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**COMMITTEE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY**

CO-DBP

Group of specialists - European Diploma

**Východné Karpaty
Protected Landscape Area**

(Slovakia)

APPLICATION

Evaluation Report
by Mr Charles ZIMMER,
(Luxembourg)

INTRODUCTION

At its meeting of 24-27 April 1997 the Group of Specialists — *European Diploma* took note of the application of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area submitted by the Slovak Government.

The presentation of the site and the factors justifying the application for the Diploma are contained in Council of Europe document [PE-S-DE (97) 63] of 26 February 1997. This information is not repeated in the present report.

The Group acknowledged the interest of the site and requested that the expert sent to visit it should also be responsible for evaluating the BIESZCZADY National Park whose application had been submitted by Poland, this National Park bordering the Slovak site to the north.

The Group requested the expert :

- to organise a meeting between the managers of the two areas applying for the European Diploma,
- to check on the situation of the forest areas of “unsettled ownership” mentioned in the application document for the Slovak site,
- to verify the coherence of the management of the area and determine the precise powers of the Slovak Environmental Agency.

The visit to the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area took place from 7 to 10 July 1997. During his visit the expert was accompanied by Mrs Françoise BAUER of the Environment Conservation and Management Division of the Council of Europe.

The visit to the site, the stay and the travel through the Protected Landscape Area were organised by Mr Kamil VILINOVIC of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and by MM. Miroslav BURAL, Director, and Marian GIC, Forestry Officer, of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area.

REPORT ON THE VISIT

7 July: Transfer in a service vehicle from the Bieszczady National Park to the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area.

It was during this transfer, at Hunkovce, that the meeting took place between the managers of the two sites, Polish and Slovak, applying for the European Diploma. The discussion was concerned with projects, planned or under way, on both sides of the common frontier.

Collaboration at present is based for the most part on the joint project of establishing the “East Carpathians” MaB Biosphere Reserve. This future East Carpathians Reserve encompasses the territory of the Bieszczady National Park, the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area and the Stuzica Forest Reserve in Ukraine, or a total of almost 154 000 hectares.

An *ad hoc* group drafted the Agreement on the collaboration of the three countries in the MaB Biosphere Reserve project. This Agreement defines the sites forming part of the Reserve and the common objectives (cooperation, nature conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, monitoring, information, rules of the coordination committee).

The Agreement establishes the organs responsible for implementing the cooperation, joint research and investment programmes, the passage of frontiers by the staff of the reserve, and frontier crossing points for tourists.

However, this Agreement has not yet been signed by any of the three countries of the MaB Reserve. There is nevertheless already informal collaboration between the services of the three protected areas, more particularly between the Polish and Slovak administrations.

A Fund created by the World Bank and the McArthur Foundation, deposited in Switzerland, is managed by a Foundation for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of the East Carpathians, a foundation made up of officials of the three protected areas. The revenue from this, Fund shared between the three countries (5000 USD/country), is intended for projects implemented by NGOs in the MaB Reserve.

In the course of the meeting a certain number of problems common to the three services were evoked: the lack of harmonisation of the national legislations regarding the management objectives the MaB Reserve, forest management and silviculture, management of the poloniny, tourist development and border-crossing traffic, transfrontier pollution and the need for the Agreement concerning the trilateral Biosphere Reserve to be signed in order to institutionalise and facilitate joint management.

The Bieszczady National Park already regularly publishes in its scientific review, *Roczniki Bieszczadzkie*, studies and information concerning the three sites of the trilateral Reserve.

8 July: The day was devoted to visiting the site over two circuits which gave an overall view of the Protected Landscape Area and the principal habitats.

Morning

- Pod Rabion Skalou: mountain meadow management, the poloniny, above the upper limit of the forest zone.
- Resinous forest management and conversion of the spruce plantations, fight against the erosion of the flysch soils which are extremely vulnerable to water erosion.
- Zbojsky Potok basin: project to regulate the stream by means of wooden sluices.
- Village of Zboj: collective farm and agriculture in the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area.
- Ulicska Ostra Nature Reserve: relic of primeval forest along Ulicska stream with inversion of forest zoning (beech-oak).
- Village of Kolbasov: household waste sorting station (glass and paper containers). A curious sight: two young polecats "abandoned" by the side of the road.

Afternoon

- Village of Rumina: view of the wooded slopes formerly exploited by the clear-cut method, with the broad open bands now being recolonised, with coppices and undergrowth of young birch, willow and various shrubs.
- Village of Ruské (partly abandoned): Wooden hunting lodge housing the administration, also used for village festivals.
- Discussion on the management of hunting. Except in the national reserves, hunting is organised by associations under the authority of the forest administration. There is a long tradition of hunting in the Carpathians and the stags are renowned for the quality of their trophies. Thus the bodies in charge of hunting are very jealous of their powers. The management of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area has only an advisory role in this field at present.
- Pod Ruskym Nature Reserve: extensive management of hay meadows in the valley, monitoring of the evolution of the meadow associations. A small ski lift is installed nearby. This installation may represent a potential threat in the form of tourist development.
- Starina drinking water supply reservoir, with its protection zones, maintenance of the rural landscapes below the dam.
- Havesova Forest Reserve: this primeval beech forest left to natural evolution has the characteristic structure: remarkable size and age of certain individuals, importance of the biomass and of the fallen trees.

9 July*Morning*

Presentation by the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area management of the situation, management and activities within the Protected Landscape Area. This presentation was made in the new Nova Sedlica Reception Centre where we were housed during our stay. The various topics were presented by the officials and scientists responsible for the management of the Protected Landscape Area.

The Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area extends over 97 000 hectares. However, the application for the award of the European Diploma concerns only part of the Protected Landscape Area, that constituted by the Slovak part of the MaB Reserve, which will become the Poloniny National Park with an area of some 41 000 hectares.

The management of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area comes under the Slovak Environmental Agency and is located in the area under the control of the Presov Agency regional sub-centre. The offices in Humenne are outside the Protected Landscape Area, but will soon be transferred to Snina, inside the reserve.

The service, totalling seven officials, is very small: a Director, a Forestry Officer specialised in GIS, a forester, agronomist, two botanists, a zoologist, an economist and a forest ranger.

The budget of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area (excluding personnel costs) amounts to 745 000 SKK a year.

THE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK OF NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

As early as 1968 the communist regime in Czechoslovakia introduced the federal system that gave the Czech and Slovak governments responsibility in the field of nature conservation policy.

After Czechoslovakia split in two in 1993, the Slovak Republic actively pursued the development of its nature conservation policy. Thus the outdated law of 1955 was replaced by a new Act, 287/1994, on the protection of nature and the countryside, which entered into force on 1 January 1995.

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible, among other things, for air and water quality, waste disposal, nature conservation, regional development, geology, etc.

The Ministry is made up of the following departments:

- the environmental districts and sub-districts as administrative branches of the Ministry,
- the Slovak Environmental Inspectorate,
- the Slovak Environmental Agency which has a Nature and Landscape Protection Centre with seven regional sub-centres comprising the services of the protected areas (16 Protected Landscape Areas),
- the National Parks Service (5 National Parks),
- the Slovak Caves Administration.

The Act provides for five degrees of protection of the territory, ranging from the degree of protection 1, applicable to the whole of the territory, to degree 5, the most restrictive, which applies to nature reserves.

The protected areas are:

- Protected Landscape Areas (degree of protection 2),
- National Parks (degree of protection 3),
- Protected Sites (degree of protection 4),
- Nature Reserves and Natural Monuments (degree of protection 5).

A **Protected Landscape Area** may include up to four zones with degrees of protection 2 to 5. The Protected Landscape Area service comes under the local Slovak Environmental Agency sub-centre. Over a large part of the territory of the Protected Landscape Area its powers are thus advisory. The Protected Landscape Area is designated by regulation of the Minister for the Environment who decides the restrictions and prohibitions applying to it.

The 16 protected landscapes in the Slovak Republic cover 13.5 % of the national territory.

A **National Park** may be divided into three zones A, B and C going from degree of protection 3 to 5. The management of the National Park comes under the National Parks Service.

The designation is made by a government decree which determines the limits of the National Park, its peripheral protection zones and the restrictions, prohibitions and other protective measures applicable to it.

In 1992 the government defined a general framework for the implementation of its nature conservation policy in its "Territorial System of Ecological Stability" which defines at national, regional and local level, the geographic ecological structures (networks).

The implementation of this policy is achieved through four of the ten sectors of the National Environmental Action Programme of 1996: sector E: Management of nature and the countryside, regional development; sector F: Protection and rational use of the mineral, soil and forest environment; sector H: Monitoring and computer processing of environmental data; sector J: Management of the environment, organisation and performance.

The GEF/FEM made available to the Slovak Republic a Fund of 2,5 million USD for the "Protection of biodiversity in the Slovak Republic". This project includes the management plan of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area / MaB plan of action 1993-97, a plan which will be taken over by the new Poloniny National Park.

Afternoon

Meeting in the Nova Sedlika Centre with representatives of the administration, local authorities, private organisations and the press.

Present at this meeting: Snina District (sub-prefecture) Mr Kuriscak, Deputy Head, Mr Zajac, environmental protection service, Mr Kniz, agriculture and forestry development, Mrs Ostatnikova, regional development and intersectoral relations, Mr Dudic, state forest enterprise, Mr Buday, Environmental Agency, Presov Centre, P. Pirios, Ruské pastoral and forestry association, MM. Matis, Koval and Varga, of the Friends of Východné Karpaty association (NGO).

The Snina district in which the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area is located covers an areas of 805 km² and includes, in addition to the town of Snina, 33 essentially rural communes dependent on agriculture and forestry. The district has a total population of 40 000 inhabitants, 18 400 of them active. The Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area now has only 3 500 habitants in ten villages; seven other villages were submerged in 1980 during the construction of Starina dam.

To ensure its future, the district is studying a tourism development programme based on the natural capital of the region.

At present only 4 000 visitors come to the Protected Landscape Area each year.

Forests: mainly beech woods, cover the greater part, 80 %, of the Protected Landscape Area.

81 % of these forests are formed by natural association. 12,6 % are primeval forests, partly protected in six forest reserves of 1 675 hectares, some 300-400 years old (one beech of 50 m³).

Outside the forest reserves, the forests were exploited to differing extents until quite recently. Some were converted to fast-growing plantations (red oak, spruce, Douglas pine). Substantial areas were cut down on properties that had been collectivised, using the technique of clear cutting by units of three hectares and in strips 100 metres wide. These clear cuts have now been left to natural recolonisation. The forests concerned (Kredba and Mudroch forest management) form part of the some 28 000 hectares of properties that had been collectivised (indicated as being of "unsettled ownership" in the Slovak application) and are now being handed back by the Slovak State to their Czech owners. This is a very laborious operation and it might be envisaged that instead compensation should be paid to the owners, who are in any case not interested in the return of their land, and the forested land should be transferred to the Protected Landscape Area administration.

Productive forests are worked by the Ulic state farm (21 400 hectares) and by the Ruské agricultural cooperative (2 000 hectares).

Conifer plantations are encouraged in the vicinity of the Starina dam and reservoir, with degree 3 of protection.

Because of the different types of management practised by several different bodies, the forest situation is rather complex and the administrations concerned (forestry department, Protected Landscape Area service, forestry collectives) are envisaging a new development and silviculture concept closer to natural evolution: conversion of the artificial plantations to broad-leaved forests of the species in place, more conservative exploitation, increase of the forests in the natural reserve and the protective zones. Such an approach to silviculture is to be encouraged and developed in the management plan of the new Poloniny National Park.

Agriculture is limited to the valleys and the lower slopes. Intensive farming is practised on the land that can be accessed by the machines of the state collective farms: Ulic (5 400 hectares) and Stakcin (maize, cereals, rutabaga for fuel). Crops only occupy a negligible area of 850 hectares.

Small farmers grow animals (sheep, cows) and subsistence crops. They generally occupy sloping land divided by hedges and brush.

The total agricultural area is 6 800 hectares, i.e. 15 % of the Protected Landscape Area, above all meadow. The support of this agriculture in the region is essential both for the survival of the local population and for the biodiversity of the Protected Landscape Area.

In the mountains there still remain on the crests some 50 ha of mountain pasture, the poloniny, which are the counterpart of the Polish poloniny whose conservation is the aim of a joint project with Bieszczady National Park. The Slovak management favours the traditional methods of mowing and grazing. The poloniny are all classified as nature reserve.

The Starina dam and reservoir. This water supply reservoir built in 1987 contains 60 million m³ and plays an important role in the Slovak Republic drinking water supply. The flysch soils having a fairly low water retention, the dam helps with the hydrological regulation of the downstream drainage basin.

This man-made lake is surrounded by three concentric zones for the health protection of the drinking water.

The fish populations of the upstream basin now being isolated, a fishway along the lower wall of the dam should be envisaged.

THE EUROPEAN INTEREST OF THE VÝCHODNÉ KARPATY PROTECTED LANDSCAPE AREA

Východné Karpaty, the Bieszczady National Park in Poland and the Stuzica Reserve in Ukraine together form the MaB Biosphere Reserve. The integration in this supranational geographical area of the East Carpathians with a view to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of this region of central Europe largely justifies the award of the European Diploma. This Diploma has already been awarded to the Ukrainian Reserve and has been applied for by the Polish National Park. In fact the Diploma should cover the whole of the Biosphere Reserve.

In October 1997 the Slovak Government announced the creation of the new **Poloniny National Park**, the territory of which is more or less identical to that of the Slovak part of the East Carpathians Biosphere Reserve.

This Park, created at the same time as the Muranska Park, brings the number of Slovak national parks up to seven.

The new Park has an area of 29 805 hectares and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 10 973 hectares, making a total of 40 778 hectares. A western part along the Polish frontier is not included in the Park and remains a Protected Landscape Area. It is planned to increase the staff to twelve and the budget to ten million SKK, i.e. more than ten times the present budget.

The site's European interest is enhanced by the diversity and quality of its fauna and flora which include several species endemic to the Carpathians. The flora include some 1 200 species of higher plants, 350 mosses, 200 lichens and 1 100 mushrooms.

The forest vegetation, covering 90 % of the surface of the new Park, still presents substantial habitats of primeval forests of beech and beech-fir. The Park houses, for the continental region, a very rich genetic stock, in particular of rare, threatened or disappearing species which are listed in the annexes of the Bern Convention and of Community directives, such as: for fauna, a number of mammals (brown bear, wolf, lynx, otter), reptiles (*Lacerta agilis*, *Coronella austriaca*, *Elaphe longissima*, *Natrix tessellata*, *Triturus cristatus*, *Triturus montadoni*, *Bombina variegata*, *Hyla arborea*), birds covered by Birdlife/Council of Europe/EU action plans (*Crex crex*) and for flora, plants such as *Aconitum lasiocarpum*, *Campanula abietina*.

The Park has a typical architectural heritage, with "cerkvi", remarkable wooden churches, Greek orthodox and catholic: the villages have for the most part conserved their rural character, with their low houses and agricultural outbuildings. This heritage is one of the Park's assets and there should be regulations governing development and architecture for all the hamlets within the protected site.

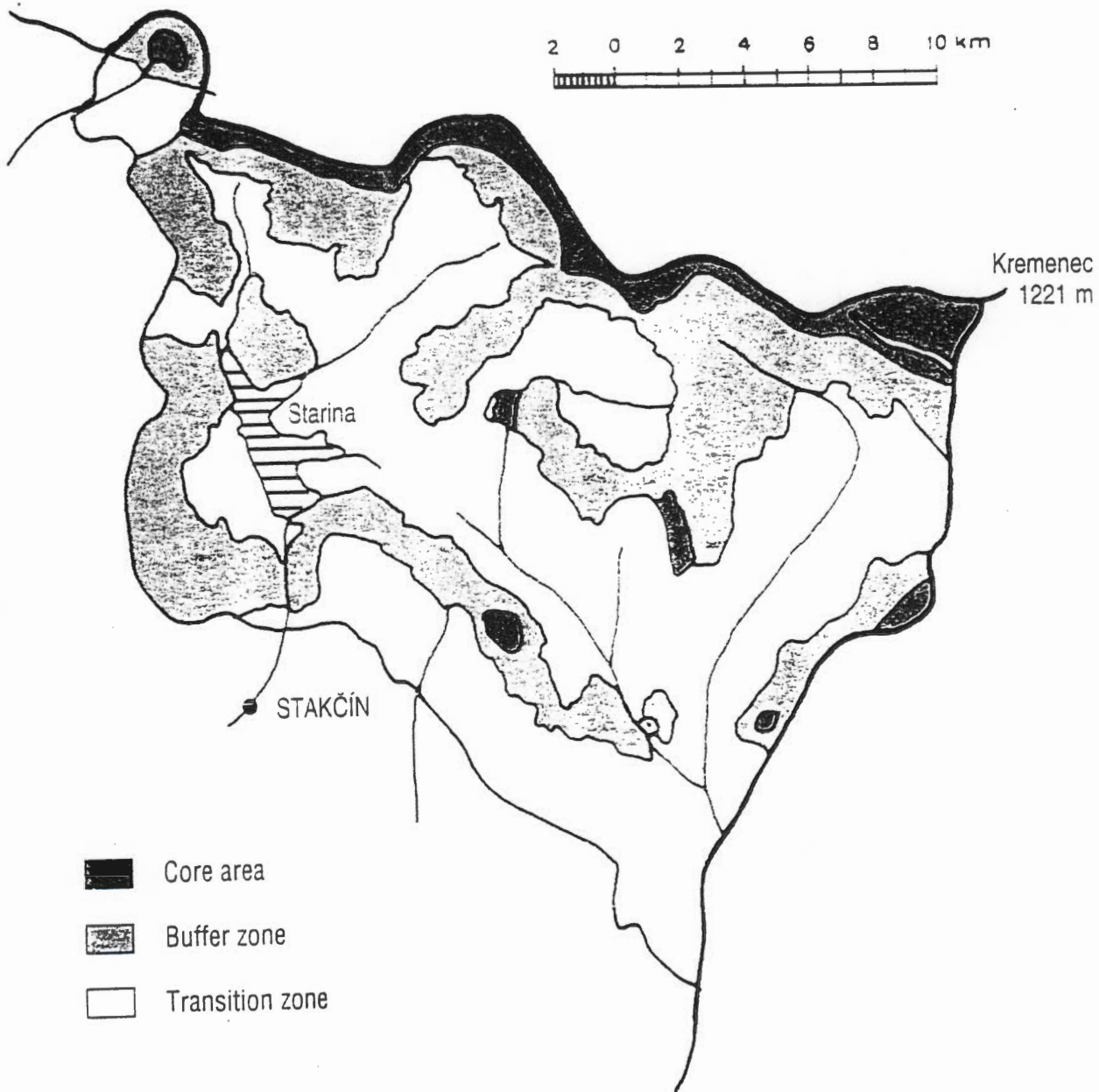
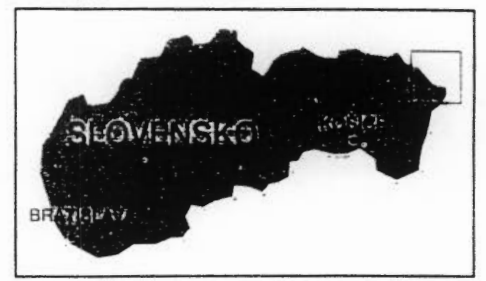
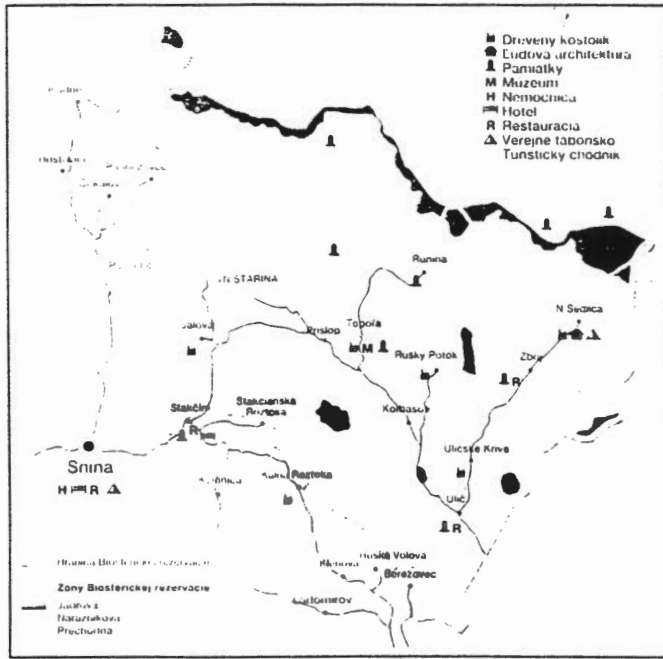
CONCLUSION

Since at present the Diploma is still awarded in different categories, category B would be best suited here, the site being subject to agricultural and forestry activities and the beginnings of a tourist development which is essential to keep the local population in the area.

The award of the Diploma should be accompanied by the following recommendations:

- Ratify the cooperation Agreement for the management of the MaB Biosphere Reserve of the East Carpathians.
- Determine in the peripheral zones of the National Park (the buffer zone, the remaining territory of the Protected Landscape Area) how coordination is to be achieved between the management of hunting and the objective of conserving the fauna of the National Park.
- Draw up a development plan for the site, now the Poloniny National Park, on the basis of the MaB plan drawn up for the former Protected Landscape Area. A summary of this plan should be sent to the Council of Europe Secretariat for evaluation on the occasion of the five-year review of the Diploma.
- Make available to the new National Park sufficient human and financial resources to ensure implementation of the initial measures corresponding to the new legal status of the site.
- Pay particular attention to the management of the poloniny, the subalpine grasslands of the Park, notably in the context of the concerted management of this habitat with the competent Polish authorities.
- Draw up a strategy and specific development plan defining the different categories of forest (national reserves, protective or special function forests, productive forests) and their management, taking account of the maintenance or restoration of natural associations and habitats.
- Increase the area of the forest reserves and other forests returning towards primeval forest.
- Restore the forests that were clear-cut and integrate, as far as possible, the forests that had been collectivised and are now of "unsettled ownership" into the public domain of the National Park.
- Pay particular attention to the ecosystems of the watercourses and especially their fish and invertebrate fauna.
- Pursue and develop the collaboration with the Polish and Ukrainian authorities of the MaB Reserve, especially in the field of research,.

- - Encourage the participation of the local nature conservation NGOs in the management of the Park.
- - Envisage the drawing up of a development and architecture plan for the hamlets located within the National Park.



Zonation of the East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve

COMMENTS BY THE SECRETARIAT

The representative of the Secretariat shares the opinions expressed by the expert in his report. The criteria for the award of the European Diploma are met.

She wishes to raise several points however:

1. The area applying for the European Diploma is in a situation of transition. The status of National Park will guarantee a higher level of protection; it will be necessary:
 - to clarify the administrative situation, since the zone which was managed by regional branch of the Slovak Environmental Agency will come under the national parks administration; what will happen to the staff currently in place who are serious and highly motivated?
 - to ensure that sufficient resources are available to ensure the proper functioning of the National Park.
2. The fate of the forests of “unsettled ownership” has not yet been decided; if the owners are no longer interested or cannot be found, the State should have the possibility of buying the land so that it can be integrated into the Park.
3. The authorities responsible for the Park should play more than an advisory role in the management of hunting.
4. Transfrontier cooperation with the managements of the two other units of the trilateral biosphere reserve should be strengthened (the same applies to the Bieszczady National Park).

Appendix I contains a draft resolution on the award of the European Diploma to the Poloniny National Park.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT RESOLUTION (98) ...

**on the award of the European Diploma
to the Poloniny National Park**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 5 instituting the European Diploma ;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP) ;

Having noted the agreement of the Government of the Slovak Republic,

After deliberation,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma, Category B, to the Poloniny National Park

Places the aforesaid zone under the patronage of the Council of Europe until

Attaches the following recommendations to the award:

1. ratify the cooperation Agreement for the management of the MaB Biosphere Reserve of the East Carpathians ;
2. determine in the peripheral zones of the National Park (the buffer zone, the remaining territory of the Protected Landscape Area) how coordination is to be achieved between the management of hunting and the objective of conserving the fauna of the National Park.
3. draw up a development plan for the site, now the Poloniny National Park, on the basis of the MaB plan drawn up for the former Protected Landscape Area. A summary of this plan should be sent to the Council of Europe Secretariat for evaluation on the occasion of the five-year review of the Diploma.
4. make available to the new National Park sufficient human and financial resources to ensure implementation of the initial measures corresponding to the new legal status of the site.
5. pay particular attention to the management of the poloniny, the subalpine grasslands of the Park, notably in the context of the concerted management of this habitat with the competent Polish authorities.
6. draw up a strategy and specific development plan defining the different categories of forest (national reserves, protective or special function forests, productive forests) and their management, taking account of the maintenance or restoration of natural associations and habitats.

7. increase the area of the forest reserves and other forests returning towards primeval forest.
8. restore the forests that were clear-cut and integrate, as far as possible, the forests that had been collectivised and are now of "unsettled ownership" into the public domain of the National Park.
9. pay particular attention to the ecosystems of the watercourses and especially their fish and invertebrate fauna.
10. pursue and develop the collaboration with the Polish and Ukrainian authorities of the MaB Reserve, especially in the field of research,.
11. encourage the participation of the local nature conservation NGOs in the management of the Park.
12. envisage the drawing up of a development and architecture plan for the hamlets located within the National Park.