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IKEA's destruction of old-growth forests in Romania's protected areas

Dear Ms. Anderen,

Dear Mr. Brodin,

According to IKEA's company policy, you put responsible wood sourcing at the heart of your business. Through FSC certification and collaboration with WWF, you claim that you work to eliminate deforestation and forest degradation, and promote responsible forest management beyond your own wood material needs.

However, we have been on a field trip to an IKEA-owned forest located in the Penteleu Natura 2000 site in Romania and we are very concerned about the way timber logging takes place there. Our observations confirm the findings of the [investigations](#) conducted by Agent Green, mainly:

- high intensity logging (extracting large timber volumes up to 40% of existing stands during a very short period of time) to an old-growth forest of high conservation value (photo 1) including a mix of tree species reaching 300-400 years old, with flora and fauna that are typical to primary forests and that includes bears, wolves and lynx;
- very high levels of soil erosion which is a sign of poor forest management (photo 2);
- extensive damage to trees from logging operations, another sign of poor management (photo 3).

According to the mentioned investigations, the corresponding forest management plans (FMP) and technical memoirs (TM) call for the majority of parcels with average ages between 120 to 180 years to be logged with priority due to a so-called "regeneration urgency". This is based on the assumption that after the age of 120 years, trees start to lose their commercial value, but grossly neglects the fact that it is precisely these old forests that have the greatest biodiversity value. The investigations also show that despite the high conservation value, none of this Natura 2000 old-growth forest was included in the strict protection category and that the environmental assessment, mandatory under the EU Nature Protection Directives, was conducted much later than the FMP (FMP and environmental assessment should have been done at the same time). Moreover, the mentioned assessment lacks key elements such as exact dates, location, methods used and evidence gathered from the forest.

This all happens in a forest that is part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas, which was established through the EU Nature Protection Directives in order to conserve habitats

and species. The directives allow for the continuation of land uses (e.g. forestry) only as long as they contribute to or at least do not compromise conservation objectives. Moreover, as you are certainly aware, one of the key targets of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which aims to reverse ecosystem degradation in Europe, is to *strictly protect¹ all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests (i.e. not just virgin forests stricto sensu)*, while also increasing the quantity, quality and resilience of all its forests. At least one third of protected areas should be strictly protected, meaning 10% of EU land.

The intensive logging applied in the Penteleu forest will fully replace old-growth with younger stands over a period of only a few decades. It is clear that this level of commercial logging and the destructive way in which it is being implemented are not compatible with the nature and biodiversity conservation goals of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (Natura 2000 network), the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, or with IKEA's own sustainability ambitions for that matter.

We fear that the Penteleu case is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to unsustainable forest management in IKEA (Ingka) - owned forests in Romania. This is all the more worrying as there is a considerable track record of reports on IKEA's unsustainable timber procurement from Romania.

We therefore urge you to immediately halt logging in IKEA-owned Natura 2000 sites as well as other nature protection areas and to independently review all forestry operations in IKEA-owned forests in Romania.

As a market leader in Switzerland with annual gross sales of over one billion Swiss francs, IKEA should set a clear and strong example of respecting - and even going beyond - the EU's nature protection regulations and 2030 biodiversity strategy.

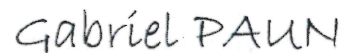
We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

BRUNO MANSER FONDS
Dr. Lukas Straumann
Executive Director



AGENT GREEN
Gabriel Păun
President



Ines Gavrilut
Eastern Europe Campaigner



¹ Strict protection means that natural processes remain essentially undisturbed to respect the areas' ecological requirements, while the areas may remain accessible to humans. Source: EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Brussels, 20.5.2020 COM (2020) 380 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>



Photo 1: Stump of 150-year-old spruce in Penteleu forest



Photo 2: Soil erosion, a sign of bad forest management, in Penteleu forest



Photo 3: Damaged tree in Penteleu forest