

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



Budva, April 22nd 2008

Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection and UNDP launched a new joint initiative on Earth Day

The Ministry for Tourism and Environmental Protection of Montenegro and the UNDP held a joint press conference today in commemoration of the Earth Day. The two partners announced a launch of a joint initiative to solve a problem of plastic waste in Montenegro.

“As a developing and world renowned tourism destination and an Ecological State, Montenegro can hardly afford to stand idle in face of plastic waste problem,” said **Ms. Milica Begović Radojević, PhD, Economy and Environment Cluster Leader at the UNDP Montenegro**. “Aside the fact that plastic bags never fully decompose, they are responsible for death of over 1 billion seabirds and mammals yearly, increased air and land pollution,” she continued. “Commemoration of the Earth Day, the largest secular civic event in the world, is a fitting occasion to announce this initiative and the Ministry for Tourism and Environment Protection should be commended for taking proactive steps in dealing with this issue.”

Globally, up to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed each year, while less than 6% gets recycled. In other words, in five minutes that it takes the reader to go through this article, some 4.5 million plastic bags globally will have just been consumed. Considering that one ton of plastic waste reused as something else other than plastic equals 1749 liters of oil saved, no country can afford to get that choice wrong economically or environmentally.

Solutions to this challenge vary from country to country. While Ireland applied a .22 cent tax on plastic bags, which resulted in €11 million profit utilized for implementation of environmental legislation and reduction in use of plastic bags by 90%, Bangladesh outright banned the use of plastic bags. Promotion of ‘green shopping bags’ in Australia resulted in a decrease of plastic bags use by 50%. Finding an appropriate, country-specific set of measures for solving this issue in Montenegro is the first step and UNDP will provide expert assistance to the Ministry on this matter. Through the actual implementation, Montenegro can set an example regionally how protection of environment complements development of tourism, economic growth and prosperity.

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