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THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
FIELD OFFICE IN KOSOVO/A



Promotion of Kosovo Environmental Action Plan

THEME ■ 3

Germia a protected area?!

THEME ■ 8



THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER





The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), is a neutral, non-advocacy, not-for-profit organization founded in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Its mission is to assist in solving the environmental problems of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) Region and to encourage its progress toward sustainable development. The Center fulfils this mission by encouraging cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, by supporting the free exchange of information and by promoting public participation in environmental decision-making.

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“PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN”

The aim of Public Information Campaign is to inform the general public in five regions of Kosovo/a with KEAP process, its origin, effects and the role that citizens, municipalities, governments and business have in it.



Kosovo Environmental Action Plan

Kosovo Environmental Action Plan 2006-2010, the first of its kind in Kosovo, was compiled after 18 months of work of about 80 Kosovar experts.

Prepared by: Zeqir Veselaj, Ph.D.

The draft Plan was another activity in the line of activities supported by the Swedish government, following the development of the Kosovo Environmental Strategy, also supported by the Swedish government, and adopted by the government of Kosovo in July 2004. This Strategy set the priorities for environmental activity in Kosovo in the 10 year period, and is to be made operational with the application of a 5 year action plan. It should be acknowledged at the very beginning that it was not easy for all those involved in the compilation of the Plan to engage in the development of a document that had not existed before, considering the new and fragile structure of the Ministry, the limited number of experts in certain fields, the place that environment holds on state policy priority lists, the inappropriate approach of certain institutions to the process, etc. Nonetheless, through continuous work based on "learning by doing", an admirable collaboration between the working groups, and incredible assistance based on similar experiences of the international consultant, a process, which, some skeptics had thought at the beginning, "should have been left to an international consulting firm" in the lack of local preparation for such an endeavor, was successfully completed.

It should be emphasized that the Plan, as a Document, is a product of the Kosovars, because it was compiled by Kosovar experts; it is a pragmatic document based on realistic conditions that Kosovo is currently facing.

The Plan involves 16 environmental sectors discussed separately. The section on each sector follows a certain order beginning with a brief overview of the current situation, an introduction of the existing legal framework, prioritization of the problems to be dealt with within the sector, listing of the objectives, measures and concrete activities involved. A study of the final Plan reveals a number of 23 objectives to be met, 48 measures to be taken and 163 activities to be undertaken in the 5 year period. Each activity has been defined by the level of treatment, including the key actors, potential financial resources, interconnection of the given activity with activities in other sectors, and, finally, the clear indicators of the level of the Plan's implementation to be considered during the assessment in 5 years.

The analysis of the Plan has shown that the greatest number of activities planned for the next five years are in the sectors of Biodiversity and Forest Management (14 per sector), followed by the sectors of Energy, Mining and Industry (13), Waste Management (11), those of Air, Public Health and Agriculture

(10 activities per sector), etc.

The assessment made in the fields, where more work needs to be done, has revealed that 28% of the activities must focus on the drafting of policies on environmental sectors such as the sector strategies, specific plans, reports, cadastres, inventories, etc; 15% must focus on the preparation and adaptation of the environmental legislation, 9% on building the human capacities, 9% on the improvement of institutions, etc. Based on the above, the logical order of activities to be undertaken in the subsequent years is as follows: the responsible institutions determine and draft their own policies for each sector, develop the legislation for the realization of draft policies, raise the human and institutional capacity for the implementation of policies and the application of the legislation. Such an order of events would enable the creation of an efficient and sustainable system for finding solutions to numerous environmental problems in Kosovo, and more importantly, would facilitate the process of its European integration.

Environment is one of the main and most difficult conditions that a country must meet toward its integration in the EU. This challenge should by no means be ignored by the institutions of Kosovo, although the current state of affairs, the place that environment

holds among the government's priorities, and its exclusion from the list of Standards for Kosovo, are clear evidence to the contrary. Concrete examples of the last set of countries that became EU members in 2004, show that a great amount of work, commitment, and substantial financial resources are needed to meet the environmental standards (e.g. Slovenia invested 2.7 billion dollars in this regard). For each sector included in the Plan a list of priority projects has been prepared in the form of brief two page long project summaries, which will be later developed into

full projects depending on the availability of financial support from local sources or from potential foreign donors. The total cost of projects from the priority list in the Document is estimated at around 15 million EUR. It should be stated that this is only the first set of projects that are to be followed by other projects as they are developed in accordance with the activities listed in the Plan. The Waste Management sector leads the list with 5.9 million, followed by the Forestry sector with 2,9 million, Air Quality Management,

2,1 million, Energy 1,2 million, etc.

The Kosovo Environmental Action Plan was compiled by eminent environmental experts of Kosovo with the support of and in consultation with international experts, and with full financial support of the Swedish government.

Now, it is up to the government of Kosovo, especially the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, as the authorities responsible for the implementation of this Plan's projects, to take action toward making this document more than just a Plan.

Kosova promotes its First Environmental Action Plan

Prepared by: Merita Mehmed

The latest developments within this project were the Donors Conference and the Conclusive Meeting.

The Donors Conference was held on 5 June 2006, on the International Day of Environmental Protection. Representatives of almost all donor organizations in Kosova were present at this meeting, including the representatives of the World Bank, European Agency for Reconstruction, USAID, UNDP and other organizations, as well as the representatives of the diplomatic offices in Kosova.

The participants praised the action plan as something that will be very helpful in their strategic planning and the allocation of funds for meeting the needs that were identified as priorities by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial



Planning and by other Ministries involved in the compilation of the plan.

Promises were also made by the donors and diplomatic offices, who expressed their readiness and willingness to extend their support for the environmental developments in Kosova in the future.

Besides the Donor Conference, a conclusive meeting was held on 12 June 2006.

This meeting served as an opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the development of the

Kosova Environmental Action Plan in a direct manner, and as an opportunity to introduce the completed document in front of a wider spectrum of responsible actors in the field of environment. The invitation for this meeting had been extended to representatives of the ministries, municipal environmental officials, NGO representatives, independent experts and the University representatives, as well as to the members of the Task Force and the permanent secretaries of the ministries.

Project – Improvement of the Implementation Practices of the Aarhus Convention – Second Regional Meeting



Prepared by: Merita Mehmed

The second regional meeting concerning this project was held 7-9 June in the beautiful city of Budva.

Different from the first regional meeting, this meeting was far more pragmatic and focused on

the sharing of experiences and the results that had been achieved during the implementation of the project and the realization of the pilot projects in the countries involved.

On the first day of the meeting, delegations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FRY Macedo-

nia, Serbia and Montenegro presented their activities that had been completed up to that point on the local and central government level, as well as on the NGO level. The rest of the meeting was organized in the way that would allow the participants to get acquainted with the good practices and methods for the most efficient engagement of the public in decision-making. Practice sessions and group work during the meeting focused on pilot projects that were being implemented in the countries participating in the project. Special attention was given to the preparation of a plan for the meaningful participation of the public in the environmental decision-making processes.



Prepared by: Merita Mehmed

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP) is the main environmental component of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe. REReP is an initiative for South Eastern Europe that was shaped by the countries of the region themselves — including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration).

An Extraordinary Task Force Meeting on Environmental Investments in SEE was held on June 23rd 2006, Budapest, Hungary.

The agenda of this meeting included presentations of country reports on successes and challenges in relation to environmental investments; discussion of main obstacles for developing environmental infrastructure investments projects; trends in bilateral donor commitment and International Financing Institutions support to financing environmental investments projects in SEE; as well as presentation of the activities of International Financing Institutions in financing environmental investments projects in SEE.

The representatives from Kosovo presented the main Environment Infrastructure Investment Projects and their status:

Improvement of air quality in Kosova "A" and "B" power plants

- Tender process is launched for electro filter for power plant Kosovo "A"-unit 4 which will cost 2-4 Mill. Euro;
- Revitalization of electro filter unit B1 is at the final stage.
- On-line air emission monitoring system for Kosovo "A and B" Power Plant is necessary.

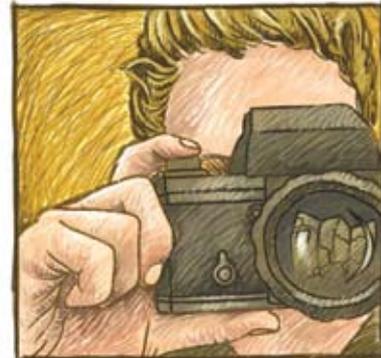
Rehabilitation of Ash dumps of the Power Plant (PP) Kosova A and B

- 5.5 Mill. Euro donated for this project from World Bank Rehabilitation and closure of Tailing Area in MIP - Trepça
- Implementation started in May 2006 and will be finished in December 2006

Regional Waste Water Treatment Plants

- Status of companies is not clear and privatization process is slow
- Donor support - grants, remains the main source of finance.

Discussing the main obstacles for development of new environmental infrastructure projects, the following facts were considered to be more or less accurate for all countries of the region: Lack of policy enforcement, lack of integrated approach, low priority from decision makers and politicians, lack of lobbying power, economies of scale – small municipalities with small financial capacity – dilemma of decentralization vs. consolidation. low cost measures for pollution reduction, cost recovery – low tariffs and charges for environmental services, no methodologies for risk identification/management, ownership issues – privatization, outdated documentation without financial strategies and follow up strategies, no methodologies for alternative analysis.



Possible solutions for the aforementioned problems were also discussed and agreed, being:

- Cooperation between municipalities, regional administration and national authorities should be developed, and national authorities should provide incentives for developing investment projects;
- Decentralization of environmental functions for providing public services leads to the need to identify clear ownership of projects;
- Environment Infrastructure investment projects need to be integrated into the overall local government budget;
- Municipal projects should achieve cost recovery.

The representatives of the European Commission introduced the newly established financial Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), (to assist candidate countries and potential candidate countries). This instrument after adoption of its framework will replace Phare, ISPA, SAPARD and CARDS and it will cover V Pillars: Transition Assistance and Institutions Building, Cross Border Cooperation, Regional Development, Human Resources Development, Rural Development

For potential candidate countries, where Kosovo would belong, this instrument would support participation in the Stabilisation Association Process, and would allow access to funds dedicated to the first two IPA components.

As part of the REReP Programme, REC has published a new publication over the actual environmental situation in the SEE countries. This summary was prepared in cooperation with respective country ministries responsible for environment and the leaders of the environmental programmes in European Commission.

A full version of the publication can be found on: http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/docs/rerep_country_profiles.pdf

Survey of Environmental Civil Society launched by REC as first step in four-year support programme



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



Prepared by: Merita Mehmed

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and the Swedish International Development and Co-operation Agency (Sida) launched in the April of 2006 an ambitious project for the support of the civil society entitled SECTOR: Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in South Eastern Europe. The goal of the activities is to promote the development of a vibrant and democratic environmental civil society within South Eastern European countries, so that they may positively influence society towards sustainable development and help improve living conditions in urban areas. The beneficiaries will be civil society organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration).

The first step is a comprehensive survey focused to update REC's current directory of environmental non-governmental organizations and to assess the status, needs and problems of CSO in South Eastern Europe. This survey will have two practical outcomes. Firstly, it would enable environmental CSOs to be included into a new directory of environmental organisations on the national and regional (SEE) level. The directory serves as an important information resource for all individuals and groups interested in the environmental movements in the SEE countries and is the most searched database on the REC's website. CSO members, government officials, business people, scientists, journalists use the directory for communicating with those organizations which share a common interest or for identifying possible partners for joint projects.

The update of this directory is an important and necessary task, the last version being published in 2001.

Secondly, the survey will help in the preparation and planning of the other forms of support to be offered through the SECTOR programme, namely: an organisational assessment toolkit for CSOs; a granting programme for projects focussed on community activities in the urban environment and sustainability fields; assistance with the development and operation of CSO networks; and in providing training on key skills to increase environmental groups lobbying, advocacy and participatory activities. These support activities are already under development and will be launched towards the end of 2006, their design will benefit greatly from inputs through the survey.

CSO are invited to take part in the survey by fulfilling and submitting questionnaire to the REC Field Office in Kosovo. These results will be published through the next edition of the NGO directory and will be used to publicise the work of environmental groups in SEE and to press for more support for them. A copy of the questionnaire is available on request (see the contact details below) or may be downloaded at <http://kos.rec.org>

The completed form should be returned to coordinators by July 18, 2006.

For more information, please contact:

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Urbanization and Environment

Prepared by: Hysen Ibra

Secretary of the Greens Movement of Kosova

We live at the time when construction, rebuilding and reconstruction of dwellings, restoration and maintenance of monumental natural and cultural heritage, and the protection, revitalization, recultivation and improvement of the living environment are crucial factors for existence, health and human welfare and the sustainable (economic, social, ecological, scientific, technical and technological) development, harmonious development, decrease of the unemployment rate and the bridging of the gap between the poor and the wealthy. Also, these factors provide a secure basis for the living, working, education and recreation of the citizens today, and yet more importantly, tomorrow. For these important multiplex reasons, it is of great interest to adopt and apply the regulations for legal planning and arrangement of the dwellings, management of space and the living environment, and raise the awareness and conscientiousness for institutional responsibility alongside the human freedoms and rights in a democratic system.

Institutional and organizational failure to protect the regional park of Germia

The importance and failure of the Prishtina municipal institutions to implement the appropriate legal provisions came into play at an early stage of putting the regional park of Germia under municipal protection. First, Germia cannot be called a “compound” because it is not a dwelling, but a hilly area (forest). The initial definition was therefore entirely wrong. In accordance with Article 4 of the decision “the utilization and construction (not erection) of different facilities within the Park is done in conformity with the utilization, improvement and protection program for the regional Park”. So far, neither the municipality of Prishtina nor any other institution in Kosova has drafted or adopted a program for the regional park of Germia. They have not even determined the Park’s boundary or the area that needs to be put under protection. By failing to take these basic actions toward the protection of the regional park of Germia, the appropriate institutions of the Prishtina municipality and Kosova have violated the legal provisions and hurt



the interests of the citizens and the institutions of this municipality, and beyond. Because, in accordance with the Article 4 of the Law on the Protection and Preservation of Natural Values and of Values Created Through Work in the human living environment ("Kosova Official Journal," # 39/1988), "institutions, enterprises and citizens have the right and the obligation to provide conditions for the protection and development of the natural and the created values in the environment," in the given case, the principles of Article 5 of the Law on Environmental Protection # 2003/8 were also violated.

According to the Kosova Institute for the Protection of Nature, before 23 March 1989, the following facilities were built in Germia: the Administration and Protocol Center of the Kosova Assembly (remains ruined since the war), the old hotel at the foot of the Germia Hill (damaged during and torn down after the war), children's recreational center, a space, which, after the war, was taken over by what is today Restaurant Freskia, and Restaurant Vila Germia, which is the only facility that has maintained the same activity as before the war.

The most outrageous undertaking of the Prishtina municipal institutions and the Kosova Assembly in the regional park of Germia so far has been the case when the Bureau for Planning, Urbanization and Civil Engineering of the Prishtina Municipal

Government with Decision # 05-350-8645, dated 19 April 2005, gave permission to the investor – Kosova Assembly, for carrying out preliminary work for the construction of a new facility at the location specified by the decision of the Prishtina Municipal Assembly. The other case was when above the basketball field, in the middle of the track for sports and recreation of citizens, and below the existing facility, a construction company was given permission to build another building the foundation for which has already been set.

This undertaking too was contrary to every regulation. First, a special areas spatial plan has not been developed for the regional park of Germia, nor have the schemes for special areas been prepared by the Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning in accordance with Article 12 of the Law on Spatial Planning in Kosova #2003/14, nor has the program for the utilization, improvement and protection of the regional park of Germia been adopted in conformity with Article 4 of the decision for putting the park under protection ("The Official Journal of Kosova," #43/1987).

Therefore, there is absolutely no legal basis or an urban plan for the construction of the investment building by the above mentioned investor. Another fault and severe violation of the legal and urban regulations is the fact that the construction site, where works have

started in strong contradiction with the common interest in the cadastres # 264 and 269, as recorded in the possessory #168, land registry municipality of Sofali, is located where it blocks the way of the telpher and the movement of people to and from the spring and the fountain, the building does not fit in with the environment and is located in an area where construction is forbidden. Many trees have been cut, including quality timber, the damaging or exploitation of which is forbidden by all civilized legal acts. On the other hand, just across the street from the current site is the appropriate location, where used to stand the building that served for administrative purposes to the institutions of Kosova. The location only needs to be cleared from debris and the construction works can begin without causing any destruction, damage or obstruction. About this location, the Institute for the Protection of Nature on 29 April 2005, was right to say that “the Administration and Protocol Center of the Kosova Assembly can be built at the site where used to stand the building used by the then Assembly and the government of Kosova for the same purposes (the site is located in the Level III Protection Zone, where construction is allowed, whereas the current site is located in Level II Protection Zone, where construction is not allowed.).

In all the countries of the world, where a fair spatial and urban policy is applied with regard to the environment, great importance is given to construction, reconstruction and the rational utilization of natural resources (land, forests, monumental heritage, water, air, biodiversity, etc.).

The utilization of assets and values should be environmental friendly, be rational and in conformity with the common interest in the areas of special purpose. The responsible authorities should pay special attention to the protection of the environment from the possible destruction, degradation or pollution by construction and other devastating activities, as well as against causing disorder and obstruction for the citizens.

Several NGOs have raised their voice against the construction of this massive building, the Greens Party of Kosova, Association of Pensioners and of those Disabled in the War, the Greens Movement of Kosova, as well citizens, as cited:

“The government building is being built at the heart of a protected landscape, creating great risks for the ecosystem of the hill and causing the decrease of biodiversity in that area, and creating conditions for Germia to become yet another site of illegal construction. It is still unclear who made the decision for

the realization of the initial project, and if the possible impact of the project on the environment was assessed prior to the issuance of the license for construction, as required by the Law on the Protection of Environment.

Another devastating and polluting activity in Germia, which is also degrading for the park, is the mass of soil and other waste that has been removed from the Administration and Protocol Center construction site, and thrown 500 m further, right in the middle of the hill, by the road and the spring fountain with quality water, and near the recreational sites. There is no need for comment here. From all of the above we can conclude that the construction of this building is illegal, it is an activity that is being undertaken for entirely personal interests and in strong contradiction to the general interest by misusing even the highest institutions of the country.

Other devastating activities in Germia

Other devastating activities taking place in the regional park of Germia are the cutting of young and valuable trees that are suitable for use in industry; failure to clear the forest from dry timber and other waste and failure to clear the forest from bushes and heath. In addition, there are cases when certain individuals put a claim on certain parts of the park and get permission to build villas, hotels and business facilities. An example of this kind was the case when a person put a claim on and a fence around a part of an open field in Germia. Germia is not properly maintained by the PE Hortikultura either, which charges 1 EUR for every car entering Germia, but has not built any recreational or sports facilities there, not even a public toilet. Speaking of maintenance, we should also mention the citizens' irresponsible behavior, who should be chastized for leaving the packages and leftovers of food and drinks behind on and around their seats, instead of collecting them and throwing them into the garbage bins, and for destroying and demolishing the scarce seats, tables and bins.

I will conclude this paper with a quote from the Declaration from the UN Conference on Global Protection of Soil and Sustainable Economic Development – Agenda 21, held in June 1992 in Rio De Janeiro “The state must adopt laws and other meaningful legal acts on the protection of environment and must systematically exercise its authority over the devastators and other actors who are responsible for the living environment.”

Profile: The Greens Movement of Kosovo

Prepared by: Hysen Ibra

Secretary of the Greens Movement of Kosovo

Following several meetings of the initiating team, which was made up mainly of educators and experts in different fields, it was decided to create a non-governmental organization with the name "The Greens Movement of Kosova". The first inaugural Assembly of the GMK was held in University of Prishtina's School of Philology on 12 April, 1991, where the executive body of the movement was constituted. The executive body of the GMK consists of the Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Professional Committee. Subsequently, this movement founded its branches in the majority of Kosova's municipalities. The Greens Movement of Kosova is registered with the appropriate UNMIK department, registration # 5100102-8, dated 29 February, 2000, and is one of the first and most contributing organizations in Kosova with a highly professional and contributing potential. As part of their continuous efforts, the GMK members, supporters and sympathizers, have organized tens of round tables, public hearings, and conferences, where they have raised their voice in writing and during discussions about different fields against the ecocide, urbancide and ethnocide in Kosova - 1989 and onwards. After the war in Kosova, the GMK has raised its voice in different ways against the post-war destruction, degradation, pollution, the fierce and irrational cutting of woods, destruction of fertile soil with unauthorized construction and the uncontrolled exploitation of sand, gravel, stone, etc. To have a quality environment we have taken concrete action for cleaning up the environment in Prishtina and other centers in Kosova.

As a result of the GMK activity and the support of, primarily the pupils and students, many riverbeds, parks and other green areas, as well as sports fields, have been cleaned up and maintained; we have also carried out volunteer group work projects for planting young trees and for reforesting former woodland. In the villages, we have worked on building new roads and fixing the existing ones, as well as on encouraging the local population to improve their water supply system and build dumping grounds with self-contribution. In this way, we have gotten rid of many illegal dumping grounds, which had become a source of infection and represented a risk of epidemic diseases.

With regard to publications and education, with the intention of raising the awareness of citizens for environmental protection, we have published a magazine, "The Biology Journal", and have written articles and papers for other newspapers and magazines to propagate our beliefs and raise our voice against the negative phenomena and activities and in support of an increased and profound awareness for the importance of positive undertakings and the ecological activity. We have distributed "The Biology Journal" for free in schools, and also have given lectures against environmental pollution, drug abuse, protection against AIDS, smoking and other damaging phenomena for the environment and health.

In terms of collaboration, we have had a good working relationship with other environmental organizations in the region, and broader, with which we have maintained regular communication. We have had a better relationship with the Greens of Albania, Macedonia, Hungary, Germany, France and the U.S. In this regard, we have participated in several environment-related international conferences such as those of the European Greens Federation, held on 25 November, 1995 in Sofia Bulgaria, and again in Sofia from 10-12 March, 2000 with the topic the East-West Dialogue.

In this meeting of scientific and ecological importance, the Greens of Kosova, among other things, discussed the environmental problems that derive from the war such as the consequences of the exclusion of the Kosovar environmental experts from the environmental institutions for ten years, the use of fertile soil for construction purposes, uncontrolled cutting of woods, the damaging of recreational centers in Banja, Klllokot, etc, and the problem of green areas in the cities, which have suffered the most amidst these negative developments, as well as the overall problem of natural and cultural heritage. In the last meeting of the European Greens Federation, Kosova received equal treatment as other countries of the Balkans.

It is worth stating that, although the GMK is the oldest environmental organization in Kosova, it does not have the appropriate support of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, especially when it comes to participation in environmental meetings. For this reason, we believe that, after a short break, it is time that the GMK reclaims its key role in the environmental life in Kosova.

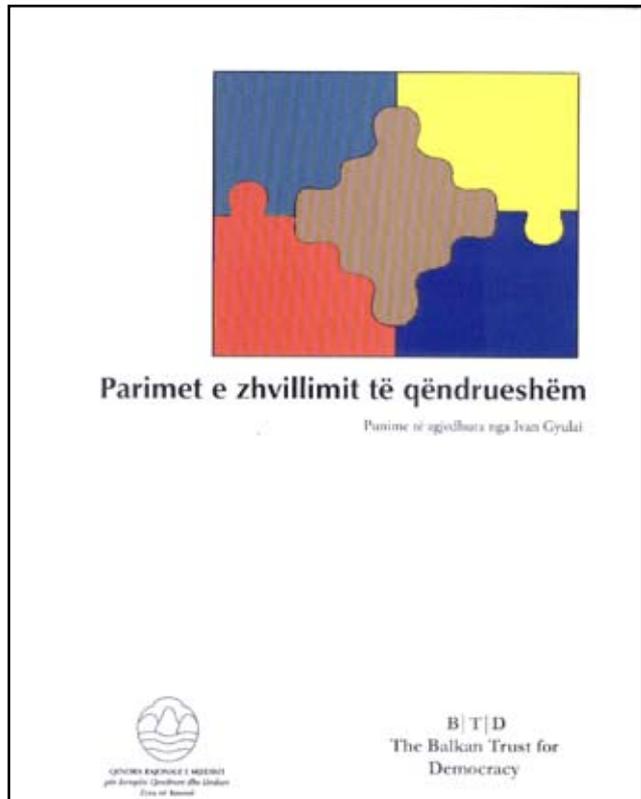
Barriers to sustainable resource management

Extract from REC publication 'Principles of Sustainable Development'

From: Mathis Wackernagel Ph.D

While simple to spell out, sustainability is hard to implement. Some initiatives have successfully reduced human pressure on distinct ecosystems, but on the whole, humanity has not lived up to the challenge to reduce, or even stabilize human pressure. Reasons abound. The most prominent one may be that the challenge seems too daunting. It is daunting for the "golden billion" that is blessed with unprecedented personal wealth and material abundance, since the current situation provides them with comfortable lives, while their privileges might be called in question if the world adopts a sustainable path. It is also daunting for the other 5 billion members of humanity, since they lack resources for mobilizing development that does not liquidate natural and social assets. Many are caught in daily survival struggles that make it nearly impossible to allocate resources for redirecting our common course.

Too few of the institutions serving the golden billion have taken an active stand to give sustainability teeth and to make progress toward measuring sustainability. On the contrary, they have a propensity to keep the debate fuzzy, which conveniently diffuses the pressure to address the challenge, thereby maintaining the status quo. This allows them to find consolation for their concerns about the future in vague discussion, while not risking accountability for their actions or having to abandon the system that maintains their privileges. Vagueness is also advanced by a few misconceptions of core concepts. For example, ecological limits are considered to be visible and obvious. But they are not visible. The most influential decision-makers in this world, including most professionals, live urban industrial lives where scarcity is not present in their daily routines. On the contrary, urban shoppers are enjoying an explosion of diverse and refined products, taking for granted the basic supply of energy and clean water. Nor are the limits obvious. As explained above, due to the possibility of overshoot, resource use can increase even after ecological limits have been transgressed. Since nature has some reserves, humanity can, for a while, take more than nature can regenerate. This overshoot eats up nature's reserves and weakens its capacity to regenerate. Without balancing



our ecological books, we do not know whether human draw on nature's "accounts" exceeds nature's "interest payments." Also, society cannot perceive ecological limits through a monetary lens. For wealthy people, resource prices have decreased over the years, as pointed out by a long tradition of economic studies. However, prices only signal availability of a resource on the market, not its availability in the biosphere. Finally, many have claimed that it is impossible to assess with certainty the remaining stocks of resources. This is true for most non-renewable resources that are hidden in the Earth's crust. However, the argument does not apply to the even more critical renewable resources, since they are above ground and therefore visible and measurable. For all these reasons, sustainable resource management is only possible if sustainability is defined in a way that is accountable and consistent with ecological realities. This paper argues in the following sections that the sustainability approach outlined above can serve as such a consistent and ultimately accountable framing of the challenge of sustainable resource management.