



ROBIN WOOD



GREENPEACE



Gesellschaft für
ökologische
Forschung e.V.

Berlin, 02nd November 2017

Botschaft der Republik Polen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Botschafter Prof. Dr. Andrzej Przytyński

Lassenstr. 19-21

14193 Berlin-Grunewald

Halt logging of Białowieża forest - World Heritage Committee Decision and Ruling of European Court of Justice

Dear Ambassador Prof. Dr. Andrzej Przytyński,

Forests have always played a central role in human lives and our cultures. They play a crucial role as our “green lungs” and places to improve human wellbeing in our increasingly urbanised societies. Moreover, they are key in fighting climate change, providing fresh air, regulating the water supply, and they serve as pivotal habitats to our ever-shrinking biodiversity.

Yet, only tiny fractions of old-growth forests remain in Europe, conserving the widest range of biodiversity and serving as a last refuge for our native plants and animals.

The Białowieża Forest is one of Europe’s most iconic and high conservation value forests and home to species such as the European Bison, otherwise threatened with extinction. As such Białowieża forest has been declared by UNESCO as an irreplaceable area for biodiversity conservation and designed as a World Heritage Site. Consequently, Poland has also designated the Białowieża Forest as a Natura 2000 site (SAC), and therefore has to follow European Law and the ruling of the EJC (Case C-441/17).

We are therefore extremely concerned by the logging activities that Poland is undertaking in Białowieża, which not only threaten protected species but are destroying our common European heritage. Likewise, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, at its 41st session in Kraków, Poland (2-12 July 2017), requested that the Government of Poland protects the old-growth forest in Białowieża, and immediately halts all logging and wood extraction in it.

This call is strongly supported by the EU Commission alongside with scientists across Europe, local people, people around the world, and environmental NGOs. NGOs thereby play an important role as they represent civil society and altruistic interests that often have no proper voice, and as they are a driver for finding constructive solutions.

The EU Court of Justice has issued an immediate ban on logging in Białowieża Forest, since in the Court's opinion, increased timber harvesting in Białowieża Forest could cause serious and irreparable damage to this priceless natural environment.

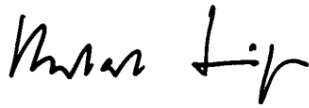
However, so far the Polish government is not respecting this court's injunction. This is a precedent, as no Member State in the history of the EU has failed to comply with such an order from the court.

In a Community governed by the rule of law, it is of utmost importance that decisions of the CJEU are fully complied with by the Member States. It is essential for the safety and integrity of all EU citizens that all EU countries abide by common laws, including those protecting the nature upon which we all depend.

We, the undersigned, implore you to take all necessary action to make sure Poland respects the decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and complies with the order of the Court of Justice of the European Union to immediately halt logging in Białowieża forest.

We also call for the whole Białowieża forest area (including Browsk and Hajnowka) to be made a National Park that would benefit human well-being for generations to come. All commercial logging should be prohibited there.

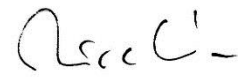
Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Hubert Weiger
Chairman
BUND



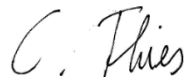
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President
Deutscher Naturschutzring



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Secretary General
Forum U&E



Sylvia Hamberger
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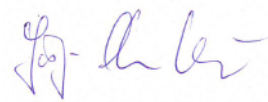
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