

## **Achieving full partnership relations between the EU Member States and the EU Neighbours in the area of environment and sustainable development**

### **WWF Recommendations - March 2007**

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EU foreign ministers are preparing to discuss the implementation of the communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (the so called “ENP Plus”) on the 30-31 March 2007. WWF urges EU decision-makers to ensure that the protection and sustainable management of natural resources such as freshwater, forest, and marine ecosystems becomes a priority in the implementation of the strengthened ENP.

Environment and sustainable development are already recognized as priority areas for co-operation in the ENP strategy, the ENPI, and in all existing Action Plans. However, in the past, such recognition has been overshadowed by other priorities (e.g transport, energy and trade) in the implementation stage. The “ENP Plus” mentions the environment as an “issue” where all partners may share common concerns and interests. Regrettably, it does not include it in any of the action points for follow up.

WWF believes that environmental issues should be higher on the ENP agenda, particularly in areas where environment can be a tool for conflict prevention/resolution. The south Caucasus, eastern Europe and south Mediterranean regions face potentially irreversible environmental problems (e.g. water pollution, forest degradation, freshwater scarcities, climate change impacts) that need to be urgently addressed. To enhance co-operation between the EU and Neighbouring Countries (NC) on environment and sustainable development, WWF has prepared the following recommendations:

#### **1. Priority measures for environmental integration and governance:**

- Enhance knowledge, capacity and legal approximation to EU environmental policies, in particular those related to impact assessments of projects, programmes and policies to ensure harmonisation with EU standards;
- Support implementation of international obligations in the field of environment (ESPOO Convention, Biodiversity Convention, CBD, Convention to Combat Desertification, CCD, Sustainable Development Strategies and guiding principles, etc.);
- Ensure civil society participation at all levels, notably in the field of environmental decision making (e.g. implementation of the Aarhus Convention<sup>1</sup>);
- Enhance the capacity of NC stakeholders<sup>2</sup>, to promote environmental integration, environmental monitoring and assessment.

#### **2. Priority environmental issues and related EU initiatives:**

- **Sea management and protection: Implementing the European Marine Strategy (EMS).** NCs should be more closely associated to the EMS political process and to the implementation phase through the Regional Sea Conventions Secretariats. After previous capacity building on EMS, the individual countries should be given clear responsibilities to ensure that their policies and legislation are coherent with those of the EU. The role of the NC should be made more explicit in the final version of the directive<sup>3</sup>, using it as an example on how they can work more closely with the EU under the ENP.
- **Freshwater ecosystems protection and integrated river basin management: Implementing the EU Water Initiative (EU WI).** Implementation of the EU WI has been hampered by the lack of political support and financial resources. However, WWF considers that it remains, next to the Water Framework Directive, a coherent and useful tool to respond to freshwater scarcity and quality problems, facilitating sustainable access to water supply and sanitation, and should therefore be re-invigorated in the framework of the “ENP Plus”.

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<sup>1</sup> Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information, public participation and decision making, Fourth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe, June 1998

<sup>2</sup> These include environment ministries, local and sectoral administrations, civil society organisations and other actors involved in ENPI implementation.

<sup>3</sup> The current draft (political agreement of December 11, 2006) reads: “Regional cooperation means cooperation and coordination activities between MS and whenever possible, third countries....” (Art 2a.9)

- **Sustainable management and forest resources: Implementing the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG).** Support to the ENA FLEG process and the follow up to the 2005 St. Petersburg Ministerial Conference are of high importance. The ENP countries should implement programmes to strengthen controls in the forest sector. Work done by the World Bank and the EU in this context should be scaled up, making FLEG a priority for the entire ENP and not only for its Eastern Regional Programme.
- **Energy: promoting sustainable energy policies in the neighbouring countries.** Energy security and climate change are closely linked and should be tackled together. Therefore the EU should try and promote in the NC what it's heading towards domestically, in terms of diversification of energy sources, promotion of energy efficiency, renewable energy and adaptation to climate change.

### **3. Regional environmental initiatives and priorities:**

Implementation of the environmental activities under the ENPI regional programme should build on existing initiatives and the EU should play a facilitator role to ensure effective coordination and complementarities.

- **In the Mediterranean,** the Environment Strategy for the Mediterranean proposed by the Commission in September 2006 and the EU's Horizon 2020 Initiative should receive political boost and be supported with concrete steps within the "ENP Plus". The ENP Environmental programme should promote environmental integration and allow in depth policy dialogue and increased NC's capacity (including NGO capacity) on environmental protection and management. Implementation of the Horizon 2020 Initiative should be coherent with initiatives in the field of marine protection and fisheries in the Mediterranean and help prevent negative environmental impacts of unsustainable development of transport, energy and tourism infrastructures.
- **In the Black Sea,** environment should be considered as a top priority for the EU (at the same level as energy or democracy). A joint agenda, on the lines of Horizon 2020, should be set up and implemented in a way that promotes full public participation and ownership of the Black Sea countries. Environmental priorities for the Black Sea should include sustainable forestry, freshwater/integrated river basin management, nature conservation (including marine protection) and waste management.

### **4. Environmental conditionality for the use of the ENPI additional funding**

- The EU must ensure that the additional money (€1 billion) foreseen by the "ENP Plus" for a Governance Facility and a Neighbourhood Investment Fund is allocated according to qualitative and strategic criteria (eg. environmental governance and accountability) as much as quantitative and technical criteria (eg. degree of implementation of the Action Plan).
- To avoid adverse impacts on the environment of major ENPI infrastructure projects, the EU should ensure that these investments meet stringent sustainable energy, low carbon and environmental criteria.
- Projects implemented and/or co-financed by the International Financial Institutions and the five European-based Multilateral Financing Institutions (MFIs) should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessments according to EU standards<sup>4</sup>.
- NCs should aim at EU regulations, standards and legislation on low-carbon infrastructures and technology, but also promote carbon capture and storage for new fossil fuel infrastructures as a minimum level to achieve.
- In line with the commitments expressed in the « ENP Plus » with regards public participation and ownership in the ENPI, WWF proposes that small grant facilities are made available to support NGOs, small businesses and communities. This would be crucial in building local initiative, involvement and ownership.

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<sup>4</sup> And not just "subject to local conditions" as stated in the European Principles for the Environment adopted by the five European-based Multilateral Financing Institutions in May 2006