

DECLARATION

ON COOPERATION OF OMBUDSMEN

IN THE AREAS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ljubljana, 15 September 2017



1. The Ombudsmen from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia assembled at the 4th international conference The Environment and Human Rights: Public Participation in Environmental Matters held on 15 September 2017 in Ljubljana:

- recognising that the right to a healthy living environment is a fundamental human right (third generation) and that all States should strive to adopt systemic measures to exercise them;
- considering that Ombudsmen receive and deal with petitions concerning environmental issues and bearing in mind their mission to protect human rights and freedoms in relation to state and local authorities, also in the area of environment;
- noting that the issues of safe, healthy and sound environment are closely related to the situation in the State's neighbourhood as well as to the transboundary and global context;
- noting that public participation in environmental and spatial decision-making in our States is below the desired level;

are unanimous that the undersigned Ombudsmen's Representatives establish closer cooperation regarding the environment, herewith establish a **Network of Ombudsmen for the Environment and Human Rights**.

2. The purpose of the Network shall be:

- to establish close cooperation between the Members of the Network;
- to exchange knowledge, findings, experience and good practices;
- to further develop forms of Ombudsmen's response in the area of environment;
- to act in concert and to provide mutual support in fulfilling the mission of the Ombudsmen in the area of environment.

3. Participation in the Network shall be voluntary.
4. Membership in the Network shall be open. Applications to join the Network shall be received by the Chair of the Network of Ombudsmen. Applications shall be decided upon unanimously by the Members.
5. The Network shall be open to cooperation with regional, European and international organisations that pursue similar objectives with regard to exercising the right to a healthy environment.
6. Cooperation shall be developed through regular annual forums, conferences or meetings of Representatives, topic-oriented meetings, joint visits to degraded areas, and exchange of knowledge, findings, documents, information and reports.
7. Language used at conferences shall be the official language of the host country with provided interpretation in one of the participating parties' languages.
8. The Network may establish working groups for specific issues.
9. Members of the Network shall adopt decisions by consensus.
10. Members of the Network shall agree on the Ombudsman to serve as the Network Chair for one-year term.
11. The Network shall have its headquarters with the Ombudsman chairing the Network of Ombudsmen.
12. The Chair of the Network of Ombudsmen shall present the positions and agreements adopted.

13. All Members of the Network shall bear their own costs relating to participation unless the Chair or other Members of the Network provide funding for the organisation of particular event.

14. The wording of the Declaration in its original version is in the English language.

Signatures of the Ombudsmen from:



Bosnia and Herzegovina:  

Croatia: 

Kosovo*: 

Macedonia: 

Montenegro: 

Serbia: 

Slovenia: 

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.