

## Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

### Terms of References for Biodiversity Taskforce (BD TF)

#### Regional Environmental Working Group (RWGE)

February 2017

#### 1. Rationale

The Regional Cooperation Council established a Regional Working Group of high-level representatives of ministries responsible for environment, water resources, land, energy and climate change (hereinafter referred to as “Regional Working Group Environment” or “RWGE”) to guide the implementation of the Dimension J – Environment of the SEE Strategy 2020. RWGE operates under the auspices of the RCC Secretariat with the main responsibility for programming, overseeing, and monitoring the activities within Dimension Environment. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is the Dimension Coordinator in cooperation with Global Water Partnerships – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development (SWG) and supporting the RWGE activities.

Following the endorsement of the minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> RWGE meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2016 in Belgrade, the RCC Secretariat shall present to the SEE governments for consideration and endorsement a proposal for establishment of a Regional Biodiversity Task Force (hereinafter BD TF) and request subsequent nomination of participants.

Based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the RCC and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Biodiversity (ORF BD) developed the concept and Terms of Reference for the Regional Biodiversity Task Force, in close consultations with the RCC Secretariat and other relevant international organizations and projects in SEE.

#### 2. Objectives

Due to the complexity and importance of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for the SEE region as biodiversity hotspot of global importance, it is deemed necessary by stakeholders and partners, to form a BD TF at regional level as contribution to the thematic broader RWGE. The BD TF will contribute to the RWGE as well as to other cross-sectoral regional working groups to promote and facilitate regional cooperation related to biodiversity and related Sustainable Development Goals in SEE region and thereby contribute to the environmental dimension of the SEE Strategy 2020.

The regional Biodiversity Task Force is a regional structure to be formed to convey the best available strategic, scientific and technical advice to the ORF BD and other thematically relevant and interested initiatives and projects with focus on the region of South-East Europe.

#### 3. Composition and Structure

The BD TF is proposed to include up to **16 members from public administration from each of the SEE economies (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo\*, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) with specialized expertise in biodiversity and/or other related intervention fields.** The members must be

highly positioned professional with adequate academic background in the respective institution, primarily from Ministries of Environment, Environmental Protection Agencies or Institutes for Nature Conservation.

The BD Task Force consists of a **chairperson**, elected annually by the majority of the members, and **members** responsible for overseeing and ensuring advice on assigned areas of responsibility. Annual rotation of the chairperson shall be harmonized with rotation of the chairing in RWGE.

The chairperson is the spokesperson of the BD TF and ensures effective liaison and communication with the BD TF Secretary and RCC RWGE and related projects such as ORF BD project.

The BD TF may invite other national, regional and international partners, organisations, stakeholders and experts to attend the meetings and participate in the process as appropriate.

#### 4. Responsibilities

- a. The BD TF members participate in up to two face to face meetings of the regional BD Task Force annually based on the invitations of the BD TF Secretariat;
- b. The BD TF members communicate and disseminate information on the RCC RWGE and other related initiatives such as ORF BD actions in their respective institutions and sector of work;
- c. The BD TF members mobilize their respective institutional, scientific and technical networks in support of the regional biodiversity relevant objectives and initiatives (in the start-up phase primarily to GIZ ORF BD);
- d. The BD TF members identify trends and emerging issues that could impact the regional operations and advise and network with the global, regional and national initiatives contributing to the topic and particularly with stakeholders designed to implement the RCC SEE 2020 Strategy;
- e. The BD TF members endorse deliverables from GIZ ORF BD and other regional biodiversity initiatives upon request, including verification of produced documents, guidelines, recommendations, position papers;
- f. The BD TF members develop recommendations and statements used as contribution to the annual High-Level Meeting of Ministers in charge of the Environment organized by the RCC Secretariat and the RWGE;
- g. The BD TF members take an active part in consultations on development of new regional projects and support regional projects (in the start-up phase primarily to GIZ ORF BD) in preparation of future actions;
- h. The BD TF members support reporting on regional biodiversity related issues from their economies as specified in the action plan foreseen under Point 5 c below;
- i. The BD TF members make recommendations for revision of SEE 2020 Environment Regional Programme 2015-2017 "Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in support of Green Growth" as judged necessary and appropriate.

#### 5. Organisation and meeting procedures

- a. The BD TF is being established for the duration of 2 years. The RWGE shall decide on a possible extension prior to the expiry of the TF mandate.
- b. The BD TF meets up to two times a year physically.
- c. The BD TF will operate on the basis of a bi-annual action plan, which is a subject to adjustment on annual basis.
- d. Location of the BD TF meetings will be determined by the Chair and TF Secretariat based on efficiency and logistical considerations.
- e. Correspondence to the BD TF is in English as official working language. The use of translation services is assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- f. Decisions of BD TF shall be taken by majority of members, 2/3 majority of total, understood as absence of objection.
- g. The BD TF may invite external experts and partners to attend its meetings as necessary without the authority of decision-making. During the start-up-phase, ORF BD will be represented at the TF meetings.

- h. The BD TF will issue a brief yearly report that will be administered by the Secretariat (Point 6).

## 6. Secretariat

- a. The work of the BD TF is supported by BD TF Secretary.
- b. It is suggested that the BD TF Secretariat is identical with the Regional Dimension Coordinator - REC.
- c. The BD TF Secretariat will schedule and convene the meetings with written notification to the members, at least 15 working days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- d. The BD TF Secretariat will draft meeting agendas and discussion items comprising suggestions by the TF members, ORF BD and other relevant regional biodiversity initiatives. Secretariat shall harmonize the aforementioned and submit to the Chairperson for approval minimum 15 working days prior to the scheduled meeting. Approved meeting materials shall be sent to the TF members by the Secretariat at least 10 working days prior to the meeting.
- e. The TF Secretariat prepares minutes of the meetings. Minutes will be distributed to members in 10 working days. TF members will have 10 working days to submit comments. If no comments are received within 10 working days, the minutes are considered final.
- f. The BD TF Secretariat provides both substantive and operational assistance in the delivery of the regional BD TF member responsibilities outlined above including background research, development of terms of reference and draft minutes /outputs, as well as to administer the contracting, task management, and delivery of the work under the direction of the BD TF member concerned.
- g. From 2017 to August 2018, GIZ ORF BD assures financial assistance to the BD TF Secretary and overall BD TF mechanism.

## 7. Partners and Support

### **Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South-East Europe – Biodiversity**

The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is financing a regional project Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South-East Europe – Biodiversity. The ORF Biodiversity (ORF BD) project runs from 08/2015 to 08/2018 and is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The GIZ ORF BD Project aims to contribute to regional efforts for EU-integration processes and to increase the first knowledge of relevant governmental administration at national and local level as well as academia, civil and private sector actors in the region regarding the (i) economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services; (ii) to improve the skills of regional network partners particularly of environment ministries and agencies to report on biodiversity status and protection, and (iii) to initiate measures for transboundary management of ecosystems and the protection of priority species in identified transboundary habitats.

The ORF BD advocates and supports efforts for establishing a regional BD TF as part of the RWGE to facilitate regional exchange on biodiversity-related policy recommendations and to provide recommendations and guidance for the RWGE as well as other RCC working groups and related sectors.

The ORF BD project agreed to support therefore the RCC RWGE related work of the BD TF Secretariat and TF meetings.