



Mr Dacian Cioloș
Prime Minister of Romania
Ms Christiana Pașca Palmer
Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests
Palatul Victoria, Piața Victoriei nr. 1, Sector 1
București, cod postal 011791
ROMANIA

November 7, 2016

Dear Prime Minister Cioloș,
Dear Minister Pașca Palmer,

Primary forests constitute only a tiny fraction of the contemporary landscape in Europe. Consequently, they play a critical conservation role for many species, ecosystem services and carbon storage. Europe's most important areas of primary forest are located in the Carpathians, especially in Romania. An estimated two thirds of primary forests of the European Union have survived in the Romanian Carpathians. Together with the Ukraine, Romania is the most important country for conservation of larger stands of primary forests of the European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), which is of global natural heritage.

However, many of these areas of outstanding universal ecological and scientific value have been degraded or destroyed during the past 10-15 years in Romania. This degradation and destruction continues at an alarming rate. At the moment we are facing one of the most serious losses of European natural heritage. The main direct threat to the primary forests in Romania is logging, both legal and illegal.

During the last years, the Ministry of Environment in Romania has made important steps towards primary forest conservation. In 2008, the approved Forest Code clearly stated that all virgin and so called quasi-virgin forests were to be protected. Unfortunately, for at least four years, a by-law explaining which areas qualify as virgin was missing, causing much further loss of primary forests. Therefore we appreciate the most recent step undertaken by your government to create a National Catalogue of Virgin Forests (Ministerial Decision no.1417; July 11, 2016) which should secure their protection.

However, today it is not exactly known how large the primary forest remains in Romania are and where they are precisely located. Given the slow pace of populating the National Catalogue, many important areas are being additionally destroyed by ongoing logging before they can even be considered by the National Catalogue.

The largest complex of the mountain virgin forests in the European Union is situated in the Natura 2000 Site Fagaras Mountains, with the total area of virgin forests reaching almost 7,000 ha. These outstanding forests deserve special attention and protection. Of paramount concern is that many of these primary forests are critically endangered by logging. A critical

example of a large complex of primary forests in Fagaras threatened by logging at this very moment is the gorgeous Boia Mica valley, which hosts one of the largest (more than 1000 ha virgin and quasi virgin forest) and best preserved primary forests in the whole Fagaras Mountains. In total the valley comprises approximately more than 1500 ha of wilderness and remote mountain landscape.

Boia Mica valley has outstanding ecological values on a European scale. This has also been demonstrated by the fact that it was included in the permanent study plot network of the largest primary forest research project in Europe. The project is entitled „Disturbance History and Stand Structure in the Primary Forests in Europe“ and it is led by the Czech University of Life sciences in Prague. Many highly experienced international researchers work on this project and have been involved in the study site's selection. Only the best European primary forests were selected for this research. The project includes also numerous UNESCO sites such as Perucica (BiH), Stuzica (SK), Havesova (SK) and Vihorlat (SK). Among these top primary forests of the European Union, the researchers consider Boia Mica as one of the highest quality primary forests in the whole of Europe.

It is not only the size of the area which makes this locality so outstanding - also the inaccessibility and the very old forest age of Boia Mica is of extremely high value.

Based upon dendrochronological research in Boia Mica, there is evidence the valley probably hosts some of the oldest beech trees of Romania: in 14 randomly selected plots a methusalem beech with more than 500 years and 15 beech trees aged beyond 400 years were found. Targeted and comprehensive research would most likely find more and even older individuals.

The extreme value of Boia Mica is especially in the high diversity and complexity of this primary forest area, and the existence of a whole gradient of different forest vegetation types, starting from low elevation forest dominated by hornbeam, through the clean beech mixed with maple tree and elm, to the mixed beech fir spruce forest that changes on spruce-fir forests, and finally the pure spruce forests and natural timber line formed by dwarf pine. This is something very unique in all of Europe. Researchers believe that Boia Mica is probably the only primary forest remain with such a complex gradient of forest vegetation types in the entire European Union.

Furthermore Boia Mica is home to many endangered species: scientists found numerous bear dens, a golden eagle is nesting on steep cliffs inside the forest and the extremely rare hermit beetle (*Osmoderma eremita*), a EU Habitat Directive priority species, lives here in dead wood.

And due to very difficult and remote access, Boia Mica is still a real, pathless wilderness.

The extraordinary natural features of Boia Mica and the whole Fagaras mountains constitute also an outstanding basis for sustainable development of the region - including close-to-nature tourism. They are also keys to continually providing important ecosystems services such as flood prevention and flood protection, management of the hydrological regime and long term ecological stability.

Boia Mica was already registered as virgin forest by the Biris / Veen forest inventory (2005). The valley is part of the Fagaras Mountains Natura 2000 site (Muntii Fagaras ROSCI0122). It was included in the category of „virgin“ and „quasi virgin“ forests in the draft management plan (Natura 2000 site). The Romanian Government recently announced intentions to establish a National Park in the Fagaras Mountains.

In September 2016 an expert study confirmed the virgin / quasi virgin status of Boia Mica's forests. The study was submitted to the Forest Guard and to the Ministry of Environment (by Dr. Marius Teodosiu) in order to ensure that Boia Mica will be included into the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests.

However, more logging in the upper Boia Mica valley has just recently started. In 2015, the old growth beech forest on the southern and northern slopes at the “entrance” of the wild part of the valley was partly logged. During September-October 2016, an old logging road has been fully rehabilitated. It will allow easy access to more parts of the virgin forest now. Researchers were recently (vaguely) informed by an engineer in the area that there are plans for the construction of a bigger road into the wild valley. Expansion of logging could happen there any minute.

Boia Mica is among the most precious natural treasures of Romania and the whole European Union. Its extraordinary natural and scientific value is of European and global importance.

Dear Prime Minister, dear Minister, Boia Mica virgin forest deserves strict, strong and long term protection. Therefore the undersigned call on the Romanian Government to immediately take measures to ensure full preservation of Boia Mica valley and to halt the any further logging, the expansion of road construction and / or potential hydro projects in this area. Furthermore forest owners should be compensated accordingly to reduce the risk of illegal logging.

Please inform us about the measures the Romanian Government is applying.

Thank you very much.
Yours sincerely,

Gabriel Schwaderer, CEO EuroNatur



Gabriel Paun, President Agent Green



Prof. Ing. Miroslav Svoboda, Ph.D. (Prague)



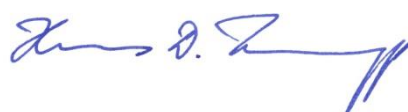
Martin Mikoláš, Ph.D (Prague)



Dr. Marius Teodosiu, "Marin Drăcea" National Research-Development Institute in Forestry



Prof. Dr. Hans D. Knapp, Vice-Chair of Michael Succow Foundation



Copies of this have been sent to:

Carpathian Convention, Mr Harald Egerer

Dr. Iovu-Adrian Biris

EU Commission, DG Environment, Head of Nature Unit, Dr. Nicola Notaro

Foundation Conservation Carpathia, Mrs Barbara and Mr Christoph Promberger

Frankfurt Zoological Society, Mr Michael Brombacher

Greenpeace, Ms Antje Helms, Ms Gesche Jürgens, Mr Valentin Salageanu

His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Director General, Ms Inger Andersen

UNESCO, Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova

Wild Europe, Director, Mr Toby Aykroyd

WWF, Mr Andreas Beckmann, Mr Costel Bucur, Mr Magor Csibi, Ms Irene Lucius, Mr Radu Vlad