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Her Excellency Ms. Katerina Sequensová
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
Chemin Louis-Dunant 17
1211 Geneva 20

17 February 2012

Subject: Protection and management of Šumava National Park

Your Excellency Ms. Sequensová,

I am writing to you as the Chair of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) which is one of the six technical commissions of IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network.

A number of WCPA and IUCN members have advised me of their serious concerns about the potential implications of the new proposed law on protected areas for the Czech Republic that could weaken the protection and management of Šumava National Park. The Šumava National Park is part of the largest, best conserved and most species rich forested area in Central Europe, and is home to vital populations of lynx (*Lynx lynx*), Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*) and Eurasian elk (*Alces alces*). The Czech Republic and its people are privileged and I am sure proud to have this jewel of nature within their territory.

Large parts of the Šumava forest are unspoiled habitats which justify its designation as a National Park (IUCN Category II). This category is applied to large natural or near-natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes along with the complement of its species and ecosystems (IUCN, 2008). A distinguishing feature for a National Park is to have the ability to maintain ecological functions and processes that will allow the native species and communities to persist for the long term with minimal management interventions.

However, according to the information received from several concerned experts and institutions, the new proposed law would substantially reduce the Nature Zone as proposed under the existing law. The proposal to reduce the Nature Zone from what was to be 93% of the park to just 35% by the year 2057, plus the fact that parts of the nature zone will be subject to bark beetle salvage operations means in practical terms that only 22% of the park’s area will remain in a natural state.

It is a concern to know that the new law provides for logging in two-thirds of the park’s overall area and interventions intended to prevent the spread of bark beetles, e.g. through



clear-cutting, would be permissible even in the Nature Zone. It is the expert opinion of WCPA that these proposed changes are not in line with Šumava's designation as a Category II protected area (National Park). More importantly, these proposed changes will substantially reduce the ability of Šumava to maintain the vital ecological processes and services it provides. While the new law may have positive influences in the short term on tourism and the local economy, we feel utmost concern about the likely impacts of this law on the future ecological integrity of Šumava's nature and thus the long term impact on local economies that are dependent on Šumava.

In the opinion of leading WCPA and forest ecology experts worldwide, not intervening with natural dynamics, such as bark beetle invasions, holds many advantages for biodiversity and forest rejuvenation: dead wood provides habitat for many birds, insects and other species. Old trees are an excellent substrate for germination of a new tree generation and protect rejuvenation from damage by deer, snow, dryness and erosion. Conserving large natural areas in national parks also provides a reference for science to learn about natural processes and the ability of species and ecosystems to react to them; thus providing valuable information which is also relevant to understand the ecosystems adaptation to climate change.

Furthermore the Czech Republic is signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and decreasing the Nature Zone of Šumava goes against the principles considered in Target 5 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Targets, which calls on parties to reduce the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests.

In conclusion, from the technical and policy point of view, WCPA would kindly recommend a careful reconsideration of the impacts of the new proposed law on the conservation and management of Šumava National Park. The World Commission on Protected Areas stands ready to assist you in any way possible, including through technical advice as required.

Yours sincerely,



Nikita Lopoukhine
Chair
World Commission on Protected Areas

Cc Prime Minister of the Czech Republic