**Drin River Basin pioneers new approaches to water management**

The **6th Drin Stakeholders Conference** was organized on 14-15 November 2018, in Ohrid.

Over 120 representatives of ministries, NGOs, academia and water users working to manage the Drin Basin or living in the Drin Basin gathered overlooking Lake Ohrid, UNESCO World Heritage site, to discuss the main problems, how these can be addressed using innovative techniques looking into water, energy and food security, and the steps ahead towards solutions.

The conference marked 10 years of action for the management of the Drin and its sub-basins, Prespa, Ohrid, White and Black Drin and Skadar/Shkodra.

**Ms. Petrovska, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning** welcomed the work done under the process for the implementation of the Drin Memorandum of Understanding which aims to understand the transboundary problems. She indicated the main critical step for the immediate future was defining environmental objectives and the development of an Action plan with priority measures. She stressed the importance of sharing information and data among riparian countries to enable the decision making process.

**Ms. Gerta Lubonja, Director of the Water Resources Management Agency in Albania** indicated the importance of joint action among Drin riparians to protect water resources but also to protect from extreme phenomena linked with water such as droughts and floods.

**Mr. Radosav Rasovic,** **representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro,** transmitted the satisfaction of the leadership of his Ministry as the Conference is one of the activities to address common concerns and put forward common wishes regarding the management of the Basin.

The implementation of this year’s Conference marks the continuation of a tradition in involving stakeholders in the work under the Drin Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that in its Article 5 “Implementation and Monitoring”, indicates “(…) *understanding the need for the implementation of the Strategic Shared Vision to reflect the views of the stakeholders the Parties call for an annual meeting of stakeholders from the Drin Riparians* (…)”.

Each year the Conference is used as a forum to present progress in implementing the Drin MoU as well as a forum to discuss significant issues for the Basin. This year the Conference provided a forum for:

* Presenting the main issues (and impacts) in the river basin identified through scientific analysis done by 54 national experts, 2 international experts and 2 consultancy companies under the coordination of the GWP-Med.
* The stakeholders to discuss the Water-Food-Energy- Ecosystems Nexus interlinkages and identify those that are of importance. By doing so the Conference served as a Nexus Policy Dialogue in the Drin Basin. Through a series of workshops and discussions, participants were able to understand how to apply nexus thinking to enable a more holistic approach to managing the Drin River Basin.

Ms Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa, Regional Adviser for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) - a key collaborating partner with GWP-Med on the Nexus project identified three main areas for further consideration by decision-makers:

* Hydro-electric power and floods;
* Biomass and forest management, and;
* Agriculture and trade.

The Conference was organized by the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) as part of the process for the implementation of the Drin MoU.

Its organization was made possible through two projects:

* The GEF Drin Project.
* The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) supported Project “Promoting the sustainable management of Natural resources in Southeast Europe through the use of the Nexus approach”. This project serves the implementation of the SEE2020 Strategy. The Drin Basin is one of the two transboundary basins that the project focuses on, supporting the implementation of Nexus assessments and Dialogue. The second basin that the project focusses on is the Drina Basin.

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