



ASCOBANS meets to agree further measures to protect small cetaceans, p. 6

© Preben Toft

I. Good to Know

p. 2

- New Albanian Government to start business in September 2013
- Europe's forests approach carbon saturation point
- Luxembourg Prime Minister resigns over spy scandal
- Czech parliament dissolved
- Russian President calls for help to flood-hit region
- Strategy on solid municipal wastes treatment in the Russian Federation approved
- Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement is born
- Turkmenistan to build Caspian energy port

II. UNEP on the Ground

p. 4

- Declining bee numbers: measures to protect the pollinators in Africa and Asia
- Restoring Dalmatian Pelicans and their habitats in the Mediterranean basin
- The Regional Ozone Network for Europe and Central Asia turns 10
- Experts discuss environmental impact of next winter Olympics
- ASCOBANS meets to agree further measures to protect small cetaceans
- German Ministries and CITES Secretary-General coordinate fight against wildlife crime
- Promoting disaster risk reduction in fragile states

III. On the Calendar

p. 8

- Winners of the Global Art and Environment Competition
- Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management: 5th Central and Eastern European regional meeting
- Job posting – call for applicants: Chief, Brussels Office, P-5



New Albanian Government to start business in September 2013



On 31 July, Albanian Prime Minister Designate Edi Rama announced the names of the members of the government he will lead with effect from September 2013 after parliamentary approval. The new government was formed as a result of a landslide victory by the Socialist Party-led "Alliance for a European Albania" at the general election of 23 June. Six of the 19 ministries will be headed by women, something unusual in the history of Albania in the past 23 years. Besides an environment minister, the new cabinet includes a minister of energy and industry, a minister of urban development and tourism, and a minister of agriculture, rural development and water administration. The new Minister of Environment is Lefter Koka, leader of the Socialist Party-allied "Socialist Movement Integration" group in the Albanian parliament. He served as mayor of his home town, Durrës from 2003 to 2007 under the Socialist Party.

Europe's forests approach carbon saturation point

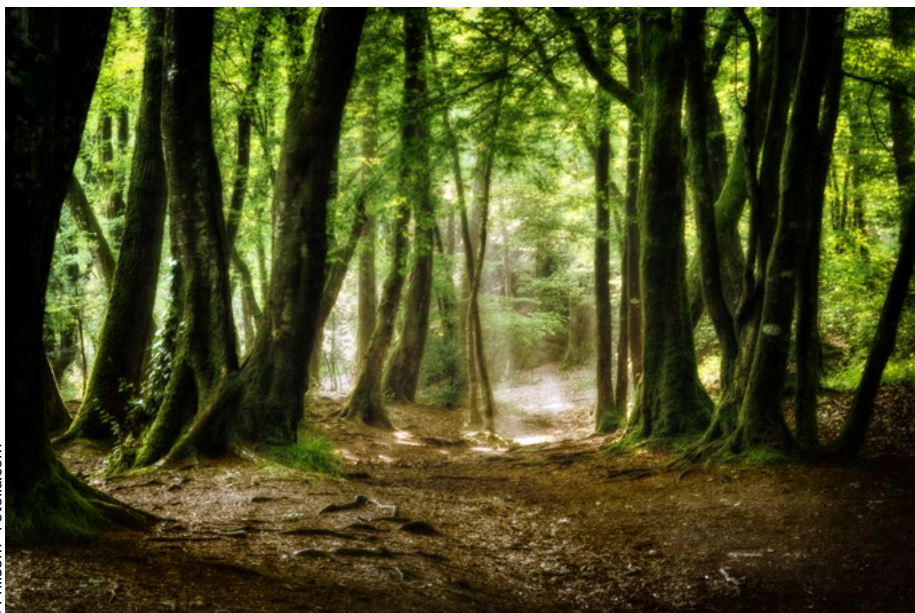


The ability of Europe's forests to absorb carbon dioxide is heading towards saturation point, threatening one of the continent's main defences against global warming, a study published on 18 August in the journal *Nature Climate Change* showed.

Forests from Spain to Sweden are getting older, packed with trees less able to soak up CO₂ emissions, which are blamed for rising world temperatures, rising sea levels and increased heatwave and flood risk, experts said. Trees are being threatened by more fires, storms and insect attacks, and some parts of the continent have also started cutting down some forests, said the *Nature Climate Change* study. This means that Europe should no longer assume its forests will be able to continue absorbing carbon emissions at the same rate (currently 10%).

Calculations suggested saturation point could be reached by around 2030 unless governments took action, said Gert-Jan Nabuurs, of Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands, who led the study with experts in Finland, Switzerland and Italy.

More information [here](#).



© Phil35m - Fotolia.com

Luxembourg Prime Minister resigns over spy scandal



On 10 July, Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker submitted his resignation to Grand Duke Henri, following an intense parliamentary debate over alleged corruption in the country's secret service. The Grand Duke announced on 19 July that he has resolved to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies for 7 October with elections set to take place on 20 October, following the recommendations of a parliamentary constitutional committee.

By resigning, Mr Juncker avoided a parliamentary vote of no confidence over the allegations, which included illegal wiretaps, financial speculation and questionable dealings with used cars by the Luxembourg Secret Service.

Mr Juncker's Christian Social People's party (CSV) has led all but one government since the end of World War II. The landlocked country of 500,000 people—per capita the richest in Europe—hasn't had a government fall since 1916. Mr Juncker has served as Prime Minister since 1995 and until January 2013, he was head of the Eurogroup conclave of euro-zone finance ministers.

More information [here](#).

Czech parliament dissolved



An ideologically diverse array of lawmakers voted to dissolve parliament's lower house on 20 August, paving the way for an autumn general election, probably on 25-26 October. The dissolution comes after Prime Minister Petr Nečas's government collapsed in a combination of scandals involving spying and corruption. A caretaker government installed by President Miloš Zeman failed to receive the backing of parliament. 140 MPs voted for dissolution, with only seven against.

More information [here](#).

Russian President calls for help to flood-hit region



The cost to agriculture in Russia's flood-hit Far East is estimated at 8.5 billion rubles (USD260 million), Russia's Agriculture Ministry revealed on 19 August.

More than 627,000 hectares of agricultural land, or 40% of crop areas, have been affected by the floods, the ministry said in a statement.

Some 140 towns and villages in the Amur Region, the Khabarovsk Territory and the Jewish Autonomous Region have been inundated following heavy rains. Nearly 28,500 people have been affected by floods in the three regions.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has called on local authorities to ensure that funds allocated to the flood victims reach them.

More information [here](#).



© EnryPix - Fotolia.com

Strategy on solid municipal wastes treatment in the Russian Federation approved



An integrated strategy document on solid municipal wastes treatment has been developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation in accordance with the instruction of the Russian Government and with the participation of the Russian State Duma, business, academia and NGOs. According to Minister Donsky, "the document is aimed at the elimination of a number of imbalances and risks for the environment and human health, caused by the treatment of solid municipal wastes". The document regulates the development of infrastructure for separate collection, utilization, deactivation and environmentally-safe disposal of solid municipal wastes and also the integration of relevant economic mechanisms. It furthermore envisages upgrading the regulatory and legal frameworks for the treatment of solid municipal wastes treatment, developing environmental education and raising awareness on issues related to solid municipal wastes treatment, deactivation and disposal.

More information: vladimir.moshkalo@unep.org

Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement is born



On 29 July, the newly-created Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (KazFOAM) was formally registered.

The main aim of this public organization is to unite, develop and support organic agriculture as a sector contributing to the green economy of the country as well as in the Central Asia region. The KazFOAM has a plan for 2013-2017, and aims to develop the legal and technical base in accordance with international norms, to study the supply and demand of organic products, and to closely work with all participants of the market for organic products such as farmers, producers, consumers, processors and distributors.

Turkmenistan to build Caspian energy port

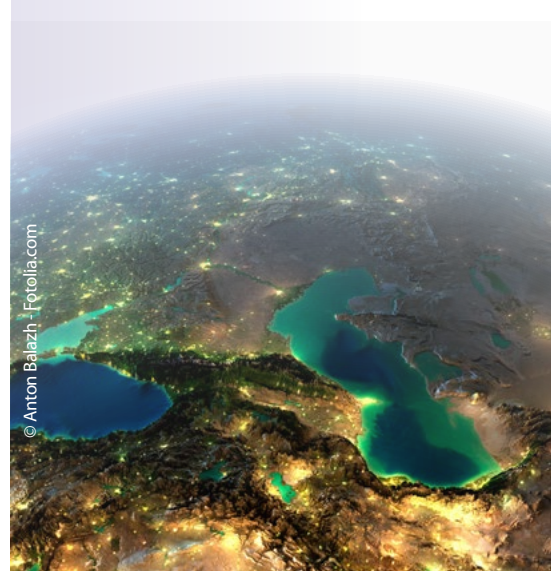


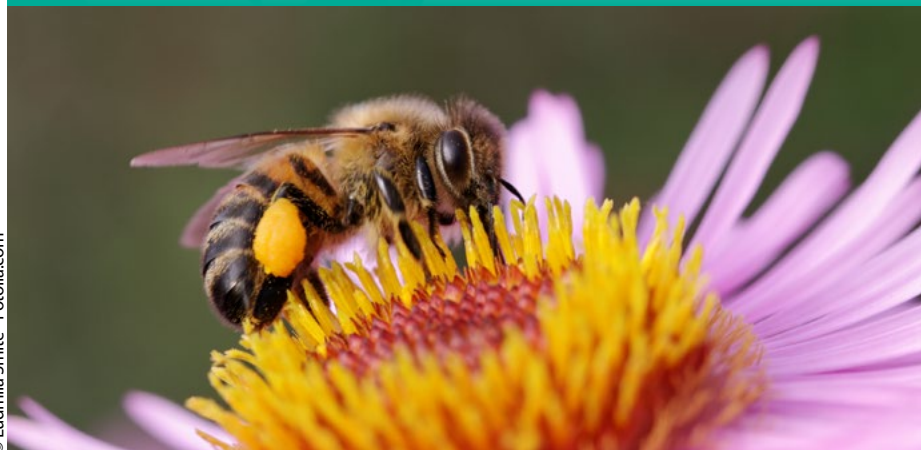
Energy-rich Turkmenistan launched on 15 August a USD2 billion project to build a new port on the Caspian Sea designed

to boost exports. Turkmen President Berdimukhamedov and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan took part in a ground-breaking ceremony in the western town of Turkmenbashi where the new port will be built by a Turkish construction firm.

More information [here](#).

© Anton Balazh - Fotolia.com





Declining bee numbers: measures to protect the pollinators in Africa and Asia

As the crucial role of bees as pollinators of the world's food supply is increasingly becoming common knowledge, reports about the serious decline of honeybee populations in Europe and the USA have alarmed governments, the private sector and the general public. A similar decline in Africa and Asia has the potential to further threaten the world's biodiversity, in addition to compromising the food security and livelihoods of millions of rural resource-poor farmers, as well as having negative impacts on the agricultural income of commercial farmers.

Through the support of [Gaston Franco](#), Member of the European Parliament and creator of the European Week of Bees and Pollination, UNEP and the European Union (EU) organized the [2nd European Week of Bees and Pollination, 3–5 June 2013](#) to review why bees are declining and what is being done to help them.

Renowned scientists from around the world came together to give an overview of beekeeping and bee mortality in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, and assess key needs and actions to protect bees around the world.

Apart from the honey they produce, bees are vitally important pollinators of fruit and vegetable crops. It is estimated that pollinators, especially bees, are responsible for about one in three bites of the food we eat.

For much of the last ten years, beekeepers, primarily in the United States and Europe, have been reporting annual hive losses of 30% or higher, which is substantially more than is considered normal or sustainable. Many bee species and other pollinating insects have experienced a sharp decline in numbers, raising major concerns about the impacts on food supplies and environmental health.

"The increase in honeybee mortality is a puzzle," said researcher Dennis vanEngelsdorp, an entomologist from the University of Maryland. "We know that it involves the parasitic varroa mite, we know it is a result of poor bee nutrition, and there is increasing evidence (in the US) that more and more land in the Midwest is being ploughed under by corn and soybean, with increased exposure to pesticides – so we think it is a multi factorial process."

Read the full "[Voices and Views](#)" article on www.capacity4dev.eu.



Restoring Dalmatian Pelicans and their habitats in the Mediterranean basin

The Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is funding a project on the conservation of the Dalmatian Pelican and Wetlands in the Mediterranean Basin. Wetlands are some of the world's most biologically diverse yet fragile ecosystems. They are home to a remarkable number of waterbirds such as the Dalmatian Pelican.

In the Mediterranean Basin, there are 226 Ramsar sites which are considered as "wetlands of international importance". Many are in a critical state or have already disappeared, due to human-made threats such as expanding agriculture, with serious negative impacts on the Dalmatian Pelican, whose presence in Europe is now limited to only 13 wetlands in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

The Dalmatian Pelican is listed in CMS Appendices I and II. It is categorized as Vulnerable by the IUCN, and listed under AEWA, Appendix II of the Bern Convention, Appendix I of CITES, and Annex I of the European Birds Directive. Without continued efforts, the decline of breeding sites will cause the total disappearance of Dalmatian Pelicans from the Mediterranean Basin.

The CMS-funded project is being implemented by the French organization Noé Conservation, in collaboration with other international and regional research centres and specialist groups. It focuses on the Skadar Lake National Park in Montenegro, Kerkini Lake in Greece and Karavasta Lagoon in Albania. Its main purpose is to improve the scientific knowledge of the species and its habitats and to manage effectively its breeding sites. The project also aims to help local communities to establish sustainable management and use of natural resources, and increase public awareness to generate local support for the conservation of this species. Other wetland flora and fauna will also benefit from the protection of the Dalmatian Pelican as an umbrella species.

More information: ulenarz@cms.int

II. UNEP ON THE GROUND



The Regional Ozone Network for Europe and Central Asia turns 10

The Regional Ozone Network for Europe and Central Asia (ECA network) celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The anniversary brochure will highlight a decade of achievements in facilitating the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and share major achievements, case studies and highlights within and outside the region.

The network includes countries from Central Asia, Caucasus and the Balkans. Several former ECA network countries have already acceded to the European Union and Croatia is the most recent example. Further candidates (Macedonia FYR, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey) and potential candidates (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina) may join in the future.

Facts and figures of the ECA network in terms of Montreal Protocol implementation at a glance:

- all 12 countries ratified all Montreal Protocol amendments since 2011
- all are in compliance with the phase-out schedules for ozone-depleting substances (ODS)
- all reported Article 7 and Country Programme data for 2012 (by June 2013)
- all have operational ODS import / export licensing systems in place
- 10 out of 12 designated Customs focal points for the Montreal Protocol
- 8 out of 12 participate in the informal Prior Informed Consent initiative to prevent illegal trade
- 8 out of 12 reported HCFC consumption for 2012 below the baseline (freeze in 2013)

UNEP's OzoneAction Programme congratulates the ECA network countries for these achievements, their high commitment to meet the phase-out targets under the Montreal Protocol, the tremendous efforts in policy setting, technology transfer, training, education and awareness raising and their willingness to share experiences with other network countries.

More information: halvart.koppen@unep.org



Experts discuss environmental impact of next winter Olympics

On 2 August, the Head of UNEP's Moscow Office Vladimir Moshkalo participated in a live Skyleaf Eco TV discussion on Sochi 2014 with the Sochi Organizing Committee and the Russian Federal Service for Supervision of Nature Management (Rosprirodnadzor). UNEP has given recommendations to minimize the environmental impact of the winter Olympics. Mr Moshkalo pointed out that Sochi had all opportunities to pick up the slack of "green construction" from the London Olympics. Mr Gleb Vatletsov of the Organizing Committee stressed the environmental challenge of the Sochi Olympics caused by the facilities being partly located within the territory of the Sochi National Park. He also pointed out that representatives of environmental NGOs had convinced the Administration of the region to transfer some Olympic facilities before the construction plan was approved. Ms Natalya Sokolova, Head of Division of the Russian Federal Service for Supervision of Nature Management, Deputy Chief State Environmental Inspector of the Russian Federation expressed concern over the small quantity of landfills for waste disposal in the Sochi region.

Following the TV debate, the Working Group on Sochi 2014, which included UNEP experts, met to discuss an assessment matrix detailing the state of implementation of each activity and prepare the mission work and agenda.

More information:
vladimir.moshkalo@unep.org



ASCOBANS meets to agree further measures to protect small cetaceans

From 27 to 29 August, government officials, representatives of IGOs, NGOs and scientists gathered in Warsaw, Poland for the 20th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS).

In the course of their migrations, during which they cross national boundaries, small cetaceans encounter a variety of human-induced threats. Bycatch in fishing gear takes the heaviest toll, but pollution, shipping traffic and habitat degradation also endanger these marine mammals.

One species of particular concern to the Agreement is the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise. The only cetacean species occurring in the Baltic Sea, its Baltic population is classified as critically endangered by IUCN. In recent decades it has dramatically declined, from several tens of thousands to a few hundred.

In order to improve the odds of survival for the Baltic harbour porpoise and other species, ASCOBANS Parties are obliged to take appropriate conservation measures, undertake research and engage in awareness-raising. Much has been achieved, but further action is urgently needed. The 20th Advisory Committee Meeting in Warsaw accordingly made recommendations to Parties and decided how it will be addressing these threats with regards to bycatch, underwater noise, marine debris, and items only recently included in the ASCOBANS Work Plan, such as the threat coming from unexploded munitions and the methods for their removal.

ASCOBANS was concluded in 1991 under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS or Bonn Convention). The Agreement currently has 10 Parties from across the Baltic, North Sea and North Atlantic regions. The Advisory Committee meets annually and takes stock of progress in implementing the ASCOBANS and charts the course for future action.

More information: vlenarz@cms.int



 **ASCOBANS**





© Andrey Kuzmin - Fotolia.com

German Ministries and CITES Secretary-General coordinate fight against wildlife crime

Efforts to fight poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and international support for global, regional and national initiatives were the focus of talks held in Bonn last July between representatives from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and CITES Secretary-General John E. Scanlon.

Discussions touched on a number of different initiatives spearheaded by Germany, including a project to develop forensic methods to determine the age and origin of elephant ivory by analysing isotopes. Addressing directly the benefits of this project, Mr Scanlon stated that “the provision of reliable evidence based on new DNA technologies is critical to combating wildlife crime. It will be of great value to prosecutors in securing convictions against criminals engaging in illegal trade in wildlife”.

German representatives and Mr Scanlon also discussed how to promote more coherent approaches among different ministries to deal with poaching and illegal trade in wildlife, activities that are highly profitable and pose complex challenges.

BMZ supports concrete measures to fight poaching and illegal trade in range countries of rhinos and elephants and in countries where ivory and rhino horn based products are consumed, as well as at the international level. This is part of Germany's commitment to making available 500 Mio. € annually from 2013 onwards for the conservation of forests and other ecosystems worldwide.

These initiatives will be further buttressed by the preparation of a high-level elephant event organized by Tanzania in cooperation with IUCN from 4 to 6 November. This summit's purpose will be to find solutions and funding for urgent measures to better deal with the challenges posed by the illegal trade in elephant ivory.

More information:
juan.vasquez@cites.org



Promoting disaster risk reduction in fragile states

Promoting and scaling up ecosystem-based approaches in disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) requires political buy-in from policymakers, decision-makers and planners in governments both at national and local levels.

UNEP, in partnership with national government ministries and partners, delivered national trainings on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction in Afghanistan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan between June and August. The trainings raised greater awareness and enhanced capacities in applying sustainable ecosystem management for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Based on the National Training Course on Eco-DRR developed by the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), the trainings were then tailored towards each country context and geared towards developing an Agenda for Action that facilitates inter-sectoral collaboration on mainstreaming ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction into development.

UNEP is implementing Eco-DRR demonstration projects in the four countries, with funding support from the European Commission. This project is in line with the European Union Strategy for Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries (2011-2014).

More information:
samantha.newport@unep.org



Eco-DRR in Haiti focuses on reforestation to prevent erosion

© UNEP



Chiratchaya Kaeokamkong from Vietnam wins UNEP's children painting competition

Winners of the Global Art and Environment Competition

13-year-old Chiratchaya Kaeokamkong's painting of a child playing with fish, turtles and unicorns in a world awash with water and vegetation has won first place in the 22nd International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment, run by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

All of the young artists painted under the theme of "Water: Where Does it Come From?" in support of the 2013 UN International Year of Water Cooperation. She won the top prize of USD 2,000 and an all-expenses-paid trip to attend the award ceremony, which takes place alongside UNEP's Champions of the Earth award in New York in late September. Yevheniia Zakharchuk from Ukraine is Europe's regional winner and will receive USD 1,000 and a trip to the award ceremony.

"Water plays a key role in sustaining human life and the environment, yet rapid urbanization, pollution and climate change are threatening this resource," said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

"The paintings by these bright and environmentally savvy young people demonstrate that the coming generation understands this, and can play a key role in transforming how the world treats its water supplies," he added. "This gives UNEP great hope for the future."

The International Children's Painting Competition is UNEP's flagship art and environment event. Since 1991, it has received more than three million entries from children in over 190 countries. The competition is organized in partnership with the Japan-based Foundation for Global Peace and Environment (FGPE), Bayer and the Nikon Corporation.

Entries are now being sought for the 23rd competition, which will be themed around the issue of food waste. UNEP, in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Organization, is running a campaign called "Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint" to cut the estimated one-third of all food lost or wasted every year.

Young people between 6 and 14 years are eligible to enter the competition. Full details are available [here](#).

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management: 5th Central and Eastern European regional meeting

The SAICM secretariat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Macedonia FYR are organizing the fifth Central and Eastern European (CEE) regional meeting on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), and related consultations in Skopje, Macedonia, from 23 to 26 September. The aim of the regional meeting is, inter alia, to review progress on implementation of SAICM, identify regional priorities, exchange experience and share information on activities undertaken at the national and regional levels, and to review and provide input to the draft document on the Overall Orientation and Guidance including some concrete elements, to facilitate achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management.

More information [here](#).

Job posting – call for applicants: Chief, Brussels Office, P-5

UNEP is looking for the Chief to its Brussels Office. Please check out the vacancy notice and apply [here](#).