

Montenegro: Piva becomes a regional park, preserving the wealth of unparalleled natural resources

Today, on Earth day, Montenegro proclaimed Piva as a regional park, thus marking yet another achievement towards keeping its constitutional pledge of being an ecological state. The local parliament of the Municipality of Plužine unanimously adopted a resolution to preserve the world-wide recognised natural, ecological and cultural values of this region by declaring it a protected area.

The area declared as a Regional park Piva is one of the cleanest and most important ecological parts of the country, covering an area of approximately 32000 hectares. It consists of four beautiful canyons (Piva, Tara, Komarnica, Sušica) and four lakes (Crkvičko, Stabanjsko, Tmovačko, Pivsko). Furthermore, this regional park has more than 1500 species of plants, many of them being endemic.

The park itself will have three different protection degrees covering three park zones; the first one being the most significant in terms of biodiversity, while the other two will be more open for a variety of economic activities and the sustainable use of natural resources.

On this occasion, Mr. Mijuško Bajagić, Mayor of Plužine said that the regional park should provide better conditions for the development of the Municipality, and would foster endeavours to raise the living standards.

Ms. Daliborka Pejović, State Secretary for the Environment, reminded that Montenegro's National Strategy for Sustainable Development prescribes that at least ten percent of the territory should be under state's protection. "Apart from the already existing five national parks which cover 7,7 percent of the country's territory alongside other protected areas, proclamation of Piva adds to the total of 11,4 percent, thus exceeding the set target," Ms. Pejović stated. She also pointed out that "nature and environment do not pose business barriers, but actually present an opportunity for growth and development".

On Montenegro's EU integration path, the ever increasing demand to better preserve its environment and wisely utilise natural resources requires not only a set of actions, but also a mindset shift. "Montenegro should not take for granted its splendid nature and resources. The efficient management of protected areas requires a whole set of prerequisites, including strengthening the support from both national and local levels, creating strong bonds and partnerships, ensuring financial sustainability and building capacities," concluded Ms. Jelena Janjušević, Manager of the Centre for Sustainable Development***.

Upon proclamation of Piva as a regional park, a donor conference was held which gathered number of state institutions, mayors of 5 municipalities, ambassador and high-level state representatives. German Ambassador to Montenegro, Ms. Gudrun Elisabeth Steinacker emphasized that regional park will provide plenty of opportunities for the development of local economy and tourism in this region: "I'm assured that more and more German tourists

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will be visiting your country, and we at the German Embassy and the German National Tourism Organization are willing to invite our fellow countrymen and women to visit Montenegro and to enjoy the abundant intact natural beauties”.

Government of Montenegro, together with UNDP, through their joint venture – Centre for Sustainable Development, seeks to stimulate regional development of the underdeveloped and rural areas, in order to strengthen the potentials of the region in areas such as tourism, agriculture and livestock husbandry and production.

Mr. Borko Vulikić, UNDP Project Manager for Protected Areas explained that the Municipality of Plužine has committed to establish a separate company for management of the regional park, and that they have already allocated financial resources. He added that within the UNDP project for protected areas, financed by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the newly established Piva regional park received two off-road vehicles, two laptops and one GPS device, which will facilitate their work at the beginning. Mr. Vulikić expressed appreciation to the Municipality for recognizing immense potentials of protected areas: “Despite the initial set-backs, we managed to jointly build trust among local communities. The original plan was to put 17,000 ha under protection, while the Municipality decided to double it, so we now have 32,400 ha of protected territory”.

Proclamation of Piva as a regional park is just one of many results of UNDP’s undertakings in the domain of protected areas, conducted within two projects: Strengthening sustainability in protected areas and Financial sustainability of protected areas.

*** The Centre for Sustainable Development was established on January 1st 2014 as a programme jointly implemented by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Montenegro. The work of the Centre is aimed at supporting the implementation of national policies for sustainable development and the gradual improvement of cooperation with the countries of the region in order to define common priority actions, modalities of cooperation and building associated partnerships.

source: me.undp.org