



Mediterranean Mountains: Climate Change, Landscape and Biodiversity

A partnership for enhancing Sustainable Mountain Development in the Mediterranean

EXPO MILAN 2015 Bio-Mediterranean Cluster

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Workshop

Mediterranean Mountains

The Mediterranean mountain area covers about 1.7 million km². From an ecological perspective, this territory is characterized by an extreme diversified and rich biodiversity, that provides local populations with basic services, such as water.

According to scientific literature, Mediterranean Mountains have unique characteristics which have to be addressed properly in the process of policy making.

BOX: the importance of Mediterranean Mountains

- > Most of the biodiversity hotspots are concentrated in mountainous areas; biodiversity in Mediterranean mountains is closely linked to a traditional management system of resources;
- > Mountains provide basic goods and services for the population and play a key role in providing vital and scarce resources, such as water, and important services such as carbon sequestration. Mountains have also an important aesthetic, symbolic and recreational meaning and boost touristic development;
- > Mountains are highly affected by the effects of climate change and are considered as early indicators of climate change;
- > Mountains have unique cultural values, traditional management systems of resources and specific historical and cultural-religious beliefs;

(Source: Mediterranean Mountains in a changing world -Guidelines for developing action Plans -IUCN -IMELS 2008)

In mountains, international cooperation aiming at sustainable development of the region, can play a strategic role both in planning and in political terms, as it has been demonstrated by the long lasting experience of the Alps and Carpathians: the only two mountain ranges in the world protected through specific international treaties dedicated to the promotion of sustainable development in mountain areas.

In the Mediterranean area several cooperation's actions aiming at conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources of mountain areas have already been proposed. These experiences recognize the added value of a trans-national approach and promote the exchange of experiences between different regions and organizations active in the fields of conservation and sustainable development.

Recently the Italian Ministry of Environment, acting as Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention (2013-2014) in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) ROE Vienna -Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, has further supported and deepened the cooperation between the Alps and the Carpathians. This collaboration facilitated the creation of Task Force on International Mountain Cooperation of the Italian Presidency This platform supported the debate and promoted cooperation among several actors involved in mountainous regions in dealing with the main environmental challenges related to mountain areas, such as ecological connectivity, climate





change (adaptation strategies and guidelines), and the development and management of mountain forests¹. The Conferences of the Parties of the two Treaties (COP4 of the Carpathian Convention - Mikulov, September 2014- and the XIII Alpine Conference of the Alpine Convention - Turin, November 2014) welcomed this commitment toward international cooperation, encouraging their Parties to continue and strengthen collaboration with other mountain areas in Europe and in the world².

The international community has repeatedly encouraged regional cooperation between mountain areas through several documents such as, the final declaration of the Rio + 20 Conference "The future we want" (2012) which recognized the importance of regional cooperation in the mountain regions as a tool to achieve "Sustainable Mountain Development" (SMD). The results of these paragraphs on mountain included in the outcome document constitute the basis for future action in the field of regional cooperation in mountain areas: the strengthening of existing institutions, such as the Alpine and Carpathian Convention, as well as the support of new agreements and partnerships³. Several international declarations and voluntary initiatives specifically dedicated to cooperation for the sustainable development and the protection of the Mediterranean Mountains has been adopted in the past, such as the Resolution 3.039 "The Partnership for the Mountains of the Mediterranean" adopted in 2004 in Bangkok by the World Conservation Congress, promoted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature -IUCN⁴.

For capitalizing these valuable experiences, the Italian Delegation to the Alpine Convention, in cooperation with UNEP Vienna – SCC and the Bio Mediterranean Cluster at EXPO 2015, promotes the workshop "Mediterranean Mountains: Climate Change, Landscape and Biodiversity. A partnership for enhancing Sustainable Mountain Development in the Mediterranean".

The meeting is intended to foster exchanges of experiences in Mountain management in the Mediterranean, in order to strengthen and expand cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, and to develop appropriate tools for a multi-level governance of Green Economy in these areas and so to promote local adaptation to climate change, sustainable tourism and enhancement of the landscape, biodiversity and agro - biodiversity in mountain areas Mediterranean.

International Experts, representative of academic and research institutions from Mediterranean countries, will discuss how to facilitate networking among policy makers and stakeholders in order to:

- Identify synergies and define common projects to be applied to international funding, in line with the strategic priorities of the European Union for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with the international guidelines for the Mediterranean mountains and the national priorities on these issues;
- Help define the contribution of the Mountains to the "Bio-Mediterranean Charter", promoted in the framework of the activities of the Bio Mediterranean Cluster at EXPO 2015 in order to identify and share priorities for sustainable development of the Mediterranean and to discuss the contribution that this area can offer to the theme of EXPO 2015 "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life";
- Enhance the value and contributions of existing experiences on sustainable management of mountain areas, especially in the Mediterranean area, such as the "Charter of Sarnano" (2014) on the importance of the Apennines as a European mountain range, but also the mentioned IUCN Resolution- and other experiences from the Alps, the Carpathians and other mountain regions in the world, in order to foster future opportunities to discuss technical and political issues of the Mediterranean Mountain.

¹ Among the main actions of cooperation between the Alps and Carpathians the presentation of the guidelines for local adaptation to climate change and a joint statement on the value of mountain forests in the context of the COP 20 on Climate Change in Lima has to be mentioned.

² See decision ACXIII / A2 – Alpine Conference (Turin, 21 November 2014)

³ On the basis of paragraphs devoted to the mountains (# 210-212) of the Declaration of Rio + 20 States were invited to "strengthen the cooperation action for the effective involvement and sharing of experiences of all stakeholders, by strengthening the existing agreements, research centres for the development of the mountain, as well as the exploration of new agreements, where appropriate" (# 211), it is also recalled the need for "international support to sustainable development in the mountain countries development" (# 212)

⁴ Resolution 3039 calls on "national, regional and local institutions to promote national and - where appropriate - transnational action plans for each of the major mountain ranges of the Mediterranean for the preservation and improvement of the state of their biological richness, the landscape and cultural diversity." the work of the Congress in Bangkok was attended by numerous non-governmental organizations and institutional bodies, among them the Italian Ministry of Environment.





Working tables

Working language: English

Climate Change

The Mediterranean is recognized as one of the most vulnerable areas to the effects of climate change in respect to the European average. In the next decades, the Mediterranean it is expected to increase aridity and higher temperatures than all other parts of Europe. This climate exacerbation could generate negative consequences for the environment and ecosystems in the region, as well as for human settlements, regional economic activity and quality of life for citizens (EEA 2010; Eurobarometer 2008), for example by increasing the shortage of water – that is already an inherent characteristic of the Mediterranean climate.

At the same time, the Mediterranean region presents some excellences in relation to the adoption of the EU directives and measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation (also local) (i.e. the adaptation plans fostered by some cities and regions), there are also favourable conditions to move towards a "low carbon economy".

Mountain territories also in the Mediterranean area have unique features that deserve specific approaches. The experience of the "Guidelines for adaptation to climate change in the Alps"⁵ (already presented at the UNFCCC COP20 in Lima and in the area of the Carpathian Convention) could provide a starting point for the development of similar approaches for other mountainous areas, in line with the main European guidelines, becoming a useful tool for local policy makers.

Discussion

Opportunities

- Adaptation and mitigation. What are the best strategies for the Mediterranean Mountains?
- Low carbon economy and energy sector in the Mediterranean Mountains;
- Water and basins management and prevention of natural hazards, why and how they can be identified as a priority in the protection of mountain areas?
- Ecosystem services, green economy and the role of mountain forests;

Existing tools, best practices and cooperation

- The European framework and the national and local strategies: useful instruments for mitigation and adaptation into mountain areas;
- Which possible cooperation to the identification of joint projects for the management of Climate Change?

Sustainable Tourism and enhancement of the landscape

The Mediterranean region is one of the largest areas of touristic attraction in Europe and worldwide, according to recent analysis by the World Tourism Organization it attracts about 18% of the entire global tourist flow. In mountain areas, the tourism sector is a driver of economic growth, its development can help local inhabitant to protect the territory and, if managed according to sustainable principles, it can support the preservation of landscape and environmental resources in green economy context. In this sense, the unique context of the Mediterranean can become a meeting place for peoples, cultures and models of sustainable touristic development. The subject was dealt with in the 2013-2014 period under the Alpine Convention by a Task Force of international experts who worked on the definition of the criteria of sustainability for the tourism sector in the Alps (LINK), also based on previous analyses carried out on the valuable UNESCO sites.

Discussion

⁵ Produced during the 2013-2014 period, under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment in the context of the Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and approved by Decision B3/ACXIII of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties of the Alpine Convention. For the short version of the guidelines: http://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio_immagini/Lima/Guidelines%20for%20Climate%20Change%20Adaptation%20at%20the%20local%20level%20in%20the%20Alps_.pdf





Opportunities

- Sustainable tourism, a tool to contrast the abandonment of the Mountain;
- Objective sustainability: how to combine economic, environmental and land management needs within touristic activities;
- Tourism in Mediterranean Mountain: community tourism or corporate model?
- Human activity for the management and the enhancement of the mountain landscape, which role for mountain farming?

Existing tools, best practices and cooperation

- The European framework, the national and local strategies: tools for landscape management;
- The role of UNESCO lists to promote the territory ;
- Which possible cooperation to the identification of common projects for the sustainable management of tourism in Mountain?

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Biodiversity and Mountain farming

The Mediterranean's rich biodiversity has to be protected and several initiative for its conservation were undertaken. The increase represents an important asset for the promotion of economic productivity and social value of environmental resources in this area. Ecological challenges but also social and economic are intensified in the face of systemic shocks such as climate change and the economic crisis, with the restrictive effects on public finances dedicated to conservation. Therefore it becomes of central importance to enhance biodiversity in order to support the citizens' quality of life and to generate regional economic welfare.

Moreover, in the year of EXPO 2015, the topic of food sustainability is gaining wider attention among the national and international decision makers. By taking into account the indications of the XIII Alpine Conference, the Italian Ministry of the Environment has promoted a dialogue in the frame of EXPO 2015 between national and international stakeholders on international cross-border cooperation on Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) of Mountains,

In fact, mountain farming, especially if done in a sustainable way, can contribute to the protection of the territory and the environment, with respect to the prevention of hydrogeological risk and the conservation of biological diversity. The promotion of network of local stakeholders, government agencies and private sector to promote the exchange of good practices and innovative experiences for the conservation of agro-biodiversity and the enhancement of the mountain products is an objective considered strategic at various administrative levels.

Discussion

Opportunity

- Which contribution of the agriculture in the Mediterranean mountains to feed the Planet;
- Protected areas and biodiversity. Why are they essential for the conservation of natural capital and the quality of life in the Mediterranean region?
- Mountain farming is equal to family farming: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this model?
- Human activity management and enhancement of the mountain landscape, what role for the mountain farming;

Existing tools, best practices and cooperation

- The European framework, the national and local strategies for the protection of protected areas and biodiversity 'in the Mediterranean;
- What possible cooperation to the identification of common projects for the conservation of Biodiversity in the Mediterranean?
- What funding system for the preservation and enhancement of the natural capital in the Mediterranean?

