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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Mikulov, Czech Republic, 23-26 September 2014) and the Czech Presidency to the Convention 2014-2017 - Information from the Czech Republic

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Czech delegation on the above subject, which will be discussed under "Any other business" at the Environment Council meeting on 28 October 2014.

**Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on the
Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians
(Mikulov, Czech Republic, 23-26 September 2014)
and the Czech Presidency to the Convention 2014-2017**

- Information from the Czech Republic -

Ministers and High-Level Representatives of the Governments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine met on 23–26 September in Mikulov, Czech Republic, for the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 4) to the Carpathian Convention. The meeting was also attended by the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, executive secretaries of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Alpine Convention, and representatives of France, Germany, Italy, the European Commission, the EEA, the FAO, as well as many non-governmental organisations and stakeholders.

Policy and strategic outcomes of the COP 4

The adoption of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport to the Carpathian Convention is an important joint step towards the sustainable development of the Carpathians, balancing social, economic and environmental needs, opportunities and threats to this sensitive mountain region. The Conference of the Parties also adopted other key documents aimed at creating synergies and mutual supportiveness regarding natural and cultural heritage conservation and social and economic development, such as the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians, the Declaration on Cultural Heritage, the Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Forest Protocol, the Strategic Agenda on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Carpathian Region and the Joint Alpine – Carpathian Statement on Adaptation to Climate Change.

The Conference of the Parties *encouraged* the Parties to actively participate in the implementation of existing EU macro-regional strategies relevant to the Carpathians, i.e. the strategies for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and for the Baltic Region (EUSBSR), and to use the Carpathian Convention as a strategic tool to link and complement relevant strategies.

The Conference of the Parties also *recognised* the crucial role of local and regional administrations and their spatial planning/development authorities in the successful implementation of the Convention, its Protocols and strategies, and *called* for strengthened cross-border and trans-boundary cooperation of the Parties on maintaining sufficient ecological connectivity of the Carpathians and on avoiding landscape fragmentation. Discussions on a joint Carpathian landscape, eco-connectivity and green infrastructure project are ongoing.

Czech Presidency to the Carpathian Convention 2014 – 2017 and its priorities

The Czech Republic has taken over the Presidency to the Carpathian Convention from the Slovak Republic (2011 – 2014) and will be followed by Hungary (2017 – 2020).

During its Presidency to the Convention, the Czech Republic will aim at:

- 1) Strengthened cooperation with the European Commission, in particular DG REGIO, analysis and potential integration of the objectives of the Carpathian Convention into the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and other relevant existing EU funding programmes;
- 2) Greater involvement of regional and local stakeholders in the practical implementation of the Carpathian Convention, its Protocols and strategic documents;
- 3) Strengthened cooperation on issues related to landscape conservation, ecological connectivity and green infrastructure at local, regional and international levels;
- 4) Increased efficiency and effectivity of processes within the Carpathian Convention;
- 5) Strengthened cooperation with the Alpine Convention, especially in seeking a common approach on adaptation to climate change in mountain areas.

About the Carpathians:

The Carpathians are Europe's largest, longest and most fragmented mountain chain in Europe, shared by eight Central and Eastern European countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. With over 80% of Carpathian waters draining into the Danube, the Carpathians are an important and integral part of the Danube river basin and its management. The Carpathians are one of the major European biodiversity hotspots with the EU's largest populations of brown bears, wolves, lynx, European bison and imperial eagles, and almost 4 000 plant species, of which 481 are endemic. The unique and well-preserved cultural heritage of the Carpathians, together with their natural heritage, are a great asset for their sustainable development, in particular the development of sustainable tourism.

About the Carpathian Convention:

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) was adopted and signed by seven Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine) in May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine. It is the only multi-level governance mechanism covering the whole of the Carpathian area and the second sub-regional treaty-based regime for the protection of a mountain region worldwide. Since 2004, the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (SCC) has been located in Vienna, administered by the United Nations Environment Programme, supported by the European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC), and hosted by the Republic of Austria in the Vienna International Centre.
