

DECLARATION of COMMITMENT on the Creation of a Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park)

OHRID - PRESPA

- Recognizing that the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes with their surrounding mountain and forest ecosystems providing unique natural and cultural landscapes with outstanding beauty worth to be conserved for current and future generations;
- Considering, that the real capital and intrinsic values of the entire region at all sides of the transboundary area are based on the combination of natural sites of the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, including cultural landscapes such as the forests and agricultural areas, and by this providing best provisions and excellent features to be nominated as a Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park) according to the UNESCO Standards of the Program 'Man and Biosphere'.
- Understanding that the Biosphere Reserve strives to harmonize the needs of the inhabitant human population for sustainable use of natural resources with the needs of inhabiting flora and fauna species to survive in stable populations;
- Recognizing that Biosphere Reserves (Area/Park) are the unique instrument to enhance functioning ecosystems in order to provide their services for the current and future generations of human inhabitants;
- Considering that the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems shall be enabled to provide the following functions for current and future generations:
 - Habitat function for endemic endangered and essential species for functioning of natural processes in intact ecosystems;
 - Sufficient spaces for undisturbed ecological processes. (e.g. cycles of live and substances);
 - Resilience of stability of ecosystems;
 - **Maintaining ecosystem services, such as:**
 - Resources for local population by supplying of firewood and non-timber products;
 - Resources for local population by supplying fish for consumption;
 - Water supply and regeneration;
 - Climate protection;
 - Erosion protection;
 - Climate moderation function by evaporation of water through vegetation or intact lake ecosystems;
 - Carbon sequestration function;
 - Recreation and nature experience area to attract visitors and tourists;
 - Nature education area.
- Considering that it is equally important to conserve and protect the cultural heritage of the entire region which dates back to a 8000 years history of human presence;

- Recognizing that the terrestrial ecosystems with their combination of forests, sub-alpine pastures and meadows in combination with the aquatic ecosystems of the lakes in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, are playing a key role and have an important function for corridors maintenance along the Balkan region called Balkan Green Belt, which is part of the European Green Belt.
- Understanding therefore that the Ohrid-Prespa Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park) with its mountains is an important contribution to the European Green Belt initiative to conserve all precious areas along political borders having divided Europe in East and West in the past;
- Understanding that the lakes ecosystems are important winter habitat for wintering birds for the Palaearctic region and are an important breeding habitat for highly endangered avifauna.
- Considering the needs of the inhabitants of the Ohrid-Prespa Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park) for a positive and sustainable socio-economic development to improve their livelihood an international recognition of the entire area by the UNESCO's program 'Men and Biosphere' will provide best features for a positive and sustainable development;
- Understanding that a Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park) provides the best features for the sustainable development of the area, well balanced with the need to conserve the biodiversity and the outstanding natural beauty of the landscape.
- Based on the international legally binding agreement between both Countries, signed by the both Governments in 2004, revised in 2008 and ratified by the both Parliaments the undersigned propose to nominate the region as a Biosphere Reserve (Area/Park) under the UNESCO Program 'Man and Biosphere' based on the existing protected areas in the region especially:

the National Park Prespa-Albania, National Park Galičica - Macedonia, National Park Pelister – Macedonia , National Park Prespa-Greece, the Landscape Protected Area Pogradec – Albania, Monument of Nature Driloni – Albania, Monument of Nature Ohrid Lake- Macedonia, Monument of Nature Prespa Lake- Macedonia as well as the Park of Nature Ezerani - Macedonia.

Any other legal entities like communities are invited cordially to join the initiative.

Signed: Ohrid/Pogradec/Resen/Struga/ Liqenas 02.10.2012

Republic of Albania
Ministry for Environment, Forests and Water
Administration

Minister

Fatmir Mediu

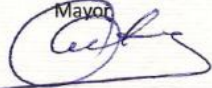
Republic of Macedonia
Ministry for Environment and Physical Planning

Minister

Abdilaqim Ademi

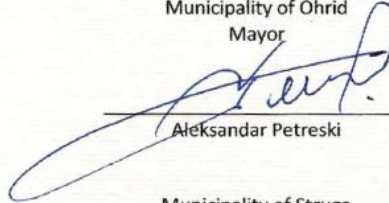
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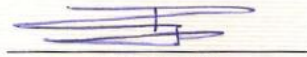
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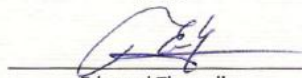
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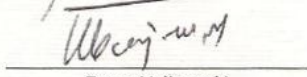
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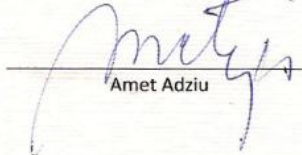
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Amet Adziu

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Olsi Duma