

## **Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity in the Republic of Macedonia**

**22 May 2014, Delchevo**

Aiming to increase understanding and awareness regarding biodiversity issues, 22<sup>nd</sup> of May has been proclaimed by the United Nations as International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB), and celebrated worldwide to commemorate the adoption of the text of the Convention on 22 May 1992. This year's IDB theme is 'Island Biodiversity' referring to unique ecosystems often comprising many endemic plant and animal species that are irreplaceable treasures. It was chosen to coincide with the designation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2014 as the International year of Small Island developing countries supporting 600 million islanders or one tenth of the world's population.

Republic of Macedonia is landlocked country and the IDB theme was elaborated through island biogeography theory, referring to an ecological islands - an isolated habitat type that is effectively an "island" surrounded by an area of inhospitable land (e.g. small remaining patches of woodland, natural habitats surrounded by human-altered landscapes, etc.) and/or small protected areas - often too small to be sustainable in the long-term especially for large predators, so they need to be managed in the context of whole landscape.

A general concept for celebration of the IDB in Macedonia was created jointly between the Ministry of Environment and Physical planning (MoEPP) and ongoing national projects "Support to the Republic of Macedonia for revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and preparation of the Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity", executed by United Nations Environment Programme and MoEPP, funded by GEF and "Nature conservation programme in Macedonia", financed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Two other relevant projects supported by the Swiss Government and implemented in the Bregalnica region will also contribute to the main event through implementation of different educational activities. Technical support for organization of the IDB activities on 22<sup>nd</sup> of May will be given by the Nature conservation programme in Macedonia coordinated by Farmahem and UNEP/GEF/MOEPP project for revision of NBSAP with the help of Macedonian Ecological Society. The Municipality of Delchevo (as hosting municipality) will take active part in the event, too.

Raising awareness and education for biodiversity conservation will be the main topic of the event highlighting the rich biodiversity in the Bregalnica region as well as the potential for effective conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources, thus contributing to the general implementation of Biodiversity Action Plan in the country. All relevant stakeholders will be actively involved in the IDB event: starting with children, school teachers, local population, representatives of the governmental and non-governmental organizations, municipalities, international community, donors, etc.

Celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity in the Republic of Macedonia is planned to be realized in two phases: preparatory activities (that have already started, implemented through different projects) and IDB event. Details are given below.

### **I. Pre-activities**

1. *Competition for best photo reflecting the biodiversity in Bregalnica region* – information for this open competition is already published on the Nature Conservation Programme web page and was also presented on the local televisions. All interested professionals, amateurs and students are invited to participate – sending their photos on the theme biodiversity (specific flora or fauna species or characteristic landscape) from the Bregalnica region. The aim is to turn the attention to the biodiversity in the Bregalnica region and to influence the public awareness for nature conservation issues.
2. *Targeted arrangement of the central area for the main event* – preparation of the concept of this special design (with panels and totems) has already started, aiming to attract more people and spread the information regarding IDB, raise awareness about Aichi biodiversity targets, UN decade on biodiversity 2011-2020 as well as national biodiversity vision, targets and priorities for conservation of biodiversity and educate regarding important flora and fauna species in the country.
3. *Preparation of promotional materials:*
  - Promotional leaflet will be prepared in order to promote the general idea of IDB celebration including the programme for the final event; it will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders 1-2 weeks prior to the event.

- Poster prepared by the CBD Secretariat and slightly modified in order to align with national biodiversity values will be printed and put in the central area and Cultural centre in Delchevo to announce the main event on 22 May.
  - T-shirts and bags with IDB logo (prepared by the CBD Secretariat) will be printed and distributed to the children and other participants during the main event aiming to raise awareness regarding IDB.
  - Cards with important/flagship species (identified as characteristic for the Bregalnica region) will be printed and distributed to the participants encouraging them to write a 'biodiversity message' that will be collected during the event and analysed later aiming to get the insight of local population perception of biodiversity values.
  - Badges with illustrations of flagship species from the Bregalnica region will be prepared and distributed to all participants aiming to raise awareness regarding IDB and important flora and fauna species in the Region
  - Info-boards will be placed in the central area and municipality building with posters, photos, etc.
4. Media coverage – the event will be announced in the national and local TVs and radio stations (1-2 days before), and local reporters will be present during the final event.
  5. Two other relevant projects supported by the Swiss Government and implemented in the Bregalnica region will also contribute to the main event:
    - Education for biodiversity component in Bregalnica region, implemented by NGO OXO - an invitation letter for participation on the IDB event has been sent to the primary schools Vanco Prke (as a school which is already involved in the project activities and has gained a green flag) and Kliment Ohridski in Delcevo. About 30-40 school children will be selected to make drawings on theme "biodiversity" and "board games" related to ecological topics will be organized. It is expected that this initiative will be encouragement for the schools to continue to mark the IDB in the future.
    - Bregalnica River Basin Management project, funded by SECO is conducting preparatory activities for experimental analyses of water samples. The experiment will be presented to the participants.

## II. International Day for Biological Diversity event

The main event will be realized during 22 May in the central area (the park in front of the memorial house of ASNOM) in the city of Delchevo (planned to be realized outdoors, or the Cultural Center in Delcevo will be used if weather conditions are inappropriate for organization of the event). The following awareness and educational activities are planned to be organized:

- Targeted arrangement of the central area with special panels, posters and totems referring to the IDB, spreading information about Aichi biodiversity targets, UN decade on biodiversity, information regarding national biodiversity vision, new targets and priorities for conservation of biodiversity as well as national biodiversity values (important flora and fauna species in Bregalnica region).
- Opening of the event - ceremonial address from high representative of MoEPP, high representative of the Embassy of Swiss Confederation and the Mayor of Delchevo are planned. Awards for the 3 best photos will be handed to the rewarded people by SDC.
- Separate stands with project banners will be posted on both sides of the main arranged point in the central area aiming to inform all interested people regarding the project activities. Appropriate promotion materials will be distributed to all interesting participants.
- East Planning Region Office covering 11 municipalities in Bregalnica watershed and other organization networks will be invited to promote and share experiences from their activities in protecting the environment and biodiversity at the final event. For that purpose, few more stands will be set in the central area.

- Exhibition of photos (received for the best biodiversity photo competition) and totems with information regarding important flora and fauna species in Bregalnica region will be organized along the two paths leading to plateau where the children will do their artwork.
- Children's paintings on the floor with coloured chalks expressing their views for importance of biodiversity as well as "board games" related to ecological topics will be organized on the plateau nearby.
- The experiment for analyzing water samples will be organized by Bregalnica River Basin Management Project.

The event will be covered by different national and local media. A professional photographer will be engaged to take pictures and make video of the whole event.

In the second part of the event several presentations will be given addressing the biodiversity values of Bregalnica Region and IDB theme - ecological islands as well as main aims and activities of both projects. Main target groups are professors for natural sciences from elementary and secondary schools in the Region, MoEPP and municipality staff, public enterprises, other relevant institutions, as well as interested local people.

At the end, cocktail with traditional courses will be organized for the participants.

