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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

***NINETEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING
OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

*Organised under the auspices of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe*

“The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy”

**Brno, Czech Republic,
5-6 September 2017
*Study visit, 7 September 2017***

WORKSHOP 3 - GENERAL DEBATE

Experiences of taking into account the landscape dimension at the local level - Georgia

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The European Landscape Convention has a great importance for all countries which have ratified it, including Georgia. This Convention facilitates and pushes these countries to consider the importance and value of landscapes in their territory not only at the country level, but throughout Europe. Such global vision plays a major role in appraising the value of landscapes and promoting higher quality protection.

The improvement of mechanisms for protection of landscapes in the territory of each country is available at the local level, on the platform of the Convention, in the field of implementation of its provisions in the field of regulation of legislative, education, agriculture and tourism development, as well as in the development of urban planning documents. One of the most important issues in the development of national landscape protection policy is to ensure that the convention is intended for a wide range of community and its promotion. It is necessary to

educate the population of the country that with protection of the valuable landscapes of their region, cities or villages, that they are doing a great job not only at the local level but also in the protection of European landscapes, which have universal value. Many things in this direction still need to be done. Not everyone is aware that neglecting and inappropriate treatment of surrounding landscapes damages not only his own country but the entire European family.

Implementation of the European Landscape Convention on Urban Planning Documentation and Issues of Landscape Management

Regarding the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, it has been absorbed into legislative acts of Georgia, in particular in the project of The Cultural and Natural Heritage Code. We have also initiated and promoted the implementation of urban development documentation by the Government of Georgia on the territory of different municipalities, for areas with valuable landscapes. In particular, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia announced competitions for the elaboration of spatial-territorial planning documentation for various municipalities in 2016-2017.

The importance of the urban documentation should be noted in connection to landscape protection and management issues, as land use issues are defined within the urban planning documents. Urban Land Use Master Plan (ULUMP) documents are processed by law, including the legislative basis of cultural heritage and environmental regulations and the conventions ratified by Georgia. The existence of ULUPM in the context of local democratic processes facilitates effective development of the regions of Georgia and their municipalities. Land use issues under separate municipal areas guarantees protection of the valuable landscape at the local level.

Outstanding examples of exceptional mountain landscapes are an important part of the UNESCO World Heritage list, as well as the Tentative list of nominations. Georgia is represented by three nominations in the main list of world heritage. These are the historical monuments of Mtskheta, Zemo Svaneti-village Chazha and Bagrati-Gelati. In all these three nominations landscapes have a big role in determining their value. The role of landscape in the Mtskheta nomination is uncertain. In order to protect the unique landscapes around the historical monuments of Mtskheta, according to the Georgian legislation, the historical landscape protection zone has been established by the relevant regime.

Unique landscapes are one of the major criteria that qualifies the representation of Zemo Svaneti-Chazhashi in the World Heritage List. The role of landscapes is very important in the nominations presented by Georgia for the Tentative List, including: Mta-Tusheti region (Category: Mixed). It is also worth mentioning the nomination of Colchis Wetlands and Forests (Category: Natural).

Problems and their solutions related to the Landscapes

In the context of problematic issues, it should be noted that the increase in tourism flows in areas with valuable landscapes require a rapid growth of tourism infrastructure. Development of tourism infrastructure, in turn, requires appropriate urban planning documentation, as this

document regulates the main issues of land use. The development of urban documentation is, in some cases, far behind the tourism development- for example in Svaneti, which is very popular with tourists. The increasing flow of tourists has led to more residential areas and tourist infrastructure development need. In response to the new challenges, processes were implemented without proper regulation and threatened the issue of the protection of unique landscapes. The unauthorised new buildings, (in most cases without a permit documentation) initiated by local people, threatened the preservation of the unique landscape. Taking into consideration the situation, the Government of Georgia announced a moratorium on new construction until the processing of appropriate ULUMP documentations on the territory of the village Chazhashi which is on the UNESCO heritage list. The resolution “About the introduction of a special regime of urban regulation in Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtsheta municipality” is in force until 31 December 2018.

Regarding the issue of the development of a national landscapes policy, it could be said that this is too important for Georgia. Special attention should be paid to the improvement of landscape protection mechanisms while developing such a policy. In this context, it is important to raise public awareness. Under Georgian legislation, issues of protection of landscapes are presented in various legislative spheres, including the Law of Georgia on Cultural Heritage and Environmental spheres. Developing a united national landscape policy will bring forth the importance of existing regulations in these laws and will help to present the issues of Georgia’s Landscape Protection at a qualitatively higher level. A document defining the national landscape policy will be a message for the population about the importance of preserving and protecting the landscape of Georgia for the State. It would also recognise the State's obligations as a member of the European family, which has ratified such an important document as the European Landscape Convention.

In conclusion, it should be said that Georgia still continues its efforts in exploring new approaches, methodologies and best practices for the implementation of European Landscape Convention.