

*Kick-off Meeting for the preparation of the project:*

***Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through  
Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning***

**MEETING REPORT**

Belgrade, July 2014

## I. Introduction

The First Stakeholders meeting for the preparation of the project *Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning* was held on Thursday July 17, 2014, in Hotel Moskva, Belgrade. The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, Serbian Environmental Protection Agency and United Nations Environment Programme. The meeting has gathered 56 stakeholders, with media coverage by one TV station and various news agencies and online portals. The Final Agenda of the meeting is available in Annex 1 of this report.



**Image 1.** *The First Stakeholders meeting, held in hotel Moskva, Belgrade, July 17, 2014*

## II. Background

Land degradation in Serbia, resulting from various environmentally unsustainable activities such as over-mineral extraction, inadequate agriculture practices and uncontrolled waste disposal, negatively impact ability of land to act as a natural filter or retain water during high precipitation, among other. Once the functions and quality of the land have been violated, its regeneration can be

costly and time consuming. Therefore, urgent and comprehensive actions are needed to reduce pressures on land from competing land uses in the wider landscape: stimulation of science and technology, strengthening the institutional capacities, development of partnerships for concerted actions, and raising awareness on integrated and Sustainable Land Management (SLM).

One of the steps to guarantee the SLM, was to endorse the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification / Land Degradation (UNCCD), that Serbia fulfilled already in 2007.

This meeting was intended to bring together representatives from all relevant governmental, public and scientific institutions, international organisations as well as non-governmental organizations under one roof to share experiences and discuss issues of relevance to this complex assignment. Significant damages and losses resulted from May 2014 floods in Serbia add to the significance of immediate action towards SLM.

### **III. Participants**

The meeting was attended by representatives from various institutions and organizations:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection: Project Management Department; Directorate for Agricultural Land; Water Directorate; Group for Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment; etc.
- Ministry of Mining and Energy;
- Environmental Protection Agency; Republic Agency for Spatial Planning;
- University of Belgrade: Faculty of Forestry; Faculty of Agriculture; Faculty of Geography; Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy;
- Soil Institute; Institute for Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy; Nature Protection Institute; Geodetic Institute; Institute for Water Management; Institute for Field and Vegetable Crops; Mining Institute; Republic Hydrometeorologic Service of Serbia; Institute of Geology;
- Secretariat for Environmental Protection of the city of Belgrade;
- Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection;
- Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities;
- European Integration Office;
- Project Preparation Facility 5;
- German International Cooperation, GIZ office in Serbia
- The World Bank;
- Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade; Italian Embassy in Belgrade;
- UNEP; UNDP;
- OSCE mission to Serbia;
- NGO: Young Researches of Serbia; Aarhus Center Kragujevac; Forestry and Environment Action, FEA, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Regional Environment Center – REC, Office in Belgrade; NIRAS – Belgrade.

Detailed List of Participants from the meeting is attached to this report.

#### IV. Opening and Lectures

The meeting was opened by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Ms Stana Bozovic. Ms Bozovic emphasized the importance of both the meeting and the forthcoming project, especially after recent flooding events in Serbia. The National Action Plan to mitigate the effects of drought and land degradation, towards the UNCCD Convention, is currently in the final drafting phase and will represent the basis for the implementation of this project. Ms Bozovic shortly introduced project components and highlighted the goal of the project: to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource, stop further land degradation and implement remediation measures. Ms Bozovic finally invited interested potential donors to contribute to implementation of activities within this project.



**Image 2.** Opening of the meeting. From left to right: Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei (UNEP ROE), Ms. Stana Bozovic (State Secretary), Mr. Filip Radovic (SEPA)

Mr Pier Carlo Sandei, UNEP Regional Office for Europe, welcomed the participants with few opening remarks. Mr. Sandei explained the importance of soil remediation in all countries. After flood episode in May this year, there is evident need for more attention devoted to the land and its degradation. The process, of which this project will be an integral part, is a long-term process and results will be visible only in several years.





**Image 3.** Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei (UNEP) giving opening remarks

Director of the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Mr. Filip Radovic, briefly described general activities of SEPA regarding air and water quality monitoring on the state land, including real time measurements, and activities towards publishing State of the Environment Report on an annual basis. The initiative to establish soil quality monitoring was also mentioned. In the last two years, SEPA conducted sampling of soil on 143 sites, collecting 165 samples. The goal is to expand the accreditation of the National Laboratory to soil quality analysis. Apart from monitoring, SEPA also maintains national register of pollution sources in accordance with the PRTR Directive.

Projects of the Ministry in the area of environmental protection, with special focus on rehabilitation and remediation, were presented by Mr. Vladica Bozic. Mr. Bozic introduced the legislative framework with respect to rehabilitation and remediation of contaminated sites and two bylaws adopted in 2010. He also introduced the approach in data collection, i.e. the questionnaire for determination of potentially contaminated sites, completed locally during the twinning project *“Strengthening institutional capacities in hazardous waste management”*. Mr. Bozic presented remediation activities in Bor, Great Backa canal, Palic and Ludas Lakes, industrial wastewater canal in Pancevo etc., funded from domestic resources and via grants and loans.

Ms Dragana Vidojevic, Senior Advisor at SEPA, gave a brief insight into land degradation relevant bylaws (adopted in 2010) and indicators to be monitored in order to measure the level of degradation. Ms Vidojevic also introduced development of the inventory of contaminated sites, which currently lists 384 sites, of which 2% has been remediated. It was noted that municipal waste

landfills and oil extraction and refining processes prevail among the contamination sources. The problem of land degradation increased after the May flooding event in Serbia with 72% of the total agricultural damages falling under degradation of land and loss of soil productivity. Additionally, Ms Vidojevic presented activities of SEPA in the framework of international projects and initiatives and reminded participants of the State of Soil in the Republic of Serbia in 2012 – published by SEPA in 2013.

At the end of the lecturing section, Mr. Sandei in his capacity of being a representative of the GEF funded project implementing agency, briefed the participants with basic information about the project and expected outputs for each project component. At the end, Mr. Sandei presented PPG Work Plan and provided short overview of other UNEP regional and national activities in the South-East Europe, and concluded by emphasizing importance of joint efforts towards sustainable land use in Serbia.

## **V. Outputs**

Similar initiatives were presented in the final section of the meeting, including GIZ project *Strengthening Municipal Land Management* that is currently being implemented in Serbia. During the discussion, meeting participants gave their suggestions and expressed their observations. The Minutes of the discussion from the First Stakeholder Meeting is enclosed in the Annex 2.

Project promotional material developed for the meeting as well as media coverage is presented in Annex 3.

## ANNEX 1

### Kick-off meeting for the preparation of the Land Degradation project in the Republic of Serbia

Hotel Moskva, Belgrade, 17 July 2014

#### FINAL AGENDA

09:45 - 10:00	<b>Registration of participants</b>
10:00 – 10:15	<b>Welcome and opening remarks:</b>  Ms Stana Božović, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection  Mr Pier Carlo Sandei, Programme Officer at United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe, Office in Vienna
10:15 – 10:35	<b>Presentation of SEPA activities:</b> Mr Filip Radović, Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) Director
10:35 – 11:05	<b>Environmental projects – rehabilitation and remediation:</b> Mr Vladica Božić, Project Management Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
11:05 – 11:25	<b>Land degradation in the Republic of Serbia:</b> Ms Dragana Vidojević, Senior Advisor, SEPA
11:25 – 11:45	<b>GEF Land Degradation project introduction:</b> Mr Pier Carlo Sandei, Programme Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe
11:45 – 12:05	<b>Introduction to other related initiatives:</b> national stakeholders and representatives of international organizations
12:05 – 12:45	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Cocktail lunch</b>	

## Minutes of the Kick-off Meeting

17 July 2014

The Kick-off Meeting for the *Enhanced Cross-sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning* project started at 10.00 at Hotel Moskva, Belgrade, with the participation of 56 stakeholders, including the presenters. The opening of the Meeting was also attended by the representatives of media. After the presentations, the participants were invited to share their ideas and experiences on the potential course of the project.

Main points of discussion:

- The project "Rural Development: Effective Land Management" – funded by the EU and the German Government – is being implemented in Serbia by GIZ from 2013 – 2015. It also facilitates implementation of land consolidation schemes as well as measures to reduce abandoned agricultural land.
- 70% of land in Serbia is being "legally" contaminated, meaning that for ex. high content of Ni and Cr can be (and usually is) of natural origin; so the actions should be carefully designed having this in mind.
- The main focus of the project would be to prepare the sound ground for due diligence
- 70% of arable land is being used for agriculture and this land should be somehow protected
- The need for monitoring and controlling the quality of the land has improved in the last years, but the research needs to continue the same path
- The contaminated soils in Serbia represent only a small portion of land. There is a need to investigate what are the indicators and polarity of change of this natural resource
- This project should anticipate all different institutions working together covering different aspects
- The establishment of the Law on Soil would be necessary
- There are different types of land degradation, but the most expressed types are the loss of arable land, erosion, landslides, chemical degradation, and biological degradation
- The follow-up activities would include bilateral meetings on what needs to be done and what is expected from the project

(Discussion)

➤ *Mr. Michael Becker, GIZ*

GIZ in Serbia is currently implementing a project worth 3,7 mil EUR, which started in 2013 (and will last until 2015). This project aims to support municipal land management in South and Southeast Serbia, i.e. to improve the legal framework, improve the state land management and introduce land consolidation in pilot municipalities.



The project includes performing the legal analysis and ways of improving the legal framework, support to development of the series of laws and bylaws in order to make land management more effective.

The project also involves state contract lease management. Within the project 7 pilot municipalities were selected for land consolidation improvements. The major issues within these 7 municipalities were land ownership fragmentation into little parcels, the over-aging population and emigration of people from rural areas. Areas in the South of Serbia are differently structured than in Vojvodina, which is for now more advanced in consolidation. The project on Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management could support farmers, and for that reason the country and the GIZ project can highly benefit from it. The project GIZ is currently implementing is doing research on the causes of land abandonment, the ways to reactivate this land and the factors to expand the number of young farmers. Public participation process introduced environmental assessments in the areas to be consolidated. Within the subject of implementing capacity development, FAO has organized a "Landnet" Conference in June 2014 in Belgrade (with participation of 28 countries all over the world).

The goal of the GIZ project is to establish sound and sustainable agricultural areas. IPA 2014 would provide support for the continuation of the project.

- *Mr. Prvoslav Marjanovic, Institute for the Development of Water Resources "Jaroslav Cerni" - Belgrade*

Within the Southern Gas Pipeline project (2mil.EUR) soil chemistry and soil pollution were investigated all the way from Eastern Serbia near Zajecar to Hungary. During the process over 300 samples of soil were collected. Within the project agricultural pits for testing the quality of soil were made. 70% of samples were "legally" contaminated. Nickel and cobalt were present in the samples, but they cannot be observed as real pollutants, whereas arsenic and copper may originate from agriculture.

In Serbia for sure there are objective hotspots, especially landfills which account for 1/3 of the sites contaminated. But it is important not to lose the focus of the project, and focus should be put on the systematization and to try to evaluate the real problem, create institutional capacity within the government (Ministry), especially including staff that needs to implement and conduct activities within the project. The Institute would gladly support the project, as it has good capacities, but the legislation needs to be reviewed. The main focus is to prepare the sound ground for due diligence.

- *Dragana Djordjevic, University of Belgrade*

Serbia has agricultural capacities, and in 70% of cases the arable land is indeed used for agriculture. These areas need to be protected.

In Republic of Serbia there is a need for monitoring of the pollution, but it is also necessary to understand the cause and conditions of pollutants and other substances in the environment, including their migration. Researches have been carried out regarding transformation and migration of pollutants from their sources to the recipients. The scientific sector has a lot of capacities; the

University of Belgrade is since recently on the Shanghai list. The sediments in the rivers can filter the soil to some extent. Additional parameters need to be monitored.

➤ *Jordana Ninkov, Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops (NS Seme)*

The next year is the FAO International Year of Soil. Our role as a scientific organization is to connect the existing research results.

➤ *Mr. Srboljub Maksimovic, Institute for Soil*

The efforts put for land protection in Serbia are very much appreciated. The Institute never had more work to do than after the recent flooding, regular control measures have been implemented. There are 4 field teams for sampling of land. In July – August there will be 40.000 results from the soil sampling. The need for monitoring and controlling the quality of the land has improved in the last years, but the research needs to continue the same path.

➤ *Mr. Aleksandar Djordjevic, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade*

It is a bit surprising that only the chemical pollution is now being considered. Serbia has 1.200.000 ha of arable land, 800.000 ha of the top quality land for fruit production, etc. The polluted soils represent only the small portion of the whole territory and these have mainly been identified and some effort has been put to remediate them. In 2011 the Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Spatial Planning has financed the development of the methodology for systematic monitoring of the state of land. The project identified forest and agricultural land, together with hotspots. The other types of land, which cover greater portions, should not be forgotten. There is a need to know what are the indicators and polarity of change of this natural resource.

The methodology for research of land needs to be carefully selected. The legal framework needs to protect the land. The establishment of the Law on Soil is a very good idea.

➤ *Mr. Zoran Knezevic, Department for Agricultural Land, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection*

This project should anticipate all different institutions working together covering different aspects. The *Department for Agricultural Land* works on protection of agricultural land. In 2014 2.5 mil. EUR will be invested into agricultural land protection. There is concern about the loss of agricultural land; Republic of Serbia yearly loses around 34.000 ha of agricultural land. The second threat to land is land degradation. The owners of the agricultural land should also be included in the project. In Serbia there is a law by which every owner of agricultural land needs to report on agro-chemical analysis results every 5 years.

➤ *Mr. Aleksandar Djordjevic, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade (replica)*

There is Law on Agricultural Land, but the law on land as a natural resource is lacking.

➤ *Mr. Milan Knezevic, Faculty of Forestry, University of Belgrade*

There are a lot of institutions working with soil/land; it would be good to establish cooperation between these institutions. Over 1/3 of all land in Serbia is forestland. The contaminated locations are usually the landfills and industrial sites, but they are lot fewer in number than the quality land. There are different types of land degradation, but the most expressed types are the loss of arable land, erosion, landslides, chemical degradation, and biological degradation. West Serbia has larger content of nickel and chrome, but this is the result of natural processes.

➤ *Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei, UNEP*

Mr. Sandei expressed his appreciation to all participants of the Meeting for their attendance and proactive participation. The feedback from the participants was largely positive. The discussion was very focused and precised. He thanked everyone for their comments and sharing of ideas. The follow-up activities would include bilateral meetings on what needs to be done and what is expected from the project.

### ANNEX 3

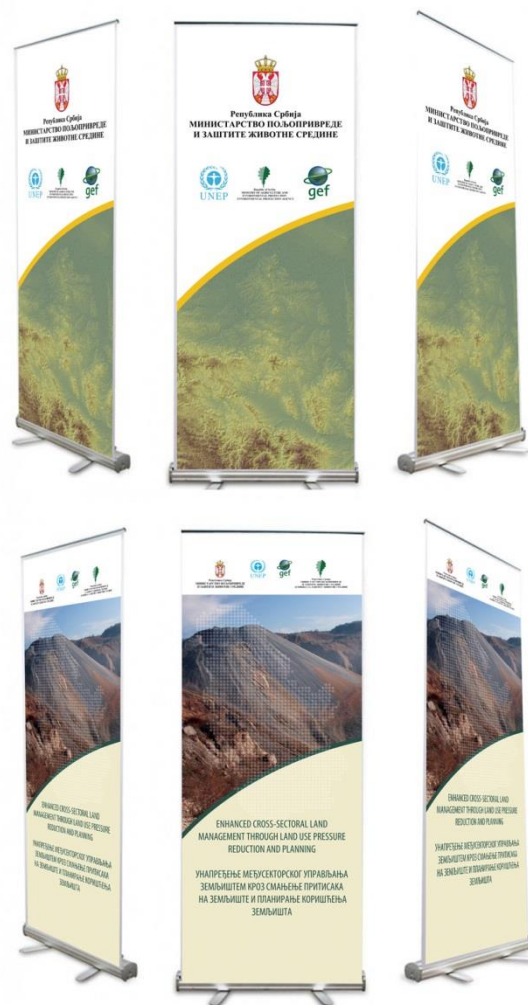
Project promotional material developed for the meeting includes bilingual brochures and roll-up banners.



**Image 4.** Bilingual brochures at the venue

Brochure in English language is available at:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/ukjj8s2mh5m56fy/25.07.2014\\_Eng%20verzija.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ukjj8s2mh5m56fy/25.07.2014_Eng%20verzija.pdf)



**Image 5.** Two roll-up banners with Ministry, SEPA, UNEP and GEF logos and the project title

The TV station Sky Plus recorded the opening of the meeting, and broadcasted on Sunday July 20 in the TV show "Privredni Kalendar". The stand-alone video is available at the following link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/07ipbf3eaa02289/2014%2007%2017%20ZEMLIJISTE%20ZA%20PK.mpg>

Additionally, the news about the meeting was published (in Serbian language)

- ◆ on the Ministry website:  
<http://eko.minpolj.gov.rs/predstavljen-projekat-unapredjenje-medjusektorskog-upravljanja-zemljistem-kroz-smanj enje-pritiska-na-zemljiste-planiranje-koriscenja-zemljista/#more-14228>
- ◆ and SEPA website (date 17.07.2014):  
<http://www.sepa.gov.rs/>

and many web portals:

- ◆ Specialized portal for Agriculture:

<http://www.poljoprivrednik.net/772-predstavljen-projekat-unapredenje-medusektorskog-upravljanja-zemljistem-kroz-smanjenje-pritiska-na-zemljiste-i-planiranje-koriscenja-zemljista>

- ◆ News portal of the Tanjug News Agency:

<http://www.tanjug.rs/novosti/137812/predstavljen-program-za-upravljanje-zemljistem-kao-resursom.htm>

- ◆ Danas online:

[http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/iz\\_sata\\_u\\_sat/predstavljen\\_projekat\\_upravljanja\\_zemljistem.83.html?news\\_id=80401](http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/iz_sata_u_sat/predstavljen_projekat_upravljanja_zemljistem.83.html?news_id=80401)

- ◆ Voice of Serbia - International Radio Serbia (online): „Stop land pollution“

<http://glassrbije.org/privreda/stop-zaga%C4%91enju-zemlji%C5%A1ta>

- ◆ Belgrade Chamber of Commerce:

[http://www.kombeg.org.rs/Komora/udruzenja/udr\\_poljoprivrede/Aktuelnosti.aspx](http://www.kombeg.org.rs/Komora/udruzenja/udr_poljoprivrede/Aktuelnosti.aspx)

- ◆ Vibia Business Portal:

[http://www.vibia.rs/dokument\\_new.php?s=vesti&ID=5066746&lang=sr%3C/a%3E](http://www.vibia.rs/dokument_new.php?s=vesti&ID=5066746&lang=sr%3C/a%3E)

- ◆ Business portal eKapija:

<http://www.ekapija.com/website/sr/page/944489>