

Press Release, 30 January 2015

2 February 2015, World Wetlands Day: It's time for ratification of the Agreement on the transboundary Prespa Park



2 February 2015 is not only World Wetlands Day, but it is also 5 years to the day since the 3 states sharing the Prespa basin joined with the European Union and all signed the **International Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area**. The Agreement still remains inactive because the Greek side alone has not ratified it. Recently the other two littoral countries, without Greece, established a “transboundary Biosphere Reserve” in the area under the auspices of UNESCO, which they have invited Greece to join.

Seven environmental organizations - [EuroNatur](#), [Frankfurt Zoological Society](#), [KORA](#), [MES](#), [Plantlife](#), [PPNEA](#) and the [Society for the Protection of Prespa](#) (SPP) - **call upon the new Greek Government to now ratify the Prespa Park International Agreement**. After decades of efforts for Prespa, all those involved, reach the same conclusion: the only choice for the protection, wise management and sustainable development of this sensitive and valuable place is for the 3 states to establish permanent mechanisms of deliberation, coordination and joint actions. Separate national actions, however positive, cannot produce maximum results and benefits for people and nature alike.

In view of this lack of state-led, trilateral cooperation in Prespa, the protection of the area still relies on initiatives taken by local and international actors with Prespa's inhabitants. In this context, this 7 environmental organisations, trumpeting the theme of this year's World Wetlands Day, "Wetlands for Our Future", will meet in Greek Prespa on 3 and 4 February to discuss common targets and priorities of action for the protection of Prespa's natural and cultural values. But at the core of these discussions is the message that **a different development perspective must be sought for areas like Prespa**, especially in times of economic insecurity. Such a perspective has to ensure the conservation of natural resources and the diversity of life for future generations, whilst at the same time allowing for the development of modern productive activities with high added value, especially in the primary and tertiary sectors.

"The Secretariat of the [Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative](#) (MedWet) associates itself to the call to the new Greek Government, as it did with the previous one, to ratify without further delay the International Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area", said Delmar Blasco, MedWet Coordinator from his office in Arles, France. He added that "this will represent a significant step towards ensuring the conservation and effective management of this significant area, not only for the benefit of nature but also of the local communities. Significant opportunities are there for the sustainable development of the Prespa Park Area to become a prime example in Southern Europe of local peoples' participation and engagement in making a wise use of local resources."

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Editor's notes

1. The 2nd February (World Wetlands Day of the Ramsar Convention) has always been an important date for the Prespa Lakes: The Prespa Park was established on 2nd February 2000 with a joint Declaration by the Prime Ministers of the three countries. The 'International Agreement for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park' was signed on 2nd February 2010 by the three countries, who are sharing the rare ecosystem of Prespa Lakes, and the EU Commissioner for the Environment. This is in fact one of the most significant agreements for the comprehensive protection of a catchment basin and Ramsar wetland in Southeast Europe, aiming at the conservation of the natural environment and sustainable development of the region through a standing mechanism of transboundary cooperation.
2. The PrespaNet is an environmental NGO network, founded on February 2013 and consists of MES (Macedonian Ecological Society) based in Skopje, SPP (the Society for the Protection of Prespa) based in Agios Germanos, Prespa, and PPNEA (Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment in Albania) based in Tirana.
3. MedWet brings together 26 countries from around the Mediterranean since more than 20 years ago, with the aim of conserving wetlands and making a wise use of wetland services for people and nature.