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Mr. Petro Poroshenko
President of the Republic of
Ukraine
11 Bankova Street
Kiev 01220, Ukraine

Dear President Poroshenko,

Preserving and restoring forests is an urgent priority for the future of the planet¹ and is essential if we wish to mitigate climate change.² That is why we are writing to you to express our hope that you will stop the huge ski resort project planned in the “Svydovets” massif in the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine. The area is described as one of the most beautiful and less disturbed mountain ecosystems in the country characterized by high biotic and landscape diversity with old-grown spruce and beech forests and three natural lakes.³ The development covering a total of up to 14,000 hectares and involving over 60 hotels, 120 restaurants, 33 ski-lifts and 230 km of ski-runs would have far-reaching negative impacts.

The investors are claiming to vitalize the area with 5,000 jobs. While we understand the need for jobs in poor rural regions the permanent damage to core ecosystem functions cannot be replaced. Hence there is a need to develop livelihoods that do not create such disturbance.

The Svydovets massif is one of the "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" listed by UNESCO in its World Heritage List⁴.

Ukraine is a signatory to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change⁵, Article 5 of which calls for "reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks."

Ukraine has also signed the Carpathian Convention which lays down that "the Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure a high level of protection and sustainable use of natural and semi-natural habitats, their continuity and connectivity, and species of flora and fauna being characteristic to the Carpathians, in particular the protection of endangered species, endemic species and large carnivores"⁶.

¹ [Shvidenko, et al. 2005](#): Forest and Woodland Systems. Chapter 21, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.

² [Griscom et al. 2017](#): Natural climate solutions. PNAS, 114 (44), 11645-11650.

³ [Kanarsky et al. 2018](#): Nature conservation value of the central Svydovets mountains. Research gate.

⁴ [Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe](#)

⁵ [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#)

⁶ [Text](#) of the Carpathian Convention.

Making the EU work for people and forests
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This huge ski resort project flies in the face of the goals laid down in these international commitments. The proposed project will have a number of negative economic, environmental and social consequences for the region:

- the destruction of forests that would provoke changes in the hydrological regime resulting in flooding,
- soil erosion, land-slides and water pollution, all to the detriment of the local inhabitants,
- degradation of fragile ecosystems that will harm forest health and productivity,
- a decrease in the area's capacity to sequester carbon,
- a significant increase in carbon emissions on the local level due to dramatic increases in tourist traffic, projected at 28,000 tourists at a time, along with emissions from related land development and infrastructure activities in this remote area.

We are concerned by the total lack of transparency with regard to the promoters and investors behind the project. Furthermore, the way in which the local authorities gave it their authorisation would appear to be highly problematical. The public meetings held in the three most affected villages were not widely announced and were poorly attended. No detailed plan of the project was provided to enable the local population to form an opinion. We were encouraged to hear that this authorisation was annulled by a court on 10 January.

More generally, we are alarmed by the information we have received concerning the illegal logging of timber which would appear to be widespread in this region. Such practices have already provoked a big scandal in Romania⁷ and we would urge you to ensure that this no longer takes place in your country.

For all of these reasons we would like to call on you, Mr. President, to do all in your power to protect this magnificent massif. Specifically we would urge you to:

- annul the building permits for the tourist resort
- refuse authorisation for a change in land use
- support the initiative by the scientific council of the Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians to protect the summits, forests and natural lakes in the massif by extending the neighbouring Natural Reserve
- impose a reduction of the maximum yield permitted per hectare for wood harvesting
- support inclusiveness of decision making process on forest exploitation and encourage stronger involvement and contribution by environmental civil society organisations
- support the approximation of the Ukrainian environmental legislation to the EU legislation on ecological impact assessment related to development projects.

⁷ Spiegel, 2015: [Logging Threatens One of Europe's Last Virgin Forests](#).



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We hope that this case receives your full attention and that you will support sustainable development of livelihoods in a manner that does not collide with protection of Ukrainian nature.

With our best wishes, yours sincerely,

Hanna Aho, forest and climate campaigner, **Fern**

With the support of:

Fataï Aina, Executive Director, **Amis de l'Afrique Francophone**, Bénin (AMAF-BENIN)
Almuth Ernsting, Co-Director, **Biofuelwatch**, United Kingdom
Johanna Michel, Deputy director, **Bruno Manser Fund**, Switzerland
Wendel Trio, Director, **Climate Action Network** (CAN) Europe
Rita Frost, **Dogwood Alliance**, United States
Martin Luiga, int. communications coordinator, **Estonian Forest Aid** (Eesti Metsa Abiks)
Nicholas Bell, **European Civic Forum**, France
Dr. Ralf Straußberger, BUND Naturschutz in Bayern - **Friends of the Earth Bavaria**
Nataša Crnković, President, Centar za životnu sredinu/ **Friends of the Earth Bosnia and Herzegovina**
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Nicola Uhde, Forest Campaigner, BUND - **Friends of the Earth Germany**
Friedrich Wulf, Head, Int. Biodiversity Policy, Pro Natura, **Friends of the Earth Switzerland**
Olexiy Angurets, international coordinator, Zelenyi Svit - **Friends of the Earth Ukraine**
Christoph Promberger, Executive Director, **Fundatia Conservation Carpathia**
Mary S. Booth, Director, **Partnership for Policy Integrity**, United States
David van der Spoel, spokesperson, **Protect the Forest Sweden** (Skydda Skogen)
Reinhard Behrend, director **Rettet den Regenwald** e.V. (Rainforest Rescue), Germany
Régis Lindeperg, **SOS Forêt France**
Larry Lohmann, **The Corner House**, United Kingdom



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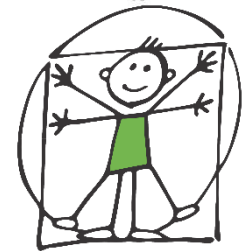
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