



Launch of the GEF Drin Project in Tirana

A new Impetus for Enhancing Cooperation for the Management of the Drin Basin

16 December 2015

The Inception Meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported project “**Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the extended Drin River Basin**” took place in Tirana today, at the presence of Mr. Edmond Panariti, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, Mr. Ferid Agani, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, as well as Mr. Stevo Temelkovski, Deputy Minister of Environment and Physical Planning.

More than 100 representatives of Drin Riparians’ government institutions, national and local stakeholders as well as of intergovernmental, international and regional organizations supporting activities in the Drin River Basin exchanged views on management priorities and the Drin institutional process the Project will support. The ultimate goal is a shift of mentality from a potentially conflicting sharing of waters among Riparians to a sharing of benefits among stakeholders.

With a budget of \$5.5 million for the beneficiary Drin Riparians - Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo¹ and Montenegro, over the next four years, the Project becomes the pivotal action in the Drin River Basin, with the aim to “***promote joint management of the shared water resources of the transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin joint commissions and committees***”.

The GEF Drin Project comes at a critical point, as the vehicle to financially support and facilitate the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding for the management of the Drin Basin³ (Drin MoU) that was agreed in Tirana in November 2011, in line with the existing agreements at national and transboundary level. Aligned in content, aims and objectives with the Drin MoU, the Project will

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

² Prespa Park Coordination Committee, Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission

³ The Drin MoU itself, as the product of the Drin Dialogue Process (2009-2011) to tackle the absence until then of coordinated action at the Drin Basin level, provides the political framework for, and defines the context of cooperation among the Drin Riparians. It aims at the attainment of its Strategic Shared Vision to “***promote joint action for the coordinated, integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore, to the extent possible, the ecosystems and the services they provide, and promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin***”.



consistently contribute to the operationalization of the institutional structure established and enhance scientific knowledge in the Basin towards informed decision-making for transboundary management, based on a set of commonly agreed measures and a systematic involvement of users, civil society and other stakeholders.

“The serious issues faced in the Drin River Basin cannot be addressed by a single country. There is an imperative need that all countries sharing the watershed cooperate to provide transboundary solutions”, stressed Mr. Panariti, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, who congratulated all actors involved in the Project for their engaged work, and raised his Ministry’s commitment to actively participate in this Project, to make it succeed. *“This Project assists Riparians in joining forces to increase capacity in the region, taking steps to guarantee the continuity and sustainability of its results”,* he concluded.

Mr. Ferid Agani, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, expressed his satisfaction that the launch of this Project, as a major step towards meeting the Drin MoU objective on “Promoting joint action for the coordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin basin”, comes at a moment of significant developments in the Kosovo water sector. *“Despite modest progress in legislative and institutional terms, we are aware that the main challenge remains the financing of water projects, with a cost of about 1.25 billion Euros, including projects on water supply, wastewater treatment and protection of water resources”,* he mentioned, while stressing also the need to improve coordination among various organizations, bringing together all relevant stakeholders in water sector.

Mr. Stevo Temelkovski, Deputy Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, highlighted the strong involvement of his Ministry in all stages of the development of the cooperation process for the Drin River Basin management, culminating with the GEF Drin Project implementation phase. *“I would like to express our clear political will towards basin mutual understanding in water management as a precondition for cooperation towards sustainable development”,* he stressed, while expressing his belief that Drin Basin can become an example of transboundary cooperation, and his hope that different demonstration projects will support national management plans at basin level towards a strengthened Integrated River Basin Management.

The GEF Drin Project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) through GWP Mediterranean (GWP-Med), in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).



For more information, please contact:

Ms. Nora Kushti, Communication Manager, UNDP Albania - nora.kushti@undp.org

Ms. Georgia Angelopoulou, Communications Officer, GWP-Med – georgia@gwpmed.org

Moreover, you can have a look at the respective websites:

Drin Coordinated Action_ www.drincorda.org

Global Environment Facility_ www.thegef.org

United Nations Development Programme_ www.undp.org

Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean_ www.gwpmed.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe_ www.unece.org