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2nd International Conference on the protection of Salina Ulcinj Podgorica, Montenegro, 7 April 2016

Summary of discussion points and main concerns

The *2nd International conference on the protection of Ulcinj Salina*, which took place in Podgorica on the 7th of April 2016, was organized with the goal to enhance a transparent dialogue between responsible institutions and civil sector that initiated the protection of the site. The aim of the conference was to define a road map for the implementation of the commitments agreed on during the 1st International Conference in April 2015.

The organizers of the conference, Centre for protection and research of birds (CZIP), EuroNatur Foundation and the Municipality of Ulcinj were supported by BirdLife International and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund as well as other international organizations. About 80 participants attended the conference, beside the mentioned organisations; the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Public Enterprise for National Parks Montenegro, the European Delegation, the US, German, French, Greek, Slovenian, Polish and Bulgarian Embassy, UNDP, GIZ, the Ramsar Secretariat, Eurofond, many representatives of Montenegrin NGOs and journalists from national and international media were present.

During the opening speech of the Conference, CZIP stressed that the commitments agreed on during the 1st International Conference related to the national and international designation of the Salina Ulcinj as protected area (that would lead to enforcement of hunting ban) failed to be finalized. However CZIP representative stated the importance of the progress made with regards to the reparation of pumping stations and nomination of temporary management (until August 2016).

The EU Delegation, the US and German Ambassador as well as the organizers emphasized in their statements the importance of the Salina Ulcinj as breeding, resting and roosting site for birds. They pointed out that the designation of the Salina Ulcinj as nationally and internationally protected area is very relevant and needs immediate action.

Even though Minister Gvozdenović and State Secretary Pejović stressed that all conclusions were almost completed they both gave comprehensive elaboration on reasons for prolonging the date for fulfilment of the conclusions due to the complexity of Ulcinj Salina case. Both pointed out that the main obstacles for protecting the Salina were its legal aspect regarding bankruptcy and ongoing judicial proceedings in front of the Commercial court. They also claimed the importance of economic analyses that would provide a direction



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towards the sustainable management of the Salina. Furthermore Minister Gvozdenović stated that the Saline Ulcinj will be protected in a few months.

He also emphasized the importance of the salt production as the precondition for sustainable management of the future protected area. The Minister reassured the participants that there will be no building permits issued on the territory of Salina and invited the Municipality of Ulcinj and the Public Enterprise of National Parks Montenegro to effectively and actively resolve the illegal hunting issue.

Furthermore the State Secretary justified the absence of international designation with the lack of protection of the Salina Ulcinj under national law. According to the experience of the present international experts it is a common procedure to first designate protected areas under international regulations and later on add the protection status under national law. Usually the international designation is not as complicated, but faster.

Further issues of concern:

- ❖ New arguments were presented by representatives of the Ministry against the official approval of the Study on protection of Ulcinj Salina. Even though the Ministry has been included in the process of developing this Study from the very beginning these comments were not addressed during the public hearings. The arguments were new to all involved parties: CZIP, EuroNatur, Municipality of Ulcinj and Environmental Protection Agency which has been responsible for the development of the study.
- ❖ The lack of an analysis of the economic sustainability of the Salina Ulcinj, which is requested by the Ministry, affected the evaluation of the chapter on the socio-economic dimension of Study on protection of the Salina. The Ministry prepared Terms of Reference for the development of such economic analysis and a prompt assignment of relevant experts by the Ministry is expected timely.
- ❖ The presented legal analysis shows clearly that there is no contradiction between the protection of the Saline Ulcinj and the status of the company which is acting under bankruptcy conditions. This analysis was developed by the Law Firm Žarić as requested from the Municipality of Ulcinj by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism. The publication of a similar analysis, developed by the Law firm Velimirović engaged by the Ministry, is still to be expected.
- ❖ The alarming situation of illegal hunting on Salina Ulcinj (157 shots in 40 minutes on 16 March 2016, counted by the ornitological experts from the Universal Museum Joanneum from Graz) requests immediate reaction and fast forwarding of the



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protection process since some bird populations are drastically declining (5 time less birds were cummulatively present in Salina this spring than at the same time previous year).

Finally there has been no consensus, how to proceed since the organizers hadn't allowed introductions of new conclusions insisting on the fulfilment of the previous ones. Thus the State Secretary announced a roadmap towards the protection of the Saline Ulcinj, which is still to be expected. However the organizers of the conference are encouraged by the Minister Gvozdenovic statement that the designation of Salina Ulcinj as protected area is just a question of a few more months.

EuroNatur Foundation
Centre for protection and research of birds
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