

International Status of Area Protection in the Function of Sustainable Tourism Development of the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract: Due to increasing problems of deterioration of areas and their resources by the developing tourism activities, during the half of the 19th century, complete world public started to initiate international cooperation in fields of preventing negative impacts on the environment. This is the reason why special institutions and agencies for monitoring of the problem of impacts on the environment were established within the United Nations Organization. Numerous cooperations, for the purpose of taking measures and actions towards the environmental protection and cultural and historical heritage protection, have been initiated. The Republic of Serbia records a significant increase of environmental awareness of tourists, regarding the protection of natural and cultural resources. The reason is simple, natural resources, alongside the social values, should be cherished so that they would be there for future generations. They, together, represent the significant value of Sustainable tourism development.

Key words: Nature Protection, IUCN, UNESCO, Sustainable Tourism Development, Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Governments of many countries have great number of possibilities to prevent the negative impacts of tourism to the environment. In the conducted analyses and case studies, it has been concluded that they can implement large set of policies, planned measures and activities for prevention of negative impacts, on the international, national, regional and local level, through the following:

- constitution of protected areas through legislation. For example, through establishing the national park status and applying for international recognition of significant sites, such as World Heritage Site, the status of which is adopted by UNESCO;
- implementation of planning measures as regards the use of areas such as zoning, carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change and control of tourism development;
- mandatory analysis of impact on the environment for numerous projects;
- encouragement of coordination between the government sectors regarding the implementation of environmental protection policy and entering into a dialogue with private sector, in order to encourage the adoption of environmental protection management policies, such as environmental audit and development of the environmental protection management system [1].

On the territory of the Republic of Serbia, certain activities of significant international institution can be identified by the implementation of certain global acts, emphasizing the priorities and necessary regimes and levels of area protection, which can take part in Sustainable Tourism Development. The most significant type of tourism in the protected areas is nature-based tourism, whose basic function is the improvement of natural values and preservation of endangered species. Since such areas are becoming more and more attractive, it is necessary to implement numerous measures and activities. These activities are implemented by national and local entities in the protection systems, including tourism entities. International protection systems represent such special measures and regimes of area protection. The

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most significant international networks of area protection in the Republic of Serbia are: UNESCO, UNEP and IUCN.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Protected natural areas are of great importance as regards the tourism planning [2]. Therefore, they participate in the Sustainable Tourism Development, through the significant influences, such as socio-cultural, economic and environmental influences [3]. The most significant international networks of area protection in the Republic of Serbia are: UNESCO, UNEP and IUCN [4].

- ✓ UNESCO is United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, established on 16 November 1945, based in Paris. It promotes the international cooperation in the education, science, culture and communication fields, between 193 member countries and 6 associated countries [5].
- ✓ UNEP (*United Nations Environment Programme*), is an institution whose programme is the environmental protection, established in 1972, based in Kenya [6].
- ✓ IUCN - is the abbreviation that is still in use although it has been derived from the old name - *International Union for the Conservation of Nature*. New name of this organization is World Conservation Union. This organization was formed in 1948, based in Switzerland [7]. IUCN in the partnership with UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, intensively monitors the progress of the global conservation, with the objective to conserve at least 17% of Earth's land surfaces and 10% of marine area [8]. At the end of 2017, protected land coverage was 15% of the total land surface, and total coverage of ocean area under the protection was almost 7% [9].

In 1978 UNESCO and IUCN carried out extensive analyses and identified the need to form two categories, i.e. two types of international status of all protected world cultural and natural sites [10]. These two categories are Biosphere Reserve (MaB – Man and Biosphere) and World Heritage Sites [11].

Protected sites all around the world represent significant tourism potential [12]. Through nature-based tourism, the protection is not only promoted, but economic benefits from this form of tourism can be brought back to the protection systems [13]. Representatives of all species and genera of flora and fauna, leaders, local community, tourists and country itself gain from these benefits, which is the basic postulate of sustainable development [14].

The same source indicates that, by 2018, the list consisted of the following: Biosphere Mura-Drava-Danube Reserve, Danube Delta in Romania, Doñana National Park in Spain, Kiskunság National Park in Hungary, Ichkeul in Tunisia, Amboseli in Kenya, Ohrid Prespa, Central Amazon in Brazil, Golija-Studenica, Bačko Podunavlje since 2017, Mount Olympus, the Hawaiian Islands, Julian Alps, Tara River Canyon, The Black Forest (Schwarzwald) since 2017, and many more [4,15].

By 2016, after establishing the protection regime, Serbia had about 463 protected natural resources on the area covering more than 6.54% (578,705 ha) of its territory. By 2016, 5 national parks, 71 nature reserves (strict and specialised), 16 nature parks, 42 natural areas around immovable cultural heritage sites, 16 landscapes of outstanding features and 313 natural monuments (botanical and dendrological, geomorphological, geological and hydrological zones) were put under protection [4,16].

Nine sites registered on the list of wetlands of international significance – Ramsar Sites, of 55.6 km² total area gained the international protection status. There are not any goods registered on the list of World Natural Heritage. By the decision of International Coordination Committee of UNESCO “Man and the Biosphere” Programme, at the meeting held on 14 June 2017 in Paris, “Bačko Podunavlje” was registered on the list of biosphere reserves [17]. In 1993, Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, nominated 5 sites for obtaining the status of World Natural Heritage: National Parks “Đerdap”, “Tara” and “Šar-Planina”, Special Nature Reserve “Deliblatska Peščara” and Natural Monument “Devil’s Town” [18].

The Republic of Serbia is a signatory of The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992, while the Law on the Ratification of Direction The Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD was adopted in 2001. Biodiversity research activities in the previous period referred to the collection of qualitative and quantitative data on the state in which the species, habitats and ecosystems were. However, besides these activities, state of biodiversity in the Republic of Serbia is still not on the sufficiently high level as regards the conservation. On the territory of the Republic of Serbia, there are:

- 39% of vascular flora of Europe;
- 51% fish fauna of Europe;
- 49% reptile and amphibian fauna of Europe;
- 74% bird fauna of Europe;
- 67% mammal fauna of Europe [19].

3. METHODS AND DATA

The paper analyzed the dataset related to the protected natural areas in the world and Serbia. In this article listed are numerous protected areas under international protected status. Natural and cultural values on the lists of Man and the Biosphere Programme and World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site are significant resource of tourism offer of numerous countries. Because of it, this paper analyzed and presented selected world natural heritages and possible tourism influences of sustainable tourism development. Also, this paper analyzed importance of international status of area protection in the function of the sustainable tourism development in Serbia. Selected international protection statuses for analysis in the Republic of Serbia are: Natura 2000, The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Bern Convention, Important Bird Areas – IBA, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Important Plant Areas – IPA, Prime Butterfly Areas – PBA, and Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest. A numerous protected natural areas in Serbia under the international protection status areas, can have important effects of tourism development. There are threatened species in this sites, which are attractives for nature-based and eco tourists. Such a model of international protection status is IUCN Red List of threatened species, that is investigated in this paper. Analysis of all selected international statuses, can propose the development of specific forms of tourism possible. It is nature-based tourism, ecotourism, trips, birds and animal watching and other forms.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Natura 2000

With over 26,000 declared sites, up to now, Natura 2000 represents the largest network of protected areas in the world. As the programme which makes the nature conservation basis in European Union, Natura 2000 results from Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora [20,21]. It is necessary to emphasize that Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are disabled. Actually, it supports the sustainable development and integrated management, in a way that conserves and supports the present species and habitats, but maintains the ecosystem stability as a whole, too. Within Natura 2000 Networks, member countries have to ensure the following:

- to avoid the activities that can significantly disturb species or habitats, which are the reason for including the site in Natura 2000 Network;
- to take adequate measures for conservation or returning of “favourable conservation status” of species and habitats, where is necessary [22].

Besides the above stated, Natura 2000 sites should be protected from new projects or changes in the use of land, which could severely threaten the natural values. The way of fulfilling the stated obligations is up to the member countries, whereby the economic, social, cultural, regional and local characteristics of the site should be taken into account. These sites of importance for nature protection are singled out on the basis of EU Directives and unique criteria, based on the principles of sustainable development and application of other conventions in connection to the conservation of biological diversity, first of all Convention on Biological Diversity. Natura 2000 sites cover 18.36% of European Union territory, on average, and network consists of over 27,000 sites with total area of over 1 million km², in 28 member countries [23].

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is about the protection of wetland bird habitats, and it is one of the oldest international agreements regarding the nature protection. It was adopted on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, and the convention adoption day became the World Wetlands Day. This Convention protects the habitats where the water is the primary factor within the environment, and as such it is associated with wildlife. These are, usually, the habitats with rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. Also, parts of oceans or seas, mangrove islands, fish ponds, rice fields, irrigation channels and other forms of water surface attractive to tourists, belong to this group. At the beginning of 2018 there are over 2,200 Ramsar sites covering over 2.1 million square kilometres, which is the area larger than Mexico [24]. Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. These are the important centres of biological diversity because they provide the conditions for the survival of great number of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates. Through the fishery, agriculture and tourism, wetlands provide economic benefits to the local community, and as the source of

drinking water and the other services of ecosystems in the significant part of the world, they are the only condition for the survival of human population. However, because of the extensive regulations of waterflows, pollution, over-exploitation, influence of invasive species, tourism and other factors, wetlands are the most endangered ecosystems in the world [22].

Intentions of expanding the protection are intensively increasing, as proven by the data that, in 2000, 1,023 wetlands were registered on this list, with the area coverage of 749,000 km² [11]. These wet habitats represent the significant potential for tourism. Global offer and demand, in the tourism market, includes the wet habitat resources, to a large extent. Because of the great impacts of the site users on these habitats, tourism is considered as the significant promoter of protection. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism are significant models, which can greatly improve the protection of these sites, because modern tourist, more and more turns to the sustainable tourism and the use of renewable resources for touristic purposes.

Ramsar list, in the Republic of Serbia, includes the following: Special Nature Reserve (SNR) "Stari Begej-Carska Bara", SNR "Obedska Bara", SNR "Zasavica" (Figure 1), SNR "Ludaško Jezero", SNR "Slano Kopovo", SNR "Gornje Podunavlje", Landscape of Outstanding Features "Vlasina", SNR "Peštersko Polje", SNR "Koviljsko-Petrovaradinski Rit" and SNR "Labudovo Okno" [25,26].



Figure 1. Landscape of Special Nature Reserve "Zasavica"
(Source: Igor Trišić, 2019)

Bern Convention

The Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, adopted in September 1979 in Bern (Switzerland) and entered into force in 1982. Serbia signed and ratified this Convention in 2007 [25]. The objective of this Convention is the conservation of flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those whose conservation demands the cooperation of several countries, including the promotion of such form of cooperation, too. Endangered, vulnerable, including migratory species have the special place in this Convention. Bern Convention classifies species within four annexes, whereby Annex I refers to strictly protected flora, Annex II to strictly protected fauna, Annex III to protected fauna, and Annex IV lists prohibited means of killing, capture and other forms of use of wild flora and fauna [27].

Important Bird Areas - IBA

Holder of the IBA programme of conservation is the largest international organization for bird conservation - BirdLife International. Conservation refers to wild birds, first of all the rare ones that are in danger of extinction, and migratory birds that are also exposed to threat while flying over the territories of certain countries on their stopover habitats towards the places for nesting. IBA Convention signatory states undertake to protect, under established conditions, nesting places, limit or prevent hunt, and in connection to that regulate the conditions of capturing and export of birds, too. Prescribed conditions of conservation and circulation are defined by national regulations [26]. IBA programme, in its broader sense, treats the man as the integral part of the ecosystem. Significant bird sites make one unique network, which is equally important for migration of bird species and their permanent settlement, and for

planning and development of nature-based tourism and scientific research activities. Assets acquired from tourist spending can be invested in the protection and improvement of protection levels of IBA areas.

Today, IBA programme is the part of global programme and network "BirdLife International", as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas – IBAs, and it covers the area of over 15,000 spatial units in more than 200 countries around the world. It has the total area of 10 million km², i.e. 7% of total land surface in the world. Besides, BirdLife International consists of: over 10 million members and supporters, i.e. 2.72 million members and 7.2 million supporters, who are the advocates of this programme, 4,000 local groups and movements, over 1,000 actions within Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas and over 1.9 million young people, aged over 18. BirdLife International partnership employs nearly 8,000 workers, who are followed by over 5,000 volunteers. It is significant to emphasize that this programme, according to data of 2014, disposes of the budget of USD 636 million [28].

Total of 42 areas of international significance for the conservation of bird diversity has been singled out in the Republic of Serbia by the use of standardized IBA criteria. Total area is 1,259,624 ha or 14.25% of the territory of Serbia [29].

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

This Convention refers to the measures and incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and regulation of the approach to genetic resources. In addition to that, it concerns the approach and exchange of technologies, including biotechnologies, technical and scientific cooperation, assessment of the impact on the environment, education and raising of public awareness, provision of financial means and reporting on the progress in implementation of Convention on different levels. Convention signatory states are expected to prepare and implement national strategies and action plans for conservation, protection and improvement of biological diversity. They, also, have to carry out thematic programmes aimed to conservation of ecosystems and solution of problems recognized in the provisions of the Convention [22]. It was adopted in 1992 on the Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro, known as "Earth Summit". Convention on Biological Diversity, entered into force on 29 December 1993, while Serbia ratified it in 2001. Convention emphasize three basic objectives:

- conservation of biological diversity;
- sustainable use of the elements of biological diversity;
- fair and uniform division of benefits arisen from the use of sustainable resources [27].

Biodiversity is defined, in the Convention on Biological Diversity, as: the diversity (variability) among the living organisms, which come from all natural resources, including, among others, terrestrial, coastal and marine wetlands or some other aquatic ecosystems or ecological complexes they are part of, including diversity within the species and ecosystems. The obligations referring to the following, are also defined:

- identification and monitoring of biodiversity condition and processes and activities with the significant negative impact;
- "In Situ" conservation, by the establishment of the protected areas and biological resources management systems, of the introduction of species control, revitalisation of ecosystems and endangered plant and animal species, etc.;
- "Ex Situ" conservation, by the establishment and maintenance of capacities for "Ex Situ" protection, etc.;
- sustainable use of biodiversity components, by the integration of the review of conservation and sustainable use of biological resources, and making of national decisions, by the adoption of economical incentive measures and similar;
- research, training and improvement of public education and awareness;
- assessment of the impacts and minimizing of negative impacts on biodiversity and environment;
- access to genetic resources;
- access to biotechnologies and their transfer;
- exchange of information, especially taking into account the needs of developing countries;
- technical and scientific cooperation in the field of resources conservation and their sustainable use;
- use of biotechnology and distribution of benefit arising from it [30].

Important Plant Areas - IPA

These areas represent internationally significant habitats of wild plants and fungi. They are not officially protected areas, but they are significant in terms of their importance for the development and implementation of activities of the protection model in nature. Many references state, as the main objective of IPA programme, the protection of at least 50% of these plant areas and surfaces. IPA area definition is also important for the fulfilment of the objectives of Convention on Biological Diversity. According to the available data, 1,771 IPA has been identified in Europe up to now, in 16 countries (including Serbia).

Prime Butterfly Areas - PBA

These are the significant areas for conservation of butterflies. Besides, the objective of their definition is the support to the development of Natura 2000 and Pan-European ecological network. 431 PBA areas in 37 countries and 3 archipelagos, covering the territory of 21 million hectares or 1.8% of total European territory are defined in Europe. Considering the fact that on 62% PBA in Europe, agriculture represents the dominant activity, it is also the most endangering factor on these areas. In Serbia, PBA areas include the separate sites and larger areas where target species of butterflies live. These areas are defined under the same principles as PBA in Europe. Selected areas for butterflies represent natural or semi-natural habitats with the exquisite richness of fauna, especially butterfly fauna or habitats containing exquisite communities of rare, endemic and endangered species, as well as species of European importance, or of importance for Serbia [27].

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

IUCN Red List represents the set of information on the status of conservation of plants, animals and fungi all around the world. It includes the assessment of risk from the extinction of species in case of lack of protection measures. Species are classified in one of eight categories of threat, on the basis of application of criteria in connection to the size, structure and distribution of population. Species designated as Critically endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU) are considered threatened. IUCN Red List gives necessary information on ecological needs of species, habitats, threatening factors the species face with, and protection measures which are to be taken for the purpose of decreasing or preventing the risk of extinction. Until the end of 2017, IUCN Red List included total of 85,604 assessed threatened species [9,31] and the objective is that until 2020, at least 160,000 species is assessed. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the result of cooperation between IUCN and numerous partner organisations. IUCN Programme Office for Southeast Europe promotes good management and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity [32], and supports the initiative for conserving the biological diversity and manage the ecological systems for the benefits of people and nature [22]. These are the grounds of Sustainable Tourism Development.

Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest

Emerald is the European ecological network for conservation of wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats in those countries which are not members of EU. This network of areas extends all over Europe, from the Canary Islands to Caucasus, and from Turkey to Lapland. This network consists of the areas of special importance for nature protection, and it has been established under the auspices of Council of Europe, as the part of activities arising from the application of Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats - Bern Convention [27]. In European Union, Emerald network operates alongside with Natura 2000 programme. Identification of species and habitats was carried out and list of species from Bern Convention Lists, being significant to Serbia, as well as the description of potential areas which should be integrated in Emerald network have been proposed, in the pilot project titled "Establishment of Emerald Network in the countries of Southeast Europe", which was executed in 2005 and 2006 by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, under the coordination of Faculty of Biology. From the total of 61 proposed potential "Emerald" areas (1,014,286.87 ha, which is 11.48% of total area of the territory of Serbia), six areas (9.83%) were covered in detail [22].

6. CONCLUSIONS

Only certain number of natural reserves has the international status or is a candidate for obtaining such status in the Republic of Serbia. On the other hand, stated protected areas suffer various pressures from the users and other natural phenomena. That is why their protection represents the constant priority.

Main threats to endangered natural areas are: wild and unplanned construction, water and land pollution, terrain devastation, agricultural land treated with chemicals, which via air, land and water reach the protected areas, poaching, presence of domestic animals, overgrowing of fields because of the lack of pasture, introduction of non-native species, decrease of non-native species, frequent and high threat to flora and fauna, draining of wetlands, soil erosion, tourism activities with consequences to the environment and a lot of other pressures. Each of stated threats leave its mark in ecosystems. By the proper and quick action these impacts can be minimized or completely eliminated.

One of the main instruments of protection is the legal framework. On the protected areas in the Republic of Serbia, besides international status of area protection, the following protection regimes are established too: Of the I, II or III degree. Depending on the zoning, different activities are limited and allowed. Tourism activities, not influencing the environment, are allowed in the III degree of protection. In the research and analysis of presented data, start point was the hypothesis that the establishment of international levels of protection of certain areas is completely conditioned by the vulnerability of flora and fauna and pressures on the concerned area, and that its purpose is to contribute to the conservation of threatened species. That means that for the purpose of protection, diversity and vulnerability of species, specific protection levels and sufficient number of protected areas and surfaces are established. On the other hand, protected areas contribute to Sustainable Tourism Development, by achieving the positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts.

Areas, protected by international laws, represent the sphere of interest of numerous international tourists. Forms of tourism, which are manifested as sustainable ones at these destinations are: ecotourism, nature-based tourism, trips, bird-watching, photography, stargazing, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and visiting parks.

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