Memorandum of Cooperation between

the Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (CERI)

and

the United Nations Environment Programme Vienna – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP Vienna – ISCC)

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Carpathians are a unique natural treasure of great beauty and ecological value, an important reservoir of biodiversity, the headwaters of major rivers, an essential habitat and refuge for many endangered species of plants and animals and Europe's largest area of virgin forests, and AWARE that the Carpathians constitute a major ecological, economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous peoples and countries;

REALIZING the importance and ecological, cultural and socio-economic value of mountain regions, ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of sub-regional cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians;

NOTING the complementary nature of the goals and basic principles of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and the 'ecoregion approach': visionary and large-scale, science-based, participatory (Article 2(3) of the CERI statutes), and the existence of specialized technical and scientific competence within CERI platforms and programs relating to the goals of the Carpathian Convention;

NOTING the Carpathian Convention's Article 4 on "Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity**,** and acknowledging the expertise of CERI members in specialized areas of biodiversity assessment and research in the Carpathians;

RECALLING the Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Carpathian and Danube Region (Bucharest, 2001); ACKNOWLEDGING the strong historic partnership of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative, such as in the Bucharest summit and the Kyiv Conference; TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the participation of and contribution by CERI as an invited guest in the work of the 3 Bolzano Ad Hoc Expert meetings, and ACKNOWLEDGING UNEP's participation in and contribution to the 1st CERI General Assembly since its independence;

RECOGNIZING that the Carpathians constitute the living environment for the local people, and ACKNOWLEDGING the contribution of the local people to sustainable social, cultural and economic development, and to preserving traditional knowledge in the Carpathians; and recognizing the ability of CERI to work on issues of local sustainable development;

The Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (CERI) and UNEP Vienna – ISCC, agree to establish the following cooperation:

1) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC join their efforts in promoting the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathian region by combining their comparative advantages and balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches.
2) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will further increase their cooperation and ensure regular exchange of information and ensuring representation, as appropriate, in each other's events and activities.
3) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will cooperate in the development and implementation of relevant projects, and in particular in the UNDP GEF submission "Biodiversity Conservation in the Carpathians through an Enhanced Protected Areas System and Connectivity of an Ecological Network".
4) Based on the activities and outcomes of above project, CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will cooperate in supporting stakeholders, as requested by them, in the development and implementation of an Ecoregion Action Plan as well as of a future Protocol on Biodiversity under the Carpathian Convention.
5) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will join the efforts in supporting Governments of Carpathian countries, as requested, in their preparations for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and the establishment of a Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA).
6) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will explore further opportunities of increased cooperation in integrative activities relating to other fields of action of the Carpathian Convention.
7) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will cooperate by dissemination of information on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Carpathian countries.
8) CERI and UNEP Vienna ISCC will cooperate in assessment and data collection, such as in preparation of KEO, and the development of Carpathian Clearinghouse and information system.

CERI and UNEP Vienna-ISCC establish joint annual operational action plans for the their activities in support of the Carpathian Convention (Annex), which shall be regularly updated through at the request of either party or at the point either party's programme is revised.

The present memorandum of cooperation is for an initial period of two years (2005 and 2006) and can be extended for a second period, taking into account the results of the first period.

Nothing in this Memorandum shall create or imply a financial obligation by either party to this Memorandum. Either party can withdraw from this Memorandum of Cooperation by notifying the other party in writing at least six months in advance.

Signed:

For the CERI Secretariat

For UNEP Vienna ISCC

Jan Seffer
Chair

Frits Schlingemann

Regional Representative, UNEP

Joint action plan for 2005–2006

1. To cooperate in the preparation and implementation of the UNDP / GEF project submission "Biodiversity Conservation in the Carpathians through an Enhanced Protected Areas System and Connectivity of an Ecological Network", and implementation of the related projects under the Carpathian Convention:

- Stakeholder meeting at COP1
- …