

Programme

Western Balkans Restoration Conference Advancing Nature-based Solutions under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

Date: 09-11 June 2026

Location: Hotel Metropol, Naselba Dolno Konjsko bb 6000 Ohrid, North Macedonia

Background and context

Ecosystems across the Western Balkans are under increasing pressure from multiple drivers, including unsustainable resource use, deforestation, infrastructure development, land-use change, invasive alien species, pollution, and climate change. As these pressures intensify, ecosystem degradation accelerates, leading to the depletion of natural capital and the decline in ecosystem services that support biodiversity, human well-being, and long-term socio-economic resilience.

Ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) offer opportunities to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into development pathways, delivering dual benefits for nature and people. Nature-based Solutions address key societal challenges, including climate change through adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity loss by reversing ecosystem degradation, disaster risk reduction by reducing risks and increasing resilience, socio-economic development by supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic recovery, food security by ensuring sustainable food production, water security by securing clean and sustainable water sources, and human health and well-being. They leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure, and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future.

The Western Balkans Restoration Conference aims to explore pathways for accelerating ecosystem restoration and mainstreaming Nature-based Solutions (NbS) across key economic sectors in the Western Balkans Six. It brings together policymakers, practitioners, academia, civil society, and development partners to facilitate multistakeholder dialogue and strengthen coordinated action on restoration and NbS through policy, institutions, finance, and on-the-ground implementation.

Anchored in the [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#) (GAWB), the Conference discusses key regional policy documents in development, notably the draft WB6 Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2030 (BSP) and the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) Plan. It also explores the operationalisation and implementation of these policy frameworks, informed by lessons learned from ongoing projects and programmes, alongside forward-looking discussions on new initiatives at both WB6 and domestic levels.

The Regional Conference is organised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature through its Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO). The event is held in the framework of the project “[ADAPT 2.0: Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in the Western Balkans](#)” funded by Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented by IUCN ECARO.

Conference Objectives

The main goal of the Western Balkans Restoration Conference is to catalyse regional action on ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans Six through policy, institutions, finance, and on-the-ground implementation.

Specific objectives

1. **Facilitate multi-stakeholder policy dialogue** on key regional policy frameworks under development, including the draft WB6 Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2023 (BSP) and the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) Plan.
2. **Explore innovative approaches** for the operationalisation and implementation of ecosystem restoration and NbS policy frameworks, including institutional arrangements, financing mechanisms, tools and standards, as well as case studies from the region.
3. **Identify opportunities:** Collaboratively identify opportunities for new project initiatives, and partnerships to scale up ecosystem restoration and NbS actions at both WB6 and domestic levels.

Conference Format and Participants

The Western Balkans Regional Conference convenes representatives from public authorities, practitioners, academia and civil society from the WB6, Regional Coordination Council, as well as international organisations and development partners working in the region.

The event is conducted in a hybrid format. The working language is English.

Expected Outcomes

The meeting is expected to result in:

1. **Strengthened regional cooperation** and a shared understanding among WB6 stakeholders of key policy frameworks and proposed actions on ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions, alongside greater alignment on implementation priorities.
2. **Identification of new partnership opportunities** and project ideas to support the scaling up of ecosystem restoration and NbS actions, including potential funding sources and implementation pathways.
3. **Improved understanding of ecosystem restoration and NbS**, as well as enhanced visibility of on-the-ground actions across the WB6.

Western Balkans Restoration Conference: Advancing Nature-based Solutions under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

Agenda Day 1

Online registration: [Western Balkans Restoration Conference: Advancing Nature-based Solutions under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans - Day 1](#)

9 June 2026, Tuesday	
Time	Agenda Item
09:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:15	<i>Opening remarks</i> – Dr. Oliver Avramoski, Regional Director, IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) – Ministry of environment and physical planning, Republic of North Macedonia Minister – Ministry of Environment, Republic of Albania – Ms. Ivana Markovic Boskovic, GAWB Coordinator, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
10:15-11:30	<i>High-level panel: Mainstreaming ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans – from stand-alone projects to systemic change</i> – IUCN presentation: <i>State of ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans Six</i> – Panel with the representatives from Western Balkan Six
11:30-12:00	Group Photo and Coffee Break. Press Statements
12:00-13:00	<i>Expert dialogue: Nature-based Solution benefits for enhancing biodiversity, climate and societal resilience in the Western Balkans Six</i> – This session aims to highlight key findings from the ongoing IUCN study on Nature-based Solution benefits for enhancing biodiversity, climate, and societal resilience in the Western Balkans Six, as well as to facilitate expert dialogue on the current state and future pathways for NbS in the Western Balkans Six.
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:30	<i>Donor roundtable: Finance for nature</i> – This roundtable convenes donors, political and development partners to exchange perspectives on mobilising for ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkan Six
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break
16:00-17:30	<i>Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) Plan</i> – This session presents a draft of the Western Balkan Six Forest Landscape Restoration Plan and provide a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue on its key elements

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Agenda Day 2

Online registration:

Stream 1: [Western Balkans Restoration Conference: Advancing Nature-based Solutions under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans - Day 2, Stream 1](#)

Stream 2: [Western Balkans Restoration Conference: Advancing Nature-based Solutions under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans - Day 2, Stream 2](#)

10 June 2026, Wednesday	
Stream 1: Policy, Finance, Institutions	Stream 2: NbS Actions
09:00-11:00 <i>Roundtable:</i> Finance for nature in practice - Financial instruments and delivery models for nature and biodiversity investments	09:00-11:00 <i>Community of Practice dialogue:</i> IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions™ for local action in the Western Balkans
11:00-11:30: Coffee Break	
11:30-13:00 <i>BDTF and its Thematic Groups Convening:</i> Connectivity for biodiversity conservation in the Western Balkans	11:30-13:00 <i>Community of Practice dialogue:</i> IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions™ for local action in the Western Balkans <i>(continuation)</i>
13:00-14:00: Lunch Break	
14:00-14:45 <i>Policy dialogue:</i> Nature restoration meets renewable acceleration: Policy pathways for a climate-neutral Europe Lead Expert: Energy Community Secretariat	14:00-15:30 <i>Community of Practice dialogue:</i> Nature-based Solutions for Agriculture and Rural Areas
14:45-15:30 <i>Expert Presentation:</i> Dam removal – restoring longitudinal connectivity of rivers Lead Expert: TNC	
15:30-16:00: Coffee Break	
16:00-17:15 – Case studies from National Park Galicica: Introduction to Day 3	
17:00-17:30 – Closing remarks	