



PRESPA PARK

REPORT

**FIFTH REGULAR MEETING of the PRESPA PARK
COORDINATION COMMITTEE**

**LEMOS, GREECE
13-15 NOVEMBER 2003**

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Fifth Regular Meeting of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee

Lemos, Greece, 13-15 November 2003

**Hosted by the Municipality of Prespa and the Society for the Protection of Prespa
Funded by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works**

At the invitation of Mr. Spyros Plessas, Department of Management of the Natural Environment of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece, representative of the Ministry to the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee (PPCC), the PPCC held its fifth regular meeting at "Liakoto" Hotel, in Lemos, Greece on 13-15 November 2003.

The meeting was attended by all members of the PPCC from the three countries involved and from Ramsar/ MedWet, as well as by representatives of UNDP, KfW, GTZ, Neretva River Cooperation and the Sompan Foundation, and observers from the Prespa National Forest Management Authority, Ezerani Reserve, the Korcha Forestry Service, the Prefecture of Florina and WWF International (see complete list of participants in Annex X).

The meeting was opened by the Mayor of Prespa, Mr. Lazaros Nalpantidis, and chaired by Mr. Spyros Plessas.

Agenda

1. Opening session:

- 1.1. Welcoming by the Chairman
- 1.2. Welcome address by the Mayor of Prespa
- 1.3. Presentation of the working agenda by the Chairman and approval

2. Prespa Park PDF B project implementation

- 2.1. Training on UNDP/ GEF procedures for project implementation
- 2.2. Presentation of Project Document and project implementation arrangements
- 2.3. Questions and discussion
- 2.4. Conclusions

3. Procedural Matters

- 3.1. Endorsement of reports of last two PPCC meetings
- 3.2. Renewal of mandate of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee

4. Activities since the last regular meeting in Oteshevo

- 4.1. Presentation of report by the Secretariat
- 4.2. Additional contributions from the PPCC members

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

- 5.1. Endorsement of current version of the SAP

6. Prespa Park Communication Plan

- 6.1. Extension of the current workplan and the term of the Communication Officer for another year

7. GTZ programme

- 7.1. Brief report on supported projects within GTZ programme in 2001 - 2003 and other GTZ activities relevant for the Prespa Park
- 7.2. Information on selected projects in Round 4 and selection procedures
- 7.3. Information on the next phase of the programme
- 7.4. Discussion

8. Possible additional designations for the Prespa Park

- 8.1. Presentation on Proposed Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa
- 8.2. Questions and initial exchange of views

9. Neretva River transboundary co-operation

- 9.1. Presentation of the Neretva River transboundary co-operation
- 9.2. Questions and discussion

10. Sompan Foundation programme

- 10.1. Presentation of the Sompan Foundation programme
- 10.2. Questions and discussion

11. Closure of the meeting

- 11.1. Adoption of decisions, recommendations and conclusions of the meeting
- 11.2. Date and place of the next meeting
- 11.3. Closing remarks

Summary Minutes

The acting Chairman, Mr. Spyros Plessas (Ministry of Environment, Greece), opened the meeting by welcoming all participants and passed the floor to the Mayor of Greek Prespa, Mr. Lazaros Nalpantidis. The Mayor of Prespa, host of the meeting, welcomed all participants to Prespa and spoke of the beauty and the importance of the Prespa environment and the risks it faces, expressing the view that the strategic planning for Prespa will help preserve it. He stressed the need to improve the conditions of living and make Prespa more attractive, interesting and profitable, so that its inhabitants remain in the region. He acknowledged the fact that interstate meetings can be time-consuming and not always effective, usually concluding in wishful thinking without reaching agreements that can be implemented, but on the other hand, he evaluated positively the course of the Prespa Park process to date, since the Committee has decided to proceed with agreements, give solutions and overcome problems. The Mayor noted that trust has been the cornerstone of cooperation in Prespa. He was optimistic about the future and convinced that the results of the cooperation for mutual benefit were going to be visible soon.

The Chairman continued by asking the Committee members to approve the working agenda. The agenda was approved.

Under **agenda item 2**, the floor then passed on to Mr. Batkhuyag Baldanbongo (UNDP Tirana), who presented the UNDP's global objectives and mandate. His presentation went through UNDP's history, establishment of regional bureaux, mission and goals. He noted that the Millennium Development Goals comprised 6 focus areas, namely Democratic Governance, Poverty Reduction, Crisis Prevention & Recovery, Energy & Environment, Information & Communications Technology, and HIV/ AIDS. His presentation also referred to UNDP's activities in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia. The full presentation by Mr. Baldanbongo can be found in Annex I.

The floor then passed to Ms. Anita Kodzoman (UNDP Skopje), who briefed the Committee on the practice and programmes of UNDP Skopje. Its practice areas are: Democratic Governance, with a portfolio related to decentralisation process in FYR of Macedonia; the Economic Development programme, focusing on young unemployed people; the Reconciliation and Security cluster, aiming at establishment of better relations among the ethnicities of the country; the Environmental portfolio, which comprises several projects, working especially with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, and helping it address its commitments to global environmental conventions; and the regional project of Prespa, implemented together with UNDP Tirana and KfW (see full presentation in Annex II)

The next speaker, Mr. Petar Gjorgjiev (KfW), presented the activities of KfW in the developing countries, tasks and areas of assistance, project spiral, agreement procedures, etc. Mr. Gjorgjiev talked about the main activities of KfW in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia, in the field of social infrastructure, which included water management and resources, water supply, sanitation, and wastewater treatment plants. Mr. Gjorgjiev's full presentation can be found in Annex III.

Subsequently, the floor passed again to Mr. Baldangombo, who made a presentation on UNDP/GEF project implementation/ execution (full presentation in Annex IV). He explained that UNDP manages specific activities related to the six GEF focal areas. The Prespa Park project falls under the biodiversity focal area. In this context, UNDP ensures there is one executing agency for each project, usually the recipient government, which increases ownership of the programme. The relevant financial management procedures were also outlined.

Following Mr. Baldangombo's presentation, Ms. Kodzoman talked about "Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation" (M&E) of UNDP projects. She reminded that the PPCC will have the role of the PDF B project Steering Committee, and consequently it ought to be familiar with M&E issues, in order to be able to assess whether the project will achieve the expected results. She presented the objectives of M&E and its components, namely reporting, validation and participation. The second part of her presentation focused on outcomes and outputs of projects, and on use of specific indicators to measure progress. These indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and trackable. Ms. Kodzoman's presentation is available in Annex V.

In the afternoon session, Ms. Kodzoman continued with a presentation on the Prespa Park PDF B project, which mainly consisted of a brief overview of the main project objectives, as set by the Project Document (full presentation available in Annex VI). Ms. Kodzoman suggested that the PPCC, being the PDF's Steering Committee, try to define specific indicators related to the project's objectives, in order to be able later to evaluate its progress. She continued by providing an overview of the current status of the project. She informed the PPCC that in the FYR of Macedonia, the Ministry of Environment and the UNDP Country Office had already signed the Project Document and that the Ministry of Environment in Albania was expected to sign it soon. She added that UNDP and KfW had announced the positions for the International Project Manager (IPM) and that approximately 20 applications had arrived. She reminded participants that the selection panel for the IPM

would consist of the three National Project Directors (NPDs) and the representatives of UNDP and KfW, as agreed during the fourth regular meeting of the Committee. After the panel would agree on a shortlist of candidates, she proposed to hold telephone interviews in Skopje; if needed, one or two candidates could also be invited for personal interviews. Ms. Kodzoman also informed the PPCC that the positions for the national staff had been announced in all three countries, adding that the staff would be selected by the NPDs, representatives of the local government and NGOs participating in the PPCC, as well as UNDP and KfW. The IPM, who would be hopefully selected by the beginning of December 2003, would also participate in the national staff selection. As far as the consulting firm was concerned, UNDP and KfW would put out a request for bids. Selection would be carried out by a panel according to the technical and financial evaluation criteria used by UNDP. Ms. Kodzoman stressed the importance of the requirement that the consulting firm should include at least 20% national experts in their team.

Then, Ms. Kodzoman went on to explain that the PDF is a regional project, with a regional component – to be operationally supported by UNDP Skopje - and smaller national components, which will be executed by the Ministry of Environment in Albania and the Ministry of Environment of the FYR of Macedonia. She noted that the Project Document contains what was agreed in the project proposal and stressed the “parallel financing” component of the project, namely the fact that UNDP is managing GEF money (376,000\$) and KfW is managing German bilateral funds. She mentioned that in reality, two project documents (contracts), one by UNDP and a similar one by KfW, have been sent to the respective Ministries of Environment. The UNDP budget is mostly related to activities regionally implemented, as well as to the national components, basically payment of national staff and smaller activities. The consulting firm is expected to get a lump sum for their work - falling under the budget line “contracts”- and their work will be financed by both UNDP and KfW funds. The two donors have agreed to coordinate their budgets and will have a joint project agreement underlying coordination and joint activities. Ms. Kodzoman concluded that in effect there exists one project with parallel financing, and a steering committee by UNDP and KfW will ensure that the budget and the activities are properly coordinated. Finally, she stressed that all participating countries have equal obligations and equal rights and opened the floor for discussion, committing herself to reply to any questions that she could not answer immediately during the following days, after contacting Mr. Nick Remple from the UNDP Regional Bureau in Bratislava.

Mr. Zamir Dedej (Ministry of Environment, Albania) thanked Ms. Kodzoman for the presentation and said that the PPCC should be proud for the successful work it has done up to now, which led to the approval of the funding request by the GEF. He stressed the importance of the previous speaker's point about the regional character of the project and the equality of the parties, expressing his concern for the fact that, although during the Project Document preparation there was no issue of country priority, subsequently some kind of country listing appeared, which he did not find appropriate. However, after having met with Ms. Kodzoman in Ohrid he had some clarification on this issue.

Mr. Dedej proceeded with a question about the project implementation structure, commenting that although NPDs are very important within the scheme, this is not reflected in the structure. Still, he continued, this is reflected in the ToRs and, therefore, he proposed that the structure be revised to reflect that. Then, regarding the agreement between KfW and UNDP, he said that the PPCC is not aware of the terms of this agreement and expressed his wish for these to be made known to the Committee. His next question referred to the parallel implementation of the Greek component within the project, noting that Greece has the same ToRs with the other two countries, but, however, follows different rules, especially so since the country provides the funding for the project on its side. Mr. Dedej continued raising a question about whether the equality of all countries will also be reflected in the

budget. To illustrate this, he referred to the example of the hydrological issue, which forms an objective of the project and constitutes a big problem in Albania –as Micro Prespa is shrinking and there is not enough water for agricultural and other purposes- asking whether this critical issue will also be reflected in the budget. Regarding the consulting team, Mr. Dedej asked for some clarification of the 20% participation of national experts in the team. More specifically, he wondered whether this percentage refers to each country or will be shared between the countries, and, if so, how will this be divided. Finally, he proposed that the PPCC works further for the development of evaluation indicators and requested the UNDP presentation, along with the rest of the presentations to the meeting to be distributed by e-mail to all participants.

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis (MedWet) then took the floor, commenting on the significant role the PPCC has to play in the implementation of the project, as, among others, it brings together representatives from all three levels (governmental, local and NGO). He noted that the SAP, which is an achievement of the Committee, is the spine for the work proposed in the PDF and can play an important role in the quality control of the outcome. He then added that in 3-4 year-long projects the issue of sustainability usually arises, in other words, what happens after the end of the project. To this point, he noted, the PPCC is a system that may guarantee the project's continuation in time. Finally, he said he would welcome the points of view of the members of the Committee as to how they see their participation and what they plan to do in order to secure quality control and continuation.

Subsequently, the Chairman passed the floor to Ms. Kodzoman for replying to the questions posed. On the issue of the proposed PDF B implementation structure, she noted that during the last PPCC meeting there was some confusion about this issue, whether a reporting line is needed and who reports to whom, and added that everything is clear now in the ToRs. The accompanying diagramme was provided so as to help in the understanding of the ToRs.

She also said that the NPDs are *ex-officio* members of the PPCC with no voting rights. To this statement, Ms. Vivi Roumeliotou (PPCC Secretariat – SPP) noted that this is the first time ever this is mentioned and Ms. Kodzoman replied that it is actually included in the implementation arrangements section of the Project Document. At this point, the participants checked the relevant paragraph in the Project Document, which did include this phrasing.

Ms. Kodzoman asked if the Committee would like the UNDP to redraw the structure so as to clearly reflect the ToRs. Ms. Myrsini Malakou (SPP) intervened raising a question about whether it is possible to make any changes in the document at that point, since it was already signed and Ms. Kodzoman replied that it would not be possible to change its content, since the document is approved; however what she proposed was only for the diagramme to be adjusted. Mr. Dedej claimed that he had already discussed the issue of signing the document with his Minister and they have concluded that, if they do not do so, the procedure should start from the beginning; otherwise, they should interpret what is written in the way they find appropriate. Ms. Kodzoman stressed that this Project Document actually reflects what was included in the project proposal, developed by the PPCC.

Ms. Roumeliotou said that she appreciates the UNDPs efforts to combine various documents (the PDF request and the ToRs), however she notes that the ToRs for the project staff, which were discussed in the second extraordinary meeting of the PPCC -especially held for discussing the PDF B project- and were then redrafted by UNDP and circulated, do not refer to NPDs as *ex-officio* members of the PPCC, which means that some changes had been made, which now create confusion. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the *ex-officio* status of the NPDs is included in the implementation arrangements section, which forms an indispensable part of the Project Document, adding that all ToRs are included in the Project Document as discussed during the extraordinary meeting. Ms. Roumeliotou proposed that the NPDs could

be designated with a different term and not *ex-officio* members, since the PPCC membership is a decision made under a certain process and cannot be changed this way. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the role of the NPDs is to ensure that the Ministries commit themselves and participate in the project. However, since the Ministry representatives in the PPCC have a voting right, the NPDs must be *ex officio*, in order to have a general overview of what is happening, as observers.

Mr. Dedej noted that the fact that this is not reflected in the ToRs, but in the implementation arrangements of the Project Document creates a contradiction within the same document. Still, he agreed that the NPDs should be among the PPCC and that they are *ex-officio* members. Ms. Kodzoman clarified that according to the UNDP national execution manual each project has a NPD who is part of the steering committee. In the Prespa Park project, the PPCC is the steering committee and the NPDs are only part of the implementation structure. Mr. Dedej agreed to the above, but requested once again the structure to be revised so as to fully reflect the ToRs. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the ToRs form the reference point for the implementation of the project and state clearly the position of each party and the reporting lines to be followed.

Mr. Thymio Papayannis (MedWet) raised two issues. Firstly, his concern whether the NPDs will have adequate time available to attend the PPCC meetings, as they are high officials, and, secondly, the fact that, based on this scheme, the government representatives -who are lower officials than the NPDs- will have the right to vote. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the PPCC was established by the three governments and the PDF B phase uses the existing structure and also tries to combine the UNDP requirements for project implementation -that is the NPDs. Regarding the time the NPDs will have available for the project, she replied that they are responsible for project implementation on the Government's side and, therefore, they should find the time required to carry out the respective duties.

Regarding Mr. Dedej's question about how the particular problems each region faces will be reflected in the budget, Ms. Kodzoman replied that this is something to be evaluated by the consulting firm. Further explaining the procedure, she said that each consulting firm would submit a proposal according to the bid request, based on the ToRs and certain evaluation criteria. The usual practice is that the firms visit the countries, make an assessment and then prepare their proposal. The degree of importance of the inequalities of each region, as well as the percentage of the national experts to be used are issues to be evaluated by the firms. Mr. Gjorgjiev commented that KfW shares the same opinion, adding that the most important thing is competence and quality of services of the firm, which will be evaluated appropriately in a panel, including UNDP, KfW and the PPCC. Mr. Dedej expressed his concern that a table of proposals and CVs may turn out to be an inadequate method of evaluating a proposal. To illustrate this, he mentioned the example of the concept paper, which was initially prepared by a very good KfW expert; however, the paper turned out not to reflect adequately the real needs of the region.

Finally, Mr. Dedej asked whether the existing budget could be appropriately adapted during the project implementation period. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the current budget is only an estimation –and KfW money will be further added to this amount. Although the total amount is fixed, during the lifetime of the project amounts may be reallocated between the budget lines, with the agreement of the signatories of the Project Document. Mr. Dedej welcomed the answer, but expressed his doubts that the budget could be revised within the one-year period of the project. Mr. Kouvelis noted that both the 20% participation of local experts and the budget lines are qualitative and not measurable issues. UNDP and KfW should give emphasis to the quality of the consultant team, as they should have sufficient local knowledge to be able to deliver something that is relevant to the needs of the region. He also stressed the importance of always considering the aim of the PDF B, which is the

development of a good full-GEF project proposal that will also include an appropriate allocation of funds, according to specific local problems. Ms. Kodzoman commented that the PPCC would have a mechanism to control the consulting firm, as it will be getting draft reports for comments during the project implementation period. In addition, UNDP and KfW will make their best to ensure that both the IPM and the consultants follow the ToRs. Finally, she claimed that the consultants would be paid after their reports have not only been submitted but also accepted by the donors.

Mr. Dedej further noted that the budget does not cover meetings of the PPCC, which is the project's Steering Committee. Mr. Kouvelis commented that the issue of covering the PPCC's operation by the PDF B project has been discussed in previous meetings and added that the Secretariat's work should also be covered by the project. Then he addressed a question to both Ms. Kodzoman and the rest of the participants regarding the way they conceive the interaction of the work done by the Steering Committee of the project -the countries, UNDP and KfW- with the PPCC, so that the latter will be able to exercise quality control of the project implementation procedure and outcomes. Ms. Roumeliotou reminded to the participants that the project request did include a budget line for PPCC meetings and noted that this provision is not obvious in the current Project Document.

Regarding the Steering Committee and its relation to the PPCC, Ms. Kodzoman explained that the Committee between KfW and UNDP would be an "internal committee" between the donors. However, the Steering Committee for the PDF B project -which is managed and implemented by the UNDP and KfW- is the PPCC, and for this reason, the donors are present in the PPCC meetings in order to hear the Committee's opinions. She also stated that the PPCC meetings would be financed, as long as they are related to the PDF B, and the details will be known later when the project staff will be on board. Mr. Kouvelis replied that all PPCC meetings are related to the PDF B, since it is the Committee's overall work that has led to the realization of the PDF B project. To Ms. Kodzoman's point that the project has a limited budget and will not be able to fund meetings discussing general Prespa issues, Mr. Dedej replied that the issues discussed in the PPCC meetings always concern the Prespa area and in that sense the PDF B project and proposed, therefore, that the budget be revised so as to cover PPCC meetings, which would be maximum three during the one-year project. Ms. Kodzoman said that a combination of GEF money and government contribution could be made but this could be further discussed as soon as the project staff is recruited. Regarding the KfW-UNDP agreement, she commented that it is needed for reasons of internal procedure between the donors and that as soon as it is signed it could be made known to the PPCC.

Mr. Dedej asked for a clarification on which activities would be supported by each donor and Ms. Kodzoman replied that the existence of the two Project Documents is due to the "parallel financing" of the project, i.e. each donor manages their own money and, therefore, a different document should be signed between each Ministry and the respective donor. The agreement between UNDP and KfW is between the two donors.

Mr. Gjorgjiev added on this point that the donor agreement is a prerequisite in order to start the project. He also said that KfW is a bit more flexible on its budget and they thought that something like €400,000 should cover diverse activities, such as hydrogeological activities and research. Compared to this budget, there should be an investment project in the next phase. Then the funds that will be allocated will not remain with the German federal Government, as is the case with the PDF phase, but will be transferred to the recipient countries.

Responding to the question about the role of the Greek Ministry of Environment in the PDF B implementation, Ms. Kodzoman said that UNDP wants an equal representation of all countries, but leaves the discussion on how the Greek Ministry of Environment will fit in the

whole structure to the Ministries. She proposed an agreement to be reached within the PPCC and then be recommended to the three governments in order to make it operational. To Ms. Roumeliotou's question about the way of operation of the three Project Offices and how the PIU in Greece would integrate with the rest, Ms. Kodzoman replied that the three offices will be collaborating very closely so as to provide information to the consulting team and develop an integrated community outreach programme. The IPM, who will be seated in the main office in Resen, will build very close contacts with the offices in both Albania and Greece. The only difference is that there is no allocation in the budget for the PIU in Greece, as this will be funded by the Greek government.

Mr. Kouvelis stated that the formal arrangements are quite clear; however, he wondered how the three national offices will collaborate in practice. He also suggested that the PPCC should start thinking from now on the way the PIUs' work will be reported to the Committee that should exercise quality control. Ms. Kodzoman replied that once the staff gets on board, the donors will organise special training for them and proposed that this is followed by a joint meeting with the PPCC, during which it could be agreed that the project staff would submit quarterly reports to the Committee and would keep it informed about the activities. Mr. Kouvelis agreed on the idea of a joint meeting and noted that it will have a budgetary implication.

After the coffee break, the Chairman passed the floor again to Ms. Kodzoman. The UNDP representative asked the PPCC to propose some possible indicators that could be used for measuring the achievement of the project outputs. Mr. Dedej proposed that the PPCC could elaborate some possible indicators and present them to the donors later, as it would be difficult to come up with such indicators right away. To this, Mr. Papayanis added that the first indicator would be the approval of the GEF project, which is the aim of the PDF B phase. He also said that the PPCC could propose specific indicators to facilitate positive development of the PDF B process and, to this effect, he asked the donors to clarify better how detailed they expect the consultants' studies to be, in view of the fact that the ToRs are very detailed but the related funds seem to be limited.

Ms. Kodzoman explained that at that point the budget was just a rough estimation by the donors, while it only included the UNDP's contribution as regards to the consulting services financing. Mr. Gjorgjiev added that KfW would be contributing to the consultants' expenses too, however, they could not bind themselves to the financing of certain activities before they see the consultants' proposals. Finally, he clarified that the KfW did not reveal any kind of amount at the announcement of the tender procedure for the consulting bids in order to leave to the consultants themselves the task of drafting a good proposal. Mr. Papayannis then recapped the preceding discussion by concluding that the sums of the budget are not binding, but the ToRs are binding for the consultants.

Subsequently, Ms. Malakou expressed her concern that there is a shift of interest from the main project area -Micro and Macro Prespa- to Macro Prespa and Ohrid, and referred to KfW's special interest for lake Ohrid. She further noted that the Project Document presented is not absolutely consistent to what has been agreed in the past. She specifically noted that the paragraph regarding the Devolli River was now omitted and requested assurance that the Devolli problem will be addressed by the consultants and that both KfW and UNDP will give emphasis to both Prespa lakes and to the positive impact of human activities in the area. Ms. Kodzoman replied that the consulting firm would always be consulting the PPCC, which as a Steering Committee will be able to ensure the best of outputs. Mr. Dedej commented that the Project Document included, in Annex IV, the concept paper, which sets the concrete outcomes of the GEF project, including "restoration of past interventions concerning the Devolli River". In order to overcome the problem presented by Ms. Malakou,

he suggested that both the Governments and the donors try to ensure that the consultants take into account the Concept Paper output and organise their work towards that direction.

The Chairman summed up the discussion directing the Secretariat to draft some relevant points to be included in the conclusions of this meeting, one of which should certainly be that the ToRs are the overriding document for project implementation. He also proposed that a two-page explanatory document be prepared to accompany the already signed PDF B Project Document, which would include the interpretations/ conclusions reached during this meeting. Ms. Kodzoman replied that she believed the minutes would include all necessary information and offered to help the Secretariat at their preparation. The Chairman concluded that the Secretariat, with the help of Ms. Kodzoman, would prepare the recommendations or points to be included in the conclusions.

Regarding the lake Ohrid issue raised by Ms. Malakou, Mr. Gjorgiev clarified that KfW has been working in Ohrid and Struga since 1998 and, therefore, has a strong commitment there; however, it has also shown its long-term interest in the transboundary Prespa Park and is committed to it through this GEF project. Mr. Kouvelis acknowledged that and added that during the International Lake Ohrid Conference, he had attended the previous week, he had a relevant discussion about the connection between Prespa and Ohrid and the synergy between the work done in one area and the other. Still, he noted, synergy does not necessarily mean that the two systems should be treated as one area. Mr. Dedej objected saying that during that conference another point came out, namely that Prespa is the biggest polluter of Ohrid. He added that, although he doubts this, he does believe that the two ecosystems should be treated together. He also claimed that experiments with radioactive carbon isotopes in Albania have shown that the velocity of water flowing from Prespa into Ohrid is high; however, this is also something uncertain as knowledge is still not enough for recommendations. Mr. Kouvelis agreed and went on to say that when he talked about synergies he meant that this interaction should be reviewed very carefully and the hydrogeological study should clarify this connection too.

On the second day, the Chairman welcomed all newcomers to the meeting and congratulated the PPCC member, Mr. Pandi Andoni, Head of the Prespa Commune, for his re-election in the recent municipal elections in Albania.

Under **agenda item 3**, the Chairman then proceeded with the issue of endorsement of the reports of the last two PPCC meetings (fourth regular and second extraordinary meeting). The Committee endorsed the reports.

Subsequently, the Chairman introduced the issue of the renewal of the mandate of the PPCC (working document 2), proposing that the PPCC should extend its provisional operation for an indefinite period, until the three governments jointly decide to put in place a more permanent and mature arrangement. To this, he added that the government representatives to the PPCC should obtain written confirmation by the three governments on further proper legitimization. Moreover, in connection to the PDF B project, the Chairman proposed that the PPCC examine the idea raised in its fourth regular meeting regarding the creation of a three-member working group, supported by a MedWet representative, which would assist the Committee in the PDF B implementation.

Mr. Kouvelis agreed on the extension of the PPCC mandate and stressed that this decision had to be communicated to the authorities of each country first, so that the respective Ministers officially renew the PPCC, and, after that, the official establishment of the PPCC as a joint committee of the three countries through the PDF B process could be sought. With regard to the creation of a small working group to assist in PDF B project implementation, Mr. Kouvelis requested the opinion of the rest of the Committee members. Mr. Dedej

maintained that upon signing the PDF B Project Document the Ministers approve the PPCC as the Steering Committee of the project. Still, he admitted that the legal question is not fully addressed that way, since the PPCC also deals also with other, more general, issues of the Prespa Park area. Regarding the working group, he noted that the GTZ project selection panel (one representative from each country and each sector) was a good example, but suggested that the scope and ToRs of the new group be made clear from the beginning and to this direction he requested some additional input from the other members on how this group would function.

Mr. Branko Micevski (PPCC Secretariat – MAP) intervened to express his opposition to the formulation of such a working group, especially so if it would consist of MedWet representatives. Ms. Malakou said that the operation of the GTZ working group was quite effective and agreed that the PPCC should define clear ToRs for this group from the beginning. She also stressed the importance of the support provided by the MedWet/Ramsar representatives in the PPCC.

In relation to the official institutional establishment of the PPCC, Mr. Kouvelis said that, through PDF B project implementation, legal and administrative ways for the establishment of a permanent arrangement would be investigated. Additionally, he offered to work closely with the consultants of the project towards this objective and, in case an agreement on the establishment of the PP would be reached, he offered to also promote its official signature under the auspices of the MedWet Initiative. As far as the working group is concerned, he clarified to Mr. Micevski that the proposal of a working group included three persons from each country supported by only one MedWet representative. To this, Mr. Micevski commented that did not see the need for MedWet's contribution at that point.

Ms. Malakou once more stressed the importance of clear ToRs for the trilateral working group and expressed the opinion that the group should report to the PPCC more often and support its work, but not have a decision-making role as the GTZ working group does. Mr. Micevski proposed that ToRs be developed for the group before the PPCC decides on the matter. Mr. Dedej commented that Mr. Micevski should be more collaborative and polite to the rest of the participants, and especially the MedWet initiative that kindly offers its help to the Prespa Park process. He then asked for the opinion of the Government representative of the FYR of Macedonia. Ms. Margarita Matlievska (Ministry of Environment – FYR of Macedonia, alternate member) requested some more explanation of the reasoning for the creation of such a working group, as well as its duties and obligations. Mr. Micevski commented that he was not against the help of MedWet, but against the creation of a working group without ToRs.

At that point the Chairman intervened noting that the idea for the formulation of a working group to assist the PPCC on PDF B project implementation was extensively discussed during the fourth regular meeting in Oteshevo, as well as the second extraordinary meeting in Ag. Germanos, and asked from the MedWet representatives, Mr. Papayannis and Mr. Kouvelis, who had then put forward this proposal, to explain the necessity of this working group. Replying to the request, Mr. Kouvelis stressed the effectiveness of a working group, arguing that the organisation of a meeting between a small team of people would be much easier and less expensive than a meeting of the PPCC. He also stressed the significance of a quick response to UNDP and suggested an alternative, i.e. that the PPCC could be represented by its Chairman for the purposes of the PDF B project.

Ms. Kodzoman said that the way the PPCC would be organised was an internal matter but, according to her opinion, the formulation of a small working group that would equally represent all three countries and all three levels would be a very difficult task. On the other hand, she stressed that the donors would like to have a joint reply on the various issues that will arise during project implementation and not independent comments from each PPCC

member and urged the PPCC to decide on a way that will enhance cooperation. Mr. Gjorgjiev added that the PPCC could proceed with the selection of the right persons to represent each country and level only after the ToRs of the working group are clarified.

Mr. Micevski expressed his worries that, since the Governments would decide on the membership of the working group, the NGO sector would be under-represented, mentioning also that in the GTZ working group the NGO sector has never been consulted on project selection.

Mr. Dedej suggested that ToRs be prepared and the Committee decide on the establishment or not of such a group at its next meeting. Concerning the problem with the NGO sector, he commented that the Governments have tried to avoid such contradictions and stressed that the Ministries have a high level of responsibility, since they search for funding and are accountable for the amounts of money generated for the NGOs or the countries, while the NGOs responsibility is limited to the proper execution of projects. Ms. Pandorka Nikusheva (MAP) stressed the importance of NGO participation in the PPCC and agreed that ToRs should be developed before the PPCC decides on how to proceed.

Mr. Aleko Miho (PPNEA) requested that each national group resolve its possible internal problems before and outside the PPCC meetings, which should be used only for the purpose of discussing international issues of common interest. Regarding the creation of working groups, he said that, in general, he is not in favour of that, unless a good, effective and well-staffed group is created.

Mr. Plessas summed up the previous discussion proposing that the Secretariat, the MedWet and the Chairman develop draft ToRs for the working group and also concluded that the renewal of the PPCC mandate is approved. Mr. Kouvelis added that along with the ToRs some alternative options could also be prepared promoting the most effective functioning of the PPCC during the PDF B implementation period. The Chairman agreed and closed the subject.

Ms. Roumeliotou, on behalf of the Secretariat, subsequently presented **agenda item 4.1**, Report on activities concerning the Prespa Park since the fourth regular meeting in Oteshevo (working document 3). Some of the most significant developments, she noted, were the establishment of the Greek protected area Management Body, as well as the first working meeting of the Prespa basin Mayors in Liqenas, Albania, and the first working meeting of the fire-fighting authorities of the region, in Lemos, Greece. The last two were supported by the "Hellenic Aid" Agency of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following the presentation, the Mayor of Resen, Mr. Dimko Toskovski, made some comments regarding the meeting of the Mayors. He noted that the Mayors are the operational part of the Prespa Park process, as they are closer to the local population and try to achieve tangible results for the region and the people. He also added that in the Liqenas meeting, the Mayors had the opportunity to lay down their own priorities concerning the development of the area and reached an agreement that water is the most valuable resource of the region and that priority should be given to the hydrogeological study in the PDF B context with a view at protecting water resources. They also concluded that in Albania attention should be given to infrastructure (drinking water, roads, sewage system), while in Greece and the FYR of Macedonia attention should be given to the road network, and especially the peripheral road around the lakes. On this particular subject, Mr. Toskovski stressed the importance of new border crossings for better communication of people and transportation of goods, and pointed out to the need for a station in Markova Noga. To this effect, he proposed that a declaration be produced and addressed to the authorities of the three countries. In addition he stressed the importance of agro- and eco-touristic activities, referring to a very good project for the development of women's agrotouristic cooperatives,

implemented by the Ag. Germanos Women's Cooperative, within the framework of which the Resen Municipality organised relevant seminars the previous summer. Moreover, Mr. Toskovski referred to the organisation of various cultural events, such as the "Prespia" Festival in Aghios Achillios, and a Festival in Oteshevo, which attract international visitors. He further noted that issues discussed in the meeting of the fire-fighting authorities had already started to develop in practice. Concluding his intervention, he said that the Local Self Government supported the idea for the establishment of a Euroregion and the Municipality of Resen had already secured three offices for that purpose which would be fully equipped soon.

Ms. Nikusheva agreed on the urgent need for road connections and proposed that the Committee should produce a declaration concerning the opening of two border crossings (Greece-FYR of Macedonia and Albania-FYR of Macedonia) requesting a quick decision from the Governments. She also proposed that the Ministers or other high Ministry officials be invited to the next PPCC meeting so that the Committee presents them with recommendations for the road connections and infrastructure.

Ms. Darinka Jantinska (Ministry of Environment – FYR of Macedonia) agreed with the previous speaker on the importance of the opening of border crossings and suggested that the Government representatives should address this issue in the individual reports on this meeting to be prepared for their Governments. However, she noted that the issue of border opening falls under the competency of many ministries and, therefore, could not be solved immediately. Mr. Dedej concurred with the view that the Government representatives could promote the issue through their reports, but he also expressed his doubts on the effectiveness these would have due to the complexity of the issue.

Referring to the report of activities previously presented, Mr. Dedej proposed to inform REC-Macedonia about the ongoing GTZ project on ecotourism in the area. Finally, referring to the SPP LIFE project, he asked whether and at what point the Albanian part had been consulted on the reconstruction of the sluice gate. Replying to the question, Ms. Malakou first clarified that the sluice gate project concerned only the reconstruction of the old, existing sluice gate in Koula and did not involve new construction works. She added that, although the work is intended to protect the breeding colonies of pelicans, it would not change anything in the existing management of water of Micro Prespa, since the Greek side is perfectly aware of the needs of the different stakeholders in the area. Regarding cooperation with Albania, the SPP Director said that Prof. Eftimi had provided data for the hydrological study in the context of the LIFE project, which was only a very brief preliminary study but still considered the problems faced in Albania to be further developed within the PDF B project.

To Mr. Dedej's expression of uncertainty on whether the reconstruction of the sluice would take into consideration the significant irrigation problem in Albania, Ms. Malakou explained that the Greek side would not control or manage the water of the lake without previous discussion with both Albania and the FYR of Macedonia. To this, she added that the SPP would only repair the existing gate and recommend to the competent authorities the optimum fluctuation of the water level for purposes of conservation of the pelican colonies, and reiterated that apart from this scientific approach the issue of human needs should be simultaneously considered.

In order to clarify the issue, Ms. Roumeliotou reminded that there do exist interventions with regard to water, such as the deviation of the Devolli River through canals in Albania, and a sluice gate that can be opened and closed in Greece. She said that the reconstruction of the sluice is not a new intervention, and if that were the case, it should have indeed been presented and discussed thoroughly in the Committee and the respective Ministries; on the contrary, it safeguards the *status quo*, since the old construction might collapse and the water of Micro Prespa could be lost. She added that this activity does not purport to be a

solution for the water issues of the basin, and is not presented as such, but only as an emergency measure.

Subsequently, Ms. Anica Palazzo (GTZ Ohrid) took the floor and spoke about the development of an action plan for sustainable tourism in the area, for which she had had meetings with various stakeholders from the region and from Skopje. In that connection, she stressed that local actors in particular should be more aware and involved. Mr. Micevski intervened at that point and commented that there should be more attention paid to nature protection, and that he would deeply appreciate if the Mayors during their meetings could also deal with the immediate problems of solid waste and wastewater. These problems, which are especially acute in the FYR of Macedonia, could hinder any kind of socio-economic development in the region, including sustainable tourism. Mr. Papayannis noted that there have been a lot of important activities on ecotourism, including a Greek study on ecotourism, the GTZ programme etc., and there is need to coordinate all these activities in order to have positive results, as foreseen under the mandate of the Committee and its Secretariat.

Then, the Mayor of Prespa, Mr. Nalpantidis, took the floor and continued on the same line with Mr. Toskovski. He presented activities that took place in the Greek part of Prespa, and stressed the importance of the Prespa Park. Concerning the peripheral road, he said that the Greek side intends to submit proposals for the construction of roads from the villages of Lemos and Vrondero to the borders with the FYR of Macedonia and Albania, respectively, to the INTERREG programme. On the same issue, he reminded that the three Mayors have had a common position on the improvement of communication within the Prespa basin, and he said he believed that in Athens there is political will in the same direction. Concerning Mr. Micevski's comments, he argued that the Greek side has worked for the protection of the environment, and he mentioned the reconstruction of the sluice gate, the LIFE project for Lake Micro Prespa, the plans for biological treatment of sewage, and the plans for drip irrigation. He thought, however, that a lot more needs to be done, and that after three years of operation of the Prespa Park and considerable time spent on procedural issues, the Mayors would like to see more substantial results that would enhance the standard of living of their citizens.

Mr. George Stamou (Chairman, Prespa Management Body), welcomed the participants on behalf of the Management Body of the Greek Prespa National Park, one of the 25 recently established Management Bodies in Greece. The Body started operating in July 2003 and its three main objectives are scientific research - including possibilities of setting up a research centre for scientists and students -, ecotourism, and monitoring of biological and physical parameters.

On the next **agenda item (5)**, concerning adoption of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) by the three Governments, the Chairman suggested that its current version, incorporating comments submitted during the consultation process, should be reaffirmed as the overriding document that will guide PDF B project activities. He proposed that final endorsement by the Government of the FYR of Macedonia should be made in the coming two months. Ms. Roumeliotou, on behalf of the Secretariat, clarified that the comments submitted in Albania and Greece have already been incorporated in the version circulated to the PPCC members. The Chairman concluded that the current version should be considered the overriding document, and that the comments from the FYR of Macedonia should also be integrated later.

Ms. Jantinska, agreed with the Chairman's statement and proposals, but she said that the processing and completion of the material on their side could take more than two months. Mr. Miho thought that the issue should not be considered closed, and that the Governments should not only approve but also integrate the SAP in their development plans for the

region. The Chairman concluded that the completion of the SAP on behalf of the FYR of Macedonia should be over in three months, and agreed with Mr. Miho's point.

Mr. Spase Shumka (PPCC Secretariat – PPNEA), on behalf of the Secretariat, introduced **agenda item 6**, on the extension of the current workplan and term of office of the Communication Officer for another 12 months. He said that the PPCC has to kindly request the financial support of GTZ for the coming period, and then gave the floor to the Prespa Park Communication Officer, Ms. Aferdita Ponari, to present her Terms of Reference and tasks for the year 2004.

Ms. Ponari presented a progress report, briefly describing the international competition for the selection of a logo that is now the new identity of Prespa Park, and the publication of the newsletter, notwithstanding minor delays. She kindly asked the Committee for increased involvement and said that she would circulate all relevant material by e-mail for approval. She then presented the Prespa Park website in detail and asked the PPCC members to contribute with comments and photographic material.

The Chairman then gave the floor to Mr. Kouvelis, who thanked the GTZ for its support to the work, reminded that a remuneration was provided only to the webmaster and that MedWet offered the space needed free of charge, and then asked for the Committee's approval so that the PP website could be made public. Mr. Dieter Biallas (GTZ) noted that it is not up to GTZ to evaluate the past communication work but up to the Committee. However, since the target group of relevant activities was not supposed to be only the international community but also the local population, he asked to what extent that had been covered by the activities undertaken. He also wondered whether the Communication Officer should spend more time in the region. Concerning the possibility of GTZ funding the Communication Plan and the Communication Officer for the coming year, he commented that from the original amount provided, there was still enough left in order to cover the second year, and that the remaining amount could be allocated to other activities instead.

Mr. Dedej remarked that he could understand Mr. Biallas's concerns. However, the three main objectives of the Communication Plan, namely the logo, the newsletter and the website, were met, albeit with a delay as far as the website was concerned. Therefore, he suggested that the Prespa Park website should be made public. Concerning the money spent so far, he agreed with Mr. Biallas, adding that he had already discussed the issue with Ms. Ponari, and urged everyone to have a more active role and to focus on concrete activities that would be based in the region. He concluded that he supports the continuation of the work and expressed the hope that the Prespa Park Communication Plan could still have GTZ's support, when the money allocated are spent. Finally, he asked the Communication Officer to prepare a detailed workplan.

Mr. Kouvelis added that all activities and projects being carried out in the region should be made known to the local people and to the decision-makers, and that communication should go beyond general information about the Prespa Park.

Ms. Roumeliotou reminded that the Communication Plan was adopted in the Psarades meeting two years ago, the Committee took one more year to have the Communication Officer in place, who, moreover, had to face all sorts of everyday problems, such as translating into four languages, with the help of the Secretariat. She added that the original workplan was focused on the development of the basic communication tools and not on the local population, but no PPCC member argued that there should be a shift of focus. The organisational and efficiency problems of both the Secretariat and the PPCC as a whole should be brought to the forefront, ahead of the requirements of the coming PDF B project.

Ms. Malakou said that it was not the right time to do this evaluation, although it is absolutely needed. She proposed that some members of the Committee should undertake to do the

evaluation, and based on it, to prepare a new workplan, which would be more specific in terms of objectives, activities, and budget.

Mr. Biallas took the floor again and said that last year's results consisted of the logo and the newsletter, and a website under construction. He argued that, since there is money left, there shouldn't have been any translation problems. About the use of money in general, he argued that limited absorption signified poor performance from the point of view of management, and added that if the PPCC asks for extension, they must be convinced that the results were satisfactory.

Mr. Kouvelis intervened and said that MedWet thought that the opinion of the Committee would be needed before launching the website, which could be done immediately.

Mr. Demetres Karavellas (WWF International) spoke of the importance given by WWF International to Prespa, and to its communication aspects in particular. He mentioned the WWF report on Managing River Basins Wisely, which included the Prespa basin among fourteen areas around the world. He said WWF felt that the communication aspects require more commitment, as well as more achievements on the ground, and that WWF was willing to help communicate a success story but it would probably need to see more tangible results, and not mere processes.

Ms. Kodzoman reminded that one of the objectives of the PDF B project was the establishment of participatory and consultation mechanisms, and the development of a community outreach programme, linked with the Prespa Park Communication Plan, and for that reason the Social Facilitators in the PDF B project implementation offices will be linked with the Communication Officer. Regarding the workplan, she suggested that the PPCC and the Communication Officer could wait for the Social Facilitators to take office, in order to sit together with them, develop, and coordinate their activities.

Ms. Nikusheva noted that she was taken aback by the fact that funds available had not been used. She noted there is lack of information in the FYR of Macedonia, concerning the situation in Prespa. On the newsletter, she believed that it would be difficult to have an edition in four languages and she asked about the list of recipients. She, finally, urged everybody to push forward the procedure.

Ms. Ponari took the floor again and returned to the issue of the newsletter. Regarding its distribution, she said that that was done in close cooperation with the Secretariat members in the three countries, with the Municipality of Resen, and the GTZ office in Ohrid, and it was, moreover, posted to international organisations and other stakeholders. She, nevertheless, asked for additional feedback concerning the possible amendment of the distribution list. On the money spent, she informed the PPCC that there were still activities to be carried out in December, including a Seminar/ Workshop on Biodiversity.

At that point, the Chairman said that the conclusions on this item would be announced in the afternoon, after he would have collaborated with the Secretariat, and introduced Mr. Ioannis Stratakis, the Prefect of Florina. Mr. Stratakis cordially welcomed all participants, and introduced Ms. Novatsidou, Prefectural Councillor, involved in monitoring the Prespa Park project on behalf of the Prefecture. He then announced the preparation of road connections from the nearest Greek villages to the borders with the FYR of Macedonia and Albania. The required studies are already finalised and the road sections are expected to be completed in two to three years. He also announced the intention to construct the secondary road network within the Greek Prespa for the promotion of monuments and other places of interest in Prespa. Those projects are expected to be implemented with funding from the Third Community Support Framework or the INTERREG-III programme. The Prefect concluded by saying that cooperation with and support by the local authorities and other actors from the other two countries would be essential for more successful results.

The Chairman thanked the Prefect for the important announcements he made, and added that all activities should take into account the special characteristics of the Prespa region and its natural environment, and that those projects eventually should be considered as contributing to the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan. He then invited the participants to a guided tour around the Prespa, adding that the PPCC meetings should not only take place inside the offices.

In the evening session, and according to the agenda, the floor passed to the GTZ representatives (**agenda item 7**). Ms. Palazzo made a presentation of the GTZ programme for Cross Border Cooperation in the Region of the Prespa and Ohrid Lakes, going through its aims and targets, and the first phase, which ended in September 2003. The activities of that phase included financing of micro-projects of the region, development and promotion of eco- and agro-tourism, and close cooperation with the PPCC. On the activities for the promotion of alternative tourism, in particular, she focused on the newly launched website <www.magiclakes.com> which contains useful information and news, and on the publication of a brochure in five languages. Ms. Palazzo's full presentation is available in Annex VII.

Mr. Shumka briefly informed the PPCC on the selection process. He reminded the decisions taken at the Korcha meeting for the establishment of a selection panel, whose last meeting took place in the GTZ offices in Pogradec on 18 July 2003. Mr. Shumka stressed that the panel members, Mr. Karayannis, representative of the Municipality of Prespa, Ms. Jantinska, and himself, conveyed and presented the views of the Committee members in their respective countries, and not their personal views. On that occasion, the panel selected eleven projects, five from Albania, one from Greece and five from the FYR of Macedonia, and the decision was taken by consensus.

Mr. Biallas took the floor again and made some remarks on the second phase of the GTZ programme, which would cover eighteen months, as of 1st October 2003, and will be based on the experience of the first phase and on last September's consultations with the PPCC members. Mr. Biallas reminded that there would be an evaluation of the first phase, which will probably take place in the beginning of 2004. The second phase will be characterised by a shift to more coordinated and sustainable activities, with emphasis given primarily on support of cooperation of Local Self Governments. To that effect, a sum of €36,000, €2,000 per month, will be allocated. The next type of activities aims to give more information to the local governments on the issue of the Euroregion, and those might also include organising a trip to Brussels and Strasbourg. There will again be an allocation dedicated to micro-projects, but that will be reduced to a total of €150,000 for 18 months. GTZ, he continued, will go on with supporting ecotourism, and that would include promotion activities, and support for the development of a regional tourist agency. Mr. Biallas reaffirmed the commitment to closely cooperate with the PPCC and to make sure the activities mentioned would fit within the scope of the SAP.

Mr. Plessas asked the participants for comments. Mr. Miho thanked the GTZ and asked how the evaluation would be done. Ms. Roumeliotou asked what the provisions for the Communication Officer would be. Mr. Dragan Pop-Stojanov (President of the Management Board, SN Reserve Ezerani) took the floor and said that during last July's meeting of the selection panel in Pogradec, he tried to attend the selection process, representing MAP, but was not allowed to. Ms. Nikusheva said that transparency and democratic procedures are important, and questioned the effectiveness and the sustainability of some of the projects, specifically mentioning a project concerning traditional recipes. Mr. Toskovski reminded that the aims and objectives of the Prespa Park also include safeguarding traditions, architecture, even recipes, which could have positive impact on agro- and eco-tourism. He mentioned other GTZ micro-projects in this context, such as renovation of houses, participation in the

Hannover tourist fair, seminars on agrotourism and the establishment of a women's cooperative, and concluded that the selection criteria should be based on economic results too.

Mr. Biallas responded that the GTZ are ready to transfer the decision of the selection entirely to the PPCC. On the issue of the evaluation, he said that it too is a subject for PPCC to decide, since the Committee members have scrutinised the projects and could give their opinion on their outputs. The GTZ, he maintained, would only intervene if the German budget law were violated. He added that even after the approval of projects by the panel, their budget was again brought for discussion with the PPCC. On the issue of the Communication Plan, he said that €25,000 has been allocated for the Communication Officer, and another €5,000 for the support of meetings. If a portion of the money is still available, it could be used for other purposes following PPCC proposals.

Mr. Miho commented that for the Albanian members it could be difficult to evaluate fifty proposals, since they are often faced with e-mail and other technical problems, and Mr. Andoni, the Mayor of Liqenas, does not even have internet access. Mr. Dedej argued that he, as a government representative, is able to evaluate fifty projects and that is his obligation, Mr. Shumka can convey the opinion of the local authority too, and that the evaluation process in Albania should be considered transparent. He reminded that he always communicates his opinion and a ranking of the Albanian project proposals prior to the meetings of the selection panel. He said that if someone believed the panel is not working well, another solution should be proposed, but before that, the differences ought to be resolved in each country in advance. He addressed the issue of lack of capacity of some local NGOs, which could work in favour of NGOs from the capitals, but he maintained that that was a different issue. In the discussion that followed, Mr. Micevski repeated the question by MAP, why Mr. Pop-Stojanov was not allowed to participate in the selection panel, and said that they have not been properly informed. He also expressed his doubts about the direct relationship of some of the projects to the Prespa Park objectives.

Mr. Biallas answered to Mr. Miho that evaluation of projects not exceeding €30,000 could not be more expensive than the projects themselves, and that the ranking prepared by the Government representatives, as well as all comments by the PPCC, would suffice. He noted that the PPCC would anyhow be asked to make even more difficult decisions and work in the future, especially when it comes to implementing the SAP. On Mr. Micevski's arguments, he reiterated the Korcha Meeting decisions, and added that since each country has named one representative, responsibility for both evaluating the proposals and informing the members from the same country, should lie with that person. If there are any objections, there should be raised in advance, but the outcome should be respected in the end.

Ms. Palazzo repeated that the selection panel member from the FYR of Macedonia was the government representative in the PPCC, as decided by the PPCC members in the Korcha Meeting. She added that announcements, deadlines and other information are always available to the interested NGOs, either through direct contact, or through contacts with the local media, authorities and a variety of organisations.

Mr. Toskovski, reminded that the Local Self Government also participates in the GTZ programme, and that it has implemented very successful projects in the fields of cultural exchange and financial relations.

The Chairman then asked the Committee to wrap up the issue with brief interventions.

Mr. Pop-Stojanov expressed his organisation's worries about the lack of projects on environmental protection. Ms. Nikusheva raised procedural objections, defended her right to express her personal opinion, and threatened to leave the meeting. Mr. Micevski said that the NGOs could decide between themselves, and that the panel members should represent

each sector, Ministry, Local Self Government, and NGO, and not each country. Ms. Jantinska said that the proper procedure has been followed, and that she conveyed the opinions of her Minister, the NGO sector and the Local Self Government. Ms. Malakou noted that the internal problem between the Ministry of Environment and the NGOs in the FYR of Macedonia couldn't be solved by the Committee. On behalf of the Greek side, she said that there is indeed a lot of work involved, but they are satisfied with the procedure and the explanations given by Mr. Biallas. Mr. Papayannis, who was the one responsible for the Terms of Reference of the selection panel, said that the panel members were elected, and that the Committee should be based on trust between its members, otherwise there would be a colossal loss of time. Mr. Dedej also repeated that the members of the selection panel do represent all three levels in their country.

The Chairman thanked the GTZ for its help, and said that members of the Committee could not intervene to matters pertaining to the internal domain of a country. He reminded that the Governments would reconfirm the role, mandate and composition of the PPCC and declared the session closed.

On the third day of the meeting, Mr. Plessas welcomed the participants again and noted the absence of Ms. Nikusheva and Mr. Micevski. Before proceeding with the agenda of the day, the Chairman asked the Committee whether the proposal brought by GTZ the day before was accepted. Mr. Dedej said that the maximum amount per project, set by GTZ at €5,000, was perhaps too low, and he proposed it should be raised to €15,000.

Mr. Biallas replied saying that if an upper limit is set, then all applications reach that ceiling, and since that would be enough for only ten projects during that phase, he proposed to cut it down to €10,000, with €15,000€ only for exceptional cases. He also asked for an opinion by the Committee on GTZ's proposed activities on ecotourism, partnership of municipalities, and possibility of organising a trip to Brussels and Strasbourg.

The Mayor of Prespa thanked GTZ for their support to the local authorities, and agreed with Mr. Dedej's proposal to set the maximum amount for micro-projects to €10,000 or 15,000. He added that they all fully agree with Mr. Biallas' proposals, and that according to his opinion the programme is functioning successfully and in a fully transparent way.

Ms. Palazzo asked the Committee to reiterate their support to the procedure, as that would be important for the GTZ programme. Mr. Papayannis suggested that the rules be put on paper, in order to resolve any future uncertainties. Mr. Dedej maintained that there was no problem concerning the selection panel itself, and that the inner procedures in each country should perhaps be revised. Mr. Kouvelis expressed the view that the procedure was clear and that consequently there was no need to prepare a new document. Instead, the PPCC should reaffirm its trust to the existing procedure. Ms. Jantinska concurred. Ms. Malakou intervened saying that one of the PPCC members had a problem with the donor and created a great fuss, instead of referring it to the Committee, and that was against the rules - and against the interest - of the Committee. The Chairman closed the discussion, and concluded that the Committee reaffirmed the procedure for the selection panel of the GTZ micro-projects.

On **agenda item 8**, i.e. possible additional designations for the Prespa Park, the Chairman asked Mr. Dedej to give a presentation on the Biosphere Reserve concept (full presentation available in Annex VIII). Mr. Dedej said that he was initially planning to invite the Secretariat of UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" programme, and he expressed his hope that the PPCC will have the opportunity to have their contribution and approach in the future. In his presentation, Mr. Dedej explained how Biosphere Reserves combine biodiversity conservation with sustainable land use, focussing more on conservation of ecosystems

rather than of single species, and integrate the cultural values of the area. A transboundary Biosphere Reserve could be established either separately by the Governments in each country, or through joint nomination by the three states. The zoning of Biosphere Reserves consists of a core area with very restricted human activities, a buffer zone, and a transition area. Mr. Dedej said that when the Prespa National Park in Albania was established, the Biosphere Reserve concept and its relevant requirements were taken into account. He presented the main features of a transboundary Biosphere Reserve in the Ohrid-Prespa region, which would protect the natural and cultural diversity of the area, function as a model for land management and sustainable development, and include research, monitoring, educational and training activities. A recommendation for the establishment of an Ohrid-Prespa Biosphere Reserve, prepared in Albania with the assistance of KfW, included among other things the following steps: zoning according to the designation criteria; identification of local and national partners, creation of working groups and identification of key issues for cooperation; agreement between state authorities; international recognition of the area by the "Man and the Biosphere" Secretariat; identification of management requirements, potential finance sources, financial activities; communication between all stakeholders; establishment of institutional mechanisms.

The Chairman asked the PPCC members for comments or questions. Ms. Roumeliotou noted that Mr. Dedej's proposal to enlarge the system and cover both Ohrid and Prespa was based on the assumption of ecosystem unity, which has not been proven yet, apart from the hydrogeological link between the lakes. Mr. Dedej replied that he is not proposing a change of the system. On the issue of the link between Ohrid and Prespa, he said that he could not give a complete answer, but from a general point of view the ecosystem unity should not be ruled out. He understood the possible concerns of Greece about enlarging the system, since Greece does not have a common border with lake Ohrid. He said that the issue could be discussed in the future, but if there is a firm position from one country against it, it could obviously be closed.

Ms. Jantinska commented that cooperation in the fields of natural and cultural heritage already exists. She pointed out that in the coming year experts will undertake a series of studies, which would prove the existence of a link or not, and reminded that the issue of a hydrogeological study for the basin remains crucial. She added that an additional Biosphere Reserve designation would bring along many duties and obligations, and that the issue should be discussed when more mature. Mr. Kouvelis said that Mr. Dedej's idea should not be discarded, but - agreeing with Ms. Jantinska - it should be discussed at a more appropriate time, since the PDF B process and other current PPCC issues were now ahead.

Mr. Dedej proposed that the PPCC Secretariat should approach the Man and the Biosphere Secretariat, and that seminars or workshops could be organised with the aim to see the connection between Ohrid and Prespa. Ms. Malakou said that it is still early to do that and suggested to wait for the PDF B specialists to give an opinion. She argued that there is a link, natural and cultural, between Ohrid and Prespa, but there is also link of Prespa with other areas around. Mr. Plessas stressed the need to have more detail and information during the next meeting of the PPCC. The Committee concluded, after Mr. Dedej's proposal and with clarifications by Mr. Papayannis and Ms. Kodzoman, that the issue would be further investigated in the future, both within and outside the context of the PDF B studies.

The Chairman then invited the delegates from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia to present the status and developments of the Neretva River Cooperation (**agenda item 9**). Mr. Jaroslav Vego (Ministry of Civil Engineering, Physical Planning and Environmental Protection of the Herzegovina Neretva County in Bosnia-Herzegovina), expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat, the Committee and the MedWet Coordination Unit for the opportunity to introduce their activities. He briefly described the course of the Neretva River from the

Dinaric Alps to the Adriatic Sea, and its importance as one of the largest and most valuable wetlands in the East Adriatic region. The water bodies, the ground waters, the complex relief of the area, and the favourable influence of the Mediterranean climate contribute to the importance of the area for wintering and nesting birds. Despite the construction of a hydroelectric plant and other interventions, the area retained its significance and with the help of the Ramsar Convention, and various initiatives, the sites of Hutovo Blato in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Neretva Delta in Croatia gained protected area status. Mr. Vego described the initiatives for the development of management plans, the promotion of regional cooperation and for the strengthening of civil society, and finally the development of a transboundary management plan and a Memorandum of Collaboration, which culminated in the establishment of a transboundary Coordination Committee. These were funded by various international sources, such as the EU, the Ramsar Convention, Spain, Switzerland and the Principality of Monaco, while the MedWet initiative played a catalytic role. The Neretva Committee's top targets include sharing of information, coordination of activities and programmes related to the area, and joint development of a Strategic Action Plan. Mr. Vego said they had benefited from participation in the PPCC meeting, and that some of their questions regarding the structure and operation of the Committee and its Secretariat could now be answered. He expressed his belief that the two bodies would stay in contact and thanked the MedWet Coordination Unit for their facilitation and help.

Mr. Eugen Draganovic (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning of Croatia) then took the floor and presented some additional information on the area. He described the importance of the Neretva Delta in terms of biodiversity and the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the area, which subsequently led to the first efforts at protection in the 1960s. He pointed out that the protection and conservation of the Neretva Delta is dependent on the upstream part, which lies in Bosnia-Herzegovina. That led to the process previously described by Mr. Vego, and to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries in the presence of the MedWet representatives and the donor country, the Principality of Monaco. The process for further protection of the area still faces objections by a part of the local population, but Mr. Draganovic expressed his optimism that the issue will be resolved successfully, and that that will enable the two parts to cooperate more actively.

The Chairman thanked the two representatives from the Neretva River Cooperation and gave the floor to comments or questions. Mr. Kouvelis stressed the importance of sharing experiences, and reminded that for MedWet and Ramsar Prespa has been a model of international cooperation, and Neretva has been a successful "test case". He acknowledged support provided from Ramsar and the Principality of Monaco, and urged the PPCC members to keep in touch with the Neretva representatives.

The Chairman fully agreed fully with Mr. Kouvelis, expressed the Committee's wish for a successful continuation of the collaboration in Neretva, and asked for more regular communication, either through the MedWet, or directly.

In the next session, the Chairman asked Mr. John Davies (University of Sussex) to present a project proposal to be sponsored by the Sompan Foundation (**agenda item 10**). Mr. Davies introduced the Development Research Centre (DRC), University of Sussex, which focuses on globalisation, migration and development issues, and presented the activities of a group of migration and social science researchers aiming to establish a facility to complement DRC activities. The core budget allocated by Sompan Foundation amounts to €750,000 over 5 years, and one of its possible locations would be the Albanian Prespa. One of its primary objectives is the promotion of migration as a development tool, and the possible re-establishment of "kurbet", the tradition of labour migration in Albanian communities, through improvement of access to migration. It additionally promotes participation, self-

solutions and accountability primarily to the targeted communities. Mr. Davies argued that labour migration, its social consequences, and the contribution of remittances to local economy in the region had not been adequately reflected in the SAP, and hoped that its benefits for local development could be understood and supported and activities for advice, support and help to emigrants could be included in the future GEF project. According to Mr. Davies, other possible synergies might include the support to NGOs through the Morava Foundation, the project's Albanian partners (contact person, Ms. Juljana Vullnetari). He informed the PPCC that one of their intentions would be the acquisition of property in the vicinity of Gollomboc, Albanian Prespa, in order to house their research and training activities in the region. Mr. Davies's presentation is available in Annex IX.

Mr. Miho considered Mr. Davies's views very interesting, but argued that migration should perhaps be more controlled. Mr. Dedej acknowledged the fact that not only Albania, but also other countries have had a long history of emigration. However, he expressed the view that it should not be directly promoted, and asked Mr. Davies for some more information, since the proposed project would start in Autumn 2004. Mr. Kouvelis found the presentation very interesting, and admitted that such elements were missing from the SAP, but some more detail would be needed for their integration into PPCC activities.

Mr. Biallas said that Germany has benefited from immigration, and asked what target countries would Mr. Davies's project propose, the EU countries or the rest of the world? Mr. Davies replied that people would go anyway, whatever is done, and that Europe is nevertheless ageing demographically and would not have the option of not accepting immigrants.

Mr. Dedej asked about the risk of the project. Mr. Davies repeated that they are not a labour placement office but researchers, and that their interest would be for people to have the maximum amount of information in order to make their own decision. Mr. Shumka asked why the centre would have to be placed in Prespa, since migration is much more intense in the Devolli region where Morava Foundation is anyway present. Mr. Davies replied that Prespa could be a very effective control group, having very well defined communities, but the issue of location is still open. Mr. Pandi Andoni (Mayor of Liqenas, Albania) said that in Albania about 95% of the population have their income supported by remittances from abroad. He added that he sees future development passing through the SAP, although the process is still slow. He thought that migration should be more organised, but said that the ideas put on the table should be studied carefully first.

Ms. Jantinska expressed the opinion that the issue was very complex as far as the Prespa area is concerned. Speaking on behalf of the FYR of Macedonia, she said that national planning does not agree with Mr. Davies's ideas. Instead, it would support people staying in the region, and try to curb the draining of young and/ or educated people. She said she believed that their activities could benefit both the people in the villages, and the unemployed town people. Mr. Davies replied that the FYR of Macedonia would be trying this way to turn the tide of history, and argued that it would be impossible to succeed. Ms. Malakou agreed with Ms. Jantinska and raised a procedural issue saying that since there were no working documents, the Committee could neither approve nor disapprove the proposal. Mr. Dedej argued that one of the aims of the PPCC would be to manage or include a broad array of projects, and proposed to ask Mr. Davies for additional information on the project activities, whether it is endorsed or not. Ms. Malakou replied that her criticism was not against Mr. Davies, but against the procedure of the Committee for failing to have prepared concrete documentation.

Mr. Kouvelis clarified that what he said was not that the project activities should be included in the GEF project but only that the Committee should take it into account, and have more information about its progress. Mr. Plessas on behalf of the PPCC thanked Mr. Davies for his

presentation, and asked for more information about project development and any relevant studies. He noted that any possible activity in this context would take place in collaboration with the Governments, the local population or the civil society, and the PPCC's task would be to collect and evaluate information.

The Committee then proceeded in organising and discussing the conclusions of the meeting, with the absence of its member from MAP, Ms. Nikusheva. It decided to hold its sixth regular meeting in Albania in May 2004. The exact date and place will be specified later. An extraordinary meeting of the Committee in relation to the PDF B project will be organised in Resen at a time to be specified later. Following that, the Chairman thanked all participants for their contribution, expressed the Committee's gratitude to the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works for their generous support, and to the Municipality of Prespa and the Society for the Protection of Prespa for the organisation of this meeting and their warm hospitality, and declared the meeting closed.

Conclusions

1. In its fifth regular meeting, the PPCC discussed in length the issue of PDF B project implementation. In this connection, the following clarifications were provided and conclusions reached:

- a. The PPCC will serve as the Supervisory Committee of the PDF B project, and for this purpose, the National Project Directors (NPDs) will participate in the Committee's meetings.
- b. With regard to the roles, responsibilities and relationship between the officers and bodies of the PDF B project, the Terms of Reference (TORs) shall be used.
- c. The PDF B budget allocations regarding the consultancy contract are indicative and will be revised if needed.
- d. During the lifetime of the PDF B project, PPCC meetings will be supported by project funds up to an amount to be specified in the near future through negotiations between the donors and the Governments.
- e. When selecting the consultancy firm, special attention will be given on adequate inclusion of national experts in the team, especially with regard to the hydrogeological study.
- f. During the lifetime of the PDF B project, specific indicators for the expected outcomes and outputs of the full project will be developed.
- g. The three project offices will closely collaborate, and will ensure full exchange of information and coordination between them.
- h. The possibility of a joint meeting between the PPCC and the consultant team will be assessed by the donors as soon as the consultant team is established.

2. The Committee discussed a proposal to establish a working group for the PDF B project and decided to defer final decision on this issue to a later stage, when the project will be well under way. In the meantime, the MedWet representatives are kindly requested to proceed with presenting various options and drafting specific TORs for this matter until the end of January 2004 and circulate them to the Committee.

3. The Committee reaffirms its decision that the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is the overriding document for the PDF B project. Further contributions from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) of the FYR of Macedonia will be incorporated in the plan in three months. The three countries have to integrate the Prespa Park SAP into their development plans and promote its implementation.

4. The PPCC decided to extend its provisional operation for an indefinite period, until the three Governments jointly decide to put in place a more permanent and mature arrangement. The Committee shall further seek proper legitimisation and full backing by the three competent Governments of the renewal of its term and mandate and for that purpose the Government representatives to the Committee are entrusted with the task of obtaining written confirmation of the above decision. In view of its role as a legal entity of the PDF B project, the respective Ministers should also reconfirm the Committee members.

5. The Committee heard a report on activities carried out or planned since its last meeting, and appreciated in particular various projects for the construction of road connections between the three countries. In this regard, it expressed its support to the establishment of new border crossings in the basin. The Committee also stressed the need for effective coordination of various overlapping projects, such as the eco-/ agro-tourism activities. It, finally, expressed its wish to see more tangible results and practical measures taken as soon

as possible, through effective use of various funding mechanisms, such as the INTERREG/CARDS programme.

6. The Committee decided to extend the term of office of the Prespa Park Communication Officer for another year and to that effect it kindly asked for the support of GTZ. The Committee noted the delays, difficulties, limited scope and insufficient absorption of funds related to the Communication activities in the past year. In order to address these concerns, it asked the Communication Officer to prepare as soon as possible a detailed workplan and budget, with special focus on communication with the local population, and on appropriate coordination with the Social Facilitators and the Community Outreach Programme to be developed within the PDF B project.

7. The Committee heard with appreciation information on the recently completed GTZ programme and on the next phase thereof planned for a period of eighteen months. The new programme will support activities related to local self-government partnerships; PPCC operation; micro-projects; the establishment of a Euroregion in the area; and eco-tourism activities, and especially the creation of a regional tourism organisation. The Committee reaffirmed its decision for the operation of the selection panel for micro-projects according to the agreed procedure. It was, finally, agreed that the maximum grant to be awarded to micro-projects would be increased to €15,000 but this ceiling would be reached only in exceptional cases.

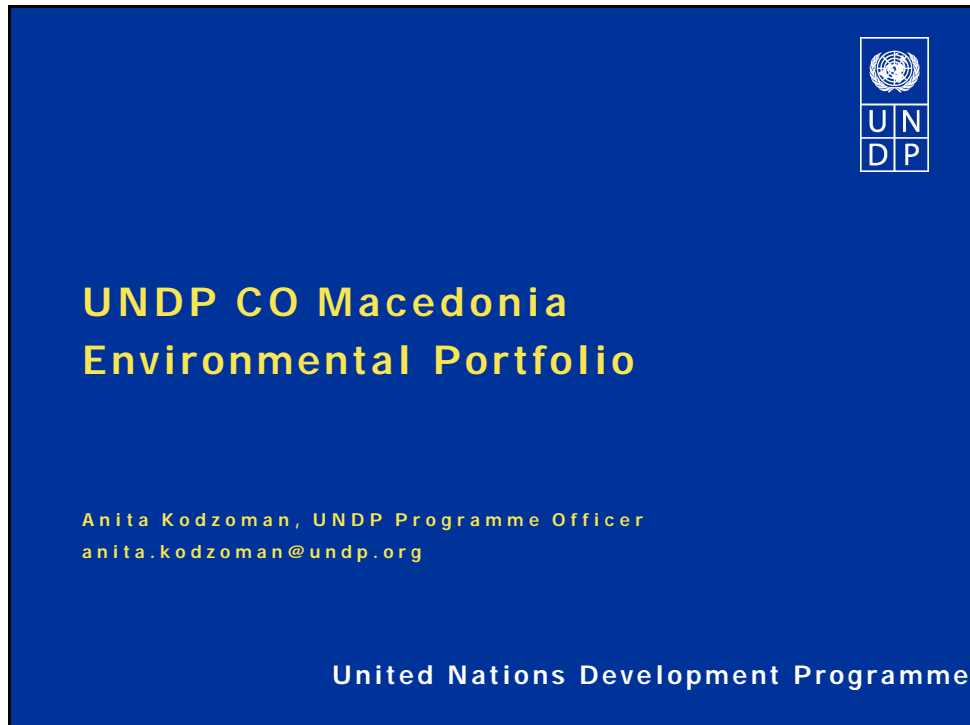
8. The Committee heard with interest a presentation on a proposal to establish a Prespa Ohrid Biosphere Reserve, which is an issue to be further investigated in the future, both within but also outside the PDF context.

9. The Committee heard with great interest and appreciation the presentations of the representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia on the Neretva river co-operation, wished every success to this new initiative, and expressed its readiness to establish permanent contacts and exchange of experience with the Neretva Co-ordination Committee.

10. The Committee also heard with interest the presentation of the Sompan Foundation representative on social research, and especially migration, and on the establishment of a relevant centre in Albania, and asked him to keep the Committee informed on relevant progress.

11. The Committee decided to hold its sixth regular meeting in Albania in May 2004. The exact date and place will be specified later. An extraordinary meeting of the Committee in relation to the PDF B project will be organised in Resen at a time to be specified later.

12. Finally, the PPCC expressed its thanks to all participants for their contribution, to the donor community for their continuous interest in the Prespa Park, to the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works for their generous support, and to the Municipality of Prespa and the Society for the Protection of Prespa for the organisation of this meeting and their warm hospitality.





UNDP/GEF Project Execution



GEF
Project Execution
NEX implementation



**Results - based Monitoring and
Evaluation**

**Anita Kodzoman, Programme Officer
13-15 November 2003
Greek Prespa**

United Nations Development Programme



**Integrated Ecosystem
Management in the Trans-
boundary Prespa Park Region**

United Nations Development Programme



**Cross border cooperation in the region of Ohrid
and Prespa lakes**

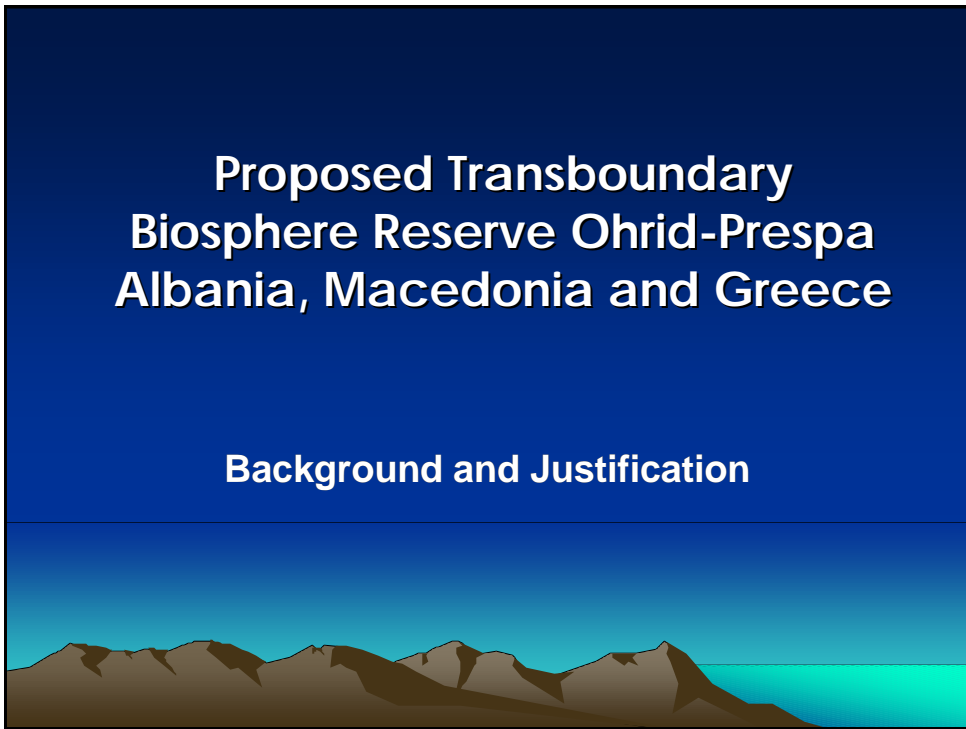


Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH

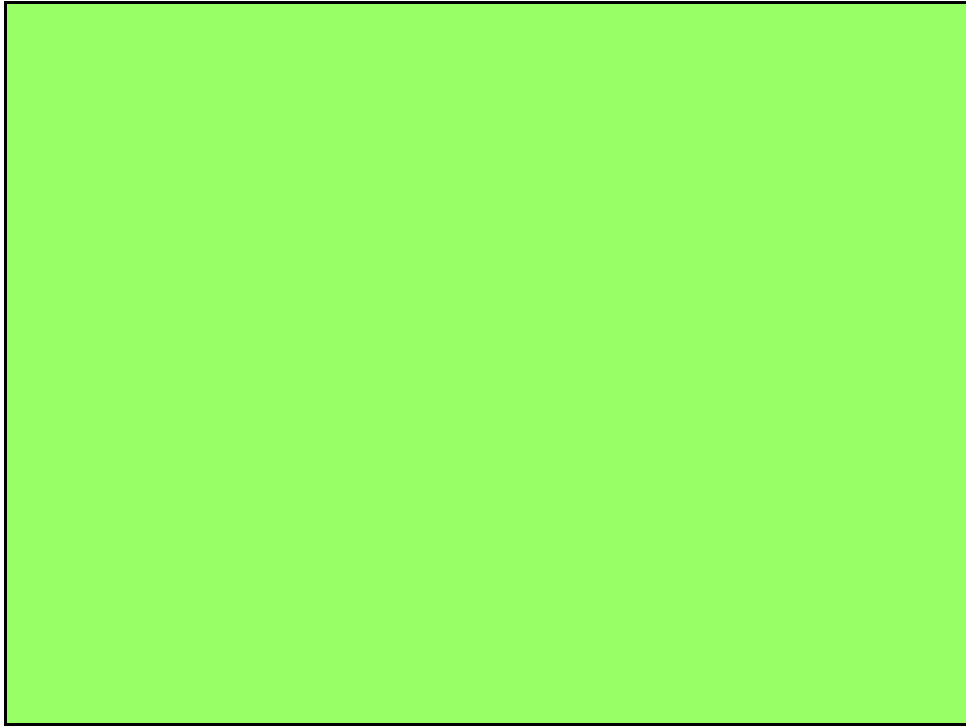
Fifth Regular Meeting of Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee
15 November 2003 - Lemos, Greece

**Proposed Transboundary
Biosphere Reserve Ohrid-Prespa
Albania, Macedonia and Greece**

Background and Justification



**Annex IX - "Sompan Foundation programme" by Mr. John Davies,
University of Sussex**



Annex X - List of Participants

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