchment basin has been characterised as a National Park (Albania and Greece) or /and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Greece, FYR of Macedonia).

The will of the three governments to co-operate in order to promote the protection of all the Prespa area was corroborated on the 2nd February 2000, when the Prime Ministers of Albania, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia issued a trilateral Declaration recognising the international importance of the Prespa Lakes as well as the need for co-operation in order to promote conservation of its natural and cultural values.

The water regime of both lakes has been impoverished due to human interventions from the three countries. Most prominent of these interventions is the diversion of Devoll River into Lake Micro Prespa. This intervention in concurrence with forest degradation at the Albanian part of Prespa results in a serious and immense impoverishment of the wetland not only at the Albanian part but in the three countries. Therefore immediate action towards the solution of these problems should be taken.

Taken as a granted that the participation of local people and local authorities is a crucial factor for the success of conservation efforts, activities targeting for an increase of public awareness, training, exchange and building local capacity are all incorporated in the

project proposal.

Summary Description of Sub-Tasks:

Sub-Task a:

Accomplishment of a study on the hydrology and functioning of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa in the three states, including human interventions, as well as their environmental and socio-economic impact.

The aim of this task is the promotion of long-term protection of the Prespa Park, an Internationally Important Wetland under the Ramsar Convention. A basic tool towards this will be the accomplishment of a study on the hydrology of the two Lakes including their catchment areas. Over the last years, due to anthropogenic reasons in the three countries, the water regime of the lakes has been seriously degraded. One of the main reasons for this impoverishment is the diversion of Devoll River in Albania into Micro Prespa. The study will give emphasis at the natural and socio-economic parameters of the Devoll River problem but it will also take into consideration the environmental problems and socio-economic situation regarding water management in Greece and the FYR of Macedonia. The study will propose specific works and measures that should be taken in order to achieve conservation aims as well as to minimise conflicts with stakeholders. Finally, the project will include a public awareness component necessary in order to ensure local participation and approval of the proposed solutions and works.

Sub-Task b:

Promotion of sustainable forest management and restoration of degraded forests at the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa.

The project includes a series of activities aiming at the promotion of the sustainable forest management of the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa, which are susceptible to degradation and erosion. Within the project, a Pilot Study on the sustainable management of the forests will be accomplished as well as specific works i.e. reforestation, fencing, soil stabilisation works and monitoring will be implemented. This Pilot Study can be accomplished in co-operation with forest experts from the FYR of Macedonia, who have a long-term experience in forest management in Prespa area. In addition, this Pilot Study can be used as an example for sustainable forest management in neighbouring countries i.e. Greek part of Prespa. The project also includes as most necessary activities public awareness, training and building local capacity.

Expected Results and Deliverables:

Main Results:

Sub-Task a : Protection of natural resources including rare wildlife species, sensitive habitats and degraded ecosystems through the enhancement of the hydrological regime of the transboundary Prespa Park

Sub-Task b: Cessation of forest and lake ecosystems degradation at the Albanian part of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa

Reports and Deliverables:

Sub-Task a:

- Hydrogeological study of Micro and Macro Prespa Lakes, including the Database of all collected data; the GIS developed during the project and the relevant spatial data; the monitoring infrastructure; the water balance model

and report with all its requirements and simulated parameters; the management scheme report; and a report on possible project evolution and enhancements.

- Public awareness printed materials on the importance and integrity of the area in the three countries

Sub-Task b:

- Pilot Plan on sustainable forest management for the Albanian part of Prespa
- Public awareness printed material on sustainable forest management

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Project Description

Introduction: The surface of Micro Prespa Lake is 47km^2, maximum depth 8.4m, while the surface of Macro Prespa is 259.4km^2 and its maximum depth is 55m. The two lakes are of tectonic origin. Nowadays, Micro Prespa is at a higher level than Macro Prespa and Macro Prespa is 179m higher than Lake Ohrid. Micro Prespa has an artificial surface outflow to Macro Prespa but Macro Prespa does not have a surface outflow but an underground karstic outflow to Ohrid. 46 %-49% of Ohrid water originates from Prespa. However, information regarding the hydrology of the area is sporadic, sectoral and inadequate due to lack of integrated research in all three countries. On the other hand, human interventions in the three states have been influencing the hydrological system of the area and consequently have affected its ecological function. During the last 35 years, a successive lowering of the water level of lake Macro Prespa of about 10m directly influencing the lake's environment, the human activities and the biodiversity, is observed. As a consequence, a change of the groundwater regime is also observed.

At present, one of the biggest interventions and threats to the lakes' ecosystems is the diversion of Devoll River (Albania) into Lake Micro Prespa. Micro and Macro Prespa compose one hydrological system, thus it is evident that any measures taken by one of the three states, will directly affect the water regime in all the Prespa area. All attempts to explain the regime of the lake and groundwater have not been successful until now, due to lack of consistent and systematic hydrological and meteorological observations. This is why in this project it is proposed to improve these observations. In addition, hydrogeological investigations, particularly in karstic areas have to be included. On the other hand, the three states have their own particularities and distinctive socio-economic aspects. Thus, solutions and proposals should incorporate these local and national particularities as well as the environmental and socio-economic parameters of the three countries.

One other important factor that contributes to the siltation of the lakes and the impoverishment of its water regime is the erosion of the mountain slopes in the Albanian part of Prespa's catchment area. Measures such as reforestation should be taken immediately in order to avert further degradation of the forest and water resources of this part of Prespa.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in the three countries administration for protected areas is in place, but it is still not advanced in its management and administrative tasks. Public awareness and training of staff of the protected area administrations, as well as of local authorities, stakeholders and NGOs, directed to conservation aims is still at the beginning. The project, therefore, also targets the strengthening of the capacity of the management authorities, as well as of the stakeholders in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia.

Details of Sub-Tasks

Sub-Task a: **Accomplishment of a study on the hydrology and ecological functions of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa in the three states, including human interventions, as well as their environmental and socio-economic**

impact.

Summary: Due to many human interventions to the hydrology of Micro and Macro Prespa, the hydrological regime of the whole area has deteriorated. In order to promote the conservation of this Internationally Important Wetland, it is regarded as a first priority to launch a study on the hydrology of the area. The aim of the study is to provide solutions to achieve the optimum water level balance of the lakes in the three countries and ensure long-term conservation of the ecosystems, as well as of the rare fauna and flora species. The study will include an analysis and presentation of all existing information on the hydrology; meteorology; hydrogeology; ecological function; human interventions and their environmental impacts; socio-economic situation. Through the synthesis of the above-mentioned different components and taking into consideration the particularities of each state, solutions and proposals for the restoration of the degraded habitats, as well as measures for the reimbursement of the local people or the activities that may be affected, will be provided.

Objective: Promote long-term conservation of Prespa lakes ecosystems and avert further degradation of the area's natural resources.

Justification: Micro Prespa, Macro Prespa and Lake Ohrid make up one unique hydrological system, which is shared between the three countries. Due to many reasons, a comprehensive hydro-geological study of Prespa lakes has never been made. As a result, integrated knowledge on the hydrological and consequently ecological functions of the area does not exist. On the other hand, the hydrological regime of Prespa has been seriously affected by various human interventions**.**

In 1936, the Aghios Germanos stream in Greece was diverted from Micro Prespa to its present artificial channel leading into Macro Prespa. In 1953, Albania linked Micro Prespa to the River Devoll and in 1969 added a dam and sluice in order to allow water to enter the lake in winter and to drain from it in summer. In 1976, the network was expanded in order to irrigate the Devoll and Korcha valleys. In the late sixties, irrigation systems were built within the Prespa basin in Greece and the FYR of Macedonia. In 1969, the connection between Greek Micro and Macro Prespa was modified to a narrow concrete flume and a road bridge. In 1986, a sluice gate has been placed at the Micro Prespa end of this channel in order to facilitate irrigation.

According to researchers, Devoll is one of the most turbid rivers in the Balkans. Since the early 70s, Devoll's flow into Micro Prespa deposited ca. 1.2 million m^3 of alluvium or 30-70 thousand m^3 of alluvium every year. In order to collect the solid material, a decanter was constructed but with poor results. Solid materials have been deposited along the coast at the Albanian part of Micro Prespa covering a zone of 1-1.5km and over 1m thick. In addition, through Devoll, a considerable amount of chemical residues from intensive cultivation and wastewaters of the Billist town and valley are going into Lake Micro Prespa. At present, at the Albanian part of Micro Prespa, water abstraction is impossible, underground water springs have been blocked, changes in flora and fauna are irreversible and serious socio-economic problems prevail. As a result, the deviation of the Devoll River, once believed as a positive factor for irrigation, has become a socio-economic and environmental problem. At present, Devoll's impact is considered as the most important and immense threat for all Prespa's ecosystems in the three countries.

It should also be pointed out that at present, the breeding sites of the rare water birds are located in the Greek part of the Lake Micro Prespa and both Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa are an important wintering and feeding area for birds. Breeding colonies and feeding sites of rare waterbirds species as well as fish spawning grounds are directly influenced by the seasonal fluctuation of the water level of the Lake Micro Prespa. As a result, any

uncontrolled intervention in the lake's water level fluctuation in Albania or in Greece may destroy more than 600 nests of the Dalmatian Pelican, a world vulnerable species, the breeding grounds of the Pygmy Cormorants, the Great White herons, the Purple herons and other rare bird species.

On the other hand, since the late 80s, the water level of the Lake Macro Prespa has decreased by ca.8m. The reasons have not been clarified yet. Researchers argue that a series of dry years in combination with increased water abstraction for human uses and possibly changes in the underground link between Macro Prespa and Ohrid has played an important role in this phenomenon. The Koula sluice in Greece controls the surface outflow of Micro Prespa to Macro Prespa. The decrease of the water level of Macro Prespa has negatively influenced the hydrology and consequently the ecological functioning of the Ezerani Ramsar Wetland, as well as the feeding and wintering grounds of rare water birds in the FYR of Macedonia part of Prespa.

Finally, it should be stressed that most human interventions in the hydrology of Prespa were targeted towards the promotion of agriculture through the improvement of irrigation networks and facilities. The economy of the area in the three countries is mainly based on the primary sector and specifically on agriculture. As a result, any changes or works that will influence the existing networks will have an impact not only to the environment, but also to the area's socio-economic situation. In order to avoid conflicts with local stakeholders, the study on the hydrology of Prespa lakes should incorporate, apart from the environmental, a socio-economic and a technical component.

Description:

The study on the hydrology, hydrogeology and ecological function of the Lakes Micro and Macro Prespa in the three states should consist of the following main components:

- Origin and functions of the Micro and Macro Prespa lakes and their relation to Ohrid Lake
- Hydrology, hydrogeology and hydrometeorology of the two lakes including their catchment basin
- Establishment of a single water and environmental management system in the Prespa area
- The socio-economic situation in the three countries
- Cost-benefit analysis of the interventions to the hydrology of the area in the three countries
- Analysis of the ecosystems' water balance requirements in order to ensure long-term protection of rare flora and fauna species
- Socio-economic problems relating to the optimum water balance of the two lakes and specific proposals for their solutions (e.g. reimbursement to local farmers, construction of specific technical works etc.)

In order to accomplish the study, the existing information on the hydrology, hydrogeology and hydrometeorology, natural resources, socio-economic situation and environmental impacts in the three countries should be collected and elaborated Due to lack of complete knowledge on the hydrology, hydrogeology and meteorology of the area, complementary, short-term, basic research supported by extension of the existing hydro-meteorological network is required.

During the implementation of the project a possibility for additional specific activities (geophysical investigation, groundwater observation wells etc.) should be provided.

Finally, given that local participation in the solution of the problems of the area is one of the most important factors for the success of the programme, it is strongly recommended for the implementation of grass-root work, as well as communication and awareness-raising activities for the stakeholders and local authorities.

The study may be dvided into four distinct phases. The first one is the collection,

evaluation and storage of meteorological, hydrological, hydrogeological and ecology-related historical data in the area. Then new measuring locations for different variables must be identified in order to provide a denser and more reliable monitoring network for water resources. Following the identification and establishment of the network, the main modelling study will take place, based both in historical and new data that will come from the newly established network. Finally, one of the most crucial components to the viability of the system is the establishment of a specific policy and a management scheme for the water systems in the Prespa park relying upon the appropriate works and measures that will ensure the preservation of the good hydrological and ecological status of the lakes.

More specifically (see also attached timetable),

A. COLLECTION, EVALUATION AND STORAGE OF DATA

The relevant meteorological, hydrological, hydrogeological and ecology-related data should be collected and stored in a common (possibly distributed in the three countries) database. The collection, evaluation and storage of data should follow the same rules leading to a common format database and common procedures for testing and evaluating data. The required data are the following:

- Total precipitation data
- Temperature data
- Geological data
- Wind speed, sunshine duration, and relative humidity data.
- Lake levels data
- Water abstraction data
- Known lake inflows and outflows
- Groundwater stages
- Hydrogeological parameters

Along with timeseries data, spatial data may also be collected to support the hydrological modelling. The elevation model, the water districts and water basins boundaries as well as the locations of measuring stations in the lakes district are all valuable data when it comes to the analysis of both hydrological and hydrogeological data. In order to store these data a GIS must be developed.

B. NETWORK IDENTIFICATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

New locations for measuring stations should be identified in places of hydrological interest around the lakes and where data are missing or not sufficient for the hydrological and hydrogeological analysis. The identification is based on the minimum accepted density for the network and the evaluation of the existing stations as far as the quality of their measurements is concerned. New instruments may be added to existing stations to enhance the spatial distribution of variables.

Following the identification of these locations, the network should be established and put in function in order to provide accurate and reliable data to the hydrological analysis. Some of these stations will be fully automatic, equipped with auto-recording instruments and a data logger. These stations with the support of the appropriate software that will be developed in order to retrieve data from the logger at constant intervals will allow for the establishment of an automatic monitoring infrastructure in the area.

C. HYDROLOGICAL ANALYSIS – HYDROLOGICAL MODELLING

The main objective of this phase is to develop an accurate water balance model to be used for the sustainable management of the water resources in the area. The analysis should investigate and address the following issues:

- The hydraulic connection of Micro Prespa and Macro Prespa

- The hydraulic connection of Macro Prespa and lake Ohrid
- The sediment deposition in the lakes
- The inflows and outflows from the lakes.

The above-mentioned analysis relies heavily on accurate and evenly distributed data and will most probably require initial processing and testing of the integrity of data. As a consequence the first task in the hydrological modelling phase is the evaluation of the reliability of data that will be used. Many tests can be applied to the data to support their evaluation involving different hydrological, spatial and consistency checks. Completion of data will be required for stations with missing periods of observations.

Hydrogeologic parameters will be derived for wells and boreholes where information about transmissivity and storativity is missing. The stations measurements will be spatially integrated in order to provide the spatial distribution of the physical variables over the water basins. The integration will be based on known spatial integration methods (Thiessen polygons, Kriging) and will be applied to both surface water observations (precipitation, temperature etc.) and groundwater observations and parameters.

One of the principal components of the water balance is the evaporation of the lakes and the evapotranspiration of the surrounding area. Using appropriate methods the maximum rate (potential evaportranspiration) can be estimated for the area leading to an estimation for the actual evapotranspiration.

The water balance model will be calibrated and tested against historical data. Given the correct input the model is able to simulate the hydrological behaviour of the lake system and provide the user with information on the available quantity of water resources and their distribution over the area. The water balance model is the starting point for the establishment of a policy for the sustainable management and environmental control of the water resources in the Prespa area.

D. ESTABLISHMENT OF A MANAGEMENT SCHEME

The management scheme relies on the identification and the establishment of the monitoring network of measuring stations as it was discussed in B. Special software must be developed in order to support this network and process the online recordings. A well-calibrated water balance model coupled by real time processing of online observations will provide all the necessary infrastructure for the development of a strategic scheme for the sustainable management of water resources in the area.

Based on this configuration, different works can be developed in the three countries to preserve the good hydrological and ecological status of the lake system. A balance between human activities and ecological functions can be established leading to a harmonised environment with controlled development and ecologic quality.

Expected Reports and Deliverables:

- The Database of all collected data
- The GIS developed during the project and the relevant spatial data
- The monitoring infrastructure.
- The final report of the hydrological and hydrogeological study.
- The water balance model and report with all its requirements and simulated parameters.
- The management scheme report.
- Report on possible project evolution and enhancements
- Public-awareness printed material on the importance of the area, which will be disseminated to local stakeholders, as well as to visitors at the Information Centres in Gorica (Albania), Asamati (FYR of Macedonia), and Aghios Germanos (Greece)

Budget: The actual cost of this three-year project is hard to define in advance. In fact, it would be possible to determine the exact costs only after the monitoring network of measuring stations is identified, in view of the fact that the relevant equipment represents a high proportion of the total cost of the study. Therefore, funding should be secured for Activities A and B of the attached timetable, namely collection, evaluation and storage of data and identification of monitoring network, and then proceed with the other phases for the completion of the project. In any case, it is roughly estimated that the total cost will be in the vicinity of 1,000,000 EURO.

Sub-Task b: **Promotion of sustainable forest management and restoration of degraded forests at the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa.**

Summary: Due to overgrazing and cutting for fuel purposes, the forests at the Albanian part of Micro and Macro Prespa have been degraded causing erosion and degradation of the protected areas. In order to cease further impoverishment of habitats and wildlife, the implementation of concrete measures such as the accomplishment of a Pilot Study on the sustainable management of the forests at the Albanian part of Prespa, as well as specific works such as reforestation, fencing, soil stabilisation works, monitoring etc., are provided for. This Pilot Study can be accomplished in co-operation with forest experts from the FYR of Macedonia, who have a long-term experience in forest management in the Prespa area. In addition, this Pilot Study can be used as an example for sustainable forest management in neighbouring countries, i.e. the Greek part of Prespa. The project also includes as most necessary activities public awareness, training and building local capacity.

Objective: To promote conservation of forest habitats, as well as of their rare flora and fauna species through the implementation of specific restoration activities.

Justification: After the break down of the former political system in Albania, large parts of former agricultural areas were no longer tended. Instead, an almost uncontrolled grazing of cattle, sheep and goats began. The woods, which had remained in the region until 1990, were almost entirely cut either for firewood or for exportation. Energy resources are especially in short supply, thus local people are compelled to overexploit the forest's timber for fuel purposes. Over exploitation of forests along with overgrazing causes erosion and hence negatively influences the situation of the two lakes. Thus, nowadays, at lower elevations the heavily grazed oak shrub lands cover the area entirely. Only small remnants of woods remain in the upper oak zone and the sub-alpine beech zone.

Whereas the vegetation at higher altitudes of the Prespa National Park is still well preserved, the lower altitudes suffer from over-exploitation. The re-establishment of oak and beech woods is, therefore, urgently needed.

Description: The establishment of a sustainable forestry system shall be encouraged and promoted within the Albanian Prespa Region. A plan aiming at sustainable forestry systems within the buffer zones of the National Park will be elaborated and discussed with the local people, the national Park administration and the forestry service.

This plan will be implemented in degraded areas of Albania in order to convert the shrubby forests into high-stand natural forests. The plan will include reforestation works with native tree species, construction of small soil stabilisation works, where it is necessary as well as training of local people in agro-forestry, spatial management and soil erosion prevention activities. A significant input to training courses can be given by the forest services of the Galichitsa and Pelister National Parks (Prespa, FYR of Macedonia) who have

a long experience in the management of forest areas and conservation of rare flora and fauna species.

In addition, a long-term monitoring system will be organised. The monitoring system has to include the assessment of changes on permanent plots, changes within populations of plant and animal indicator species. Sites suitable for monitoring have to be chosen which cover core zones, buffer zones, and development and restoration zones. The recovery of the beech and the oak zone, erosion phenomena, and possible effects of different land-use systems should be monitored. Some processes may be controlled by aerial or satellite images. The methods will be fixed and a system of suitable parameters and sites for the monitoring will be provided. In this context, a field study on the role of different types of forests on the hydrology of the Prespa area will also be preformed.

The above activities will last for 20 months.

Expected Reports and Deliverables:

- Pilot Plan on sustainable forest management for the Albanian part of Prespa
- Public awareness printed material on sustainable forest management

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Budget: The estimated cost of Sub-task b is 140,000 EURO: Reforestation activities - 80,000 EURO (of which 10,000 EURO can be covered by local resources); field study on the role of different types of forest – 50,000 EURO; other expenses, such as monitoring and supervision in forest rehabilitation activities etc. – 10,000 EURO.

SUB-TASK A (HYDROLOGICAL STUDY) TIMETABLE

	Month / Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1	Collection, evaluation and storage of data																																				
2	Identification of monitoring network																																				
3	Establishment of monitoring network																																				
4	Hydrological modelling																																				
5	Establishment of management scheme																																				
6	Delivery preparation																																				

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