

**GEF NATIONAL DIALOGUE INITIATIVE
- MACEDONIA GEF NATIONAL CONSULTATION -
21-23 June 2005, Skopje
Macedonia**

Background

Macedonian National Dialogue took place on June 21-23, 2005 in Skopje, the capital of the country. The main goals of this national consultation were: to increase understanding of the GEF strategic priorities and policies, to share lessons learned from project implementation, and to initiate a dialogue among all stakeholders - national representatives, GEF representatives and the Implementing Agencies that will facilitate the links between the GEF and national priorities and the ongoing process in the country, especially the decentralization and the EU accession and will strengthen the country coordination and ownership.

The event was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in collaboration with UNDP Country Office and the CDI Team. Representatives of the National Government, academia, NGOs, private sector, media, Conventions' National Focal Points, project staff of the GEF financed projects and donors supporting the environmental sector participated at this event that was opened by Mr. Zoran Shapuric, Minister of Environment and Physical Planning and Mr. Frode Muring, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator.

The GEF resource persons presented the GEF Strategic Priorities and Operational Programmes, National Level Coordination, Development and Incremental Costs, Resource Allocation Framework and possibilities for involvement of the private sector in the GEF projects.

The national counterparts gave an overview of Macedonia's national environmental and development priorities, and presented the experiences and lessons learnt from some of the GEF financed projects implemented in the country.

The third day of the CDI was used to visit the Prespa Lake watershed, UNDP/GEF project site and the Lake Ohrid, World Bank project site. GEF resource persons and some of the participants at the dialogue met with Mr. Dimitar Buzlevski, the Mayor of Resen (Prespa Lake region), who expressed great satisfaction with the ongoing project on the integrated ecosystem management in the trans-boundary Prespa Park project that includes Macedonia, Albania and Greece, as well as his expectations from the follow up full size project that is expected to be approved in August.

GEF projects implemented in Macedonia

Macedonia is a signatory of many global and regional conventions such as: UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD, Stockholm Convention, Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety, Aarhus Convention etc.

The GEF through its implementing agencies – UNDP, WB and UNEP is supporting the country to meet its obligations towards the global environmental conventions, especially the one related to Climate Change, Biodiversity, POPs, Bio-safety, and Ozon.

The GEF project portfolio in Macedonia is relatively modest with great potential for expansion. It includes projects in almost all GEF focal areas but most of the projects are enabling activities projects.

Experience and Lessons Learned

- Management of the GEF and other international donors' projects is sometimes a burden due to an understaffed Ministries, which is especially the case with the Energy sector within the Ministry of Economy;
- Better public awareness and dissemination of information about the projects and their achievements is needed;
- Workshops/Seminars/Study Tours targeting different stakeholders are a very good means for capacity building due to information and knowledge exchange among participants;
- Voluntary participation of government and public institutions' should be well in advance planned and agreed upon, including incentives systems;
- Intensive communication during the project implementation with different stakeholders as well as taking into account their specific priorities is needed;
- Involvement of all stakeholders on national and local stakeholders in the project development and implementation is very important for the successful project;
- Cooperation between the state institutions, scientists, NGOs and private sector is essential for achieving good results;
- Public involvement in the project development and implementation should be encouraged;
- Exchange of experience and cooperation between the ongoing projects within the country and broader is a useful mechanism and should be stimulated;
- It is necessary to ensure sustainability and a follow up activity after the finalization of the projects;
- National Government should ensure its financial contribution to the projects from the state budget;

National Priorities

As part of the preparations for the EU accession the country is undergoing through a process of revising its national environmental legislation and to certain degree of changing the institutional set up for environmental management and protection. Recently, a new Law on Environment, Law on Nature, Law on Waste and Law on Air Protection were adopted, and the Law on Waters in its final stage of preparation. The new legislation incorporates not only the requirements of the EU directives but also the requirements of the ratified international conventions.

The country has developed national strategies and action plans in many areas which identify the main problems and propose recommendation on activities and measures to address the problems and constrains.

The main national strategic documents related to environment are: Stabilization and Association Agreement (2004), National Strategy for Integration to EU (2004), European partnership and Action Plan (2004), National Environmental Action Plan (1997, currently under revision), First National Communication to the UNFCCC

(2003), Strategy and Action Plan for Biological Diversity Protection (2004), National Implementation Plan for POPs (2004), National Capacity Self Assessment for Global Environmental Management (2005), Strategy for Energy Efficiency in Macedonia by 2020 (2004), Strategy for Agriculture Development (2001), National Environmental Health Action Plan (1999).

Biodiversity

- Mainstreaming biodiversity concerns across different sectors
- Establishment of a national network of protected areas with special emphasis to NATURA 2000 requirements
- Strict control of abuse and trade of wild species
- Developing of incentive measures for improvement of biodiversity and nature conservation in and outside the protected areas
- Capacity building of institutions involved in nature and biodiversity conservation

Climate Change

- Preparation and implementation of National Strategy for reduction of GHG emissions
- Improve energy efficiency
- Increase share of renewable in the energy balance
- Participation in Kyoto Protocol financing mechanisms (CDM)

Ozone

- Approximation with the EU directives for Ozone Depleting Substances
- Complete elimination of Ozone Depleting Substances

International Waters

- Implementation of integrated river basin management
- Reduction of emissions from point sources – waste water from industry and livestock farms and urban wastewater
- Reduction of emissions from diffuse sources – intensive agriculture, dispersed settlements without wastewater treatment facilities.

Land Degradation

- Strengthening the legal and institutional framework for sustainable land management
- Integration of land management concerns into relevant sectorial policies in order to reduce erosion and degradation of soil/land and to improve its conditions for sustainable use
- Improvement the control over erosion – introduction of measures for minimization of areas impacted by erosion

Persistent Organic Pollution

- Improvement of air quality by reducing major pollutant emissions from relevant sectors
- Strengthening the air quality monitoring
- Implementation of the measures and actions foreseen in the NIP for reduction of POPs emissions.

Recommendations

The GEF is not new in Macedonia but there is a room to improve the understanding of the GEF strategic directions, policies and procedures and to strengthen country coordination and ownership. The activities and measures to achieve these objectives resulted from the country national dialogue are the following:

- Strengthening the capacities of the GEF Operational and Political Focal Points;
- Establishment of national coordination body that will have a role to secure greater mainstreaming of GEF activities into national planning frameworks, ensure synergies among GEF focal areas and convention issues at the national level, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the GEF projects in the country;
- Collaboration with the media and better dissemination of information in regards to the GEF, its policies and operational programs, as well as the project achievements and products;
- Organizing workshops on the GEF, its Operational Programmes and procedures targeting different stakeholders on national and local level (Ministries, local governments, private sector, industry, media);
- Regular information sharing on the GEF and the implemented projects.
- Involvement of the scientific sector and academia in the identification and development of the projects;
- Developing a list of priority project in each of the GEF focal areas on national level.
- Exploring possibilities for involvement of national experts in STAP as one of GEF bodies;
- Collaboration and coordination with other donors active in the field of environment protection is needed in order to ensure co-funding and to prevent overlapping of activities;
- The country should utilize the funds available to support the GEF Operational Focal Point;