

**Joint ESENIAS and DIAS Scientific Conference and
9th ESENIAS Workshop**

**Species, ecosystems and areas of conservation concern under threat from
the invasive alien species**

03–06 September 2019

Opening Statement

By Teodora Trichkova

Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Respected Guests,

I am honoured to open the third conference jointly organised by the ESENIAS and DIAS networks, which will be followed by the 9th ESENIAS Workshop. It is another opportunity to exchange valuable scientific information and take stock of our common work. This forum is dedicated to an extremely important theme: **Species, ecosystems and areas of conservation concern under threat from the invasive alien species.**

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to our colleagues and distinguished representatives of the hosting country for organising this conference, and in particular to:

- The Hydrobiological Institute Ohrid
- The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia and
- The Public Institution Galicica National Park.

My sincere gratitude goes also to local organising committee chaired by Prof. Dr. Sasho Trajanovski and Konstantin Zdraveski who contributed to the logistics, financing and scientific parts of this event. As you all know the ESENIAS & DIAS conferences are without registration fee and the organisers fully support these events.

Secondly, let me remind you that the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released last May by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has brought to the fore the urgent need for radical changes in the management of natural resources. The Global Assessment Report confirms that the rate of wildlife extinction is accelerating. Invasive alien species (IAS) are considered the second greatest threat to biodiversity globally after habitat loss and fragmentation. The ecosystems with globally significant biodiversity are most vulnerable to the impact of IAS, and need special protection. Therefore, I find it highly appropriate that ESENIAS and DIAS focus on this important theme.

This conference is an opportunity to further reflect on and advance the role of science in the invasive alien species prevention and management. By ensuring the reliable data and recent peer reviews ESENIAS and DIAS contribute greatly to the regional biodiversity conservation, as well as to human wellbeing, livelihoods and climate adaptation. On the other hand, there is the need to focus our efforts so that ESENIAS and DIAS increase the meaningful impact of the scientific results on the decision-making processes at regional level.

Our work during the third conference organised jointly by the ESENIAS and DIAS networks is focused on three general objectives: 1) Update on the current project activities of ESENIAS and DIAS, 2) Exchange of information on other regional IAS related initiatives, and 3) Enhance the networking and collaboration among scientists involved in the mentioned projects and programmes.

I am looking forward to spending precious time together not only in the conference room but also during the informal discussions and meetings in the wonderful city of Ohrid.

Thank you!