



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署

PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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29 August 2003

Dear Mr. Desai,

In response to your letter of 16 June 2003, I am forwarding to you UNEP's inputs to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the General Assembly resolution 56/110, entitled "Economic Assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the developments in the Balkans". The attached text summarizes our work in that region, focusing on environmental assessment and reconstruction. As required, the UNEP contribution to the report is also being electronically forwarded to Mr. Ian Kinniburgh, Director, Development Policy and Planning Office, DESA.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Director

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UNEP Activities in the Balkans August, 2003

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has provided assistance for the environment assessment and recovery of the Balkans, and to alleviate the environmental problems of the Eastern European States affected by developments in the Balkans, taking into account the special situation of the affected states, and in full collaboration with other relevant actors.

In 2002, UNEP activities in the Balkans have been shifting from the initial emergency humanitarian assistance, conducted together with UN-HABITAT, to longer-term environmental reconstruction in the region. Following the UNEP/UN-HABITAT Balkans Task Force (BTF) assessment report entitled "The Kosovo Conflict Consequences for the Environment and Human Settlements", issued in October 1999, BTF conducted feasibility studies at each of the hot spot sites, in order to identify priorities, costs and appropriate clean-up methods. The feasibility study was released in April 2000. A total of 27 clean-up projects were identified, with high priority projects requiring an estimated \$20 million. UNEP's implementation of clean-up works in the identified four hot spots, and additional capacity building measures began in August 2000 with a budget of \$12.5 million. The project is expected to close in December 2003.

From September 2000 to December 2001 UNEP conducted post-conflict environmental assessments and feasibility studies in Albania and in the FYR of Macedonia. The feasibility studies, published in December 2000, led to clean-up measures at one of the hotspot sites by the World Bank. In addition, UNEP implemented a separate project at Sharra landfill in Albania between September 2001 and April 2003. Based on a feasibility study, UNEP implemented preparatory clean-up activities and conducted capacity building programmes on hazardous waste management. Discussions with donors concerning full-scale clean-up are taking place.

UNEP has published three Environmental Assessments of Depleted Uranium in the Balkans: Kosovo (March 2001), Serbia and Montenegro (March 2002) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (March 2003). Each assessment concluded that the DU sites studied do not present immediate radioactive or toxic risks to the environment or human health. Nevertheless, UNEP recommended that the national authorities take a number of precautionary measures including clean-up of penetrators and fragments, investigation of health claims, and monitoring of water and air quality.

Other UNEP activities in the Balkans and neighboring countries include implementation and capacity building regarding multi-lateral environmental agreements, such as Convention on Biological Diversity (FR Yugoslavia ratified on 1 March 2002) and support to environmental information management and dissemination. In addition number of other cross-cutting projects, such as workshops on Sustainable Consumption Opportunities for Europe (SCOPE) and assessments regarding Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) continue to be implemented.