COP17 YEREVAN ARMENIA

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EU4Environment Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

WORLD BANK GROUP

From Forest to Destination: How Ecotourism Benefits Communities and Conserves Biodiversity?

Date: 29 October 2026, 16:30 – 17:30 (Yerevan time)

Location: Green Zone, Main stage, Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex

Languages: English/Armenian (interpretation is provided by organisers)

Format: Panel Discussion, on-site

From Forest to Destination:
How Ecotourism Benefits Communities and Conserves Biodiversity?

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Drawing on experience from eight pilot communities in Armenia, this panel discussion will present key findings from the ecotourism management plans developed under EU4Environment and consider how those lessons can inform ecotourism development across the country. The discussion will bring together national authorities, municipalities, protected-area managers, tourism practitioners, and biodiversity experts to examine practical opportunities, constraints, and partnerships.

The event will aim to identify practical actions and partnerships that can expand community-based ecotourism in Armenia while generating local economic benefits and supporting biodiversity conservation. The event will discuss:

- lessons and opportunities identified across the eight pilot communities;
- local livelihoods, businesses, products, and visitor experiences;
- biodiversity conservation, protected areas, and responsible natural resource management; and
- cooperation among government institutions, municipalities, protected areas, businesses, communities, and development partners.

The session will conclude with a forward-looking discussion on the most important actions that each institution or sector can take over the next two years to help develop viable and sustainable ecotourism destinations in Armenia.

The event is organized by the World Bank within the EU4Environment Programme (https://www.eu4environment.org/).

Agenda

Timing	Items
7mins	***Opening*** **Moderator sets the scene**: • Welcome participants • Introduction to the EU4Environment Programme *(Oksana Kovalenko, EU4Environment Coordinator)* • Why ecotourism and brief introduction of pilot projects • Introduction of speakers
9 mins	***Setting the context: Lessons learnt from the pilot communities*** ***Karen Aghababyan, Biodiversity Expert, World Bank*** • *What are key challenges and main opportunities in developing ecotourism identified in the EU4Environment study?* ***Karen Mkrtchyan, Representative of Vardenis Municipality*** • *What ecotourism assets does Vardenis have, and what is the most important first step needed to turn them into viable visitor experiences?*
5 mins	***National enabling conditions*** ***Anushik Avetyan, Director of Tourism Committee*** • *From the Tourism Committee's perspective, what conditions are already in place for ecotourism development in Armenia, and which gap requires the most urgent attention?*
5 mins	***Conservation of biodiversity and protected areas*** ***Nune Harutyunyan, REC Caucasus*** • *How can well-managed ecotourism support biodiversity conservation and strengthen the management of protected areas and Emerald Network sites?*

10 mins	***Livelihoods and visitor experiences*** ***Armen Grigoryan, Armenia Travel*** • *How can local culture, traditions, products and services be incorporated into marketable ecotourism experiences and generate income for communities?* ***Robert Alikhanyan, Director of Dilijan National Park*** • *According to the EU4Environment study, Dilijan already attracts already a high number of visitors and has a strong local economic base. How have local businesses and residents benefited from tourism and what could help spread these benefits more widely across the community?*
6 mins	***Strengthening communities and partnerships*** ***Anushik Avetyan, Tourism Committee*** • *What partnerships are needed between the Tourism Committee, local authorities, protected areas, and businesses to promote viable ecotourism destinations?*
8 mins	***Looking Ahead*** ***Question to all Speakers*** • *What should be the next immediate priority for your institution or sector to advance ecotourism in Armenia?*
7 mins	***Audience Q&A***
3 mins	***Wrap up*** • Key messages and takeaways • The importance of continued collaboration between conservation, tourism and local communities • Closing remarks and thanks to participants