



## **Mediterranean Mountains: Climate Change, Landscape and Biodiversity**

*A partnership for enhancing Sustainable Mountain Development in the Mediterranean*

***EXPO MILAN 2015 Bio-Mediterranean Cluster  
September 4, 2015***

### Information Note

Last September the 4th, thanks to the fruitful cooperation between the Italian Ministry of Environment, in its function of the Italian Delegation of the Alpine Convention, UNEP Vienna -Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, the Bio-Mediterranean Cluster and the European Academy of Bolzano – EURAC Research, EXPO 2015 hosted an interesting meeting among representatives of institutions, universities and scientific research bodies and actors from the civil society who gathered in Milan to discuss about sustainable development in the mountain areas of the Mediterranean.

The workshop "*Mediterranean Mountains: Climate Change, Landscape and Biodiversity. A partnership for enhancing Sustainable Mountain Development in the Mediterranean*" organized as part of a long-term collaboration between the Alps and the Carpathian for the promotion of international cooperation between mountain territories, wanted to renew the dialogue for the Mediterranean Mountains also in order to capitalize the work done over the years by other regional and international institutions, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Over fifty experts from Mediterranean countries have dealt with the issues of Climate Change, Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity, in order to facilitate networking among policy makers and stakeholders, and to identify synergies and define common projects, in line with the strategic priorities of the European Union and the other international instruments dedicated to the mountains.

The Mediterranean area presents a coverage range of about 1.7 million km<sup>2</sup>, which is characterized for the extreme wealth of biodiversity and natural capital that can generate basic services also for people residing in plains and in coastal areas. Mountain areas represent an important resource of biodiversity, they also provide basic goods and services for the population, such as water, and services eligible for promotion such as carbon sequestration, as well as playing an important aesthetic, symbolic and recreation role for stimulating the development of tourism. On the other side mountains are among the most vulnerable areas to the effects of climate change.

In the Mediterranean, therefore, international cooperation for the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources of the territories can certainly facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices between different regions, fostering sustainable development of the entire region.



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A cooperation process to which the Italian Government and the Ministry of Environment intend to contribute, as also highlighted in the note of the **Under Secretary for the Environment Barbara Degani** to comment the initiative, by which the need to recognize mountains as a "good" is reaffirmed, to enhance them and promote local initiatives, both public or private, that can be useful to the protection and development of mountain, in a perspective of territorial cohesion inspired by the principles of the European Union.

As stated by **Paolo Angelini, head of the Italian Delegation of the Alpine Convention**, this workshop was the first step of a wider "Road-Map for the Mediterranean Mountains" that, as wished, should reach an understanding between the main institutions and organizations, from the central to the local level, involved with the sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

In line with this approach it was also the Bio-Mediterranean Cluster at EXPO that, as announced by **Commissioner Dario Cartabellotta**, will work to strengthen cooperation towards the enhancement of the resources of the Mediterranean, through the project for the drafting of a "Bio Mediterranean Charter", declined on three main axes: Mediterranean diet, Sea and, of course, Mountains. A card that, beyond the all-encompassing statements of intent, wants to represent the heritage the Mediterranean will leave to the themes of EXPO 2015, highlighting the global importance of the biodiversity and food traditions of this region.

The speeches by **Piercarlo Sandei, UNEP Vienna -SCC**, and **Giacomo Luciani, European Commission DG Environment**, highlighted the strong interest of the international and European institutions to this process for the Mediterranean Mountains, launched by the Italian delegation of the Alpine Convention.

After recalling the historical ties of cooperation between the Alps and Carpathians, the only two mountain areas in the world that have been subject to specific international agreements for sustainable development, Sandei wanted to highlight the strategic importance of continuing to work for the Mediterranean region contributing also to the experience of the Mediterranean Action Plan, the first regional program for the protection of the sea, launched 40 years ago as part of the environmental program of the United Nations.

Much appreciated the intervention of Luciani, who wanted to explain to the audience the new tools offered by the new 2014-2020 European programming, with a focus on those that present among their priorities the protection and enhancement of environmental resources, the contrast to Climate Change and the promotion of tourism, such as LiFe and Interreg (in particular MED and Adriatic Ionic). In this sense he presented some starting point on the European strategies and objectives related to the protection of the internal areas, which will certainly facilitate the creation of partnerships and working networks.

The first part of the workshop ended with the speech by **Fabrizio Penna, head of the technical secretariat of the Under Secretary Degani**, he highlighted that 40 years after the Barcelona Protocol it is important to recognize also the role of the internal areas of the Mediterranean region, where the



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mountains are also "border" between Countries and, in a more proper environmental sense they provide important ecosystem services that are essential for the well-being of the surrounding territories.

In conclusion of the plenary section three working tables have been set up, devoted to the main issues for sustainable development and environmental protection of the mountain areas of the Mediterranean: local adaptation to climate change, sustainable tourism and enhancement of the landscape, biodiversity and agro - biodiversity. Each table saw the participation of several experts from the leading academic institutions from the Mediterranean, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and, in some cases, representatives of Italian regional institutions Italian.

During the meeting closure, in plenary section, institutional representatives of the Italian Mediterranean regions that attended the meeting, **the Councillor of Environment Mario Mazzocca for Abruzzo and the Chairman of the Committee on Environment and Territory Andrea Costa for Liguria**, wanted to confirm the commitment to continue the work for a "roadmap" for the Mediterranean Mountains stressing the importance of the opportunities offered in this regard by the cooperation between States, local institutions and civil society.

Finally the main points raised during the work of the technical table have been briefly summarized, including challenges and opportunities for sustainable growth of the Mediterranean mountains, which will be collected in a report document.



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## The working tables

### **Climate Change**

Climate change is confirmed as a theme of central importance for the Mediterranean region. Experts agree in considering as essential a commitment on the adaptation to climate change in terms of increased resilience of the territory to get through an ad hoc planning in the internal areas. It raises attention the theme of sustainable risk and the need to identify some ways to its proper management, including through the individual awareness and the dialogue between policy makers and private actors, such as the insurances.

At the regional level, both the Abruzzo and Lombardy Region, whose representatives were present at the table, are moving with a Overall Adaptation Plane, to be followed by funding and policy decisions from the territory.

An important consideration is related to those parties to be involved in the "governance" of the territory: experts agree in acknowledge private citizens and companies as the key players to bet on, exploiting the private nature of many adaptation policies and the interpretation of climate change as a risk factor for the security and the economic prosperity of the area.

With reference to the instruments to be used to govern climate change and its effects, is evident, above all from the experience of the present administrations, how tools such as public-private partnerships (PPP) are yet relatively little used for the realization of infrastructural and soil protection works and for the management of public services.

In terms of mitigation to climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, the experiences made by regional governments and local authorities at various levels in the coordination and implementation of policies of national and global have been recalled. Like in the case of the "Mayors Adapt", which would have been of great benefit in terms of efficiency and emissions reduction at the local level. Identify suitable instruments to encourage and enhance these efforts by local and regional governments is an opportunity to generate more responsible individual behavior in order to achieve reduction goals of global significance.

The net of responsibilities among different levels of government and private entities also requires the development of specific skills of multi-level governance, as agreed by participants of the working group, but whose achievement seems to require a refinement of the techniques of cooperation between the various parties involved. Above all in a cooperation area such as the Mediterranean where some of the main macro-regional strategies of the European Union are intertwined, those strategies have been cited as key tools for the implementation of adaptation and the identification of resources and procedures for the adoption of concrete measures.



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## ***Landscape and sustainable tourism***

The large number of experts participating the working table confirms the strong interest for the debate on tourism related to sustainability issues. It was repeatedly stressed the link between landscape management and sustainable development as essential to preserve the quality of the territory and improve the quality of life, both elements of attractiveness for tourism demand. In this sense, some actions and international instruments, such as the European Landscape Convention and the Protocol tourism to the Alpine Convention, have been recalled.

Among the issues raised, wide consideration has been given to the actions for the conservation of landscapes and the need to share, in a European context, some good practice that may encourage others actors to take similar actions to address, for example, the issue of accessibility in mountain areas and the presence of tourism in fragile areas.

Among the main issues related to the management of tourism in the internal areas of the Mediterranean it arises the presence of tourist flows concentrated along the coastal areas and their seasonality. To deal with these issues, expert discussed the potential of developing connections between internal and coastal areas, in terms of differentiation of touristic offer.

The challenge is also to try to make the nodes of attraction for tourism destination radiating, or developing the capacity of the main destination to transfer flows and resources to places less known, also focusing on innovation.

To achieve this it is necessary to increase the participation of stakeholders in the management of tourist destinations and consolidate governance that integrates different political levels, ensuring a degree of flexibility in decision-making and innovation, exploiting synergies between public and private.

The strong potential of the relationship between landscape and tourism also lies in strengthening the identity of local communities by making use of "common goods" for the preservation of local traditions and cultures, which can be a resource for sustainable tourism too.

## ***Biodiversity***

During the working table the main challenges for the protection of biodiversity in the Mediterranean have been highlighted, Biodiversity is often threatened by environmental causes– such as Climate change- and human causes, especially intensive agriculture leading to significant soil desertification.

Participants explored some interventions that could counter the loss of biodiversity: the increase of traditional farming, the use of wet waste that improve soil quality (in Italy allowed up to 30%, in other Mediterranean countries in higher percentages). A reflection was made also on the role of protected



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areas, noting that the presence of parks and reserves ensures a better seal of the territory to erosion, a strong counter desertification is most common where farming is intensive.

A problem which has been widely discussed is the abandonment of the internal lands, cause and effect of the erosion of the territory. The challenge is to bring back people in these areas, identifying solutions that will safeguard the territory, in fact, it often runs the risk of leaving the territory to be used without clearly defined criteria. In this sense some effective tools may, for example, result from EU planning.

Another problem is the fragmentation of properties. Some participants to the table dealing with land use planning have highlighted the problem by explaining how often it is difficult to involve all the stakeholders concerned, for example because of their old age or because they reside abroad.

It has been shown in this case, the primary role of local authorities, with particular reference to the Italian regions, that work towards the identification of common road map in order to identify shared methods of land management and solutions that take into account the needs expressed at the local level.

The challenge is also to organize land management with a long-course planning, counteracting the lack of implementation or the incorrect implementation of management plans. Mistakes that, as it has been pointed out, may result from the lack of detailed planning.

The enhancing of agro-food products of mountain and the support to local markets have been also discussed. In this sense it has been highlighted the increase of consumers awareness in the search for quality products, while emphasizing the need to create circular economies, that can bring to the producers the benefits from the increase in demand for local products. It is once again highlighted the need for policy action that manages to find different solutions to the different problems that arise in the field, even by trial and improvement methodology.

The lack planning, often causes the lack of concrete results, especially in the field of Biodiversity protection, therefore the main challenge for the future is represented by the need of orderliness and of becoming aware of the ecological functions guaranteed by territories supporting ecosystem services.



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The opening plenary session



Greeting by Dario Cartabellotta at BioMed Cluster



Excursus on EU funding 2014-2020 and focus on opportunities for Mediterranean Mountain



Working table on Climate Change



Working table Landscape and Sustainable Tourism



Working table on Biodiversity



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