

**IUCN MISSION TO TATRA NATIONAL
PARK, REPUBLIC OF SLOVAKIA,
APRIL 2005**

REPORT BY:

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IUCN-THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION MISSION TO TATRA NATIONAL PARK, SLOVAKIA, APRIL 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A 6 day IUCN mission was undertaken in April 2005 at the request of Slovakian Members of IUCN, both government and non-government. The main purpose was to assess the status of the Tatra National Park (TANAP) against the IUCN Categories for Protected Area Management, in particular IUCN Category II. In addition, the aftermath of the windblow of November 2004 raises issues about the status of the Park and the widely different propositions for management of the windblown areas, ranging from strict management to tourist development.

We had discussions with a wide range of interests and authorities: state, regional, district and municipal levels of government, state forestry and national park bodies, environmental NGOs and private forestry interests. In addition, we read all of the documentation available in English.

We conclude that there is no clear authority and specifically no overall management authority for the Park, there is no comprehensive strategy or management plan or formal provision for the preparation of such documents, the current approved zonation system is inadequate, and the layers of government from national to municipal level provide confusion and inconsistency to all bodies involved. In addition, we noted the highly polarised views about the future management and use of the key parts of the area, including its core, following the windblow of November 2004, which affected some 12,000ha of the Park. Pro-development attitudes were found amongst the various levels of government and within the Prime Minister's special committee, whereas both state and voluntary conservation interests sought much stricter protection. There is no formal machinery for reconciling different interests and the statutory provisions for paying compensation to private landowners had not been implemented.

We concluded that radical changes to the structure of decision making, management authority, and management planning, zonation and action were required in order to safeguard the high natural and cultural values of the Tatra National Park.

Our specific **Recommendations** are as follows:

Recommendation 1 A statement of the values of the TANAP should be prepared and promoted throughout Slovakia and internationally by all relevant authorities. This should form the basis for all future management strategies and plans for the national park.

Recommendation 2 Any proposals for intervention, including infrastructure provision, should not result in any diminution of the iconic national and international, cultural and environmental status of the TANAP.

Recommendation 3 The government of the Slovak Republic should reinforce the management objectives of TANAP through a new law and regulations in order to fulfil the requirements of a Category II area.

Recommendation 4 The government of the Slovak Republic, as the responsible authority, should establish a management regime for the TANAP that is able to withstand pressures for development from stakeholders and from adjacent areas that would negate the achievement of the conservation and heritage objectives.

Recommendation 5 The government of the Slovak Republic should adopt and implement a system of compensation for removal of opportunities for income generation by private and municipal landowners and provide the necessary resources.

Recommendation 6 Before any decisions on developments in the proposed Natura 2000 sites or which would affect the sites within the national park are taken these proposals must be subjected to the 'appropriate assessments'.

Recommendation 7 The Regional Office in consultation with the relevant Ministries should develop a positive incentive scheme for managing Natura 2000 sites. There are good models in other countries, for example the Natural Care Scheme of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Recommendation 8 The zoning system in the Tatra National Park should be based on the principles of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and the IUCN Category system. It should be the tool for maintaining the values of the TANAP, for implementing the agreed management strategy and plan, and as a basis for action on the ground, including the degree of intervention.

Recommendation 9 The current approved zoning system should be changed and a new system implemented immediately. The primary objectives of conservation should occur on at least three-quarters of the area, the management of the remaining area is not in conflict with that primary purpose, and provision should be made for a buffer zone at the eastern and western extremities of the park. The revision should be undertaken in consultation with land owners and managers.

Recommendation 10 A new body - **the Tatra National Park Authority (TNPA)** - should be established with executive responsibility for all matters in the TANAP. Its Board should comprise representatives of all key stakeholders in the TANAP.

Recommendation 11 A single Strategic Plan for the whole national park area, covering all issues relevant to the values of the TANAP, should be drawn up by the proposed Tatra National Park Authority and, following a formal process of consultation, should be approved by the new Authority. In the case of any dispute on the Plan, the body to which the TNPA reports should adjudicate and make decisions.

Recommendation 12 The primary objective of forest management in TANAP should be the development and maintenance of natural or close-to-nature forest ecosystems. This will require varying levels of intervention and selection of the native species to achieve, but pesticides and fertilisers should not be used.

Recommendation 13 A long term forest development plan should be produced, within the framework of the overall planning documents recommended earlier. Available expertise from NGOs, FAO and IUCN should be used.

Recommendation 14 An incentive scheme should be devised to stimulate land transfer to public authorities or to stimulate more proactive natural management of the forest.

Recommendation 15 In the proposed zonation grade 4 and 5 areas no fallen or broken timber should be removed, and no artificial rehabilitation measures taken. In grade 3 areas 50% of the trees should remain, a buffer zone created where all fallen and broken timber is removed, and some assistance to achieving natural rehabilitation can take place.

Recommendation 16 Tourism should fit within the carrying capacity of TANAP, meet required quality standards and be based on sustainable principles instead of mass tourism. There should be no further tourist infrastructure in Zones A and B, it should be concentrated outside TANAP. The current over capacity of tourism accommodation should be reduced, focussing on the removal of the accommodation of lowest quality. There should be a greater focus on improving the quality of existing infrastructure.

Recommendation 17 The most environmentally damaging sports equipment, such as snow scooters, and all-terrain motor cycles, should not be allowed in grade 4 and 5 areas. All other sport and tourist activities should be retained inside existing areas and trails designated for activities and in accordance with the Visitors Rules. The proposed extension of the ski slopes must be subject to careful EEA procedure taking into account the direct and indirect impact on the environment, assessment of snowfall distribution along the ski slopes and the demand for artificial snow and water.

Recommendation 18 Slovak authorities should pursue all of the funding possibilities under EU Council Resolution on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the mission sincerely thank the State Nature Conservancy and the Administration of the Tatras National Park for their support, availability and assistance provided.

Special thanks go to the Director General of the Division of Nature and Landscape Protection of the Ministry for Environment of RS, RNDr. Jozef Kramarik, Secretary of the Government Committee for restoration and development of High Tatra, Ing. Ivan Štefanec, Director of the Centre of Nature and Landscape Protection of the State Nature Conservancy of SR, Ing. Peter Urban, Director of the Administration of the High Tatras National Park and Biosphere Reserve, Ing. Tomas Vancura, as well as Ing. Juraj Svajda who accompanied the mission throughout its work.

We would also like to acknowledge the great interest of the different stakeholders at the TANAP and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, who provided valuable information on the situation, during meetings and presentations. We were extremely grateful for the information provided by Vice Mayor of the Town Vysoke Tatry, Ing. Jozef Vilim, as well as representatives of the Administration of State Forestry of TANAP, representatives of private and local community forest owners, representatives of the Regional Office of Environment in Prešov, District Office in Poprad and Liptovský Mikuláš and the representatives of the NGOs. Thanks go to the organisers of the International Workshop "Policy Options on Storm Damage Management" for the opportunity to participate.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In response to a request from IUCN members in Slovakia and the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and its Tatra National Park Administration and with the concurrence of the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Slovakia, an IUCN Mission visited Slovakia in April 2005 to consider the Tatra National Park (hereafter called TANAP). TANAP includes 3 distinctive mountain ranges – West Tatra 40%, High Tatra 40% and Belanske Tatra 20%.

The Mission was a joint one between volunteer members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas European Region and staff of the IUCN Regional Office for Europe. The members of the Mission were:

Marija Zupancic-Vicar, Slovenia, an engineer by training, IUCN Regional Councillor for Eastern Europe, former Environment Minister of Republik of Slovenia and former Director of Triglav National Park,

Roger Crofts, Scotland, a geomorphologist by training, IUCN WCPA Chair European Region, former government official in ministries of economic development and environment in Scotland, and founder Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage,

Tamas Margescu, Hungary, a forester by training, IUCN Regional Director for Europe, Brussels, and

Zenon Tederko, Poland, an agriculture economist by training, Director of IUCN Office for Central Europe, Warsaw.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference agreed were as follows:

Purpose

To provide advice from IUCN experts to the state authorities and other interested parties on the management measures required to maintain IUCN Management Category II status for the Tatra NP.

Customer for the mission

Slovak state authorities, the Tatra National Park Administration, IUCN members in Slovakia, and the IUCN National Committee of Slovakia.

Scope of the mission

To consider the management actions required to maintain the Category II status in particular

1. to assess the proposals for the removal of fallen trees,
2. to assess the implications for the ecological and wider environmental integrity of the Tatra NP in the light of proposals for economic development, including recreation, sport and tourism facilities within the park boundary,
3. to advice on the management action needed to implement a zonation strategy within the whole NP area, and

4. to review the current management plan in the light of the Slovak laws on nature and landscape protection.

Method

The mission will be carried out under the guidelines established by IUCN WCPA Europe

1. to hold private discussions with the key parties especially the state and national park authorities, and representatives of the NGOs,
2. to review all documentation in English, and
3. to visit key parts of the NP.

Timescale

The visit to the area and all discussions is likely to need 3 days. In addition, 3 days will be required for the team to write up its report.

The visit should take place in April if at all possible subject to the availability of the mission participants.

In the time available agreed between the parties we have not been able to go into great detail or to investigate every possibility, and we have only reviewed documents in English as previously agreed. Our aim is to give an overview on the key issues as we see them in the hope of helping all those interested in the High Tatras to achieve a sustainable natural resource solution.

3. THE STATUS OF THE TATRA MOUNTAINS

Any assessment of the Tatra National Park must take account of the status of the High Tatras in the cultural history of Slovakia and the image the mountains portray to others, alongside their undoubted natural importance as a mountain ecosystem.

The High Tatras are frequently referred to as “one of the symbols of Slovakia”, which we understand to mean that they have iconic status in the cultural and mentality of the people throughout history and that this will continue to be the case for future generations. The High Tatras are clearly a source of national pride as the area was designated as the country’s first national park in 1949 after many years of discussion. It is normal for the highest mountain in a country to be symbolic and this appears to be the case also in Slovakia. In addition, there are 25 peaks over 2500m altitude. The combination of peaks and the granitic rocks mean that the mountains have been a centre of informal recreational pursuits for many decades providing physical and mental challenges, and emotional and spiritual uplift. The existence of springs led to the formation of a line of small spa health resorts in the early twentieth century. These have benefited many visitors to the area and provided a source of income for the new settlers and those living in the settlements beyond the boundary.

The High Tatras are an important mountain ecosystem. The mixture of acidic and alkaline rocks, the geological history, geomorphological processes, water regime and other ecosystem services, all provide a natural life support system for many

mountain species, including some which are endemic to the area. But it is the totality of the species, habitats and ecosystems and natural processes, and the starting place for waters flowing to both the Baltic and Black Seas, which makes the High Tatras a unique place in the natural heritage of Slovakia and of Europe.

Frequently termed “the smallest alpine range in the world”, the High Tatras of Poland and Slovakia have an importance naturally, culturally and historically far beyond these two countries. Visitors from far afield are attracted to the area for its natural values. In the last decade, the quality of the natural heritage of the area has been recognised by their designation as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO and their identification as part of the EU Natura 2000 network to cover more than 80% of TANAP the High Tatras of Poland and Slovakia have also been identified as the core area of European importance of the Pan-European Ecological Network under the Council of Europe’s Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

The severe windstorm which affected some 12,000ha of the national park has been described as a “calamity” for the local area and its people, and also for Slovakia. It raises challenges about the best ways to manage the national park in the future locally, regionally and nationally in Slovakia and is also of international interest and concern. This is evidenced by the establishment of a high level committee by the Prime Minister to address the issues arising from the windblow. Contrary to many expectations that the majority of people living in and around TANAP and visitors were in favour of more development and lowering of nature protection standards, a recent survey shows that at least half of the respondents consider that the level of protection should not be weakened, that there are too many tourists visiting the park, and that future development should be based on ecotourism. This report seeks to make a contribution to these debates in the context of international experience and best practice of IUCN staff and volunteers and the guidelines for managing internationally significant protected areas. We cannot determine what should be done but we hope that our analysis, assessment and recommendations will contribute positively to future decisions on the status and management of the High Tatras which will recognise their iconic natural and cultural status to Slovakia within Europe.

Recommendation 1 A statement of the values of the TANAP should be prepared and promoted throughout Slovakia and internationally by all relevant authorities. This should form the basis for all future management strategies and plans for the national park.

Recommendation 2 Any proposals for intervention, including infrastructure provision, should not result in any diminution of the iconic national and international, cultural and environmental status of the TANAP.

4. THE STATUS OF THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK

The internationally accepted definition of a protected area is as follows:

“an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of the natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means” IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories.

Under these IUCN Guidelines, a system of six management categories has been developed and is widely used. It has been incorporated in some national legislation and forms the organisational structure of the *UN List of Protected Areas*. A National Park (Category II) is a protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation and is defined as follows:

“Natural area of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area, and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible”.

The definition continues:

“A national park (Category II) area is managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation and the objectives of a national park are to protect natural (representative examples of physiographic regions, biotic communities, genetic resources, and species) and scenic areas of national and international significance for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational or tourist purposes, all of that at a level which will maintain the area in a natural or near natural state and to eliminate and thereafter prevent exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation and to take into account the needs of indigenous people, including subsistence resource use, in so far as these will not adversely affect the other objectives of management”.

The Tatra National Park was established by law in 1949. The current legislation, 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection, states that a national park is an area *“usually more than 1000ha, predominantly with ecosystems substantially unaffected by human activities, or with unique and natural landscape structures that form national bio centres and the most significant natural heritage in which the nature protection is of higher priority than other activities”* section 19 (1). On the basis of this statement, the Slovak law for national parks clearly meets the IUCN criteria for a protected area and defines the primary objectives. However, it defines a third level of protection rather than the higher fourth or fifth levels. Also the law does not define the area in which the long term primary management objectives would be secured, as the zoning system is left for negotiation between the stakeholders (nature conservation, forestry, water management, traffic, tourism and recreation, etc.), and the area in which exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area should be excluded is not defined. In addition, the law only to some extent provides a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

There is no statutory provision for a management plan, nor for consultation, nor for governance arrangements: these points will be developed later in this report.

A more specific assessment of the Tatra National Park in relation to the IUCN Management Category II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation is considered in the next sections.

5. ASSESSMENT OF TATRA NATIONAL PARK WITH IUCN PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES

Primary management objectives: TANAP fulfils only some of the primary management objectives for an IUCN II National Park. Two critical points were noted: exploitation in the national park area and the provision of environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor management. Also some of the secondary objectives: scientific research, wilderness protection and the protection of specific natural/cultural features and education, as well as the potentially applicable objective of the sustainable use of resources from natural ecosystems, are not precisely defined in the Act 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection.

We note the statement by Milan Koren in an article earlier in 2005 about the windstorm *“we should consider irrational an import of tendencies pursued by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) trying to create in the world a model landscape and ecological structure regardless the specialities of different places in the world”*. Clearly he misunderstands both the IUCN Guidelines and the status of the organisation. IUCN is a Union of government and non-government organisations, it is not an NGO, and includes the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic. The IUCN Guidelines for Protected Areas Management Categories, the model he is referring to, have been approved by its General Assembly and have also been recognised as the international standard by all the signatories of the Convention of Biological Diversity, including therefore the Slovak Republic. That is the factual position.

Size of TANAP: the area of the National Park covers 73,800ha and, in addition, the buffer zone area is 30,703ha. The boundaries of the National Park are drawn sufficiently widely that they contain entire ecosystems of the Tatra mountains. However, some of the area was in past (and to some extent is still at present) subject to material modification by human exploitation or occupation. It should be also noted that at least three-quarters and preferably more of the national park area should be managed for the primary purpose; and the management of the remaining area must not be in conflict with that primary purpose. The Tatras Biosphere Reserve covers the national park area (core zone 49,444ha or 44%, the buffer or transition zone: 23,641ha or 21%, and the outer or development zone 32,575ha or 35%).

Pressures from adjacent areas: The government, as the responsible authority for the National Park, has an obligation to see that its management is not negated by pressures from adjacent areas. To cope with these pressures, supplementary

and compatible management arrangements may be needed for these areas, even if they are not designated as part of the protected area. However, the Government Committee for restoration and development of High Tatra “outline of a study on sustainable development of High Tatra“, in which there are some unsustainable proposals, does not respect the fact that the area under this restoration and development plan is a IUCN Category II National Park and is inscribed in the UN List of Protected Areas. The proposal to enlarge the area of all villages which form the town of Vysoké Tatry towards the core zone of the national park would require a lower standard of conservation measures in the core zone of the national park than fits with the international guidelines. The further demands for large recreation areas as part of the town Vysoké Tatry would have the same effect. Just to quote from the invitation for projects from the Prime Minister’s Committee: “...as to realize a suitable winter and summer tourism development without taking in account the nature conservation measures...”. The outline goes even further, there are demands “to construct new extreme mountain climbing trail enlarge the high mountain facilities and trails and establish a new organisation for the management of these facilities to design principles for climbing, ski alpinism, etc, without any interventions of the State Nature Conservation”. The same is true of the demand to build new huts and other buildings together with transport facilities in the high mountain environment with the highest degree of protection. In addition to those cited, some other projects are proposed, demanding new areas of the national park for tourism and recreation developments. The paper from the Committee also directly proposes that “the aim of the Tatra National Park in the sense of the IUCN criteria should be re-defined” as well as “to put in place a set of legal measures which will provide quick realisation of all the goals of this study”. We read this as a clear attempt to lower the protection status of the TANAP.

Ownership of Land: In TANAP 52% of the land is owned by the state, the rest (48%) is owned by private owners and by local communities. However, whatever the ownership, experience shows that the success of management depends on good consultative arrangements and communications between the managing authority and the other owners, and on satisfactory financial arrangements for the management of the national park.

Recommendation 3: The government of the Slovak Republic should reinforce the management objectives of TANAP through a new law and regulations in order to fulfil the requirements of a Category II area.

Recommendation 4: The government of the Slovak Republic, as the responsible authority, should establish a management regime for the TANAP that is able to withstand pressures for development from stakeholders and from adjacent areas that would negate the achievement of the conservation and heritage objectives.

Recommendation 5: The government of the Slovak Republic should adopt and implement a system of compensation for removal of opportunities for income generation by private and municipal landowners and provide the necessary resources.

6. THE ROLE OF THE EU NATURA 2000 DIRECTIVES

The Slovak Republic has to implement EU Directives on Wild Birds 79/409/EEC and on Species and Habitats 92/43/EEC. These place onerous responsibilities on the state authority to agree Sites of Community Interest according to criteria set out in the Directives and the lists of species in the Annexes within the framework of the Biogeographic Regions determined by the Commission. Once the list of sites is approved for each Biogeographic region, then the sites must be formally designated using national law drawn up for the purpose, and the sites should be managed in such a way as to maintain or achieve 'favourable conservation status'.

Good progress has been made in the identification of sites, the transposing of the Directives into national legislation, and the development of data bases about the sites. However, there is still a great deal of misunderstanding about the force of the Directives, especially by private landowners and probably in parts of government. The Directives are not a national regulation but a European Union obligation with a very open, international process in which NGOs are known, from experience in other countries, to take a close interest. In effect, there is very limited opportunity for development within or adjacent to a Natura 2000, and there is a necessity of conducting formal 'appropriate assessments' of any proposed activities and there is a need to ensure that there is no deterioration in the quality of the species and habitats that are notified under the Directives. Also we are not aware of any financial instrument for the management of the Natura 2000 sites in the Slovak Republic; the arrangements for compensation in Act 543/2002 are inadequate for ensuring the achievement of 'favourable conservation status' as in some cases this will require active management intervention at a cost to the owners of the site who may not be in a position to afford the necessary work.

We note, specifically, that around 5,000ha of the 12,000ha (48%) affected by the windblow of November 2004 are classified as provisional Sites of Community Importance and therefore they must by law be treated as if they were formally classified by the European Commission. This means that formal assessments must be undertaken by the state authority before timber is removed and restocking or any other activity is undertaken on the proposed SCIs and also on adjacent land where such activities could have an impact on the interests listed in the Annexes to the two Directives.

We recommend the following.

Recommendation 6: Before any decisions on developments in the proposed Natura 2000 sites or which would affect the sites within the national park are taken these proposals must be subjected to the 'appropriate assessments'.

Recommendation 7: The Regional Office in consultation with the relevant Ministries should develop a positive incentive scheme for managing Natura 2000 sites. There are good models in other countries, for example the Natural Care Scheme of Scottish Natural Heritage.

7. ZONING WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARK

Zoning systems are used in many national parks and other types of protected areas around the world. They are the principle tool for translating the overall vision and objectives for a protected area into the specific management and use of the area on the ground. There are two models of zoning.

The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve model has three zones: core, buffer and transition, defined as follows:

core areas which are securely protected sites for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low impact use, such as education;

a clearly identified **buffer** zone, which usually surrounds or adjoins the core areas, and is used for cooperative activities compatible with sound ecological practices, including environmental education, recreation, eco-tourism and applied and basic research; and

a flexible **transition** zone, or area of cooperation, which may contain a variety of agricultural activities, settlements and other uses and in which local communities, management agencies, and other stakeholders work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources.

The IUCN Guidelines for protected Area management Categories have also been used to identify different management objectives within a protected area. Six categories ranging from strict protection to sustainable use are defined as follows:

Ia Strict Nature Reserve: protected area managed mainly for science

Ib Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection

II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation

III Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features

IV Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention

V Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation

VI Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

The key principles for zoning a protected area are:

- there must always be a core area of sufficient size to protect the natural systems and processes on which the health of individual species and habitats depends,
- the other zones must provide management that is complementary to that of the core zone,
- zones should range from strict protection in the core to economic activity in the outer-most zone,
- zoning is most successfully applied in mountain areas where a concentric pattern of zones is feasible, and

- zones should be coherent and as large as possible, rather than fragmented, if the management is to be successful.

In Slovakia five levels of protection are set down in the Act 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection: in effect these are a national system of zoning.

A system of zoning exists on the publicly-owned land in the Tatra National Park. It was approved by law in 1987 and is still the legal basis for operation. There are a number of deficiencies in the approach: the core zone in the west area is fragmented, it does not include privately-owned land, and its translation onto the ground is not clear. It represented progress at the time of its development but was in need of revision, hence the work of the TANAP Administration to draw up new proposals for discussion and implementation.

The designation of the Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1994 led to the development of the 3 zones: core, buffer and transition. These are not adequate as the buffer zone throughout is very narrow and there is no buffer or transition zones in the west and north east of TANAP.

Proposals have been made by the TANAP Administration for a zoning system to be applied to the whole of the park including the privately-owned land. Four zones are proposed: core, two buffer zones and an outer zone. These proposals have considerable benefits over the existing zoning arrangements: there is a larger core and supporting outer zones, and the proposals cover the whole national park. The proposals could be improved further with the addition of a larger buffer area in the south west and generally a much larger buffer zone without diminishing the size of the proposed core area.

The proposals have not been approved by the Ministry of Environment in agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture as there remain disagreements. There is disagreement between the TANAP Administration and the private forest owners on the principle of zoning being imposed on private land; this is not resolved with the private owners demanding compensation for the claimed reduction in their rights. The issue of compensation is dealt with later in the section on financial issues. The State Forest Authority of TANAP and the TANAP Administration are much closer in their views. We were told that there is no difference of opinion in principle and only disagreement about 20% of the zoning proposals and that these should be capable of resolution through further discussions between the two organisations. The outstanding difference between the two state organisations, as we understand it, is that the forest service wish to retain more land in the B zone rather than it being in the A zone to allow an intervention approach in the hope of changing its present unnatural situation to a more natural one. If this were to be successful, then the B zone land could at a later date be transferred to the A zone. This debate raises an important issue of principle which divides the two organisations: whether it is reasonable to have an unnatural forest ecosystem in the core area of the park and leave nature to its own devices, or whether to have human intervention to give a greater chance of success of re-naturalisation. We do not consider that this is a black and white situation, but rather there are opportunities to test and monitor both approaches in carefully selected areas of the state-owned land to allow conclusions to be drawn over

time; we recognise that this may take many decades but consider that given the degree of intervention in the forest in the past then this is worthwhile.

There is also a debate about the degree of intervention in the aftermath of the storm of 19 November 2004. Basically, as we understand it, the argument divides as follows. The 'nature should take its course view' is that there should be very limited intervention by removing fallen and broken trees on grounds of public safety and stripping of bark off from trees where there is likely to be risk of bark beetle attacks, alongside heat stations to trap bark beetles. Otherwise the trees should be left as they provide a substantial biomass which will aid the regeneration process and ensure a much more natural forest ecosystem in the longer term. There is evidence in support of this approach from independent studies in others countries as reported to the FAO/Ministry of Agriculture seminar in April 2005. The 'maximum intervention approach' is based on the timber value of the fallen trees, the claimed high risks of bark beetle infestation and of fire, and the ability to restructure the forest to a more natural structure of variable species and age. In the event, it is likely that the outcome will be a mixture of the two approaches, with very limited intervention in the core zone of the state-owned land and greater intervention in the outer zones. The degree of intervention, as measured by the amount of timber left on the ground, needs to be resolved immediately bearing the restrictions imposed by the Natura 2000 sites as indicated earlier. The situation has not been helped by the TANAP Administration using its zonation proposals as the basis for its approach to intervention.

It is essential that a new zoning system is established at the earliest opportunity. We make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 8 The zoning system in the Tatra National Park should be based on the principles of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and the IUCN Category system. It should be the tool for maintaining the values of the TANAP, for implementing the agreed management strategy and plan, and as a basis for action on the ground, including the degree of intervention.

Recommendation 9 The current approved zoning system should be changed and a new system implemented immediately. The primary objectives of conservation should occur on at least three-quarters of the area, the management of the remaining area is not in conflict with that primary purpose, and provision should be made for a buffer zone at the eastern and western extremities of the park. The revision should be undertaken in consultation with land owners and managers.

8. DECISION-MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

Governments have a fundamental responsibility, which they cannot abdicate, for the existence and well-being of national parks. They should regard such areas as important components of national strategies for conservation and sustainable development, and the responsibility for management of an individual national park should rest with the government.

In the short time available we have been able to gain only a limited understanding of the complex administrative arrangements at national, regional and local level and the assignment of the competencies to the various state authorities. The system is set out in detail in the Act 543/2002. The following is our understanding of the position relevant to the Tatra National Park.

Ministry of Environment: overseeing implementation of Act 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection, implementing authority for EC Directives 79/409 on Wild Birds and 92/43 on Habitats and Species, supervising authority for the State Nature Conservancy and its constituent parts, including the national parks and protected landscape areas, supervising authority for the Slovak Environmental Inspection.

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: responsible for state forestry land and for the work of the state forest service.

Slovak Environmental Inspection: supervising environmental activities, inspecting environmental quality and ordering remedial measures.

State Forest Service: executive management responsibility for state forest areas.

State Nature Conservancy: comprising scientific centre, two regional centres and all national park and protected landscape administrations. Purely advisory body to all relevant authorities on all aspects related to nature and landscape protection, species and habitats, protection of trees, monitoring and information systems. National park administrations develop management plan for park for approval by Minister for Environment.

Regional Office: general and specific statutory competencies on nature and landscape protection set out in Act 543/2002. Specifically relevant to this report are: compensation for private landowners, and permission for clearing fallen timber. In addition, Regional Offices have general competence for drawing up, but not approving, an integrated Regional Plan.

Self-governing Region: specific competence for approval of Regional Plan.

Districts: specific competence for approving Regional Terrestrial System of Ecological Stability, and general competence for provision of local services.

Municipalities: specific competence for management of woods, including treatment, cutting and remedial measures.

We make the following points in relation to the administrative and decisions-making arrangements:

- we gained the clear impression from every group we talked to that the structure is very complex with a mixture of sectoral and all-purpose bodies operating at different spatial scales, and there is contradiction between different laws and regulations. As a result there is great potential for dispute and slowness in decision making.

- The TANAP Administration and its supervisory body the State Nature Conservancy have no formal decision-making authority, despite frequent criticism by those who we met that the administration abused its power!
- Prior to 1994 there was a single authority for administration of the public responsibilities for the TANAP. The Tatra NP and State Forest Service were one organization supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry , with the Ministry of Environment overseeing implementation of Nature and Landscape Protection. In 1996 a new Administration of Tatra NP was created, supervised by the State Nature Conservancy of the Ministry of Environment and this was separate from the Forest Service administration. These changes have emasculated the nature and landscape protection responsibilities.
- We gained the distinct impression from our discussions that state environmental interests are weaker than state economic development and forestry interests.
- There is no integrated approach to the strategy and management of the national park as there are many administrative levels each with different competencies.
- We gained the impression that the views of lower levels of public administration, districts and municipalities, are not considered and that decisions affecting them can be taken without consultation by higher authorities.
- We gained a strong impression from private forest owners that they are not consulted nor listened to and that claims for compensation for loss of income are ignored.

It is not appropriate for us to suggest wholesale reform of the administrative arrangements in Slovakia. However, there are a number of options for improving the structure of decision making with respect to TANAP. We have sought to reflect the best international experience which suggests the establishment of a more integrated body with a non-executive decision-making board representative of all interests with a varying degree of delegation of responsibilities from higher state authorities and covering state, charitable and privately owned land.

In the light of our assessment, we identify ways in which the system could work more effectively in relation to the protection and management of the national park and the greater engagement of the various legitimate communities of interest. In particular, we recommend some significant structural and organisational changes which we consider are urgently required. We have considered the following options:

1. Status quo: we do not consider that this is appropriate for the reasons given above reflecting the points made to us by many interests.
2. Build up State Forestry Service: this has the disadvantage of a narrow remit with a culture predominantly of intervention in nature.
3. Develop a new nature conservation body: this has too a narrow remit without the capacity for a proactive role.
4. Joint state forest and nature body similar to the previous arrangements: this would be too exclusive in relation to the other interests especially the communities and private owners.

5. Broader based body: a unitary body responsible for all aspects of Tatra National park, including nature and landscape protection, forestry, land use change. The decision-making responsibilities would be undertaken by a Board of non-executive directors representing all of the interests: state, regional and local government, local communities, land owners and environmental non-government interests. This would also provide good example for other national parks in Slovakia.

Our Recommendation is for option 5 the Tatra National Park Authority (TNPA) as this would remove some of the barriers and reduce the confusion between organisations, it would ensure that all of the key stakeholders are formally represented, and there would be opportunities for a more integrated approach to the whole area which is in tune with best international practice. It should also ensure that the Republic of Slovakia's responsibilities under Natura 2000 are fully understood and discharged.

Recommendation 10 A new body - **the Tatra National Park Authority (TNPA)** - should be established with executive responsibility for all matters in the TANAP. Its Board should comprise representatives of all key stakeholders in the TANAP.

We hope that our recommendation will be formally and seriously considered by all interests and decisions for improvement beyond the existing structure made.

There are a number of issues to be resolved in the formal consideration of this recommendation, including

- the reporting lines for the Tatra National Park Authority: to the Region Office or the Self-governing Region, or to the central government: Ministry of Environment or Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry jointly, or to the Prime Minister's Office;
- who appoints the members: the central government or the regional, municipal and district levels, or through special elections, or by nomination by representative bodies. We do not regard the representation on the Prime Minister's Special committee as sufficiently broad based or representative of the all of the interests, especially local and other sectors of civil society, to be used as a model;
- functions to be delegated from higher authorities, such as recreational management, economic development; and
- whether there should be a wider consultative machinery - Advisory Council or Consultative Forum - to ensure that all interests had plenty of opportunity to comment on issues before the Authority made decisions.

We do not offer recommendations on these detailed points as we recognise that they would have to be the subject of delicate negotiations between many parties and agreement ultimately by the Government and the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

9. MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS AND PLANS

National parks are not isolated units. They are ecologically, economically, politically and culturally linked to the areas around them. For that reason, the planning and management of TANAP must be incorporated within regional planning, and supported by the policies adopted for wider areas.

We understand that some form of management plan, referred to as the Tatra National Park Management Programme, was prepared in the early 1990s, but as we have not had access to a copy of it in English our ability to comment is very limited. It was approved by the government in 1991 and was valid until 2000. However, changes in the administrative structure of TANAP in 1994, the new law 543/2002, and accession to the EU all mean that the Programme is now out of date. It was sensible, therefore, for the TANAP Administration to draft a management plan for public participation. We welcome this approach and, in particular, the consultation undertaken. However, it should be clear from our recommendations for a new decision-making structure that we consider a broader-based plan for the national park is needed. In addition, we note that the Regional Office is responsible for the development of a comprehensive regional Plan and this is approved by the Self-Governing Region body.

Our understanding of paragraph 54 (5) of the Act 543/2002 is that management documents and management programmes for protected areas should be prepared and approved as the basis for ensuring permanent care of protected areas. Approved management programmes for protected areas or management programmes for areas of international interest (e.g. Natura 2000) are BINDING DOCUMENTS for development and approval of further management programme if they relate to the same area and they ensure sufficient permanent care of such area. The management programme for the area of international interest takes precedence over other management programmes. According to point (17) of paragraph 54 of the above law the management programmes of national parks and Natura 2000 areas are developed by the Ministry of Environment and approved by the Government.

Our strong preference is that a Strategic Plan for the Tatra National Park is drawn up covering all relevant issues concerned with maintaining the values of the park, including conservation, management of natural resources, development of community facilities and development of economic activity. This should be drawn up by the proposed Tatra National Park Authority and approved by the Authority which should have delegated powers from the government. The Plan must be the subject of formal consultation with all of the stakeholder interests, nationally, regionally and locally and covering all sectors of interest. The means of consultation should ensure that everyone with a legitimate interest has an opportunity to comments and to air their views: including web based methods, private meetings, and public debates. In case of disagreement with the Plan, then objecting parties should have a right of appeal to the state authority to which the TNPA reports.

We make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 11 A single Strategic Plan for the whole national park area, covering all issues relevant to the values of the TANAP, should be drawn up by the proposed Tatra National Park Authority and, following a formal process of consultation, should be approved by the new Authority. In the case of any dispute on the Plan, the body to which the TNPA reports should adjudicate and make decisions.

10. FORESTRY

Functions of forests in the Tatra National Park

Following § 19 (1) of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No.543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection, a national park is classified as an area...“in which the nature protection is of higher priority than other activities...”.

§ 19 (3) of the same act stipulates that the functions of forests in national parks is defined according to special regulations, set out in § 23 of the Act No. 61/1977 Coll. in accordance with zones of protected areas (§ 30). Forests in general are classified by their prevailing functions into economic forests, protective forests or forests of ‘special purpose’. According to §19 (3) last sentence, only protective forests and forests of special purpose may be designated in national parks (§ 2 (1) and § 2 (3) c) of Order of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic No.5/1995 Coll.).

In fact, nearly the whole of the forests in the Tatra National Park belong to the category of protective forests and forests of special purpose. Only small fragmented parts in the south west of the Park, owned by non-governmental entities, are classified as economic forest.

In accordance with the above, the primary function of all forests in the Tatra National Park is environmental, and economic and social functions are secondary.

The Tatra National Park is presently classified as a protected area of the IUCN Category II, which means that the protected area is managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.

Irrespective of different zones with varying level of protection in the National Park, the overall management aim needs to be the maintenance of a natural state in untouched or nearly untouched parts of the ecosystem and the restoration of disturbed ecosystems into ideally the natural or close-to-natural state. This has to be followed for the management of forest ecosystems in the national park, irrespective of whether the ownership is private or public.

The TANAP State Forest Enterprise (Ministry of Agriculture), which used to be exclusively in charge of managing the Tatra National Park until the mid 1990s,

continues to serve the management of the National Park in many aspects at the operational level. The TANAP State Forest Enterprise is not profitable and is dependent on budgetary support from the Ministry of Agriculture. The fact that 90 percent of the wood harvest carried out by the TANAP State Forest Enterprise is classified as 'incidental fellings' (removing trees for of sanitary or security reasons), proves in general that economically oriented forestry is meant to be very limited. Periodically up-dated and renewed forest management plans should, in principle, clearly spell out and reflect the above-mentioned management aim.

Management of forests in the Tatra National Park

Comparing the present state of forests in the Tatra National Park with the potential, natural forest vegetation, the conclusion is that in many parts of the park, including sections of the strictly protected zones with protection grade 4 and 5, the differences both in forest structure and species composition are substantial. Dependant on the varying state of naturalness, different levels of management interventions are required to achieve the ultimate goal of natural or at least close-to-natural forest ecosystems.

Forest structure

The natural structure would be characterized by a mosaic of vegetation in different stages of a natural forest development cycle (regeneration phase-development phase-culmination phase-decay phase). In contrast to this natural structure, the forest actually comprises many large tracts of even-aged, spruce- (*Picea abies*) dominated, dense forest stands with no structural diversity. These large tracts were artificially planted following recurring natural disasters (windbreak and windfall followed by bark beetle damage) in the past in the same fashion that commercial wood-producing plantations are established. According to observations made it seems that the planting material used for spruce was not of suitable origin. Many trees show the typical characteristics of lowland spruce provenances (wide, horizontal branches) instead of the highland spruce provenance characteristics (short, downwards pointed branches). Low intensity thinning of planted forests resulted further in too dense, spruce dominated stands with individual, thin and long trees with small crowns.

Species composition

The natural mosaic of different phases in the forest development cycle is characterized by species dynamics. Whereas the natural regeneration phase usually starts with 'pioneer', light-demanding species occupying an area in and after the decay phase, continued development can lead to substantial and even radical changes in species composition. Species diversity is further dependant on the diversity of site conditions (climate, elevation, soils etc.). Certain site conditions are favourable to specific species or even exclude them.

Spruce is by far too dominant in the Tatra National Park in general and especially on sites (due to artificial planting and wrong management), where the rooting is even more flat and shallow than it is under its optimal conditions (Gleys and Pseudogleys). The upper parts of the National Park below the tree line are characterized by a small-scale mosaic of changes in relief: small, wet hollows

next to small, relatively dry, shallow and rock-covered hummocks. Naturally, this relief mosaic would provide a basis for a mosaic of species composition. However, this is not always the case. In turn, other species, which are part of the natural species composition are not always represented sufficiently (e.g. *Abies alba/fir*, *Alnus spec./alder*, *Pinus spec./pine*, *Acer spec/maple* and others).

In order to achieve the goal of a natural or close-to-natural condition of the forest ecosystems in the Tatra National Park, a long-term forest development plan would be required, which could form part of an integrated, visionary rural and regional development plan. The existence of such a long-term forest development plan, and its consequent financing and implementation is seen as a pre-condition for maintaining IUCN Category II status.

Obviously, identified natural and close-to-natural parts need to be conserved in their present state mainly through no human intervention, with the exception of removing possible alien, invasive species.

In forest areas where the existing species composition and forest structure diverges from the natural or close-to-natural state, measures need to be taken to transform these forest stands on a medium- to long-term basis, even through specific human interventions. The basis for this must be a very detailed site-mapping exercise, giving a clear, and scientifically based indication of the desired species composition. Even natural regeneration from existing mother trees with the wrong provenance might be unwanted. Species requiring shade in their youth, such as *Abies alba* (fir) missing in spruce stands, need to be planted in groups under the mature spruce stands and uncovered gradually over two to three decades from the shade given by spruce trees above. Natural regeneration might be complemented artificially with plants of desired species and from the right provenances, which requires systematic seed collection and processing as well as nursery capacities (ideally private nurseries in a market economy). In order to achieve horizontal and vertical structuring, large even-aged forest tracts need to be carefully opened. Natural succession might even do the best and most economic job in naturally, or artificially opened up gaps. Income in state-owned forest, partly derived from the utilization of timber in the management process, should be used to off-set the costs of the long-term forest transformation programme.

Through achieving a natural and close-to-natural forest condition a state of 'biological automation' is achieved, meaning nature manages itself on a low cost basis.

The utilization of pesticides and mineral fertilizers should be avoided under all circumstances, especially in view of the importance of the Tatra mountains as a European watershed and source of drinking water.

The achievement of a natural and close-to-natural forest condition is also dependant on a population of large herbivores (such as red deer and roe deer), which allows the natural regeneration and artificial planting in sufficient numbers without fencing. Besides the avoidable high costs for fencing, high snow in winter prevents fencing from being effective. It is recommended to establish

nevertheless small monitoring fences, which allow screening of the effects of large herbivores and to provide a basis for adjusting the level of culling. In the National Park area, 'hunting' should be replaced by 'wildlife management', in order not to fall into the trap of breeding too high populations of large herbivores to the detriment of the forest ecosystem and for the 'enjoyment' of few privileged hunters. Income from hunting activities is often overemphasized, while the enormous damage and costs caused by too high populations of large herbivores are not calculated.

In the development of the long-term forest development plan, the different stakeholders might be interested in obtaining the assistance of PRO SILVA Europe, an European association with deep roots also in Slovakia, whose members practise and promote close-to-nature forest management. The facilitation of designing the forest development plan by an independent, neutral 'outsider' might be beneficial for the process. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) jointly might be suited to fulfil this facilitation role.

When developing the long-term forest management plan, due consideration should be taken of the ownership structure in the park. Whereas public (including communal) ownership should not pose difficulties in relation to the primary objective of the National Park (environment protection/nature conservation), private forest owners could be suffering economic losses, which to their full extent cannot be justified by referring to the public responsibilities of owners connected to their private land. From experience in many other countries, it might be beneficial to offer private forest owners in the National Park the opportunity to exchange their property with forest of equal value outside of the National Park boundaries, or that the public authority offers to purchase the private property. If both paths are not feasible, it might be advisable to develop an 'incentive system' for private forest owners to manage their property in accordance with the objectives of national park management, rather than engaging in 'compensation schemes'. The philosophy behind the incentive system is to pay for doing something, rather than paying for doing nothing. In any case, all stakeholders, and here most importantly all owners of forests in and neighbouring the National Park, need to be an active part of the participatory development of the long-term forest development plan.

While designing the long-term forest development plan, the legal need to prepare management plans for Natura 2000 sites in the National Park should be addressed.

Managing the storm damages of November 2004 in the Tatra National Park

A 'falling wind', a violent, cold north-easterly winter wind is a specific form of damaging wind in the Tatra mountain region. Apparently it occurs irregularly, but frequently and causes panic amongst local residents. It often 'revisits' the same areas and is regarded as a permanent 'danger zone' for any development. Not by chance had no historical settlement been established in the area most affected by

the storm of November 2004. All historical settlements have been established out of the range of bora (Milan Koren, 2005).

Storms and associated forest damages through windbreak and windfall are irregular, but recurrent events in the Tatra National Park. The storm of 19th November 2004 windblow around 12,000ha at altitudes between 700 m to 1350 m above sea level. The storm did not only affected the very susceptible spruce monocultures, but also damaged to some extent mixed forests, including close-to-nature stands, believed to have higher resistance against wind damage.

The natural event of November 2004 affected primarily forest stands which had been affected previously by smaller windstorms in the past and which were artificially replanted mainly by spruce. The planting of spruce on unsuitable sites, the utilization of non-autochthonous planting material and too low-intensity thinning led to a very high susceptibility of these stands against wind. The establishment of these 'monocultures' are and were not in line with the objectives of the national park. The windblow of November 2004 could be seen also as the 'verdict of nature' and changes the approach of transformation towards natural or close-to-natural forests. There is 'the opportunity' of being able to radically improve the forest situation in a relatively short time period.

Clearing or not clearing the fallen trees?

To utilize the fallen and broken trees commercially cannot be the primary objective in the National Park. There are usually two other reasons why the clearing of fallen and broken trees is promoted: prevention of fires and prevention of large-scale bark beetle damage, affecting also standing, healthy forests.

It should be clearly kept in mind that the removal of a large quantity of biomass from the windstorm-affected area is a severe extraction of nutrients and leads to a certain degradation of soils. Bare soils are the more susceptible to erosion and deflation, which could aggravate the soil degradation process. Heavy machinery used for cutting, processing and skidding of timber could have irreversible effects on especially wet soils (Gleys and Pseudogleys).

It is essential to establish a good monitoring network of pheromone traps for bark beetles. However, pheromone traps are not suited to fight gradations of bark beetles.

Fallen and broken trees should not be removed from forests areas with the protection grade 4 and 5 of the National Park. The outer damage areas (at the border of unaffected stands) could be treated by debarking fallen trees and leaving all biomass in the stands. In this area and only in this area broken tree trunks, still standing upright, could be cut down and debarked as well. This is especially important in and in the vicinity of private forests to avoid compensation claims of private forest owners.

In forest areas with the protection grade 3 of the National Park, at least 50 percent of all trees should remain in the area. A 'buffer belt' around the damaged areas with a width of from one half to two tree lengths (15-50 m) should be

prepared, which is to be cleared of all fallen and broken timber. Even still standing trees should be removed.

It is recommended that the utilization of insecticides should be avoided under all circumstances. The utilization of insecticides in protection areas of grades 4 and 5 is strictly forbidden.

All still standing trees in the affected area with exception of the buffer belts should be maintained, for they are important for the structuring of the new forests. Should they be attacked by bark beetles, their utilization in grade 3 areas as bark beetle traps (cut after attacked) can be permitted.

With regard to fire prevention, in protection grades 3, 4 and 5 it is recommended that a fire management plan is developed with required prevention and suppression actions. It is important, both for the bark beetle related and fire suppression work, to develop and maintain a marked and fixed forest road and skid-trail system (following contour lines) in protection grades 3, 4 and 5 to be able to approach the areas effectively. All skidding should be carried out with suitable equipment to avoid irreversible damages to soils. All branches not susceptible anymore to bark beetle attacks should remain on the soil surface to prevent erosion and deflation.

Rehabilitation

The first rule should be: no rush – we have time! In the protection zone with grade 4 and 5 no artificial rehabilitation measure would be taken, except the removal of eventually attacking invasive, alien species. It is, however, important to give nature a fair chance by reducing the herbivore game population to a minimum. There should be no artificial feeding of game in winter. Assisted natural rehabilitation should be the approach in the grade 3 protection zone. Natural succession would probably be the best approach and it would not cost any money. This could be assisted by dividing the entire damaged area of protection zone 3 into a grid of small areas ('spots') of about ¼ ha. Each year, a certain number of these small spots distributed all over the grid would be reforested with different species based on a detailed site map. In this way a net of artificially reforested spots is obtained, which differ in age and in species composition. Fifty percent of all spots should be left to natural succession combined occasionally with 'enrichment planting' of rare and endangered shrub and tree species. Groups of trees and individual trees, which were not damaged by the storm, should remain standing to provide even more structure. Again, it is very important to reduce the populations of game to the extent that nature has a chance to do its job.

The management of the storm area needs to be an integral part of the previously mentioned long-term forest development plan. Stakeholder participation in the elaboration of the plans for the storm area is a must.

The entire management process of the storm damaged area, once agreed upon by the stakeholders, needs to be accompanied by a strong public relations and

communications programme, which has as an objective to not only inform the visitors of the National Park, but also to win their support.

Recommendation 12 The primary objective of forest management in TANAP should be the development and maintenance of natural or close-to-nature forest ecosystems. This will require varying levels of intervention and selection of the native species to achieve, but pesticides and fertilisers should not be used.

Recommendation 13 A long term forest development plan should be produced, within the framework of the overall planning documents recommended earlier. Available expertise from NGOs, FAO and IUCN should be used.

Recommendation 14 An incentive scheme should be devised to stimulate land transfer to public authorities or to stimulate more proactive natural management of the forest.

Recommendation 15 In the proposed zonation grade 4 and 5 areas no fallen or broken timber should be removed, and no artificial rehabilitation measures taken. In grade 3 areas 50% of the trees should remain, a buffer zone created where all fallen and broken timber is removed, and some assistance to achieving natural rehabilitation can take place.

11. TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

The present situation

With more than 2 million visitors per year, the TANAP is the most important tourist destination in Slovakia. Half of the visitors are Slovaks and the other half foreign visitors. Tourism and recreation are found to be second most significant pressure and threat to the natural heritage of Tatra Mountains. The pressure arising from the increasing numbers of visitors comprises demand for expansion of existing and development of new sport facilities and tourist infrastructure. Visitors are mainly concentrated in the High Tatras, and especially in the tourist centres such as Strbske Pleso, St. Smokovec and Tatranska Lomnica. Tourism is concentrated in two distinct seasons: the summer season from June to August, and the winter season from January to April. Pressure on nature from visitors is also very unevenly distributed - with some parts of the High Tatras very heavily visited.

Tourists are served through mountain huts, and primarily by hotels and pensions in the area. The capacity of tourist facilities has been steadily rising, both in terms of bed capacity, and in terms of infrastructure such as cable cars and chairlifts. The continuing rise in the amount of visitors increases pressure on the cultural and natural heritage, and this is especially concentrated in and around the tourist centres and villages.

The behaviour of some visitors creates an impact on the values of TANAP. Actions not in accordance with the Visiting Rules may be observed, for example, hiking, skiing and illegal camping outside trails and designated areas.

The main reason for visiting the area is to experience nature in the mountains for hiking, skiing and other recreational activities. Other tourist activities and attractions are either situated in the towns and settlements, or outside of the park, such as horseback riding, river rafting, and thermal pools.

Buildings and other infrastructure development is considered to be the most significant pressure and threat to TANAP. It is closely related to tourism and recreation development. Such development is a part of large investments and development projects with the intention to build further facilities and enhance tourist services. At least part of this investment, such as extending ski slopes, is likely to lead to a permanent loss of biodiversity.

From our visit to the area and discussions with all of the stakeholders we make the following observations.

- There is too much infrastructure for the scale of the current market and we question the validity of attempts to develop tourism activities merely to fill up existing infrastructure irrespective of its impact on the experience of the visitor about the values of the area and its nature.
- Some of the accommodation is of poor quality, especially some of more recent date.
- The economics of skiing is poor especially as the variability of the snow fall necessitates the production of artificial snow. This has a detrimental effect on the water regime and in turn on the biodiversity and landscape quality. We understand that this is already a problem for the provision of drinking water for the Vysoke Tatry county.
- There appears to be a demand for getting closer to nature, but we observe that the work of the large number of forestry workers, who are knowledgeable about the area and its natural environment, is devoted to forestry management rather than visitor support.
- Economic development planning demands careful assessment of opportunities, protection needs and relocation of tourism into areas less occupied. The investments, if kept along major land use principles in TANAP, may not bring as much benefit as expected. An analysis of the sustainable development optimum, taking first of all into account the TANAP mission and objectives resulting in unavoidable conservation restrictions, existing capacity and development needs, should be undertaken.

To cope with the enhancement of services provided and growing number of visitors, the capacity and necessary tools to control and regulate the number and behaviour of visitors has to be improved. The most important tool in management of visitors is the National Park Visiting Rules. This sets the rules for which trails are open to the public, seasonal closure of trails, and the general code of conduct of visitors. The Visiting Rules however should be reviewed and updated in accordance to specific values and protection regime requirements of TANAP.

We make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 16 Tourism should fit within the carrying capacity of TANAP, meet required quality standards and be based on sustainable

principles instead of mass tourism. There should be no further tourist infrastructure in Zones A and B, it should be concentrated outside TANAP. The current over capacity of tourism accommodation should be reduced, focussing on the removal of the accommodation of lowest quality. There should be a greater focus on improving the quality of existing infrastructure.

Recommendation 17 The most environmentally damaging sports equipment, such as snow scooters, and all-terrain motor cycles, should not be allowed in grade 4 and 5 areas. All other sport and tourist activities should be retained inside existing areas and trails designated for activities and in accordance with the Visitors Rules. The proposed extension of the ski slopes must be subject to careful EEA procedure taking into account the direct and indirect impact on the environment, assessment of snowfall distribution along the ski slopes and the demand for artificial snow and water.

12. EUROPEAN UNION FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Future opportunities for financial support and are expected to be available from the EU for the Slovak Tatra National Park and Vysoke Tatry region. The proposal for a Council Regulation on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) published on 14.7.2004 [COM(2004)490 final], is expected to apply from 1 January 2007. According to this proposal, support should continue to be granted to farmers to help address specific disadvantages in the areas resulting from the implementation of Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in order to contribute to the effective management of Natura 2000 sites.

Forest-environment payments should be introduced for voluntary commitments to enhance biodiversity, preserve high-value forest ecosystems and reinforce the protective value of forests with respect to soil erosion, maintenance of water resources and water quality and to natural hazards.

Support should be granted for restoring forestry production potential in forests damaged by natural disasters and fire and for introducing preventive actions. Preventive actions against fires should cover areas classified by Member States as high or medium fire risk according to their forest protection plans.

SECTION 2 of the Regulation provides details relevant for the protection and sustainable use of forests. According to Article 34 (b), support concerns the following measures targeting the sustainable use of forestry land through:

(iv) Natura 2000 payments: support provided shall be granted annually on per hectare of forest to private forest owners or associations to compensate for costs incurred resulting from the restrictions on the use of forests and other wooded land related to the implementation of Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC in the area concerned.

(v) forest-environment payments: shall be granted per hectare of forest to beneficiaries who make forest-environmental commitments on a voluntary basis. These payments shall cover only those commitments going beyond the relevant mandatory requirements. These commitments shall be undertaken for five years. Where necessary and justified, another period shall be determined for particular types of commitments. The payments shall cover additional costs resulting from the commitment given. They shall be calculated on the basis of real costs.

(vi) restoring forestry production potential and introducing prevention actions: support provided shall be granted for restoring forestry production potential in forests damaged by natural disasters and fire and introducing appropriate prevention actions. Preventive actions against fires shall concern forests classified by the Member States as high or medium forest fire risk according to their forest protection plans

(vii) support for non-productive investments: in forests linked to the achievement of commitments undertaken pursuant to the measure provided for in Article 34 (b)(v), or which enhance the public amenity value of the area concerned.

Support shall be granted only for forests and wooded areas owned by private owners or by their associations or by municipalities or their associations

Section 3 - Priority Axis 3: Diversification Of The Rural Economy And The Quality Of Life In Rural Areas foresees measures for sustainable tourism development in high value natural areas. According to **Article 52 Encouragement of tourism activities**, the support may cover the following:

- (a) small-scale infrastructure such as information centres and the signposting of tourist sites;
- (b) recreational infrastructure offering access to natural areas, and small-capacity accommodation;
- (c) the development and placing on the market of tourism products relating to rural tourism.

Additionally, the **Article 53 Protection, upgrading and management of the natural heritage**, refers to the support to cover environmental awareness actions, tourism improvements and the drawing-up of protection and management plans relating to NATURA 2000 sites and other places of high natural value.

For areas of particular historical and cultural values, the **SUB-SECTION 2 - CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS, Article 55 Village renewal and development, conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage**, offers support aimed at studies and investment associated with:

- (a) a village improvement or development programme;
- (b) the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the rural heritage at village level or as regards part of a village such as its centre and historical sites or monuments.

Regarding **Fund contribution**, in the case of Priority Axis 2 - Land Management and Leader maximum support shall not exceed 80% of the eligible public expenditure. The minimum Fund contribution rate at priority axis level shall be 20%.

As far as **Natura 2000 and forest-environment annual payment** is concerned, the **minimum payment** is 40 euros and **maximum payment** is 200 euros per hectare of forestry land.

Recommendation 18 Slovak authorities should pursue all of the funding possibilities under EU Council Resolution on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

13. CONCLUSIONS

There is clearly no consensus between the various interests of what the TANAP is for and what the primary management objectives of the TANAP should be. There is a wide spectrum of opinion from the development of new activities throughout the park to the demands for reduction in the present levels and greater sensitivity to the longer terms needs of the natural resources. This is quite unsatisfactory and there is an urgency in reaching a new sustainable conclusion rather than quick short term business orientated fixes with potential long term disadvantages. There is a moral obligation on the part of the government of the Slovak Republic to maintain the long term natural and cultural values of the TANAP for the benefit of present and future generations of Slovaks and visitors, and at the same time to honour the onerous international obligations on nature as a result of the accession to the European Union. These obligations should be regarded as opportunities for developing new approaches which will have wide appeal in Slovakia and outside and bring social and environmental benefits and economic opportunities. "People and nature together" should be the vision for the TANAP, not one or the other. There are good models for these approaches in other countries such as Costa Rica.

Our report argues the case for and makes recommendations on more integrated approaches to the governance, strategies and management of TANAP, rather than the present confusing and contradictory approach which satisfies no one. More effort is required to place a value on all of the resources of TANAP, using the techniques of modern environmental economics, as well as assessing carefully the natural and human carrying capacity of the area before any decisions are taken. The expertise exists in Slovakia to undertake such studies and for the results to form the objective basis for future decisions.

There is also a greater need to learn from experience of previous windblows in designing and implementing strategies to reduce the risk of so called 'calamities' in the future. Also the mentality which argues that windblow is a 'calamity' is perhaps outmoded and rather these periodic events should be regarded as an opportunity to improve the natural status of the TANAP and to gain human benefits from them in keeping with the capacity of the area should be strongly encouraged by all interests.

We are particularly concerned about the lack of participation in decision making processes by the whole range of stakeholders who have a legitimate input to make and role to play. Improving governance structures and also building the capacity of the less knowledgeable to participate should be acted upon as a matter of urgency.

Our assessment of the status of TANAP in relation to the IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories is that the law and regulations for the TANAP are deficient as they make no provision for a management plan, consultation on it, or for governance arrangements involving stakeholders; there is no valid management plan; the TANAP Administration has only an advisory role and no decision-making or management role. Our recommendations provide a remedy for these deficiencies that would result in the TANAP continuing to achieve IUCN Category II status, as well as making the TANAP a role model in effective management for people and nature through modern planning and governance arrangements.

On forest management in relation to windblow damage, we note the findings of international scientific research that spruce monocultures are more vulnerable to windthrow and thereafter to fire and bark beetle infestation. It is therefore of some great urgency that a variety of approaches are adopted in different parts of the affected area according to their ecological sensitivity and international protected area status with the single objective of achieving a more natural structure to the forest for the benefit of its natural inhabitants and also for the human communities who depend upon and who will come in greater numbers to marvel at it.

We recognise that there are many dependent communities on the TANAP and that resources are limited. There is clearly a will by the government to make resources available, and to work with the private sector to provide solutions. We welcome this positive approach but caution that the decisions should in no way be to the detriment of the area as one of Slovakia's greatest assets. There are also opportunities under the new EU Rural Development Regulation for positive support for the area given its status as a Natura 2000 site to benefit in particular private landowners and local communities.

Finally, we hope that our conclusions and recommendations on TANAP will be considered as a model for application to the other national parks of Slovakia.

Roger Crofts, Marija Zupancic-Vicar, Tamas Marghescu and Zenon Tederko

May 2005

14. ANNEXES

1. Letters of invitation

(1) From IUCN National Committee of Slovakia December 2004

Mohammed Valli Moosa
President of IUCN
GLAND, Switzerland

Achim STEINER
Director General of IUCN
GLAND, Switzerland

The IUCN Council
GLAND, Switzerland

Dear IUCN President, Dear Councillors, Dear Director General.

As you maybe know, on November 19th, 2004, the heavy windstorm destroyed predominantly spruce forests in the buffer zone of the Tatry National Park – transboundary Tatry Biosphere Reserve. The destroyed territory is about 12 000 ha (2,5 million m³ of wood) large.

At present the Ministry of Environment together with the members of IUCN - State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Ecological Society and Slovak Association of National Parks and Protected Areas and several NGOs are active in the field of saving of the integrity of the Tatry National Park, which is the oldest, largest and most valuable national park in the Carpathian Mountains.

In our opinion this event is not an ecological catastrophe, because only one subsystem of the forest ecosystem was damaged – the growth trees. These forest trees are renewable nature resources. In the coming months it will be very important to elaborate an effective conception for purpose to remove the windstorm consequences in the forests with the adequate technologies.

The Tatry National Park is threatened by big business, but we have adopted very good Act No. 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection. The Forest division of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic shares opinion with the State Nature Conservation in keeping the integrity of the Tatry National Park territory.

What we need, as a member of IUCN from the IUCN Council, President and General Director?

Please, send the official letter - Memorandum to Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda – the Prime Minister of the Slovak Government, and to Mr. Zsolt Simon - the Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic with regards:

- To respect the Slovakian Act No. 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection with regards to the territory integrity and multifunction of the Tatry National Park.
- To support a differential method of management in the Tatry National Park with regards to the zonation. It is very important to accelerate the designation of the A Zone, which is the basis of IUCN National Park

category II. The A Zone is the core zone. This area includes the most valuable ecosystems, the most characteristic habitats of the Tatry Mountains and biocenosis minimally changed by man. In the A Zone we need to keep the whole biomass (all broken and disproved trees, branches, treetops) on the spot to save the ecosystem's autoregulation. Surroundings constitute the B Zone or Buffer Zone which requires a very sensitive management of the forest ecosystems. In this zone it is necessary to keep the biomass for humus creation (branches, treetops, roots etc.) at least 50 % of the area. The C Zone of the National Park is a development area for sustainable ecotourism, recreation, sport, environmental education, research and monitoring. In this zone it is necessary to keep the biomass about 30 % of the area. It is very important to sustain the natural regeneration of all trees and for the artificial forestation use only origin trees from the Tatry National Park. The following forest renewal and the management must be pursued by the nature friendly way.

- To maintain the multifunctional aims of the Tatry National Park. The primary functions are nature protection and climatic – therapeutic functions, secondary functions are ecotourism, sport, recreation, and the third-rate function is wood production.

Dear Councillors, President and Director General.

On behalf of the IUCN Slovak National Committee, as a former IUCN Councillor, former Director of the Tatry National Park and former General Director of the Slovak National Park Service, I believe, that the Tatry National Park with your effective support will renew the leading position in nature conservation not only in Slovakia, but also in the whole Central and Eastern Europe.

Wigh you in spirit – all our best wishes to you.
Yours sincerely.

Professor Dr. Ivan Vološčuk,
Chair of the Slovak National Committee for IUCN
President of the Slovak Ecological Society
President of the Association of the Carpathian National Parks and Wilderness

(2) From TANAP Administration

Tatranská Štrba
10.03.2005

SUBJECT

Invitation to Tatra National Park, Slovakia

Dear Mr. Tederko,

We are very pleased for your generous offer to assist the Administration of Tatra National Park [TANAP] in solving situation after windstorm in November 2005. The proposed IUCN mission to our Park and providing any requested expertise as well as neutral forum for any disputes is a very much needed help because of the following reasons:

1. Tatra National Park has already several years a clear priority to maintain a high conservation value of this park and meet IUCN Category II – National Park standard. Because of this we approached already last year the World Commission of Protected Areas, the Chair for Europe, Mr. Roger Crofts with a goal to get an independent assessment if TANAP meet an international standard for IUCN Category II – National Park.
2. Increasing pressure for more active forest management and mass tourism development in the last several years make to maintain a high conservation standard of this park more and more difficult. The recent windstorm opened again a discussion about new ski slopes, infelicitous forest management in core zone, etc.
3. Recent windstorm released also the public emotions [positive and negatives] and launched public discussion about future of this prime national park and we see this as a opportunity to confirmed clear long term conservation strategy for this park.

The windstorm attracted an interest of many national and international organizations:

- FAO in a close cooperation with the Slovak Forestry Research Institute is preparing a workshop titled "Policy option for storm damage management". The workshop will be organized in April 2005
- WWF declared a very clear position on this event and potential threads coming out from announced plans [position paper is attached]. Study tours to Bavarian Forest NP for Slovakian decision makers and journalists will be organized in May and June
- Local NGOs organize in March several presentations and open discussion forums with decision makers, land owners and locals. Some of these meetings will be attend also by the director of Bavarian Forest NP, Mr. K.F.Sinner and he will share his experience with the management of the Bavarian Forest NP [e.g. importance of the core zone and dead wood concept, but also socio-economic benefit of this park for local communities, etc.].

- There is also a wide interest of Slovakian NGOs which expressed already their concern about the future of this park. The letter which has been sent to the European Commission is attached.
- TANAP, together with all other national parks in Slovakia was last years a subject of assessment by RAPPAM [Rapid Assessment and Prioritization Methodology] under the umbrella of the IUCN WCPA Management Effectiveness where priorities and bottlenecks were defined.

TANAP has also an ambitious to meet an internationally recognized the PAN Parks standard. Recent meeting with representatives of PAN Parks Foundation confirmed that the consequences of the windstorm are not obstacle to meet the PAN Parks standard but we have been warned that TANAP can lose an opportunity to become a PAN Park if some of already announced inappropriate plans will be implemented.

We understand IUCN mission as an important signal of support coming from this institution and we believe that mission, besides others, can offers an independent audit, arguments and also come with suggestions and recommendations how the consequences of the windstorm should be managed. Because of this I would very much appreciate if your mission will not be only limited on the assessment of windstorm but I would rather prefer assessment and conclusion for overall park management [where conservation and socio-economical consequences of the windstorm are important but not singleton].

I believe that with your help and effective support we will save Tatra NP for future generations.

Some important and relevant documents are attached.

Please let me know if you have any question.

Yours sincerely,
Ing. Tomáš Vančura
director

(3) From The Living Planet civic association, Mierová 20, 921 01 Piešťany, Slovakia

The World Conservation Union, IUCN

Dr. Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

Dr. Jeff McNeely, chief scientist of IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

Dr. Tederko Zenon, IUCN Reg. Office for Central Europe, Warsaw, Poland

RE: Invitation - please, help us to save the Tatras - national natural heritage of Slovakia and a unique European heritage of the European Continent

Piešťany, December 12, 2004

Dear colleagues and friends,

We are writing to you, as our Tatra National Park (TANAP), the oldest one and the most prominent one in Slovakia, is in a great danger. This park represents some of the most valuable assets of our natural heritage. Tatras also become one of the most important national symbols of Slovakia, even the Slovak anthem sings about Tatras, many national poems and paintings concern Tatras as well.

The Tatra National Park (TANAP) has a European wide significance

In a relatively small area one finds 6 major altitudinal vegetation zones (submontane, montane, supra-montane, subalpine, alpine and subnival) with almost 1400 species of higher plants, many of them rare, threatened and endemic, e.g. crowfoot *Ranunculus altitatis*, primrose *Primula halleri* subsp. *Platyphylla* and many glacial relicts, such as saxifrage *Saxifraga retusa*. Concerning fauna, Tatra visitors know attractive Tatra endemites e.g. chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra tatrica*, marmot *Marmota marmota latirostris*. There are other important species, large carnivores – brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), northern lynx (*Lynx lynx*), further endemic rodent *Sorex alpinus taticus*, Tatras vole (*Pitymys taticus*), rare birds, e.g. capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), wall-creeper (*Tichodroma muraria*), nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) and many others.

The Tatra National Park was badly hit by windstorm

In early evening hours, on November 19th, the severe windstorm, achieving in some places more than 190 km /hour (194 km /hour at Skalnaté pleso lake) felled mountain forest (formed predominantly by spruce) in 1/6 of the national park, the area hit is approximately 40 x 3 km large. We believe, the extent of damage is with high probability due to several main groups of factors. The first one was the lower health state of mountain forests, which had several reasons – the forests are weakened by acid depositions, heavy metals plus other toxic components and also by forestry economy (majority of the area was covered by spruce monocultures). The second group of factors is connected with a phenomena of climate change, as this leads also in Slovakia in last years to more frequent and more severe storms as well as to more floods. The third group of factors includes naturally high vulnerability of these high mountain forests, underlined to a certain extent also with the changed landscape structure – relatively high amount of recreational and sport facilities and roads are in the affected area.

The affected Tatra National Park is now severely threatened by big business

What happened to a large part of Tatra forest is very sad and it hit our hearts, but still, this is not an ecological catastrophe. However, environmental NGOs in Slovakia, artists, scientists, university teachers and others are afraid, that a real ecological catastrophe is just now being launched through the pressure of great business and its plans, which clearly misuse the situation after the storm. Big business ideas of development of new recreational and sport facilities inside the national park have currently clear support from the Slovak government. Another pressure is reflected in plans to harvest as soon as possible all the fallen trees, to increase profit, which means, 12 000 ha, 1/6 of the national park area will lose all the nutrients present in these trees. We are convinced, these activities will severely undermine ecological and environmental functions of the Tatra ecosystems already disturbed by windstorm (e.g. water retention, flood prevention, refugium of threatened species, hygienic and spa functions, etc.), thus they will negatively influence nature and people – not just in Tatra region.

As the oldest and most prominent national park in Slovakia is in danger, we kindly, but urgently ask The World Conservation Union for help. Please, help us to save the Tatra National Park.

We believe, it is very urgent, necessary and important:

- 1) To safeguard respect for the Slovakian law No. 543/2002 on conservation of nature and landscape and for international treaties: We kindly ask IUCN to express clearly towards Slovak government (event. also towards big business) IUCN standpoint, expressed in the description of the category II of protected areas – which says that nature conservation is the primary function of a national park and all other activities inside the park should be subordinated to it. We are afraid, this point is not respected after the park area was hit by the storm. Implementation of this law includes also zonation of the national park area, in order to harmonize its functions – nature conservation, forestry, tourism, etc. We stress, that it is very important to approve zonation of TANAP prepared by the Management of the Tatra National Park. Also, it is necessary that Slovak Republic adheres to global Convention on Biological Diversity, which our government and parliament have ratified. Further obligation stem from the fact that TANAP is part of the network of the Biosphere Reserves.
- 2) To safeguard protection of the life-supporting ecological functions of TANAP ecosystems and to follow forest renewal in a way close to nature: We believe, it is necessary to leave at least 1/3 of the fallen trees on the spot – to allow nature to heal at least part of the area by itself – allowing natural ecological processes to take place. The fallen trees are an important source of nutrients and their branches even protect soil from the erosion. Currently, the tree branches are burned and heavy use of pesticides is planned as well. We ask you to help us to stop the use of the pesticides inside national park as these will kill many keystone species of Tatra ecosystems and severely undermine their capacities for natural renewal. We ask that forest renewal should be planned in a way very close to nature, which will lead to its future higher species diversity as well as age variability.
- 3) To safeguard the functions of the Tatra National Park – there are threats of submitting the nature conservation function under the interests of mass tourism development and forestry economy: We kindly ask you for help to stop development of plans, which will lead to enlargement of existing recreational

and sport facilities or to building new ones, which will require also building new roads in the area of the national park. This will further undermine ecosystem services provided by the Tatra National Park, utilized by many people living far away from this area (e.g. water retention, flood prevention, preserving biological diversity, production of etheric oils – health function, etc.). We believe, in the framework of climate change, these functions require more, no less protection. We stress that this way of development, disrespecting national park mission may in fact drastically change the character of our most prominent national park and largely undermine its future long term capacity to satisfy the IUCN criteria for category II of the protected areas – national park.

For your information we add that after velvet revolution, in 1990 we had faced another attempt to change the character of the Tatra National Park:

The interest of Tatra Mountain Corporation „to develop Tatras“ not only by building hotels and ski lifts but also new spas, golf-courses, artificial caves, etc.. This attempt was stopped and ended for its proponents as the Tatragate affair. Today the Tatra National Park again faces the threats to change its mission into a new funfair park... **To help to save one of the most marvellous national parks in the IUCN list, we kindly invite you to visit Slovakia and Tatra National Park,** to see the damage done by the windstorm and to discuss with our government, local authorities, business representatives, scientists, artists and NGOs the ways how to heal the Tatra National park in a way close to nature, how to avoid attempts which threaten its functions. We believe, Tatras may become the probing stone of nature conservation not only in Slovakia, but in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, where attractive areas are coming under severe stress of big business.

On behalf of the Living Planet, civic association: Executive Director	Ing. Peter Sabo, Ph.D.,
On behalf of the A-project, non-profit org. Director	RNDr. Vlasta Körnerová,
On behalf of the Society for Sustainable Living: Ph.D., Chairman	Doc.RNDr. Mikuláš Huba,
On behalf of the Forest Protection Movement Wolf: On behalf of the Ekopolis Foundation Director	Ing. Juraj Lukáč, Chief Ing. Peter Medveď,
On behalf of Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sust.Dev.: Chairman	RNDr. Tomáš Kušík,
On behalf of Nature Rangers Club in Bratislava:	Ján Dobšovič, Chairman
On behalf of Sosna civic association:	Ing. Štefan Szabó, Ph.D.
On behalf of Živica civic association:	Mgr. Petra Ďurišová
On behalf of Friends of the Earth: Representative	Štefan Jančo,
On behalf of Amber Trail Association	Ján Roháč, Director
On behalf of the Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Conservationists, Bratislava branch,	K. Šimončíčová

Annex 3 Itinerary and programme

16th April 2005

11.00 – arrival in SK

13.00 – meeting with MoE SR (RNDr. Kramárik) and secretary of government committee for restoration and development of High Tatras (Ing. Ivan Štefanec) in Bratislava

16.00 – meeting with SNC SR in Banská Bystrica (Ing. Urban)

19.00 – accommodation in hotel Meander Tatranská Štrba, meeting with TANAP Administration staff in Tatranská Štrba

17th April 2005

9.00 – meeting in Podbanské with NGO (A-projekt n.o., LZ VLK, PAN PARKS, MVNT)

14.00 – meeting on office of town High Tatras in Starý Smokovec with self-government and bussiness

16.30 – meeting in State Forestry Administration Tatranská Lomnica with land-owners and land-users (State Forestry of TANAP, private land-owners)

18th April 2005

8.00 – meeting with state governmental bodies in hotel Meander Tatranská Štrba (regional and local office)

9.00 - press conference, departure to Zvolen on FAO workshop

Annex 4 Documents submitted to the mission (in English)

1. Standpoint of environmental NGOs and Appeal "New Tatras" (28 November 2004)
2. Letter of the Living Planet civic association to the World Conservation Union IUCN (12. December 2004)
3. Letter of the Slovak IUCN National Committee to the president of IUCN (17 January 2005)
4. Letter of Greenpeace Slovakia to EU Commissioner for the Environment (31 January 2005)
5. Letter of WWF International, Danube-Carpathian Programme to the President of the European Commission (2. February 2005)
6. Letter of FAO Sub-regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe - Invitation to the Workshop on Policy Options for Storm Management in Slovakia (18-21 April 2005, Zvolen, Slovakia) and Provisional Agenda (23 February 2005)
7. Letter of the Administration of Tatra National Park to IUCN (10 March 2005)
8. Report on storm damages in Slovakia - Impacts of windthrow disaster on forest ecosystems in Slovakia in November 2004, By the Ministry of Agriculture of Slovakia as of 27 January 2005
9. WWF Position Paper „Storm in Tatras National Park“ (21 February 2005)
10. Act of the National Council of the SR No. 543/2002 on Nature and Landscape Protection, (25 June 2002)
11. Draft management plan for public participation for Tatra National Park - Version 040107, based on translation of drafts – not fully completed compared to final Slovak
12. Tatra National Park management plan - Popular presentation of management plan - AT / DRAFT 3/12 2003
13. Content of Pamphlet
 - Short popular description of the new draft Management Plan
 - Flora and Fauna interests
 - Cultural Heritage interests
 - Sport and Tourism
 - Forestry
 - Wildlife Management and Hunting
 - Agriculture
14. Maps - Windstorm materials
15. Articles/ presentations of views on the windstorm disaster:
 - Milan Koren, Windstorm on 19 November 2004: New views and consequences:
 - Ing. Pavol Toma and Ing. Marian Sturcel, Perspective solutions of the wind disaster consequences in the forests of TANAP;
 - Ing. Zuzana Sediva, Tatra Mountains and nature are for people to come here;
 - Ing. Peter Spitzkopf, Trend of development after the 19 November 2004.
16. Report on statistics evaluation of the public hearing period
17. Report on Project findings – management of National Parks, TANAP Project, Anders Tvevad, July 2004
18. WWF's Slovak Case Study – Management effectiveness Assessment of the National Parks using the WWF's RAPPAM Methodology, 2004

19.FAO meeting on windblow: outcome statement and recommendations: 21
April 2005