

# PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



*Montenegro*

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## **Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe, first of its kind Report for the Region**

At the Workshop for Journalists on the occasion of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Belgrade, the **Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe Report** was presented by **Mr. Garret Tankosić Kelly, UNDP Resident Representative a.i./UN Interagency Focal Point in Montenegro** and **Mr. Jernej Stritih, Regional Expert who was lead consultant in preparation of this Report, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Montenegro.**

The Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe Report provides an overview of the progress in the development and implementation of environmental and sustainability policy in South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Since no similar report focusing on the region was prepared for the Kiev Conference in 2003, the Report covers the period from 2000 till today.

This Report is complementary with the Europe’s Environment: The Fourth Assessment Report prepared by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and Policies for a Better Environment - Progress in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) Report, prepared by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as with a number of other reports covering SEE. The purpose of the Report is to assist the ministers in the SEE, the EU, donor countries, international organizations and other interested parties in decision-making about their future engagement in the region.

The Report provides a picture of progress achieved in recent years across a broad range of issues in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo - UN administered territory under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

This document recognizes that after the period of conflicts and instability in the region the countries focused first on post conflict reconstruction and building the institutional infrastructure for democracy and market economy. After this the governments embarked, with donor support, on the process of development of institutions, policies and legal frameworks. Currently the EU perspective is the main political driver for changes in the region. In that context environment sector has been one of the leaders in the overall reform process and in terms of regional cooperation. There has been rapid progress in drafting and adoption of environmental legislation. However, rapid transposition has proven unsustainable as it has created an implementation gap.

It is also implied that the region’s comparative advantage and an important asset for its development is relatively high quality of environment and nature, high quality of cultural and social capital. With that the SEE countries have an opportunity to make shortcuts in progress towards sustainable

development by applying mechanisms tailored to their advantages and by learning from the experience of more developed countries.

Now, when the levels of economic growth are high it seems critical from the Report that the countries in the region should, as **Mr. Garret Tankosić Kelly** said “de-link economic recovery and growth from intense use of natural resources and build competitive advantage in Europe beyond low cost labour and resource extraction”. These two will enable the SEE region to develop its own sustainable development model.

**Mr. Tankosić Kelly** also emphasized that “dealing with industrial hot spots, energy intensive, i.e. old industrial structure, and financial and human resources gap in the implementation of environmental policies will be crucial, especially having in mind low environmental expenditures in the region - 0.2 – 0.6 % GDP – and very high estimated EU environmental compliance costs - for example for Croatia they are 6-12 billion”.

The Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe Report also indicates that the biggest challenges on this sustainable road are on one hand residues from the past in terms of ecological/industrial hot spots and an energy intensive (old) industry structure. On the other hand future challenges are related to the implementation gap created by the lack of financial and human resources for the implementation of the environmental policies that will ensure sustainable development of the region.

*UNDP’s environmental portfolio in the SEE region is already 100 million USD. Findings of the Report have only reaffirmed UNDP’s commitment to supporting better integration of the environmental policies in the development agendas of the countries in the region. In that respect the key step is bridging the financial and human resources gap. UNDP will work with governments and international organizations on effective capacity building for implementation of sustainable environmental policies, since that will assist the SEE region in taking advantage of the opportunity of creating its own sustainable development model.*

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At a joint launch with the EEA and the OECD tomorrow, on October 10<sup>th</sup>, betw. 1pm-3pm at the Sava Center Press Room, the Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe Report will once again be presented by **Mr. Garret Tankosić Kelly**, this time with his guest **Mr. Predrag Nenezić, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Protection of Montenegro** who will give a brief commentary on behalf of countries and territories involved in the Report.

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For additional information, please contact Ms. Nadica Dujović, Communications Associate, UNDP Montenegro; Phone: ++382 81 231 251; Fax: ++382 81 231 644; Cell: ++382 69 319 709; E-mail: [nadica.dujovic@undp.org](mailto:nadica.dujovic@undp.org)  
**Web:** <http://www.undp.org.yu/montenegro>

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***UNDP in Montenegro promotes sustainable development, which is economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly.***