

## INFORMATION NOTE ON THE UPCOMING ALPINE CONFERENCE OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION

The XV Alpine Conference will be hosted in the capital of Tyrol, Innsbruck (AT) on 4 April 2019. The Conference will focus on climate change in the Alps, natural hazards risk governance and the sustainable use and protection of Alpine soils. The Contracting Parties assemble at ministerial level. The meeting will be chaired by the Austrian Minister for Sustainability and Tourism, Ms. Elisabeth Köstinger.

### MAIN ISSUES

#### 1. Climate Change

The protection and sustainable development of the Alps rely on a fine balance between the different uses of the natural resources. Therefore, from the onset the practical implementation of the Alpine Convention has been carried out through specific protocols and thematic bodies.

Climate change is a pressing issue and occurring at a faster pace in the Alps than in lowland areas. It is affecting the living conditions of their 14 million inhabitants, 30'000 animal species and 13'000 plant species. The impacts of climate change vary across the Alps, but they do not stop at administrative borders: Alpine-wide and cross-sectorial collaboration in mitigation and adaptation is required. To this effect, the Ministers of the eight Alpine countries in charge of the Alpine Convention and the European Union adopted a [Declaration on Climate Change](#) (2006) and an [Action Plan on Climate Change in the Alps](#) (2009).

##### 1.1 Declaration of Innsbruck

The [Declaration of Innsbruck](#) adopts the "Alpine Climate Target System 2050" for climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps by 2050. In accordance with the Paris Convention on Climate Change, measures are to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Alpine region to such an extent that the Alps become climate-neutral by 2050. At the same time, the necessary adjustments are to be made in all domains. Further the Declaration of Innsbruck adopts the 7<sup>th</sup> report on the State of the Alps dealing with "Natural Hazard Risk Governance". All this requires cross-sectoral approaches and a transnational cooperation.

### 1.1.1 Alpine Climate Target System 2050

In 2016, the XIV. Alpine Conference identified "Taking action on climate change" as one of the six priorities of its Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) for the period 2017-2022 and decided "to establish an Alpine Climate Board in order to bundle together existing climate change initiatives and contributions in the Alpine area and to elaborate proposals for a concrete Target System of the Alpine Convention in regard to the perspective of a "climate-neutral Alpine space" in accordance with the European and international objectives".

Over two years, the Alpine Climate Board (ACB) worked in a collegial, highly participative manner and actively involving the thematic working groups of the Alpine Convention, on the elaboration of a concrete system of objectives of the Alpine Convention in regard to the perspective of "climate-neutral Alps" and "Climate-resilient Alps" by 2050. As a first step, the Board developed a comprehensive stock-taking report, which identified over hundred recent or ongoing climate-related activities of Alpine Convention bodies, of the Contracting Parties as well as of Observers.

The Alpine Climate Board focused for the design of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 on soft, but verifiable objectives for the 2050 horizon with the aim of enhancing the added value of Alpine-wide cooperation. The present report, prepared for approval by the XV Alpine Conference, identifies four general principles, guiding the process:

- Transition based on cultural and natural heritage (incl. Green Economy);
- Model region for integrated action on mitigation and adaptation;
- Showcase for joint action;
- Highlight on Alpine co-benefits.

The overall strategic objectives are further crystallized into sectoral targets, complemented by two transversal fields of actions. Those twelve target sectors are the fundamental part. They are based on the recommendations of the stock-taking report of the ACB and also consider activities and work focuses of the thematic groups. As all other elements of the target system, the sectoral targets relate to the time-horizon 2050. The sectors of activity are:

- |                    |                               |                            |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Spatial Planning | • Ecosystems and Biodiversity | • Water                    |
| • Energy           | • Mountain Forests            | • Soil                     |
| • Transport        | • Mountain                    | • Municipal Action         |
| • Natural Hazards  | • Agriculture                 | • Research and Development |
| • Tourism          |                               |                            |

The first draft of the Alpine Climate Target System was presented and discussed during the 66<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee in November 2018 in Innsbruck – the twelve target sectors were as well adopted at the meeting. Further the draft was presented at the COP24 World Climate Conference in Katowice, Poland. On the occasion of the launch of this Climate Target System, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention presents a card game on the issue of climate change that can be ordered for free ([info@alpconv.org](mailto:info@alpconv.org)).

### 1.1.2 Report on the State of the Alps #7

The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Report on the State of the Alps addresses the topic of “Natural Hazard Risk Management”. Natural hazards pose an omnipresent threat to the living environment in the Alps, as Alpine areas are particularly prone to, e.g. river floods, avalanches and rockfall. Furthermore, natural hazard limits spatial planning.

Natural hazard management tends towards inclusive processes that involve the public and take natural hazard *risks* into account, instead of focusing only on prevention measures. Firstly, the report provides an overview on the risk governance concept considering the distinctive characteristics of the mountain landscape in the Alpine states. Secondly, it includes an analysis of how risk governance is applied to existing management systems, complemented by good practice examples within the Alpine perimeter and applied to specific phenomena as floods, avalanches, torrential hazards, rockfall and landslides.

Finally, the report formulates concrete recommendations for enhancing natural hazard risk governance:

1. enhancing risk management by promoting risk governance as a concept;
2. developing integrated measures for hazard prevention by using risk governance;
3. integrating local initiatives in developing solutions for managing natural hazard risks;
4. providing financial and other incentives to include and consider participatory approaches in various steps of developing protection and prevention systems;
5. applying risk governance in a practical and professional way.

The expert discussions and data for this report were provided by the Natural Hazards Platform of the Alpine Convention (PLANALP) in close cooperation with the Action Group 8 of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) and with the support of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention. The 7<sup>th</sup> Report on the State of the Alps will be available after adoption by the Conference.

The reports on the state of the Alps offer periodical information on ecological, economical, and social development in the Alpine space, for politicians, managers, journalist and scientists. Furthermore, this standard work gives important yard sticks in terms of formulating adapted strategies tackling a concrete issue.

## 2. Sustainable use and protection of Alpine soils

Soil is a limited resource. This scarcity is particularly tangible in the Alpine region and is reflected in the limited availability of soils that are well suited for settlement or agricultural use. Soils, and in particular moorland and peats, are of great importance for climate protection, which in turn underlines the important of protecting and revitalizing them.

Within the scope of Action Group (AG) 6 of the macro-regional strategy for the Alps (EUSALP), led by the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and the Land Carinthia, several actions in the field of soil conservation in the Alps were conducted. One of these actions is the development of the Declaration on “Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection”. The Declaration has been

supported by 6 Alpine States and 20 Regions and has been taken cognizance during the General Assembly of EUSALP on 20 November 2018 in Innsbruck.

At its 13<sup>th</sup> meeting in Maribor (SL), the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention, dealt with the subject of soil and adopted a number of postulations on this subject. Under the Austrian Presidency, a number of soil-relevant activities took place, including an in-depth examination of provisions of the Spatial Planning Protocol and the Soil Protection Protocol, which is the only binding instrument under international law for soil protection in Europe!

After a detailed assessment of the issue of "Economical use of soil", the Compliance Committee concluded that the Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention are committed to ensure good practical implementation of the Soil Protection Protocol. During the Alpine Conference, the Contracting Parties will be called on to take the measures needed to comply with the recommendations as formulated by the Compliance Committee and to disseminate these suggestions to the communities and supra-local planning levels.

### 3. AlpWeek *Intermezzo* "Tomorrow in the Alps"

The AlpWeek is an international event dedicated to sustainable development in the Alps and organized by a group of key Alpine organizations engaged particularly in science, environmental protection and regional and sustainable development. It is held every four years. As part of the events of the XV Alpine Conference, a special edition of the AlpWeek, the AlpWeek *Intermezzo*, will be kicked off on 3 April 2019 with a political discussion on relevant topics for the future of the Alpine region. The public is invited on the next day to a project showcase featuring inspiring stories on the topic "Tomorrow in the Alps", followed by interactive market stands.

### 4. Young Academics Award

Research and innovation make a major contribution to a sustainable development in the Alps. With the Young Academics Award, the Alpine Convention recognizes and awards the key role young researchers play in shaping the future of the Alps. This year's topic was Sustainable Water Management in the Alps, including aspects such as solutions for conflicting uses of water among different sectors, abundance of water and scarcity of water and an efficient use of it.

Aspirant researchers from natural, technical or social sciences could seize the opportunity to apply for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Young Academics Award. The Austrian Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention will award the three most outstanding master theses with respective €1.000, €750 and €500! Four additional prizes will be awarded by the infopoints Grand Paradis, Domodossola and Morbegno in Italy and the Slovenian Infopoint Tolmin for thematically relevant and geographically dedicated scholarly works.

The Young Academics Award is a joint initiative in collaboration with ISCAR, International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps.

## 5. French Presidency

The XV Alpine Conference in Innsbruck also marks the end of the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and, at the same time, the handover of the baton to France for the next two-year term Presidency of the Alpine Convention.

Overview of the past Presidencies:

<b>2017-2018/9</b> Austria	<b>2007-2008</b> France	<b>1996-1998</b> Slovenia
<b>2015-2016</b> Germany	<b>2005-2006</b> Austria	<b>1995-1996</b> Slovenia
<b>2013-2014</b> Italy	<b>2003-2004</b> Germany	<b>1991-1994</b> France
<b>2011-2012</b> Switzerland	<b>2001-2002</b> Italy	<b>1989-1991</b> Austria
<b>2009-2010</b> Slovenia	<b>1999-2000</b> Switzerland	<b>1989</b> Germany

### CERTIFIED AS GREEN EVENT

The organization of events and meetings has environmental repercussions in all its components (communication, catering, waste, mobility, accommodation, etc.). That is why the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention strives for all its events to be designed, organized and carried out with high sustainability standards – e.g. as 'Green Events'.



Therefore, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention is pleased to present the XV Alpine Conference of the Alpine Convention as Green Event Tirol! In order to obtain the certificate of Green Event Tirol, several efforts and measures in different fields have been introduced. With regard to catering, the food will exclusively come from regional suppliers and is organic, Fair Trade or direct trade. Care is also taken to ensure that the location is easily accessible and barrier free. Sustainability does not only include ecological, but also social and cultural concerns.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ALPINE CONVENTION

The Alpine Convention was a pioneer of its kind by being the world's first international treaty considering a transnational mountain area in its geographical entirety. The Convention on the Protection of the Alps, namely "The Alpine Convention", was signed on 7 November 1991 in Salzburg (Austria) by Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and the EU (Slovenia signed the convention on 29 March 1993 and Monaco became a party on the basis of a separate additional protocol). The Convention entered into force on 6 March 1995. The Alpine Convention – with its 8 internationally binding Protocols and 3 Ministerial Declarations – aims at the sustainable development and protection of the Alps. Its perimeter covers an area of approximately 190,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a length of around 1,200 kilometers and a maximum width of 300 kilometers. As a living space for more than 14 million people and a

recreational space for a manifold number of guests per annum, the Alps constitute a precious, yet sensitive area at the heart of Europe.

The Alps are too often (stereo) typically associated with peaks, forests and glaciers. If, however, we take a closer look, much more is waiting to be discovered!

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ALPINE CONFERENCE**

The "Conference of the Contracting Parties", referred to as the "Alpine Conference" is the highest body of the Alpine Convention. The responsible Ministers of the Contracting Parties and their delegates usually meet every two years. The meeting is chaired by the Contracting Party that is holding the Presidency of the Convention. As the political decision-making body, the Alpine Conference discusses the objectives and establishes the political measures for the implementation of the Alpine Convention.

The United Nations, its specialized agencies, the Council of Europe and all European countries may attend the meetings as observers. The same applies to cross-border associations of Alpine territorial authorities. In addition, relevant non-governmental organizations may be admitted as observers. Decisions are adopted on the basis of consensus.

Overview of the Alpine Conferences since 1989.

<b>#</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>The Presidency was passed to...</b>
XV.	4 April 2019	Innsbruck, Austria	France
XIV.	13 October 2016	Grassau, Germany	Austria
XIII.	21 November 2014	Torino, Italy	Germany
XII.	7 September 2012	Pschiavo, Switzerland	Italy
XI.	8-9 March 2011	Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia	Switzerland
X.	12 March 2009	Evian, France	Slovenia
IX.	9 November 2006	Alpbach, Austria	France
VIII.	16 November 2004	Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany	Austria
VII.	19-20 November 2002	Merano, Italy	Germany
VI.	30-31 October 2000	Lucerne, Switzerland	Italy
V.	16 October 1998	Bled, Slovenia	Switzerland
IV.	25-26 February 1996	Brdo, Slovenia	Slovenia
III.	20 December 1994	Chambéry, France	Slovenia
II.	6-7 November 1991	Salzburg, Austria	France
I.	9-11 October 1989	Berchtesgaden, Germany	Austria

## Date & Venue of the Press Conference

The Press Conference of the XV Alpine Conference will take place on **Thursday, 4 April 2019 at 1 p.m.** in the the big hall (*großer Saal*) of the Federal State Parliament (*Landhaus 1*) in the City of Innsbruck, Eduard-Wallnöfer-Platz 3.

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