An Open Letter to the International Olympic Committee
Save the Carpathians – No Olympic Winter Games in Ukraine

Your Excellency:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to you to express our grave concern about the environmental and corruption-related risks regarding the Olympic Winter Games that the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, announced he intended to organise during discussions with the IOC Chairman Thomas Bach during his recent visit to Ukraine.

In particular, we fear that massive construction projects currently planned in the Ukrainian Carpathians would irreversibly damage one of Europe’s last truly outstanding wilderness areas, including some UNESCO-protected World Heritage sites.

The Ukrainian government is using talks about potential Winter Games to justify highly damaging mega projects linked to oligarchs’ interests that carry significant risks of environmental destruction and of corruption. In no way do these projects represent sustainable development. And they most certainly do not befit the Olympic ideals.

- All of the areas in question are located below 1900 metres which makes them unsuitable for Winter Games in times of climate change.
- The planned mega resorts at Svydovets and Borzhava are not based on existing infrastructure and communities. Instead, they would be erected in the middle of largely untouched landscapes in a highly fragile mountain ecosystem.
- Dozens of endangered plant and animal species live in these areas of outstanding biodiversity, including a number of endemic species.

Basel, 1 November 2021
• Even today, sufficient water supplies are an issue of major concern in the region. Fair and balanced water management would be a great source of conflict with local communities given the resorts’ massive water consumption.

• In anticipation of the construction of the resorts and the inevitable increase of land prices, local dignitaries and politically connected persons have already begun to illegally appropriate land in the planned resort areas.

• In the context of the ongoing plans for a huge resort in the Svydovets massif in the Yasinya region, Ukraine is failing to comply with the Aarhus convention and the Espoo convention. In March 2019, the Espoo convention secretariat opened a case file on the issue following a complaint by Hungary. To this day, Ukraine has failed to officially address the questions raised by Hungary over the cross-border environmental impact of the Svydovets project.

• The resort plans are linked to individuals with a highly questionable track record in terms of governance and compliance with proper procedures.

In its last annual report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine adopted on 11 February 2021, the European Parliament clearly criticizes the “unlawful Svydovets ski resort project” and insists on the fact that “encourages Ukraine to invest in ecologically and environmentally safe and sustainable tourist infrastructure, and calls on the Ukrainian authorities to prevent future projects from harming the environment by improving scrutiny, transparency and the implementation of environmental impact assessments and due diligence”.

We remind the International Olympic Committee of its global responsibility for the environment, in particular in context with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). We kindly ask the IOC to support the global fight against corruption according to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and to work towards sustainability and the protection of the environment stipulated in the Olympic Charter.

For the above reasons, we call on the Olympic Committee to stop giving the Ukrainian government any kind of support for these highly problematic projects in the Carpathians and to use its influence to dissuade it from causing irremediable damage to this unspoilt mountain region.

We kindly thank you for your consideration.

On behalf of the undersigned,

Dr. Lukas Straumann
Director, Bruno Manser Fonds

Nicholas Bell
International Coordinator, European Civic Forum
List of 53 organisations and names supporting the letter

1. **Biofuelwatch, UK/USA**

2. **Bruno Manser Fonds, Switzerland**
   Dr. Lukas Straumann, Director

3. **BundesBürgerInitiative Waldschutz (BBIWS), Germany**
   Claudia Blank, Susanne Ecker, Sabine von Winterfeld

4. **Canopée Forêts Vivantes, France**
   Xavier Morin, President

5. **Cedos think tank, Ukraine**
   Ivan Verbytskyi, Director

6. **Center for international cooperation and project implementation, Ukraine**
   Vusyk Olena Head of the NGO

7. **Collectif SOS forêt France**
   Régis Lindeperg, Coordinator

8. **Danube-Carpathian Programme, Ukraine**
   Dr. Bohdan Prots, CEO/Director of the NGO

9. **Earthsight, UK**
   Sam Lawson, Director

10. **Ecoclub, Ukraine**
    Andriy Martynyuk, Executive director of the NGO

11. **Ecodiya, Ukraine**
    Gozak Natalia, Executive director of the NGO

12. **ECOGVALT, Ukraine**
    Maxym Verdesk, Head of the NGO

13. **Ecological club Eremurus, Ukraine**
    Natalia Valantyrets, Head of the NGO
14. **Ecopark Osokorky, Ukraine**  
   Oleksandr Pylypenko, Head of the NGO

15. **Ecosense, Ukraine**  
   Tetiana Zhavzharova. Head of the NGO

16. **Ecosphere, Ukraine**  
   Kateryna Stankiewicz-Koval, Director

17. **Ekoltava, Ukraine**  
   Maryna Tsyhryk, Executive director of the NGO

18. **EuroNatur Stiftung, Germany**  
   Gabriel Schwaderer, CEO

19. **European Wilderness Society / Європейське товаристводвикой природи**

20. **FORZA Sustainable development of the Carpathian region, Ukraine**  
   Lesya Loyko, Head of Agency

21. **European Civic Forum, France**  
   Nicholas Bell

   **Fern, Belgium**

   22. **Hannah Mowat, Campaigns Coordinato**

23. **Forum Ökologie & Papier, Germany**  
   Evelyn Schönheit

24. **Free Svydovets Group, Ukraine**

25. **Friends of the Siberian Forests (FSF), Russia**  
   Andrey Laletin, Chair

26. **Hnutí DUHA, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic**  
   Anna Kárníková, Director

27. **Longo Mai**
28. Milieudefensie, Friends of the Earth Netherlands
   Danielle van Oijen, Programme coordinator

29. Green Wave, Ecological Club, Ukraine
   Oleksandra Khalaim, Head of the NGO

30. Green World, Environmental Humanitarian Association, Ukraine
   Olexandr Stepanenko, Director

31. Kroky do maibutnoho, Ukraine
   Y. Dupeshko-Dzhus

32. Kryla, Youth initiatives foundation, Ukraine
   Yurii Tkachuk

33. Legal Analytics, Ukraine
   Mariana Vyniarska, Head of the NGO

34. Our Home Manyava, Youth Environmental Organization, Ukraine
   Mykola Skydaniuk, the head of the organization

35. Partnership for Policy Integrity, USA
   Mary S. Booth, PhD, Director

36. Plato, Ukraine
   Mykola Riabyka, Executive Director of the NGO

37. Pro Natura Switzerland

38. Pro REGENWALD, Germany
   Hermann Edelmann

39. Protect the Forest Sweden
   Elin Götmakr, Spokesperson

40. Quercus, Portugal
   Alexandra Azevedo, President

41. Sotsialnyi Rukh, Ukraine
   Vitalii Dudin, Head of the NGO
42. Svitlana Slesarenok, Ukraine
   Chornomorskyi Zhinochyi klub, Head of the NGO

43. Svitovur Outdoor Agency, Ukraine
   Oleh Hetun

44. Sweet Osvit, NGO for Environmental Education, Ukraine
   Miroshnichenko Kateryna

45. Snow Alliance, Blue Dalian, China

46. Touristic Club Antar, Ukraine
   Taras Syrotiuk

47. Transcarpathian tourist organization, Ukraine
   Shandor Fedir Fedorovych

48. Turinform Zakarpattia, Tourist information center, Ukraine
   Oleksandr Koval

49. U-Cycle, Kyiv Cyclists’ Association, Ukraine
   Anastasiia Makarenko, Executive Director

50. Unique Planet, Ukraine
   Pavlo Vyshebaba, Head of the NGO

51. Ukrainian Climate Network
   OksanaMariuk, Head of the Board

52. WOLF Forest Protection Movement, Slovakia
   Juraj Lukáč, Chief

53. WWF Ukraine
   Bohdan Vykhor , Managing director
cc:
- Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, 11 Bankova Str., Kyiv 01220, Ukraine, email: letter@apu.gov.ua
- Thomas Bach, Chairman, IOC, Maison Olympique, 1007 Lausanne, thomas.bach@olympic.org
- Inger Andersen, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, P.O. Box 30552, 00100, Nairobi, Kenya, unenvironment-executiveoffice@un.org
- Isabelle Anatole-Gabriel, Chief of Unit, Europe and North America Unit, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris CEDEX 07, France, i.anatole-gabriel@unesco.org
- Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Head of Policy and Programme, IUCN, Rue Mauverney 28, 1196 Gland, Alberto.Arroyo@iucn.org
- Elena Santer, Secretary to the Implementation Committee, Conventional on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), elena.santer@un.org
- Bálint Dobi, Head of Department of Environmental Conservation of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture, H-1055 Budapest, Kossuth Lajos tér 1, balint.dobi@fm.gov.hu
- István Ígyártó, Ambassador. Embassy of Hungary in Kyiv, 01901 Kijev, Rejtarszka u. 33, kiev@mae.ro