



# Towards 2020

Aiming at Sustainable Development in Central Europe and Beyond



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



# Chairman's message

New horizons and new perspectives beckon as we move into 2016. As the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) enters its 26th year we can reflect on our accomplishments but must also look to the tasks ahead. Our efforts are now, more than ever, focused on our key aims of better serving both local and regional communities and contributing to true global progress. This year we will also be put to work implementing the decisions and reflecting on the outcomes of last year's anniversary event in June, as we plan ahead for the next 25 years of our organisation.



With the strong mandate granted to us both by our 32 member countries and by the European Commission, the REC will continue to strengthen efforts to facilitate both regional cooperation and sustainable development. We are helped in our efforts, as ever, by our partners in governments, civil society and the business sector, and will continue to work with these key stakeholders, creating regional platforms to promote and facilitate the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Our new strategy for 2016–2020 aims to reinvigorate planning and management with a new results-based approach. Over the next five years the REC will work in earnest to achieve results in three main areas: environmental governance; the management of natural resources; and low-emission development. Through results in these key areas the REC hopes to cement its position as the leading actor in regional environmental action.

In the years ahead the REC will also take an active role in a wide variety of regional and international processes, ranging from the Sustainable Development Goals to the

Environment for Europe process, as well as participating in the global UNFCCC efforts. As a catalyst for sustainable solutions, the REC will continue to empower governments and non-government stakeholders alike to speed up change towards a low-carbon economy, a healthy and resilient society, and a diverse environment.

Our international Board of Directors, with members from 10 countries, is fully committed to actively supporting the REC's management and project teams. I trust that the coming years will bring significant results and new developments for the REC in the fulfilment of its mission, both in our traditional countries of operation and with new partners. Only with the solid support of donors, governments and other partners will the REC be able to face the tasks and challenges ahead. I offer my personal gratitude to all who are working with us to contribute to the REC's renaissance!

## Jari Vilen

Chair of the Board | Ambassador and Head of Delegation | Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe

# Speaking from the heart



H.E. Janos Ader



Marta Szigeti Bonifert



Timo Makela

The REC celebrated its 25th anniversary with the high-level event “Regions for a Sustainable Future: Results – Empowerment – Change: The REC towards the next 25 years”, organised under the patronage of H. E. Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary. The event took place on June 10–11, 2015, at the REC’s head office in Szentendre, Hungary.

The discussions and contributions covered past results, present efforts and future directions, thus giving a strong input to the REC’s new strategy for the years 2016 to 2020 and providing recommendations for the REC on how to facilitate progress in environmental governance, low-carbon development and the regional challenges of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## June 10

The event was opened by Andrzej Kassenberg, Chair of the REC’s Board of Directors, who recalled the history of the establishment of the REC and its importance for democracy building in Central and Eastern

Europe (CEE) as well as for environmental protection.

Executive Director of the REC, Marta Szigeti Bonifert, explained how, “as new challenges are emerging, the REC is changing from a transitional to a transformational tool.”

## RESULTS

The first part of the anniversary event, moderated by Anita Orban, Hungary’s former Ambassador-at-Large for Energy Security, focused on the results achieved by the organisation.

Contributions were made by: William K. Reilly, former Administrator of the U.S. Envi-



Andrzej Kassenberg



Laszlo Borbely



William K. Reilly

ronmental Protection Agency (US EPA); Timo Makela, former Director of Global and Regional Challenges at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment; Zhaneta Prifti, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Environment, Albania; Iskandar Abdullaev, Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia; Mel Horwitch, Dean of the CEU Business School; Mario Molina, Director of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps, The Climate Reality Project; Laszlo Borbely, former Minister of Environment and currently Chair of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Parliament of Romania; Jari Vilen, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe; Jaakko Henttonen, Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Fund Manager, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and former Chair of the REC Board of Directors; and Bob Herbst, former member of the REC Board of Directors.

William K. Reilly spoke about the REC's transformational impact: "The environment in the region is much greener and cleaner

than 25 years ago. The REC should continue playing its role in promoting cooperation that is still much needed."

Timo Makela praised the assistance provided to the countries of the region, while underscoring the rule of law, human rights, freedom, civil society and democracy as fundamental EU values that the REC shares and promotes.

## June 11

H.E. Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary, opened the second day by expressing appreciation for the REC's work over the past quarter of a century in turning environmental and security risks into environmental cooperation, while acknowledging that the organisation anticipated the importance of shifting towards sustainability. President Ader acknowledged the present-day realities of climate change and the urgent need to work together as a global community to protect and preserve the environment.

The mission of the REC is to bring officials, businesspeople, citizens and advocates together to work effectively towards the common goal of protecting the environment and building a sustainable future. That goal is as important today as it was 25 years ago.



Contributions were received from: Lek Kadeli, acting Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA); Benedek Javor, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety of the European Parliament; Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission; and Zsolt V. Nemeth, Deputy State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development.

Lek Kadeli spoke of how the U.S. is proud to be one of the founders of the REC. "The nature of the problems is changing.

The future success of the REC depends on the ownership and support of its countries. We all share a sense of commitment and responsibility towards the generations to come."

William K. Reilly read a letter from former U.S. President George H.W. Bush, dated May 26, 2015: "The mission of the REC is to bring officials, businesspeople, citizens and advocates together to work effectively towards the common goal of protecting the environment and building a sustainable future. That goal is as important today as it was 25 years ago."

Karmenu Vella sent a video message: "In the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SEE) you played a key role. You ensured that the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for the SEE region was put into place. You also helped prepare the countries in CEE for EU accession. You provided valuable support in their efforts to transpose and implement EU environmental legislation. Your approach has been valuable because it was hands-on.



Benedek Javor



Sheikha Fadyah S. Al Sabah



Lek Kadeli

Your work on how to best implement the Aarhus Convention is a guide for governments and parliaments, and has helped involve citizens more effectively. There will be no progress toward sustainability unless we involve civil society actively and early on — both in the formulation of our policies as well as in their implementation. So I thank the REC sincerely for the work of 25 years! You have reason to celebrate and to be proud. For the future I can only hope you keep up the good work. A major challenge awaiting us is the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As in the past, the REC will have a major role to play in their successful regional implementation.”

During this session, H.E. Antonios Theocharous, Ambassador of Cyprus to Hungary, signed the Charter of the REC. A memorandum of understanding between the Al-Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research of Kuwait (Sheikha Fadyah S. Al Sabah) and the REC was also signed to support education for sustainable development in SEE, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East and North Africa.

## EMPOWERMENT

Moderated by Professor Elaine Wright of the University of Pennsylvania, the discussion on empowerment explored how the REC can catalyse processes in the region and beyond.

A major challenge awaiting us is the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As in the past, the REC will have a major role to play in their successful regional implementation.



Contributions were made by: the Honourable Sheikha Fadyah S. Al Sabah, Chair of the Al-Saad Foundation; H.E. Hamad Burhamah, Ambassador of Kuwait; Senad Oprasic, Head of Department at the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ferid Agani, Minister for Environment and Spatial Planning of Kosovo\*; Krasimir Zhivkov, Deputy Minister of Environment and



Hannele Pokka



Barbara Degani



Senad Oprasic

Water, Bulgaria; Barbara Degani, Under-secretary at the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea; Lidija Stebernak, State Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia; Elita Turka, Head of Administration, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU;

## Achieving sustainable development in the region will need a common action, with all stakeholders involved



Ridha Gabouj, General Manager of Rural Engineering and Water Operations at the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia; Ali Hayajneh, Head of Strategic Planning and Water Policies Directorate at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; and Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro.

Ferid Agani congratulated the REC for its excellent work: "The ministry has very good cooperation with the REC. There is a huge need for support and assistance."

Praising the REC's role in introducing sustainable development values, Krasimir Zhivkov commented: "The REC is uniquely positioned to help transfer best practices and promote regional cooperation and initiatives involving national stakeholders."

Lidija Stebernak highlighted the REC's role, based on its 25-year experience: "Achieving sustainable development in the region will need a common action, with all stakeholders involved, with the strong role of civil society as well."



Elita Turka



Marcin Korolec



Sergii Kurykin





Lidija Stebernak



Ridha Gabouj



H.E. Junichi Kosuge

## CHANGE

As moderator, Jari Vilen, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to the Council of Europe, called on participants to put aside formalities and speak from the heart.

Statements were made by: Marcin Korolec, Secretary of State, Government Plenipotentiary for Climate Change, Ministry of the Environment, Poland; Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Finland; Meelis Munt, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Environment, Estonia; Vojtech Ferencz, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Slovakia; Sergii Kurykin, Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine; H.E. Junichi Kosuge, Ambassador, Embassy of Japan in Budapest; Raffi V. Balian, Director of the Embassy of the United States in Budapest; Ivan Zavadsky, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR Secretariat; Aylin Caglayan Ozcan, Director, Sectoral Policies Directorate, Ministry of EU Affairs, Turkey; Ivica Radovic, Special Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Serbia; and Desiree Schweitzer, Deputy Coordinator/Head, Environmental Activities Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

H.E. Junichi Kosuge stated that support to Eastern Partnership countries is a top priority: "Japan is interested in joining efforts to assist municipalities in Ukraine. The projects that Japan has supported in CEE have been successful because of the hard work of the REC."

In appreciation of the REC's activities, Vojtech Ferencz noted that "The first national sustainable development strategy of Slovakia was developed with the assistance of the REC."

Congratulating the REC for its impressive achievements, Sergii Kurykin stated: "In Ukraine we are seeking more active cooperation with the REC."

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



# Declaration

DECLARATION by the signatories to the Charter of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe on the occasion of the organisation's 25th anniversary (Extract)

(...) We, the ministers of environment and high-level representatives, in our capacities as signatories to the Charter of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), having met in Hungary on June 11, 2015, adopt the following declaration.

We congratulate the REC on its 25 years of dedicated service to the environment in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and beyond, and on the competence and expertise accumulated. The partnership initiated in 1990 by the European Commission, Hungary and the United States of America, and later joined by 29 other governments as signatories to the Charter of the REC, has made a vital contribution to the development of democracy and civil society in CEE, to EU enlargement, and to the transition towards sustainable development in the region. We express our profound appreciation to all the REC's donors. We thank all who have served on the Board of Directors and the General Assembly (GA), as well as REC partners, management and staff.

We acknowledge in particular the patronage of H.E. Mr. Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary, over the 25th anniversary of the REC. The continuous support of the Government of Hungary has been instrumental in enabling the REC's efficient operation in line with its mission. We support the REC to continue to be part of the signatories' international agenda in the future.

## Mission

We reconfirm the relevance of the REC's mission to assist partner countries in addressing environmental issues through the involvement of stakeholders.

## Vision

We support the REC's vision to strengthen, by 2020, its role as a leading regional environmental organisation known for its accountability, independence, innovation, efficiency and effectiveness in facilitating responses to environmental challenges in Europe and beyond.

## Added value

We acknowledge the added value of the REC having, for example, reached over 5 million students in more than 20 countries with educational tools for sustainable development; implemented local environmental action plans reaching 4.8 million people in 90 municipalities; strengthened more than 1,000 civil society organisations through capacity building and some 5,800 grants.

We commend the implementation of ministerial mandates from relevant international and regional conferences — including the Environment for Europe process, the European Environment and Health process, the OECD Environmental Action Programme Task Force, the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South East Europe, and the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession.

## We acknowledge the REC's expertise as a regional platform for promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

We also commend the REC for supporting partner countries in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We recognise that the regional presence of the REC is an asset for the successful implementation of its mission-driven work. We welcome the transfer of lessons learned to other regions, especially in the field of environmental governance and education for sustainable development.

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We appreciate the cooperative approach of the REC and its work in partnership with relevant international organisations and stakeholders.

### Renewing the mandate

We recognise the expertise that the REC is able to deliver as a regional mechanism to promote the implementation of relevant EU policies in CEE and South Eastern Europe (SEE), for example via Europe's strategies towards 2020 and beyond in the fields of environment and climate change, energy and circular economy.

We support the mandate of the REC as coordinator of the Environment dimension under the SEE 2020 strategy, enabling future programme development and implementation.

We encourage the continuous involvement of the REC in the Eastern Partnership countries, with the aim of supporting democratic, inclusive and sustainable societies and cross-border cooperation.

We acknowledge the REC's expertise as a regional platform for promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, once adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

### Ownership

We recognise that the future tasks of the REC in the continuously changing and challenging international context require the strengthening of our ownership towards the REC and a coordinated approach on the part of the donor community in its development policies through the REC.

(...) We endorse the REC Strategy for 2016–2020 and its focus on strengthening environmental governance, combating climate change and improving natural resources management in partner countries, and we are committed to promoting the implementation of the strategy through specific contributions, projects and initiatives.

We are determined to assist the REC to mobilise the necessary resources with mechanisms such as innovative financing, bilateral grants, competitive calls and processes and voluntary contributions to implement assigned mandates and achieve envisaged results.

### Concluding remarks

We express our strong wish for the successful completion of the REC's assigned mandates and the achievement of the envisaged results, and we look forward to reconvening in 2020.

# Executive summary of the REC Strategy 2016–2020

The REC Strategy for 2016–2020 is the key document for the future development of the REC and defines the priority issues on which the organisation is to focus. It aims to consolidate and build upon achievements to date and, at the same time, opens new professional horizons for the organisation as it faces environmental challenges in Europe and beyond.

The strategy is in line with the organisation's mission to assist partner countries in addressing environmental issues by involving stakeholders, and its vision for 2020 as having a stronger role as a leading regional environmental organisation recognised for its independence, innovation, efficiency and effectiveness in facilitating responses to the gravest environmental challenges.

The strategy envisages the translation of political support into the following mandates: (1) Supporting the SEE 2020 Strategy as coordinator of the Environment dimension; (2) Supporting the transformation of Eastern Partnership countries; (3) Supporting the implementation of EU policies and accession to EU funding opportunities; and (4) Supporting the transition to a circular and low-carbon economy. In pursuing its mission-driven activities and granted mandates, the REC will move exclusively to a results-based management system. During the 2016–2020 period the REC will work to achieve three main results: (1) Strengthened environmental governance; (2) Strengthened low-emission development, enhanced resilience to the impacts of climate change, and fostered sustainable and healthy lifestyles; and (3) Improved natural resources management. The REC's areas of professional specialisation will be grouped according to results-based management.

According to the strategy, results-based activities will be implemented in countries that are grouped on the basis of their environmental problems, political status and fund-

ing opportunities: the EU28, focusing mainly on new EU member states; EU enlargement countries; EU Neighbourhood countries; and other regions/countries. The REC will continue to have its headquarters in Szentendre, Hungary, with a strong regional presence as one of its key comparative strengths. Its country office network will be recalibrated to allow the organisation to respond in a more flexible manner to changing regional and country-specific needs.

Financial sustainability will be maintained through diversified funding via multilateral and bilateral donor relationships and by strengthening partnerships, exploring the possibility of establishing a trust fund, as well as participating in competitive tendering. As a non-profit organisation the REC's main target will be to achieve a long-term zero balance in its operations. In order to optimise the use of available financial resources, the REC will undertake the necessary organisational changes, monitor all expenses, and, in particular, make every effort to reduce its overhead costs. The REC will also maintain the highest possible transparency in its financial management and in the use of obtained funds. The REC Strategy will be implemented through annual work plans approved by the Board of Directors. Progress will be measured using a set of key performance indicators, valid for the REC as a whole and based on expected project outputs. Performance will be monitored annually via the work plans and the REC's performance appraisal system.



The REC is a catalyst that accelerates sustainable solutions in partnership with governments and non-governmental stakeholders. Our focus is on helping communities to strengthen environmental governance, shift to a low-carbon economy, build resilience to climate change, manage natural resources, and develop capacities for future environmental stewardship. As illustrated in the matrix, our projects, programmes and products cover the full spectrum of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which form the backbone of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we have solid experience in 47 targets out of the 169.

On the 25th anniversary of the organisation, the signatories explicitly expressed their wish and support for the REC to devote its work and efforts to the implementation of the SDGs in the region and beyond.

The REC continues to be an active contributor to major environmental processes and initiatives at the EU, European and global levels.

The REC contributes to various international processes, including the implementation of:

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)
- South East Europe 2020 Strategy
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Aarhus Convention
- International environmental processes such as Environment for Europe (EfE)

The REC pays continuous attention to the creation and evolution of its strategic partnerships with international organisations, institutions and bodies, in order to best match the available expertise to problems and needs in an internationally coordinated manner and to achieve the targeted main results set out in its strategy.



REC RESULTS

- 1 Strengthened environmental governance
- 2 Strengthened low-emission development
- 3 Improved natural resources management

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- 1 No Poverty
- 2 Zero Hunger
- 3 Good Health and Well-Being
- 4 Quality Education
- 5 Gender Equality
- 6 Clean Water and Sanitation
- 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 Reduced Inequalities
- 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13 Climate Action
- 14 Life Below Water
- 15 Life on Land
- 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals

	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>	Local Initiatives for a Sustainable Ukraine (LINK)	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
	Environment and Security Initiative programmes	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Education for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans: Education for Sustainable Futures	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Adaptation to Climate Change in Hungary	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
<b>PROJECTS</b>	Introducing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Schools in South Eastern Europe (SEEDLING)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Sustainable Use of Transboundary Water Resources and Water Security Management in Middle East and North Africa (WATER SUM)	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Schools Indoor Pollution and Health: Observatory Network in Europe (SINPHONIE)	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
	Building Local Community Resilience for Sustainable Development in International Watersheds such as the Drini/Drina River Watershed (CRESSIDA)	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Support for Low-Emission Development Strategies in South Eastern Europe (SLED)	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
	Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Environmental Management in Turkey	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Advancing Sustainable Urban Transport in an Enlarged Europe through CIVITAS (CIVITAS VANGUARD)	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Local environmental action planning	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
<b>PRODUCTS</b>	Green Pack interactive educational tools	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
	Sustainable Development Academy	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
	Granting mechanism/Financial support	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
	Transport monitoring tool	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	

**The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)**

is an international organisation that works as a catalyst, accelerating sustainable solutions in partnership with governments and non-governmental stakeholders.

Our projects focus on helping communities to strengthen environmental governance, shift to a low-carbon economy, build resilience to climate change, manage natural resources, and develop capacities for future environmental stewardship.

With 25 years of experience in supporting the region's transition to democracy and sustainability, the REC is a flexible mechanism for cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond, delivering results through its office and expert network.

