

REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING
On the Establishment of the Sub-Regional Platform
to Beat Pollution in South East Europe
24-25 June 2019
Vienna International Centre

Concept note

1. Background

On 4-5 December 2018, sixteen countries from South East and Southern Europe¹ gathered at the Ministerial Conference “Innovative Solutions to Pollution in South East and Southern Europe” to discuss how pollution can be curbed to the benefit of environment, health and economies. The Conference, organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, with the support from the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, presented practical examples of innovative solutions in the field of pollution monitoring, reduction and prevention.

The Ministerial Conference resulted into the adoption of a *Joint Ministerial Vision on Innovative Solutions to Pollution*², whereby countries of the region highlighted the importance of regional cooperation to address pollution-related challenges and made specific commitments and recommendations. Furthermore, Member States called upon UN Environment to consider the establishment of a sub-regional presence to assist countries in their specific efforts by facilitating the creation of innovative partnerships, exchange of information, resource mobilization and coordination.

The Belgrade Conference outcome results were presented at the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA 4 on 12 March 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya in the framework of a side event jointly hosted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea and UN Environment. The discussion on the state of pollution and its related challenges in South East Europe was followed by a presentation on the development of a dedicated **Sub-Regional**

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey

² https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27112/20181202_FINAL_Joint%20Regional%20Vision%20on%20Innovative%20Solutions%20to%20Pollution%20-%20Copy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Platform to Beat Pollution in South East Europe, developed by UN Environment. This initiative aims at supporting target countries in identifying and prioritizing transboundary pollution challenges, improve regional dialogue and foster the creation of innovative partnerships.

The establishment of the regional platform and UN Environment's readiness to support the initiative were well received by target countries, the European Commission and interested donors. To follow-up on the creation of the Platform and further consult with relevant stakeholders, UN Environment will convene a technical **Regional Consultation Meeting** that will take place on 24 - 25 June 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna, Austria. The Regional Consultation Meeting will enable the establishment of a dedicated Task Force coordinating the development of the programme of work of the Sub-Regional Platform to Beat Pollution.

2. Objectives of the Consultation Meeting

The Regional Consultation Meeting will convene representatives from the region at the technical level and lead to the establishment of the Platform Task Force. The meeting will discuss the definition of the *Terms of Reference of the Sub-Regional Platform*, its governance and structure. The draft Terms of Reference will be shared with target countries by the end of May. This meeting will focus on the definition of activities and discuss a timeline for the Platform establishment.

The Regional Consultation Meeting will focus on the following topics:

- Creation of the Platform Task Force (composition, mission, role and responsibilities);
- Identification of priority components (or pillars) for the Platform's engagement;
- Country ownership and national direct involvement in the Platform's activities;
- Definition of Platform's programme of work and budget;
- Discussion on the Governance and structure of the Platform;
- Timeline and launch of the Platform.

3. Target participants

Governments from South East Europe will be invited to participate in the Regional Consultation Meeting. UN Environment will send invitations to relevant national Ministries, requesting the designation of one Operational Focal Point that should be part of the Task Force. Furthermore, representatives of UN Organisations, the European Union, interested donors and civil society organizations will be invited to participate.

➤ Below the list of target countries from South East Europe:

Country	Target Ministry
Albania	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
Bulgaria	Ministry of Environment and Water
Croatia	Ministry of Environment and Energy
Greece	Ministry of Environment and Energy
Hungary	Ministry of Agriculture
Moldova (Republic of)	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
Montenegro	Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism
North Macedonia	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
Romania	Ministry of Environment
Serbia	Ministry of Environmental Protection
Slovakia	Ministry of Environment
Slovenia	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Turkey	Ministry of Environment and Urbanization

➤ International organizations, donors and other relevant stakeholders

European Union	DG Environment DG Near European Environment Agency Joint Research Centre
Investment Banks	European Investment Bank European Bank for Reconstruction and Development World Bank Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau (KfW)
Observers/donor countries	Italy (Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea) Austria (Austrian Environment Agency) Germany (Ministry of Environment) Czech Republic (Ministry of Environment) Norway Sweden (SIDA) Netherlands

	Regional Cooperation Council
UN agencies/programmes	UN Environment WHO UNIDO UNECE UNEP / MAP (for the marine and coastal components) UNMIK UNDP
Civil Society Organizations	Relevant Civil Society Organizations active in the region (including European Environment Bureau and Women Engage for a Common Future)

4. Date and venue

The First Regional Consultation Meeting of the Platform will take place on 24 - 25 June 2019 and will be hosted by UN Environment at the Vienna International Centre. UN Environment will act as Secretariat of the Regional Consultation and the language of the meeting will be English.

5. Preliminary programme

24 June 2019, morning	
Session 1 – State of Pollution in South East Europe	
A) Participants	- SEE Operational Focal Points, International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations.
B) Topics	- Presentation of current state of pollution in South East Europe, EU environmental acquis, relevant MEAs, Agenda 2030 and UNEA Pollution Implementation Plan; - Stocktaking of past and current regional environmental cooperation initiatives.
C) Expected outcomes	- Improved understanding of the pollution-related challenges in the region, opportunities and obligations deriving from MEAs and EU acquis; - Improved understanding of national needs and priorities;

	- Discussion on added value of the Sub-Regional Pollution Platform, and synergies with other initiatives.
24 June 2019, afternoon	
Session 2 – Platform priority areas	
A) Participants	- SEE Operation Focal Points, International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations;
B) Topics	- Establishment of Task Force; - Presentation and plenary discussion on the Platform concept and draft Terms of Reference; - Discussion on Platform priority components (or pillars); - National ownership of the process.
C) Expected outcomes	- Agreement on the Platform’s mission and Terms of Reference.
25 June 2019, morning	
Session 3 – Governance and structure	
A) Participants	- SEE Operation Focal Points, International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations;
B) Topics	- Discussion on the Platform’s structure and governance, budget and implementation plan;
C) Expected outcomes	- Advanced version of Terms of Reference and agreed date for the launch of the Platform.

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