

Greening the Coast and Blueing the Sea for a Resilient Georgia: An initiative to tackle climate change and marine pollution to promote the Common Maritime Agenda under the Blueing the Black Sea Program (BBSEA)

Consultation workshop in Georgia, 25 February 2021

Summary

I. What was discussed?

Co-hosted by the World Bank and the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) in conjunction with the Government of Georgia, the workshop (held as a webinar) was the second in a series of 'National Consultations' organised in all six Black Sea littoral states, incl. the Republic of Moldova to seek:

- ▶ input from respective stakeholder communities on marine pollution, pressing issues and priorities related to pollution prevention, reduction, and control in the Black Sea, and opportunities to inform the planned 'Blueing the Black Sea' (BBSEA) programme¹ architecture and implementation modalities;
- ▶ information to support a national and regional pollution diagnostic tool that will form the baseline for further action.

The webinar also offered an opportunity to present results and recommendations of the World Bank reports:

- ▶ [Impacts of Climate Change on Georgia's Coastal Zone: Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Options;](#)
- ▶ [The Cost of Coastal Zone Degradation in Georgia: A Tool for the Coastal Zone Adaptation and the Nationally Determined Contributions.](#)

II. Who was present?

The webinar was opened by a panel of key speakers - *H.E. Amb. Michael B. CHRISTIDES, Secretary General, Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS), Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Mr. Sebastian Molineus, Regional Director for the South Caucasus, World Bank, Mr. Steven Schonberger, Regional Director, Sustainable Development for Europe and Central Asia, World Bank, Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.* Brief outline of their remarks can be found in section IV below.

The webinar was attended by altogether 90 participants, representatives of the public and the private sector, and followed online, on [World Bank Facebook Live channel](#), where it reached over 932 people (see Annex II: World Bank Facebook Live channel). The majority of participants were from the host country. Additionally, international experts active in the region and representatives of international organisations, such as representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, took joined the event. Participants mainly represented

¹ The Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA) is a regional initiative, to be led by BSEC PERMIS, to address pollution and develop Blue Economy investments in the Black Sea region as part of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA), agreed in 2019 by the six Black Sea littoral states plus the Republic of Moldova. BBSEA is funded by the World Bank with an ongoing preparatory investigative phase supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

national and regional authorities, academia and financial institutions active in the country. For a complete stakeholder list refer to Annex I: Participating Organisations.

III. How was the workshop structured?

As indicated in the [webinar agenda](#), the official opening by key speakers was followed by:

- ▶ a plenary session, where two reports prepared by the World Bank in collaboration with the Government of Georgia were presented.

It was followed by two interactive working sessions offering an overview of how the BBSEA Program will work especially its potential activities in Georgia. The two sessions have focused on:

- ▶ the analytical component of BBSEA – to build the analytical fundamentals of the intervention;
- ▶ the BBSEA Regional GEF-funded project – to identify avenues to incentivize investments in pollution reduction technology, innovation and finance.

A key part of the workshop was spent gathering information from participants – who included experts, academics, government officials, municipalities and businesses – via a voting system to inform how the BBSEA program could be implemented not only in Georgia but also across the wider Black Sea region.

IV. What feedback was received?

In the **Welcoming Address** *BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B Christides* said that “*marine litter and marine pollution in the Black Sea are not a challenge for one country alone. It is a regional challenge. It is also a battle that never ends*”. He told the virtual audience “*the result of this battle depends on the interest and input of you all*”.

Mr Sebastien Molineus, Regional Director for the Caucasus, World Bank, in his opening remarks, said “*Coastal and marine area important for the economy and yet vulnerable. It is not too late for action to ensure that the coastline of the Black Sea of Georgia adapts to climate change. Better Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are part of the solution.*”

Mr Steven Schonberger, World Bank Sustainable Development Regional Director said the BBSEA project was “*of global significance*”. He added that “*any country tackling pollution alone cannot guarantee a desirable quality of the sea water in an enclosed eco-system such as the Black Sea. Considering this common ecosystem, collaboration at the regional level is essential*”.

Speaking for the Government of Georgia, *Ms Nino Tandilashvili, Dep. Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture*, told the audience “*The Black Sea is a very important resource for us and our marine spaces are a huge priority; for the economy, people health and also to meet all the EU Directives*”. Georgia is working on including coastal areas in an update of its NDC under the 2015 Paris Agreement to be submitted to the United Nations shortly.

In the **Plenary Session**, the *Moderator Ms Paola Agostini, Lead Natural Resources Specialist, World Bank*, introduced the two reports firstly, ‘*Impacts of Climate Change on Georgia’s coastal zone: vulnerability assessment and adaptation options*’ and secondly, ‘*The cost of coastal zone degradation in Georgia: a tool for the coastal zone adaptation and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC’s)*’. They were presented by *Ms Darejan Kapanadze, Senior Environment Specialist at the World Bank*. The reports identified key climate risks and vulnerabilities for coastal Georgia and offered the first estimate of the costs of environmental degradation of Georgia’s coastal zone due to pollution, flooding, coastal erosion, agricultural soil, and forest degradation. They sought to raise the level of urgency needed to reduce the impact of climate change on the coastal zone, address the escalating cost of inaction, and emphasize Blue Economy as a vehicle for accelerating climate change adaptation and

mitigation measures for the region's socio-economic development, tourism, and environmental conservation. Climate adaptation through resilient use of water resources and bringing back tourism to coastal areas after the COVID-19 pandemic are among the recommended priority coastal adaptation interventions.

In **Working Session 1: Turning the tide of pollution in the Black Sea**, a World Bank-led effort to establish an up-to-date diagnostic of the state of play and issues at stake regarding marine pollution in the Black Sea was presented. With contributions from *Mr Owen MacIntyre, Director, LLM, University College Cork* and *Mr Nicola Bertolini, Manager, Ambiente SPA* an attempt was made via discussion and some questions asked of the audience, to identify the sources, impacts and prevention efforts (information and institutional gaps) related to marine pollution in the region, as well the key pollution challenges in Georgia. The findings will feed into an in-country pollution diagnostic paper, which, in turn, will inform the BBSEA-GEF architecture and the creation of an effective national and regional diagnostic tool.

The **Working Session 2: Blueing the Black Sea Program: BBSEA-GEF regional project, focus on Georgia** was a highly interactive consultation exercise. It began with an overview of the of the 3-year BBSEA-GEF project, from BSEC Executive Manager, *Ms Rositsa Stoeva* who said it had "*the long-term objective of an improved environmental status of the Black Sea with increased economic and social benefits for the population*". This was followed by the gathering of feedback and ideas on the key components of the project especially with regard to Georgia. Moderated by *Mr Svetoslav Stoyanov from the BBSEA Project*, a series of votes was held for all participants to share their preferences on questions related to the priorities of the overall project, the key concerns related to Georgia, eco-sustainable business practices and innovation, how to develop awareness raising and funding avenues that could support pollution reduction.

Judging by the initial reactions of the live poll, there is little interest for the promotion of a *cross-sectoral coordination mechanism at national level*. Nutrient pollution appears to be the biggest issue at stake at the moment and urban waste water treatment facility considered as the top priority large investment. The gap in green financing was confirmed and it appears to be one of the main areas the project could focus on. Similarly, green standard in procurement and in financing is another area. *Ms Nino Tkhilava, the Georgian GEF Focal Point*, would like to play an active role in the planning of the preparation of the BBSEA-GEF project.

Ms Berengere Prince, Lead Natural Resources Specialist, World Bank, who **closed the webinar** thanked the audience for their contribution and announced that it was expected that implementation of the BBSEA-GEF project would start in September 2021. Other 'national consultation' sessions will be held shortly in Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia.

Each of the main sessions presented a number of topics, which provoked active participation in the live voting, the results of which can be found in the presentation [here](#).

For interested stakeholders, who couldn't join the webinar or simply like to give additional feedback. a tailor-made [Survey is available online](#) to gather opinions after the event.

Annex I: Participating Organisations

Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia	Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of Georgia	THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE FOR THE CAUCASUS
National Environmental Agency of Georgia	CAUCASUS ENVIRONMENTAL NGO NETWORK
Ministry of Agriculture of Adjara	Fauna & Flora International
Guria Administration of State Representative	UNDP Georgia
Kobuleti Municipality	Energy Efficiency Centre Georgia
Batumi State Maritime Academy	SOCAR Industrial Services LLC
Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	Black Sea Assistance Mechanism

Annex II: World Bank Facebook Live channel

World Bank Europe and Central Asia was live. ...

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At this virtual meeting, representatives of the World Bank, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Government of Georgia discuss key climate risks and vulnerabilities, and the costs of environmental degradation of the Black Sea coastal zone. If you wish to use the translation service, please join the webcast here: <http://wrld.bg/7E2a30rydzN>

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