www.unece.org/index.php?id=31521

A meeting of the Drin Core Group was organised on 20 November 2012 in Tirana with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean.. This was the second meeting of the Core Group as the official joint body according to the memorandum of understanding signed on 25 November 2011 in Tirana by the five Drin River Riparians — Albania, Greece, Kosovo (United Nations administered region under security council resolution 1244), Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

At this meeting, the Drin Core Group planned for the use of USD 4.5 million of funding that was approved the previous week by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) with UNECE as one of the executing agencies. This project will be an important contribution to the further joint work in the basin including improving the joint analysis and understanding of common problems, access to comprehensive data and adequate information and setting up demonstration projects for the benefit of a sustainable development along the river and lakes in the basin. The representatives of the Drin Core Group also took stock of the developments over the year after the signature of the memorandum of understanding. During this short time the institutional basis for the implementation of the memorandum has been set up with the Drin Core Group and the establishment of three expert working groups.

During two days after the Drin Core Group meeting a training course on the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive was organised in Tirana by UNECE and Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean for 25 experts in the basin.

The memorandum of understanding guiding the work of the Core Group outlines a Shared Strategic Vision for the Sustainable Management of the Drin River Basin to protect the shared resources of about 1.5 million people relying on the basin for drinking water, agriculture, fisheries, industry and hydropower. Recent floods, in particular, have highlighted the need for such closer transboundary cooperation.

UNECE support for the Core Group is carried out together with Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean within the framework of the Drin Dialogue, a joint project of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention) and the Environment and Security Partnership (ENVSEC), set up to support the establishment of cooperation to deal with the competing interests and challenges facing Riparians. Activities are supported by financial contributions from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Finland and Austria to ENVSEC, and the United Nations Development Programme.

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Note to editors

The Drin River is the connecting body for the basin, linking lakes, wetlands, rivers and other aquatic habitats into a single ecosystem of major importance. The region is very rich in endemic species and exceptional in terms of biodiversity conservation, and so has great potential for the development of sustainable tourism.

The UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water and International Lakes (Water Convention) is an important legal framework for transboundary water management

in the pan-European region. Currently, 35 countries and the European Union are Parties to the Convention. Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are preparing for accession; Albania and Greece are already Parties.

ENVSEC (see envsec.org) was established in 2003 and includes the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme. ENVSEC works to assess and address environmental problems that threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods, within and across national borders in conflict prone regions.

The Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) is a platform bringing together competent organizations working on water issues in the Mediterranean region. Created in 2002, this non-governmental organization promotes and exchanges knowledge on integrated water resources management for the sustainable use of the region's water resources. GWP-Med is the technical secretariat of the Petersberg Phase II/Athens Declaration Process for South-East Europe, a framework for the development of transboundary water cooperation in the region. For more information, see http://www.gwpmed.org.