

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



Montenegro

'Via Dinarica', a new initiative for sustainable development of countries of the Dinaric Region, one being Montenegro

Žabljak, 27-28 July 2011 – In line with Montenegro's commitment to initiatives for sustainable development and strengthening of regional cooperation, the first consultative meeting was organized on the establishment of a corridor for sustainable development 'Via Dinarica' in the area of Dinaric Arc, which should become one of the world's top long trails.

The first consultative meeting on 'Via Dinarica' was attended by representatives of the eighteen state institutions, mountain and biking associations and tourist businesses of four countries of the Dinaric region - Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. In the discussions they supported the initiative and pledged themselves and their organizations to provide full support to the initiative to create the 'Via Dinarica' long trail. At the meeting, among other things, the Alpine Convention was introduced, which was the basis for creating of similar - Via Alpina long trail stretching from Monaco to Slovenia. The example of one of the longest trails in the world, Te Araroa, New Zealand was also presented. Hundreds of volunteers have helped create the continuous 3000 kilometre-long route. Te Araroa today stands as a bright example of regional authorities and local authorities cooperation to achieve a joint goal – Te Araroa to become a leading influence in their local and regional walking, cycling and local economic development strategies.

„Given the rapid growth in popularity of adventure tourism, as well as the enormous potential of this market and the role of tourism as one of the three major driving forces in the Montenegrin economy, in line with the political commitment of representatives of governments of the Dinaric Arc states to cross-border cooperation, the UNDP Montenegro will continue to work on developing the concept of 'Via Dinarica'. As part of the initial activities during the next six months, in cooperation with partners, two more regional conferences will be organized aimed at strengthening of mutual understanding of the challenges and obtaining further support for this initiative,“ said **Borko Vulikić, UNDP Montenegro Manager for sustainable development projects in protected areas.**

In light of EU accession as a strategic goal of most countries in the region, the initiative for the 'Via Dinarica' long trail may represent an excellent platform for ensuring local and regional economic development through responsible planning and utilization of natural resources. In order to streamline towards sustainable economic growth based on low carbon emission, countries of the Dinaric region - after several decades full of challenges - again concentrate on

strengthening regional cooperation. Joint activities are carried out through various cross-border partnerships and initiatives, as well as through various mechanisms and structures of the EU and the UN - such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP. The new initiative for cooperation in the Dinaric region is such an example.

The Dinaric Arc region covers about 100,000 km² and more than 6,000 km of the Adriatic coast from Italy to Albania, including the mountainous parts of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro is one of signatories of the “Resolution on the protection and sustainable development of the Dinaric Arc and neighboring regions”, which should contribute to further development of the region by improving the eco-hiking trails and their impact on local development.

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For additional information please contact Nadica Dujović, Communications Associate, UNDP Montenegro, tel: ++382 20 22 55 33; fax: ++382 20 22 55 51; mob.: ++382 69 319 709, e-mail: nadica.dujovic@undp.org ; Web: www.undp.org.me

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