



September 19, 2006

## Call for Action To the Members of the European Parliament

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

The forests in the oldest national park in Slovakia urgently need your efficient help. The territory of the Tatra National Park (TANAP) is also a territory of Community importance as well as a proposed bird area and a Tatra biosphere reserve. This extraordinary valuable territory is now in danger.

We ask you for help in connection with a problem arising after a large windthrow in November 2004 that has affected 12,500 hectares of forests. A huge quantity of timber and wood – from 92 % of the affected area – has been removed with the approval of the Slovak government agencies and institutions. Only a very small part of the territory affected by the windthrow, especially in the valuable biotopes of two valleys – Ticha dolina and Koprova dolina – that are under the highest protection degree – should have remained untouched. But the Statne lesy TANAP company (TANAP National Forests) has been trying from the very beginning, under various false pretences, to intervene on this territory. No government institution, including the Slovak Ministry of the Environment, has been able to prevent these interventions. That was the reason why we filed a complaint in this matter and submitted it to the European Commission. The complaint was registered under the file number SG(2005) A/10302. The investigation of the complaint has not been completed yet. We have added up-dated information to the complaint several times.

After the intervention by the European Commission, the previous Slovak government decided not to allow any timber logging on the above mentioned territory. But the situation has changed after the Parliamentary election in June 2006 and a formation of a new government. The newly appointed Minister of the Environment, Mr Jaroslav Izak (SNS – Slovak National Party), declared the necessity to remove timber from easily accessible locations affected by the windthrow. This would mean a very serious damage to the most valuable areas. The false pretences for the logging were the claims that the logging would prevent a threatening population explosion of bark beetles. It is paradoxical that the development of bark beetle population on trees uprooted by the windthrow was already completed, so a logging and removal of the damaged trees would have no influence on this population.

In both valleys, the Ticha dolina and the Koprova dolina, there are numerous biotopes of Community importance and biotopes of species of Community interest. From the priority species there are, for instance, brown bear, wolf and *Pseudogauratina excellens* for which the territories of both valleys represent one of the most valuable locations in the EU. The intended logging and wood removal will damage biotopes of at least 23 species of Community interest and 3 biotopes of Community importance, one of which is a priority biotope of Community importance –mountain alder alluvial forests (91 E0\*).

Dear Members of the European Parliament, we, too, are citizens of the European Union, and we have tried all possible options in our country how to save these beautiful – and both naturally and culturally **really important** biotopes of Community importance. For this reason we urge:

- Please contact Mr. Stavros Dimas, Commissioner for Environment, and ask for details concerning the investigation of our complaint submitted to the European Commission, file number SG(2005) A/10302; please inform us about the stage of the investigation.

- Insist on the Slovak government not to allow any logging in national nature reserves of the valleys Ticha dolina and Koprova dolina.
- Insist on the Slovak government to introduce a system of clearly defined protection status of areas in accordance with the IUCN recommendations. This would definitively solve conflicts about the status of territories (territories with no human intervention, and territories where logging is allowed).

We would like to thank you for your help aimed at the protection of our common natural treasures in the European Union.

Members of the Lesoochranarske zoskupenie VLK /WOLF Forest Protection Movement

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The windthrow in November 2004 hit 12,500 hectares of forests (about 3 million cubic meters of timber). The Tatra National Park (TANAP) is a territory of Community importance in accordance with the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, a proposed significant bird area in accordance with the Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds, and the Tatra biosphere reserve.

In connection with the windthrow, no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out despite the fact that the Slovak Ministry of Environment pointed out the necessity to carry out such a study to the Statne lesy TANAP company (TANAP National Forests).