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Environment Directorate-General
European Commission
Commissioner
Mr. S. Dimas
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Subject: Degeneration of Bia•owie•a Forest (Poland)
Date: 18 december 2004

Dear Mr Dimas,

We would like to express our concern on the current management situation within the Bia•owie•a Promotional Forest Complex, located in the provincie Podlaskie in the East of Poland and the European Union, managed by the Polish State Forests Service.

Up to date the Bia•owie•a Forest is regarded by specialists – at least – as “one of the best preserved lowland forests within the temperate climatic zone of Europe”. The area has been and is of vital importance for biodiversity, represented by a number of species which surpasses those in other natural sites by far. The human preservation of the forest dates back to times when Polish and Lithuanian Kings and Tsars claimed the Primaeval Forest as their vast hunting grounds. The area has been and is essential to scientific research aimed at the study of natural processes, such as forest development and interaction between mammals and flora. The area has a growing importance for eco-tourism for modern man and in within countable days it **can** be one of the most natural lowland forests within the European Union.

Parties involved in nature protection have been active to expand the actual Bia•owie•a National Park of ca. 10.500 hectares to the whole of the Polish part of the Bia•owie•a Forest (59.500 hectares). Since the Polish government turned down this plan of protection in 1999 the prospects for the remaining forest stands of the highest natural character has deteriorated dramatically.

Currently the major plagues are not imposed by numerous insects, but by failing management, short term economic action and the Polish government, which acts unresponsably towards her natural heritage;

On July 10, 2003 a new management plan for the exploitation of the commercial part of the Białowieża Forest became operative. It allowed an ecologically shocking increase in the volume of logging of wood. A moratorium on logging trees aged over one hundred years, implemented in 1999, was strongly weakened.

*In march 2004 the certificate of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was withdrawn from Białowieża Forest! Five Polish environmental NGO's submitted their complaint describing 43 cases in which the foresters of Białowieża Promotional Forest Complex (Polish State Forests Service) violated 18 of 56 Principles and Criteria of FSC for Good Forest Management. This should be considered a new, but clear indication insufficient concern for maintaining the unique qualities of Białowieża Forest, such as fully or nearly natural processes.*¹

The Białowieża Forest deserves our compassion, respect and **true** protection. Loss of the natural character of the unique forest, both in natural and cultural view, is unacceptable after the forests 4,000 or even 8,000 years of proud natural growth.

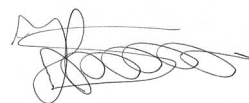
Hereby we offer you a report on our view. It discusses the natural character of Białowieża Forest as well as interrogations made by man. Another vital point is a historical difference managing large scaled forests in Western and Central and Eastern Europe. We outline the effects of the Białowieża forest management plan, implemented about 500 days ago and the response of international press and the statements of (Polish) experts in ecology.²

Our desire is that the Białowieża Forest will enjoy full protection. A balanced and sustainable socio-economic situation, with top priority for the exceptional ecological position of Białowieża Forest within our enlarged European Union, is our ultimate goal.

We request your understanding.

With highest regards,

Frank Verhart
forestry engineer Bsc



Harm Smeenge
engineer in nature management Bsc

CC: see joined list

¹ Due to technical circumstances we have been unable to insert the withdrawal of the FSC certificate for Białowieża Forest into the presented text.

² We welcome ideas for publication of the presented matter

Copies have been sent to:

- 1. European Commission, Environment Directorate-General, Commissioner**
Mr S. Dimas, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
- 2. European Commission, Environment Directorate-General, Nature & Bio-diversity**
Mr M. Hanley, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
- 3. European Commission, Environment Directorate-General, Forests**
Mr R. Flies, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
- 4. European Commission, ambassador in Poland**
Mr B. Dethomas, Warsaw Financial Center, Ul. Emilii Plater 29 / 53, 00-113 Warsaw, Poland
- 5. The Parliament of the European Union, Council of Europe, representative for Poland**
Mr I. Tadeusz, Alliance de la gauche démocratique
Avenue de l'Europe, 67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France
- 6. Prime Minister of Poland**
Mr M. Belka, Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3, 00-567 Warsaw, Poland
- 7. Polish Government, The Minister of Environment**
Mr J. Swaton, Ul. Wawelska 52/54, 00-067 Warsaw, Poland
- 8. Polish Government, Polish State Forests Enterprise**
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- 9. Polish government, Ministry of the Environment, department of Forestry**
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- 10. Polish government, Ministry of the Environment, department of Nature Conservation**
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- 11. Polish government, Ministry of the Environment, the Forestry Council**
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- 12. Polish government, Ministry of the Environment, the State Council for Nature Conservation**
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- 13. Polish Government, Board of National Parks in Warsaw**
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- 16. Polish Government, Forest Research Institute, Department of Forest Protection**
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- 17. Polish State Forests Enterprise, Regional Directorate of Białystok**
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- 18. Polish State Forests Enterprise, Forest District of Biańowieża**
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- 19. Polish State Forests Enterprise, Forest District of Browsk**
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- 20. Polish State Forests Enterprise, Forest District of Hajnówka**
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- 21. IUCN, Regional Vice Chair for Europe**
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6, Old Church Lane, Duddingston Village, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH15 3PX, United Kingdom
- 22. ECNC, headquarters**
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- 23. WWF International, Forests for Life Campaign**
Mrs D. Rana, Avenue du Mont-Blanc, 1196 Gland, Switzerland
- 24. WWF Poland**
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- 25. WWF Poland, Białowieża National Park-project office**
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- 26. WWF the Netherlands**
Mr A. van Kreveld, Boulevard 12, 3707 BM Zeist, the Netherlands
- 27. UNESCO, National Commission in Poland**
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- 28. UNESCO, Europe and North America Unit**
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- 29. Greenpeace Poland**
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- 30. Białowieża National Park**
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- 31. The Society for Protection of the Białowieża Primeval Forest**
Mr A. Bobiec, Ul. Nowa 3A, 17-220 Narewka, Poland
- 32. Białowieża Geobotanical Station of Warsaw University**
Mr W. Adamowski, Ul. Sportowa 19, 17-230 Białowieża, Poland
- 33. University of Wrocław, Institute of Zoology, Section for Bird Ecology**
Mr T. Wesolowski, ul. H. Sienkiewicza 21, 50-335 Wrocław, Poland
- 34. Mr H. Kazulka**
Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Kamenyuki, Kamenetz, Brest, Belarus
- 35-37. Editors of Dutch magazines on ecology** Nieuwe Wildernis, Levende Natuur and Vakblad Natuur Bos Landschap.
- 38-42. Editors of Dutch national newspapers** Volkskrant, Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad, Trouw and Telegraaf.