



PRESPA PARK

REPORT

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

**KORCHA, ALBANIA
20-21 NOVEMBER 2006**

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Ninth Regular Meeting of the Prespa Park Coordination Committee (PPCC)

Korcha, Albania, 20-21 November 2006

**Hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration of Albania and
the Commune of Liqenas –
Funded by UNDP /GEF Prespa Park Project**

At the invitation of Mr. Zamir Dedej, Director of Nature Protection Policy, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration (MoEFWA) of Albania, and representative of the Ministry to the Prespa Park Coordination Committee, the PPCC held its ninth regular meeting at the Grand Hotel in Korcha, Albania, on 20-21 November 2006.

The meeting was attended by eight out of the ten members of the PPCC, from the three countries involved and from Ramsar/ MedWet, as well as by representatives of UNDP, SDC, GEF/SGP, WWF International, and other national officials and observers (see complete list of participants in Annex II). Mr. Aleko Miho (PPNEA), and Mr. Dimitar Buzlevski (Mayor of Resen) were not able to attend.

The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Zamir Dedej.

Agenda

1. Opening session:

- 1.1. Welcoming by the Chairman, Mr. Zamir Dedej
- 1.2. Welcome address by the Head of Liqenas Commune, Mr. Pandi Andoni
- 1.3. Presentation of the working agenda by the Chairman and approval

2. Activities since the last regular PPCC meeting in Lemos and projects implemented in the Prespa Park area: (Working document 1)

- 2.1 Presentations of the project on Reducing environmental impacts of agriculture in the AL and MK Prespa (donor: UNDP Regional Bureau; implementing body UNDP country offices)
- 2.2 Presentation of the projects on Solid waste management in the FYR of Macedonia Prespa and Restoration of Golema Reka (donor: SDC; implementing body: UNDP Skopje)
- 2.3 Presentation of KfW current and future projects in the Prespa Park area
- 2.4 Questions and discussion
- 2.5 Presentation of the project on River Devolli-Lake Micro Prespa interaction (donors: Hellenic Aid Agency - Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ WWF GR; implementing bodies: SPP and PPNEA)
- 2.6 Presentation of SPP national and transboundary projects: LIFE; endemic Prespa trout; capacity-building in Zagradec; designation of Prespa Park Products (donors: EU and WWF GR; implementing bodies: SPP and various partners)

- 2.7 Presentation of GEF/ SGP Albania – funded projects: various completed projects; Treni cave restoration; heritage trail in Zgradec; reservation of Prespa cattle
- 2.8 Presentation of GEF/ SGP FYR of Macedonia – funded projects
- 2.9 Additional contributions by PPCC members and other donors/ implementation agencies active in the Prespa Park area
- 2.10 Questions and discussion

Side meeting on water:

First meeting of the national water authorities responsible for the Prespa Park area (exchange of information on the national process of developing water management plans in the Prespa basin; transboundary issues; establishment of contact persons)

3. Prespa Park GEF project: Technical aspects (Working Document 2)

- 3.1. Presentation by UNDP/GEF representatives on project logical framework and indicators and monitoring, especially related to indicators and collection of data
- 3.2. Input by the PPCC members
- 3.3. Discussion and conclusions

Side meeting on spatial planning:

Development of national spatial plans in the Prespa Park region (exchange of information on the national process of developing spatial plans for the Prespa area; methodology; transboundary coordination)

4 and 5. Prespa Park GEF project: Project management (Working Document 3) **and Financial management** (Working document 4)

- 4.1. Presentation by UNDP/GEF representatives on:
 - principles of adaptive management;
 - rules and procedures for changes in project activities, outputs, outcomes, or objectives;
 - role of UNDP, including clarification on roles of CO, RCU, and UNDP/GEF/HQ;
 - roles of project oversight bodies, especially Steering Committee.
- 5.1. Presentation by UNDP/GEF representatives on:
 - financial management - procedures for advances and reporting;
 - rules concerning changes in budget lines;
 - rules concerning tendering and awarding of contracts, including requirements for competitive bidding, and rules concerning individuals or companies who may be excluded on the basis of conflict of interest;
 - requirements and procedures for audits
- 4 and 5.2. Comments by the PPCC members

6. Presentation of results of side meetings

- 6.1 First meeting of the national water authorities responsible for the Prespa Park area
- 6.2 Development of national spatial plans in the Prespa Park region

7. Any other business

Remarks on Prespa Park website by the MedWet Coordinator

8. Closure of the meeting

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

Summary Minutes

The Chairman, Mr. Zamir Dedej (Director of Nature Protection Policy, MoEFWA, Albania - PPCC member) opened the meeting of the Prespa Park Coordination Committee. Mr. Dedej said that it was a special occasion for the Prespa Park because of the start of the Prespa Park GEF project. He added that the 9th PPCC meeting was an opportunity to increase the capacity of the Prespa Park stakeholders, and start an in-depth analysis of the GEF project, which is expected to cover the main PPCC activities during the next three years.

The Chairman then invited Mr. Pandi Andoni (Head of the Ligenas Commune – PPCC member) to address the meeting. Mr. Andoni stressed the need to go forward with the plans for Prespa laid down during the previous PPCC meetings, and expressed the belief that the Local Self Governments can offer solutions for the sustainable development of the area.

The Chairman passed the floor to Mr. Dejan Panovski, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) of the FYR of Macedonia. Mr. Panovski congratulated the PPCC for their efforts that led to the approval of the Prespa Park GEF project. To his opinion, the PPCC and the Lake Ohrid Commission should share their experiences and coordinate their actions, towards the future management of the whole Drin River basin.

On that point, Mr. Dedej expressed his hope that the two entities would cooperate, and went on with the approval of the meeting agenda by the PPCC with minor amendments.

On the 2nd item of the agenda, the PPCC took note of Working Document 1 prepared by the Secretariat and a series of projects implemented in the Prespa Park area were presented (presentations are available at <http://www.medwet.org/prespa/park/meetings.html>).

The first project presented was entitled "Reducing environmental impacts of agriculture in the AL and MK Prespa" (funded by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS and implemented by the UNDP country offices).

Mr. Ardit Konomi (UNDP/ National Project Manager, Albania) presented the Albanian project component. He described the current situation in Albania, which is characterised by a serious decline in agricultural production. The goal of the UNDP project was to promote sustainable agriculture, having in mind the link between economic development and environmental protection. Furthermore, the project promoted integrated or organic production, the controlled use of pesticides, a functional and environmentally friendly irrigation scheme, as well as suitable crops for the area that would include viticulture, fodder and medicinal plants. The main phases of the project involved an assessment of the capacity of agricultural services, the procurement of recommendations for capacity building and special training workshops, and training by the Agriculture Department of F.S.Noli University of Korcha aiming at the promotion of the priority crops.

Mr. Dimitrija Sekovski (UNDP/ Project Manager, FYR of Macedonia) presented the project component in the FYR of Macedonia. The overall goal of the project was to minimize the impact of agriculture on the biodiversity, ecosystem functions and water quality. To achieve this, the project promoted reduced pesticide use, controlled fertiliser use, and optimisation of water use for irrigation. Integrated pest management was introduced (weather monitoring stations, pheromone traps), recommendations on correct pesticide use were developed, and an agro-chemical laboratory was established. Soil moisture measurements for optimized water use were applied in five pilot orchards. The Union of Agricultural Associations was established with a view at strengthening the capacity of local producers. Mr. Sekovski added that the results of soil analysis, indicating high levels of phosphorus, justified the initial project assumptions.

Mr. Ljupco Stojanovski (UNDP/ National Project Manager, FYR of Macedonia) presented the project for the "Support to Extension of Solid Waste Management Service in the Rural Communities of the Prespa Lake Watershed", funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by UNDP-Skopje. The project started in January 2005 and was finalised in February 2006. It involved the extension of solid waste management to 39 villages in the Municipality of Resen, cleaning of illegal solid waste dumps, piloting composting, provision of waste collection vehicles and plastic bins, as well as public awareness activities implemented with the assistance of local NGOs. Mr. Stojanovski acknowledged the valuable help by the Municipality of Resen and said that the project would be replicated in several other Municipalities in the FYR of Macedonia. He added that remaining funds would be spent for the conversion of a cleaned illegal dump in Stenje into a basketball playground for children.

Mr. Sekovski then presented the project for the "Restoration of the Golema Reka", funded by SDC and implemented by UNDP-Skopje. The project involved the preliminary assessment of the environmental problems of the Golema Reka ("Great River"), which include erosion, sewerage pollution and lack of monitoring; and activities for the restoration and protection of the ecosystem designed with a participatory approach, which include reforestation, meteorological and hydrological monitoring, and connecting households to the sewerage network.

As the Chairman informed the participants, the CRIC / Italian Development Assistance representatives were not able to attend the meeting and present their activities on the Prespa National Park (PNP) in Albania and Galichitsa National Park (NP) in the FYR of Macedonia.

Mr. Dedej then gave the floor for the presentations of KfW (German Bank for Reconstruction) current projects and preparation activities.

Mr. Andon Bojadzi (Director of the Galichitsa NP) made a presentation on the support to Galichitsa NP in the FYR of Macedonia. Outputs and activities indicatively included the elaboration of a Park Management Plan, provision of equipment, habitat restoration, boundary demarcation and zoning, establishment of mechanism for public involvement, establishment of a park office on the Prespa side of the NP, integration with spatial planning. The total budget of the project was €2.4mi (€1.5mi provided by KfW).

Ms. Kleitia Monari (KfW-Tirana) presented the activities for the support of the PNP in Albania, mainly aiming at biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and strengthening regional cooperation, through institutional support to the PNP and forest management activities. Ms. Monari said that the project executing agency was the MoEFWA of Albania and the project implementation unit was the NP administration, both supported by an international consultant team.

Mr. Petar Gjorgjiev (KfW-Skopje) explained that the total funds to be provided by the German Government would be €5.1mi, broken down to €3.6mi for Albania and €1.5mi for the FYR of Macedonia, and that the KfW saw these activities as support to the Prespa Park.

At that point, Mr. Dedej said that in Albania the Ministry of Finance was in consultation with the MoEFWA and that the agreement with KfW was expected to be ready for signature by the middle of December 2006. He then gave the floor to questions and discussion.

Mr. Thymio Papayannis (Ramsar Convention – alternate PPCC member) expressed the PPCC's contentment that activities contributing to the Prespa Park objectives were being implemented without waiting for the GEF project to commence. He asked the KfW representatives what efforts had been made to involve the Greek side. Mr. Gjorgjiev said that at the feasibility phase KfW consultants had travelled in all three countries of the Prespa basin. Although it was not foreseen to talk at central, government level with the Greek side, Mr.

Gjorgjiev said that the KfW consultants had consultations with local and central stakeholders in Greece, using a bottom-up approach. Mr. Dedej argued that although Greece was not an eligible country for funding, information and activities should be shared.

Ms. Panagiota Maragou (WWF International) noted that each project had its own framework, and asked what the common issues and needs were, and whether some guidelines on this issue would be developed at the end. Mr. Dedej said that the donors set their own rules, and that the role of PPCC was to avoid overlapping of projects and/ or activities and to give direction to the projects, based on the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park. He argued that it would be difficult to prepare guidelines at that point.

Mr. Jeffrey Griffin (UNDP/ GEF project consultant) said that the GEF project would seek Greek involvement at transboundary level, especially after the teams would be staffed. He added that the PPCC would have to discuss how that would be implemented and should consider the use of committees or thematic working groups.

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis (MedWet Coordinator – PPCC member) expressed his satisfaction to see activities going on, strongly following the SAP, and added that this indicated the success of the work and efforts of the PPCC. He noted that KfW objectives showed synergy with GEF project objectives and wanted to know how overlapping would be avoided. Concerning the SDC project on solid waste management, he asked if follow-up was secured. Mr. Dedej noted that although the split between the KfW and the UNDP/GEF project was not avoided, at the end the two big donors should make one concerted effort.

Mr. Stojanovski said that the SDC project for solid waste management had planned some sustainability activities, and that the Municipality of Resen would now be responsible for the continuation of the activities and the follow-up during the GEF project.

Ms. Vivi Roumeliotou (Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) – PPCC Secretariat member) noted that the PNP in Albania and the Galichitsa NP in the FYR of Macedonia will receive multiple funding, and PNP alone is due to receive approximately €4.6mi from both the KfW and the Italian Development Assistance. In case these activities are not integrated into the GEF project, Ms. Roumeliotou asked whether the GEF would provide additional funds to the two National Parks. Mr. Dedej said that Mr. Daniele Pedretti, CRIC/ Italian Development Assistance project coordinator for the Albanian side, who was absent from the meeting, should be asked how their project fits with the GEF one. Mr. Bojadzi took the floor and said that there was no overlapping with KfW project activities in the FYR of Macedonia side. Mr. Batkhuyag Baldangombo (UNDP Tirana) said that when the projects were designed, the UNDP exchanged information and best practices with KfW, and noted that KfW funds are the main bulk of funding directed to protected areas and only some small relevant project components (e.g. training activities) would have to be worked together with KfW and funded by GEF. Mr. Dedej clarified that the amounts mentioned for the support of the two National Parks would be disbursed over a period of years, and added that those activities were costly and that the Albanian Government would have to pay additional funds. Mr. Gjorgjiev said that from the donor point of view there was no danger of overlapping of activities. But he underlined the fact that true ownership by the countries was a facet of sustainable development. He therefore asked the PPCC to give its contribution and suggested that the latest developments should be in the future presented by the representatives of Albania and the FYR of Macedonia, instead of the donors.

Mr. Papayannis underlined the crucial role of the PPCC as the Steering Committee of the GEF project (POC), and said that the PPCC members should discuss how to carry out this role.

On the same agenda item, the Chairman then invited Ms. Myrsini Malakou (SPP – PPCC member) to present the activities and projects implemented by the SPP in the Prespa Park area. Ms. Malakou started by presenting the project for the River Devolli-Lake Micro Prespa interaction, which was implemented by the SPP with PPNEA as local partner in Albania. The project started in January 2005 and was finalised in July 2006, with funding by the Hellenic Aid (Greek Development Assistance) and co-funding by WWF-Greece. The project aimed at evaluating the interaction of the water systems of river Devolli and lake Micro Prespa, which were artificially connected in the past for irrigation purposes, as well as at identifying the impacts of the diversion, and formulating principles for water management in the Albanian side. The study highlighted the need for a detailed study for lake restoration and application of reedbed management on the Albanian side in view of the very extensive sedimentation caused by the diversion. Proposals for meeting irrigation water demand in the wider Devolli and Korcha areas included: the evaluation of the status of existing reservoirs and possible improvements and the improvement of irrigation practices in the context of a contemporary Rural Development Plan in Albania.

Ms. Malakou proceeded with presenting several other projects implemented by the SPP. The LIFE-Nature project (2002-2007) "on the conservation of priority bird species in Lake Micro Prespa, Greece" aimed at improving the conservation status of Dalmatian Pelican and Pygmy Cormorant by restoring and managing their habitats in lake Micro Prespa. Its main activities included management of the littoral vegetation, reconstruction of the sluice connecting Micro Prespa with lake Macro Prespa and monitoring of ecological change. According to Ms. Malakou, the LIFE project could be linked with GEF project components, especially as far as water use and conservation of priority habitats was concerned.

Another SPP activity presented was the project for the conservation of the endemic species of trout *Salmo peristericus*, carried out in Greek and FYR-Macedonian Prespa. The project is being implemented by SPP with funding by WWF-Greece. Local partners in the FYR of Macedonia are the NGOs "BIOECO" and "Society for Sustainable Development of Brajchino - SSDB", while the biological station Tour du Valat, France, is the technical advisor. Ms. Malakou said that the results showed good populations in the streams of Aghios Germanos and Brajchino, and indicated the presence of two more populations in the Prespa basin. Apart from the investigation of the populations, the project included actions for public awareness, and the preparation of a Species Action Plan.

Ms. Malakou continued with the SPP project for capacity building and the establishment of an Information Centre in the Albanian village of Zogradec, in Micro Prespa, which is implemented with the local Women's Cooperative of Zogradec (Association Prespa e Vogel) as a partner. Main activities/ results are, the establishment of a local NGO, the restoration of a building to be transformed into an Information Centre, capacity building activities, and the preparation of an exhibition.

Lastly, Ms. Malakou presented the One Europe, More Nature (OEMN) project in the Prespa Park area for the designation of the transboundary Prespa Park area's products as Prespa Park Products. Its main activities so far were research on protected area products, research on the primary sector, and the compilation of a framework for "Prespa Park Products", which will be followed by a pilot certification project for the Prespa beans.

Mr. Dedej said that the SPP projects and activities tackled significant issues for the Prespa Park area, and then gave the floor to the representatives of GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP).

Mr. Arian Gace (GEF/SGP National Coordinator for Albania) presented the aims of GEF/SGP and explained the rationale behind geographical focusing, small interventions, complemen-

tarity with full GEF projects, and the strategy for poverty reduction. The main projects supported in the Prespa NP area in Albania were:

- *in situ* preservation of the autochthonous "Prespa Cow" (implemented by the NGO ALBAGENE), utilising standard management methods, and experimenting with the production of green silage from reeds of the Prespa lake;
- cultivation of mountain tea *Sideritis sp.* in private lands (implemented by the NGO ALBAFLOR), involving cultivation by 15 farmers;
- protection of biodiversity at Treni cave (implemented by the Albanian Society for the Protection of Birds and Mammals);
- heritage trails, the promotion of biodiversity and encouragement to develop agro-tourism at Prespa (implemented by the Association Prespa e Vogel), involving the placement of information tables and the construction of watchtowers for birds.

Mr. Zlatko Samardziev (GEF/SGP National Coordinator for the FYR of Macedonia) presented the main facts about the newly established (2005) office of the GEF/SGP in the FYR of Macedonia. The main projects already supported in the Prespa area were:

- integral protection of the apple production in Prespa area (partners: UNDP Project Office in Resen, Municipality of Resen; leading NGO: Union of Agricultural Associations of Resen) aiming at the reduced use of pesticides for the protection of the environment, the decrease of production costs and the increase of the competitiveness;
- establishment of a pilot centre for endangered fish stock in Oteshevo, including a monitoring station, which involves among other things the introduction of fish offspring in order to increase stock of carp;
- modern methods for management of organic waste (planning stage), involving the promotion of composting.

Mr. Samardziev underlined the importance of sustainability for GEF/SGP supported projects, and said that once a project is finished, the local community is expected to take over.

Mr. Dedej thanked the presenters and opened the floor for discussion, by asking the SPP representative whether the findings and reports of the Devolli river project had been translated into Albanian. Ms. Malakou responded that the report had been written in English and a summary report had been translated in Albanian, adding that most Albanian participants were well informed. Mr. Dedej remarked that the sluice in Greek Prespa has created some controversy in Albania, especially among farmers. To that, Ms. Malakou clarified that the reconstruction of the sluice has not changed the management of the lake level as practiced on the Greek side in the past, it only made it more efficient. She also noted that water management is always a difficult matter in view of competing interests; for instance, in the past there have been some very wet years which led to increased water level that could not be controlled by the old and inefficient sluice gate, and as a result farmers on the Albanian side could benefit from water for irrigation, while Greek farmers suffered losses because of flooded plots near the lakeshore. To Mr. Gace's question on whether an analysis had been made on the impact of climate change on water fluctuation and reedbeds, Ms. Malakou said that in the 1990s reed expansion in both Greek and Albanian Micro Prespa was attributed to a series of dry years. Nevertheless, in more recent years the expansion continued only on the Albanian side. Although specific data were not available, the SPP believed that this could be attributed to the impact of both the climate change, and the Devolli river diversion. Mr. Griffin additionally commented that GEF project activities in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia, as laid down in the Project Document, have similarities to past and current SPP activities on the Greek, and therefore it is important to share experience, lessons learned and resources.

Ms. Roumeliotou stressed the importance of the fact that the new donor, GEF/SGP-FYR of Macedonia, is ready to join in the process and integrate the projects it funds within the GEF Prespa Park project. She remarked, however, that the enrichment of the lakes with carp could be problematic, and reminded that in the past there had been problems with the introduction of exotics in Prespa through carp enrichments. Mr. Samardziev said that before approval, projects go under a verification process, adding that it is not the intention of the GEF/SGP project to introduce non-native species in the lake. He promised to take the point raised into account and investigate it further.

In the afternoon session, **on agenda item 3**, the Chairman asked the UNDP/GEF representatives to present the GEF project logical framework, indicators and monitoring issues. Mr. Griffin, based on Working Document 2, started explaining analytically the logical framework components.

Outcome 1 entitled "Stakeholders establish land and water use management basis for maintaining and restoring ecosystem health in the Prespa Lakes Basin" focuses mainly on the productive sector at national level. The first indicator would be the incorporation of ecosystem management objectives in the Spatial Plan (FYR of Macedonia) and the Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP-Albania). Mr. Griffin asked the teams to look at the indicators and ask if they are realistic. Mr. Stojanovski took the floor and said that a pre-inception workshop had recently taken place in Resen. The national project team reviewed the work done up to that moment and identified the need for changes, mainly as far as the "Risks & Assumptions" in the logical framework matrix were concerned. Mr. Griffin said that when the whole project team is in place the issue would be discussed yet again. He continued with presenting the next indicators, namely the legal indicator; the maintenance of in-stream flow for two priority streams; the strengthening of shoreline habitat management; and the replication of watershed planning.

Outcome 2, "Stakeholders modify productive sector resource management practices to reduce pesticide inputs, increase habitat heterogeneity, and improve the status of target species and communities in the Prespa Basin", also refers to the national sectors. Indicators concerned the reduction of pesticides applied; the number of harmful pesticides; the number of producers applying integrated pest management; the reduction of costs for farmers; and the application of composting from waste apples. At this point, Mr. Griffin remarked that there might be requirements for different indicators for the Albanian side. Other proposed indicators within Outcome 2 concerned the contribution of community forest to the local needs for fuel and fodder - an activity to be implemented by KfW; forest management; small-scale wastewater treatment pilots; their replication; quality of life; sales of detergents containing phosphorus; limited fish catch; and public awareness. At that point, Mr. Griffin commented that past GEF projects suffered from the use of very general language, and the indicators presented for the Prespa Park project were trying to avoid that and be more specific.

The indicators referring to Outcome 3, "Stakeholders conserve priority biological diversity across the Prespa Basin and make key protected areas (PNP, GNP, and ENR) fully operational", included a transboundary monitoring system; information update/ database on priority species and habitats; scoring of protected areas' management (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool - METT); Ezerani Nature Reserve gazetted; and priority habitat under conservation management.

The indicators referring to Outcome 4, "Stakeholders build upon ongoing trans-boundary cooperation in the Prespa Basin by strengthening the transboundary coordination mechanism and piloting transboundary conservation and water management", included the Prespa

Park trilateral agreement; commitment to fund an executive secretary position; agreement on fish conservation; database on ecosystem parameters; enhancement of Imperial Eagle habitat; bat colonies protection and monitoring; endemic trout research and protection; reduction of threat by exotics; ecotourism promotion plan; and the continuation of financial and institutional commitment by the three states.

Mr. Dedej asked colleagues from the FYR of Macedonia about the pre-inception workshop. Ms. Darinka Jantinska (Department for European Integration, MoEPP, FYR of Macedonia - PPCC member) explained that the pre-inception workshop at national level was deemed necessary and it was practically the first contact of stakeholders with the Project Document. Mr. Dedej then asked the UNDP/GEF representatives if any changes were still possible at that stage, since the Project Documents had already been signed by the two Ministers of Environment. Mr. Griffin said that the Outcomes, the Objectives and the main elements of the project could not be changed; he clarified that the objective of the discussion was to revisit and refine the indicators, adding that the Greek side could propose its own indicators.

Mr. Papayannis commented that Greece, although not a GEF recipient country, should participate more actively with its own activities and funding, before it is too late for that. He also asked whether funding for the PPCC Secretariat, which up to that time was provided by WWF-Greece, was foreseen under the GEF project. Mr. Griffin said that Greece would not be held accountable for activities in the GEF project, but nevertheless Greek participation would make a stronger project. He also admitted that the project development phase (PDF-B) had not covered the Greek part extensively. Mr. Spyros Plessas (Department of Nature Management, Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece – PPCC member) said that full Greek participation was in fact desirable; he noted that the Greek role should be mentioned in project planning and in the logical framework, since there were requirements from, and implications for, the Greek side. Mr. Dedej asked for a confirmation of Greek Government co-financing of activities in the framework of the GEF Prespa Park project. On that point, Ms. Roumeliotou clarified that Greece had secured money for contributing to the PDF-B phase activities on the Greek side. She reminded the PPCC members of the letter on support and co-funding sent by the Greek Deputy Minister for Environment in June 2005, which formally expressed the support of Greece to the GEF project, and added that money raised independently by stakeholders would contribute to the project objectives. She remarked however, that Greece was much better integrated in the rest of the Project Document than in the Logical Framework, and asked for more consistency. Mr. Griffin said that due to time constraints priority had been given to the recipient countries, but the ITA (International Transboundary Advisor of the GEF Prespa Park project) would work together with the Greek side on relevant indicators.

The Chairman proposed that the Greek side should come with additional indicators and targets at the transboundary inception workshop in order to ensure the integrity of the project. He added that it should be clearly indicated that these activities would not have a budget from the GEF. Mr. Plessas said that the Greek side would expect to have consultations with the ITA and then come up with comments. Mr. Dedej noted that there was enough time before the inception workshop, and expressed his belief that aspects of Greek participation and proposals would be clarified during the GEF project inception workshop. Mr. Batkhuyag stressed again that any proposed change in the Outcomes or the Objectives would mean that the Project Document would have to go back to the GEF for re-evaluation.

Ms. Stanislava Dodeva (National Programme Officer for SDC) noted that, as far as the FYR of Macedonia side is concerned, some indicators on water related issues should have been revised and that water experts should have been invited in the pre-inception workshop. Ms. Jantinska responded that that workshop involved stakeholders only, and that the donors would be invited in the next stages.

Mr. Kouvelis reminded that the issue was not changing the Outcomes or the Objectives, but about clarifying elements and processes in the project. As an example, he mentioned the need for an operational budget for the PPCC once it becomes a legal entity. Mr. Griffin commented that that could be a very good example of an indicator.

In this connection, Mr. Dedej said that, at the end, the Governments would have to support the PPCC Secretariat. Mr. Griffin clarified that the GEF project would not fund the Secretariat, and according to project planning only transboundary events, including the PPCC meetings, and the Executive Secretary position (i.e. the ITA), would be funded. Ms. Maragou pointed out that the issue of the Secretariat funding had been discussed in the previous year's PPCC meeting, and expressed her concern that following this discussion there was no indication of any support, neither from the GEF project budget nor from the Governments. She said that this was an issue not of WWF withdrawing its support to the Secretariat but of the level of commitment of the three Governments. Mr. Dedej responded that the PPCC had sent a letter to the three Ministers of Environment on that issue. To his opinion, the main problem was that the PPCC did not have a formal legal status/ framework and added that Albania was ready to give support once this was settled. Ms. Jantinska agreed that without any bilateral or trilateral commitment it would not be possible to provide support for trilateral activities. Concerning Government support to the representatives of NGOs in the Secretariat, she said that her Government could only fund specific projects implemented by NGOs and not permanent positions occupied by NGO representatives such as those of the PPCC Secretariat. At that point Ms. Roumeliotou intervened and reminded that the appointment of the NGOs to the Secretariat had been a temporary solution only for the first two years of the Prespa Park initiative. But at the time of the current meeting the Prespa Park process was already in its sixth year and no permanent institutional arrangement has been put in place by the three Governments. During drafting of the trilateral agreement for the Prespa Park, the Governments indicated they would prefer to have state officials in the Secretariat instead of NGO representatives. The GEF project would bring in an independent Executive Secretary for 3 years, but what would happen after that remained open. Mr. Dedej repeated that to his opinion the problem was not Government commitment itself, but the fact that the legal framework for the PPCC was still missing, and added that the Government representatives in the PPCC appreciated that the Secretariat had managed to operate with very little resources.

Summing up, the Chairman said that the pre-inception process at national level would open in Albania and continue in the FYR of Macedonia, and that the Greek position would be expected during the full project inception workshop.

Concerning the presentation of GEF project monitoring and evaluation, the Chairman gave the floor to the UNDP representative. Mr. Batkhuyag, based on Working Document 2, presented the standard GEF procedures for project monitoring. These indicatively included: day-to-day monitoring by the project managers; periodic monitoring by the UNDP Country Offices; quarterly reporting, which would be posted on the GEF website; and the annual Project Implementation Review (PIR). Mr. Batkhuyag said that the UNDP intended to send the annual reporting to the PPCC for feedback, and noted that the executing agencies were obliged to carry out site visits. Concerning external project evaluation, the project would be subjected to mid-term and final evaluation, and it was proposed to send the mid-term evaluation to the PPCC. Monitoring and external evaluation are essential, he added, since in other regional GEF projects, such as the MedWet Coast, a key lesson was that national components were successful, but the external evaluation put some question marks on the regional component. Mr. Dedej pointed out that the possible fuller integration of the Greek side into the project would probably mean that Greece would have its own monitoring mechanism. Mr. Batkhuyag, however, assumed that external evaluation should assess the process in the whole basin.

Subsequently, Mr. Papayannis reminded that many outcomes, such as fisheries or water management, depend on all three countries. Mr. Griffin said that the transboundary component could be elaborated further but in any case national capacity in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia in these sectors would have to be strengthened. He underlined the need for modifying the indicators and the importance of the inception workshop and Mr. Batkhuyag stressed the need for national pre-inception meetings in order to be better prepared and avoid excess travelling between the countries.

Mr. Dedej informed the participants that UNDP-Skopje had already done the interviews with the short listed candidates for the ITA position, and estimated that the project inception workshop would take place in February or March 2007.

At that point, Mr. Gace asked whether in the GEF project context there was a provision for a small grants modality to transfer funds to the local community. Mr. Dedej explained that there was no such provision and Mr. Stojanovski said that support for small-scale public awareness activities would be considered, but subject to the sustainability of such activities.

In the evening of the first day of the meeting, the PPCC held a closed session with the participation only of its members and Secretariat, where the following decisions were taken with regard to country participation in future PPCC meetings and budget implications thereof:

1. At the next meetings of the PPCC, the countries' representatives to be covered by the GEF project budget (travel and accommodation) will not exceed 15 persons per each country, including the PPCC and Secretariat member. Among the possible persons and stakeholders to be invited priority should be given to representatives from the protected areas, forestry, fishery and water administration. Participants in possible side events to be organised during future PPCC meetings will also be included in the 15-person list.
2. Meals will be served during the meeting for all the participants therein (irrespective of whether their other expenses are covered or not by the GEF project). Normally, this should involve two lunches and two dinners.
3. Each country would not include more than 4 drivers in its 15-person group to be covered by the project budget.
4. For the Ramsar/ MedWet, there will be maximum of two people that will be covered by the GEF project budget (travel and accommodation)

The PPCC also decided to continue its efforts at securing the adoption of a trilateral agreement on the Prespa Park, which would allow for the transformation of the Committee into a formal international legal entity and the possible development of other trilateral institutions. To this effect, the Greek members, led by the Ministry of Environment representative and with the assistance of MedWet, will raise the issue with the Greek Government, and especially with the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the coming months.

Finally, all the PPCC members present supported the idea to hold close sessions only for the PPCC and Secretariat members during future PPCC meetings.

On the second day of the meeting, on **agenda items 4 and 5**, the Chairman invited Mr. Batkhuyag to present issues on GEF project management. Mr. Batkhuyag began with a presentation of the rules and procedures concerning changes in project activities. He stressed the need for consensus by the executing agencies and the PPCC, and said that any changes would be based on the findings and results of the biannual review, the findings of the monitoring and evaluation, the reports of the regional coordination unit and the communication

with the New York Headquarters. Changes in the Outcomes and the Objectives, however, can only be made with the agreement of the GEF. Concerning monitoring and evaluation, Mr. Batkhuyag repeated the main tools and procedures available (reports, site visits, independent (external) evaluations, auditing).

Concerning the transboundary component of the GEF project, Mr. Batkhuyag said that a slightly different approach would be followed as compared with the national components. The UNDP Country Office for the FYR of Macedonia will coordinate with the three Ministries of Environment (the 'designated institutions'). The transboundary component will be 'directly executed', according to GEF/UNDP terminology, which means that UNDP-Skopje will have full authority to disburse the money, and the sole responsibility for project progress. The role of the Project Oversight Committee (POC), i.e. the PPCC, Mr. Batkhuyag continued, will be to serve as a forum for stakeholder input and discussion; to oversee project implementation and review progress of activities; to facilitate project implementation in the three countries; to ensure the timely implementation of activities; and to facilitate the integration of activities into the existing project. Regarding financial management, Mr. Batkhuyag said it would be based on the relevant UNDP guidelines and the NEX ('national execution') manual, with responsibility lying on the project unit. Finally, Mr. Batkhuyag briefly explained the procedures for procurement of goods and services involving as a rule competitive bidding.

In the discussion, Mr. Papayannis asked whether the role of the PPCC/POC would be advisory, and Mr. Batkhuyag responded it would be both advisory and coordinating. Mr. Griffin said that the PPCC in this project will be the standard Project Steering Committee (POC), endorsing work plans or indicators but without oversight authority. Concerning the regional (transboundary) component, Mr. Dedej inquired about the links and flow of information between UNDP-Skopje and the three Ministries of Environment. Mr. Batkhuyag repeated that UNDP would have full responsibility for that component. Mr. Papayannis stressed the need for synergy between the national components, the regional (transboundary) component, and the Greek (co-financed) component. Therefore, the basic role of the PPCC should be to make sure that these four components integrate as much as possible. He added that, from his experience with other GEF projects, regional components were not always successful and could not influence work being done at national level.

Ms. Malakou noted that all PPCC members have already agreed that the PPCC would serve as Project Oversight Committee (POC), and on the need for synergy and cooperation, especially in the regional (transboundary) component. Nevertheless, the difficult point was how to achieve that. She proposed that the POC should specify rules of procedure and make arrangements for funding, support or equipment in order to fulfil this role, because when the project starts it is going to be late. Mr. Dedej argued that much had already been done on that, including the Terms of Reference included in the Project Document and the work on the logical framework. Mr. Griffin said that one of the first tasks of the ITA would be to help define the role of the PPCC as POC.

The Chairman summed up the discussion, and concluded that the Secretariat together with the Chairman and assisted by Mr. Thymio Papayannis should prepare guidelines for the Rules of Procedure of the PPCC, to be presented at the GEF Project Inception Workshop.

In this connection, Ms. Roumeliotou asked whether the PPCC members would be ready at this point to express some opinion concerning the specific modalities to be followed by the PPCC during implementation of the GEF project. Mr. Dedej noted that the PPCC already had rules of procedure, but these might have to be modified in view of the GEF project, and possibly the way of communication, or the number of meetings, should be revised. Mr. Papayannis expressed the opinion that if the PPCC gives good advice on the project it will be heeded, and stressed the need for the PPCC to prepare accordingly. Mr. Griffin intervened and said that the ITA would prepare briefing material and specific questions for the PPCC

concerning the transboundary component and would request guidance and input. Ms. Jantinska argued that the PPCC should not advise on the transboundary component only, and as a project Steering Committee (POC) it should have information on all activities, including the national components. She agreed that the procedures should be put on paper.

Mr. Dedej also remarked that the PPCC as project Steering Committee (POC) would expect some support from the PIUs (Project Implementation Units) too. At that point, Mr. Stojanovski said that according to the Terms of Reference, the National Project Managers and the PIUs are to cooperate with the PECs (Project Enabling Committees at national level), but their relation with the POC was not clear. Mr. Dedej said that the PPCC would have to work at two levels: national and regional (i.e. transboundary). Mr. Griffin clarified that the National Project Managers and the PIUs would have reporting responsibility to the UNDP only, but will present their work and work plans to the PPCC/POC.

Subsequently, Ms. Roumeliotou inquired about the possibility to transfer money directly to the local community and NGOs in order to carry out project activities and more generally about the selection process for the procurement of services. Mr. Batkhuyag and Mr. Griffin said that money was not given directly to the local community or, e.g, the local Municipalities but it was managed by UNDP through fixed bidding procedures. In any case, NGOs as well as other local stakeholders were seen by the UNDP as potential partners and could, if specified in a particular call, participate in the bidding. The selection procedures would be competitive, and for contracts exceeding a certain amount, the call for tenders would have to be international. Mr. Dedej remarked that information on international calls should be circulated in all three countries in order to have a transparent and competitive process.

Mr. Dedej then informed the PPCC that the Albanian side had already established a PEC by law. Ms. Jantinska said that in the FYR of Macedonia the PEC had not been established at that time, but the competent Ministries and the Local Self Government had been asked to delegate representatives. She estimated that the Committee would be established and operational in two months, so that it could participate in the project inception workshop.

On agenda item 6, the Chairman said that the two side-events – the meeting of the authorities for water management in Prespa and the meeting of the authorities responsible for spatial and land-use planning in Prespa – were very successful. He invited the respective coordinators of the two meetings to brief the PPCC members.

Mr. Bojan Durnev (Head of Sector for Water Master Plan – Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Water Economy, FYR of Macedonia) started by saying that the first point that was agreed at the meeting was the need for exchange of information on water legislation in the three countries, especially that concerning transboundary issues as well as bilateral agreements between the states involved. He then outlined the conclusions and recommendations of the water management authorities, which included:

- the need for a terrain model on Micro and Makro Prespa (sonar survey);
- the need for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the irrigation system in the three countries;
- the nomination of contact persons;
- the establishment of a technical working group with additional tasks including lobbying to the EC and donors;
- the establishment of a joint monitoring system, as a basis for future decision-making in transboundary water resource management.

The full text of conclusions and recommendations, and the list of participants in the meeting, can be found in the following sections of this Report (Conclusions and Annex II). Mr.

Dedej thanked Mr. Durnev and said that in the near future the PPCC and the Prespa Park GEF project were expected to work hard for the establishment of the working group on waters.

The meeting of the authorities and teams responsible for spatial and land-use planning was fruitful, according to Ms. Malakou, who summarised its conclusions as follows:

- the participants agreed that an ultimate goal to be pursued would be a common, integrated spatial and land-use plan for the whole Prespa catchment;
- the teams of planners involved should cultivate exchange of information and build collaboration;
- it was proposed to translate the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the studies, and circulate them among the teams.

A follow-up one-day meeting of the teams of planners that would discuss goals and objectives, legal framework, methodology, and the procedures for plan adoption, was also proposed. The full conclusions and the meeting participants can be found in the following sections of this Report (Conclusions and Annex II).

On **agenda item 7**, concerning the Prespa Park website, Mr. Kouvelis reminded the PPCC that MedWet had provided space and access to its server so that the Prespa Park website may be updated. Still, technicalities do not make it easy for the Secretariat to maintain the website and Mr. Kouvelis said that in the long-term he believes these would be solved.

Ms. Roumeliotou then reiterated that a 3-year work plan for the PPCC would have to be presented by the Secretariat in the next regular meeting of the Committee, following the GEF inception workshop.

As far as the date and place of the tenth regular meeting of the Committee is concerned, the PPCC members decided to hold the meeting in the region of Prespa on the FYR of Macedonian side in the middle of May 2007. The exact date and place will be confirmed in the coming months. The Committee understood it might also hold extraordinary or informal meetings for the GEF project, if the need arises.

At that point, the PPCC members proceeded with the approval of the meeting's conclusions. The Chairman finally thanked the participants for their fruitful contributions and the organisers for the warm hospitality and declared the meeting closed.

NINTH REGULAR MEETING OF THE PRESPA PARK COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Conclusions

1. At its Ninth Regular meeting, the Prespa Park Coordination Committee heard a series of interesting presentations on main projects and activities funded by various donors in the Prespa Park area. Presentations and the ensuing discussion focused on the results achieved so far under these projects, their integration in the Prespa Park GEF project and the required follow-up. The Committee stressed the need to effectively coordinate and ensure synergy between all co-funding donors and the GEF project, and especially KfW and UNDP, since KfW is expected to be providing the major bulk of funds for the main protected areas in Albania and the FYR of Macedonia.
2. As a continuation of the process that started in the eight regular PPCC meeting in Lemos, two side events were held during the ninth regular PPCC meeting. The first was a meeting of national water authorities responsible for the Prespa Park area, and the second a meeting of national spatial planning agencies and bodies involved in land-use planning for Prespa. The two meetings, although preliminary in nature, reached substantial conclusions in promoting collaboration among the three countries in the water management and spatial planning sectors. The conclusions of these sectoral meetings are attached to the present conclusions.
3. As far as the technical aspects of the Prespa Park GEF project are concerned, the Committee heard a presentation on the logical framework of the project, which should be confirmed, refined or amended in order to reflect the current situation. The FYR of Macedonian side has already commented on the logical framework during its national inception workshop. This will also be done on the Albanian side and will be completed at the transboundary inception workshop. PPCC recognizes the importance of having a final refined logical framework approved at the full-project inception workshop. To ensure this happens, the PPCC requests UNDP to organize and facilitate a brief (one-day) meeting of the respective project managers from all three countries supported by one-two other experts/ staff and the International Transboundary Advisor.
4. In this connection, it was agreed that the logical framework at its present form does not adequately incorporate indicators and targets for the Greek side. The Greek PPCC members, led by the Ministry of Environment, should prepare additional indicators and targets for each outcome to ensure the integrity of the project and to be discussed during the transboundary inception workshop. Regardless of the fact that the Greek "component" is not funded by the GEF, the Committee members agreed that the project evaluation and monitoring should, if possible and as appropriate, extend to Greek activities as well.
5. Regarding GEF project management and financing procedures, UNDP explained some of the modalities of project implementation. The PPCC stressed the necessity of elaborating and clarifying its ToRs and rules of procedure in order to respond to its demanding role as the Project Oversight Committee. In this connection, it was decided that MedWet would assist the PPCC Secretariat in collaboration with the International Advisor – once he is in place – to prepare a relevant proposal for discussion at the transboundary inception workshop.
6. The PPCC decided to continue its efforts at securing the adoption of a trilateral agreement on the Prespa Park, which would allow for the transformation of the Committee into a formal international legal entity and the possible development of other trilateral institutions. To this effect, the Greek members, led by the Ministry of Environment rep-

representative and with the assistance of MedWet, will raise the issue with the Greek Government, and especially with the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the coming months.

7. The next regular meeting of the PPCC will be held in the middle of May 2007 in the region of Prespa on the FYR of Macedonian side. The exact date will be determined later. The Committee might also need to hold extraordinary or informal meetings for the GEF project, if the need arises.
8. Finally, the PPCC expressed its thanks to all participants for their contribution, to the donor community, and especially UNDP, SDC, KfW, GEF/SGP Albania, GEF/SGP FYR of Macedonia and WWF Greece for their continuous interest in the Prespa Park, to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration of Albania, the Korcha authorities and the Commune of Liqenas for the organization of the meeting and their warm hospitality.

SIDE MEETING ON WATER MANAGEMENT

Conclusions and recommendations

- **Terrain model on Micro and Macro Prespa (sonar survey)**

One of the activities of PPCC should be finding donors to support sonar survey of the terrain of Micro and Macro Prespa Lakes, for building 3D terrain model of the lakes' bottom. This will serve as a basis for future hydrological modelling and other needs required for modelling.

- **Rehabilitation and reconstruction of the irrigation system**

It is suggested that donor support should be provided for the purposes of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the irrigation systems in the three countries, since all the irrigation systems are currently deteriorated and water consumption is very high. The systems need to be rehabilitated in a modern way (underground pipes, sprinklers and drip irrigation) that would bring about less water consumption and would lower the input of nutrients and pesticides to the ground waters and lakes and improve crop production.

- **Relevant institutions to nominate contact persons (to PPCC)**

Each PPCC member should ask the relevant authorities to nominate persons who will be members of the working group for waters. It is necessary that the members of the group should be from different professions (hydro engineers, biologists, chemical engineers etc.)

- **Establish technical working group (lobbying to EC)**

Since water is one of the central interests of the projects in Prespa (especially of the Prespa Park GEF project), it is necessary to establish a technical working group which will deal with items and questions concerning waters and give suggestions to the PPCC for further activities in the water sector. In addition, the same working group will put an emphasis to lobbying the EC and other donors in order to mobilize additional resources for investments in the water sector.

- **Establishment of a joint monitoring system**

As Prespa Lakes are international lakes, special attention should be paid to the joint monitoring system connected to the EU Directives. This would bring about the same knowledge on the conditions of the water and will serve as a basis for future decision-making in trans-boundary water resource management.

SIDE MEETING ON SPATIAL PLANNING

Conclusions and recommendations

1. During the side meeting on spatial planning, the participants presented the situation with regard to spatial and land-use planning in each country, with special reference to the Prespa region. They focused on the methodology, the problems, the trends and the special features of Prespa that should be taken into consideration during spatial and land-use planning.
2. Although there are differences in the legal frameworks of each country, many similarities were identified as far as the content and the objectives of spatial and land-use planning is concerned. In F.Y.R. of Macedonia and Greece, spatial plans for the Prespa area are underway and are expected to be finalized within the next year, while in Albania existing planning for the area covers only part of the Liqenas Commune, as a first step towards regional planning for the area.
3. The participants agreed that:
 - An ultimate goal to be pursued would be a common, integrated spatial and land-use plan for the whole Prespa catchment area;
 - In the meanwhile, the teams of planners involved should cultivate exchange of information and slowly build collaboration;
 - In order to achieve this, it was proposed to translate the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the studies underway, and to circulate them among the teams;
 - To organize in the near future a follow-up one-day meeting of the teams of planners that would discuss goals and objectives, legal framework, methodology, and the procedures for plan adoption.

Annex I – List of Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet Union)
CRIC	Centro Regionale di Intervento per la Cooperazione (NGO)
ENR	Ezerani Nature Reserve
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF/SGP	GEF Small Grants Programme
GNP	Galichitsa National Park
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit – German Technical Assistance Agency
ITA	International Transboundary Advisor – PP GEF project
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau – German Bank for Reconstruction
LEAP	Local Environmental Action Plan - Albania
MedWet	Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoEFWA	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration - Albania
MOEPP	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning – FYR of Macedonia
NEX	National Execution – PP GEF project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	National Park
OEMN	“One Europe, More Nature” (WWF project)
PDF-B	Project Development Facility – Block B (GEF)
PEC	Project Enabling Committee at national level
PIR	Project Implementation Review - GEF
PIU	Project Implementation Unit at transboundary level
PNP	Prespa National Park in Albania
POC	Project Oversight Committee/ Project Steering Committee, i.e. PPCC – PP GEF project
PPCC	Prespa Park Coordination Committee
PPNEA	Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (NGO)
SAP	Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers - Netherlands Development Organisation
SPP	Society for the Protection of Prespa (NGO)
SSDB	Society for the Sustainable Development of Brajchino (NGO)
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature (NGO)

Annex II - List of Participants

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