



**AMBASSADE
DE FRANCE
EN MACÉDOINE
DU NORD**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

Dear participants

Dear Academics and Representatives of civil society,

Dear Organizers from France,

I'm happy to be here with you today to say few words, so thank you for the invitation.

I know that you have been working intensively since yesterday morning in interactive workshops, to create an efficient regional platform to advocate for sustainable and equitable forms of food production and consumption.

So first and foremost, congratulations on this initiative. To meet these climate and environmental challenges, and their impact on global food security and rural areas, we need new, innovative and integrated approaches. This is what you are doing.

These are real issues that we need to address together and I really believe that your approach is a good one. First, because you have an integrated vision that includes biodiversity and food sector into the climate changes. Secondly, because you work on a regional level and this has more impact and adds weight to your recommendations and actions.

Your position as members of the civil society is crucial, and that's why I welcome this initiative of bringing together the active stakeholders of the region in this field.

This action will complete the policies and national strategies of your authorities and the EU to fulfil the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. We don't have much of a choice : we need to develop agricultural and food systems that perform well in economic, environmental, health and social terms. The Green Agenda for Western Balkans takes this path.

And this topic is a priority for the Western Balkans, but it is also for France. We are also involved, particularly in the agricultural sector. That's why we have been committed to the agro-ecological transition for several years now.

And this involves relying on ecosystems and biological regulation, encouraging the completion of major cycles and improving carbon storage in soils and biodiversity.

As you may know, the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty adopted the observer status in the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD) in South-East Europe in September 2023. SWG has been mandated to work on the actions defined in the Green Agenda of the Western Balkans (GAWB) and Pillar 4 of the adopted Action Plan, covering climate change adaptation in the agricultural sector.

Some of you are part of the 30 members of this challenging working group and we are looking forward to reading your assessment. France will welcome next year the general Assembly of SWG in Montpellier and we will support regional cooperation in this field.

Preserving biodiversity and strengthening the ecosystem services provided by agriculture is an absolute necessity, and it is vital to meet the climate and biodiversity challenges together, since they are becoming increasingly interconnected.

I look forward to hearing about your platform in the future and I wish you a successful advocacy and concrete results.

Thank you for your attention