

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF PROTECTED AREAS 2011

21st – 25th September 2011
Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve



Bad Urach Declaration on the Strengthening of Protected Areas in Europe

We, the members of the EUROPARC Federation gathered here today, address the European Commission, the European Parliament and the national governments of Europe and hereby declare that, with reference to the outcomes of this conference, only high-quality and well-managed protected areas in Europe will be able to serve as model contributors in the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity and climate protection. We call upon the EU and its member states to establish the legal, financial and human resource conditions necessary to fulfil the objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity by 2020.

The EU's original goal of stopping biodiversity loss by 2010 failed in all 27 member states.

A contributing cause has been the fact that in many protected areas the related tasks were completed either insufficiently or not at all. Over the past few years, conditions in many areas have in fact deteriorated considerably, despite the ever-increasing significance of protected areas as "treasuries" of European biological diversity. If the loss of biodiversity cannot be stopped within protected areas, it will be impossible to do so outside their borders.

Therefore, the motto "**Quality counts - Benefits for Nature and People**" was chosen for this year's EUROPARC Federation conference. With regards to the quality of nature parks, regional parks, national parks and biosphere reserves in Europe, as well as in the host country Germany, this means that:

- quality must be ensured by means of comparable standards, and
- financial and human resources appropriate to this task are required, which are necessary for the development and administration of the protected areas.

Only on this basis can the objectives set out by the designation of the protected areas be adequately fulfilled. The signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UNESCO member states have committed themselves to these provisions. The criteria of IUCN and UNESCO are recognised as the basis for the development of protected areas.

According to international agreements and national legislation, the role of protected areas includes:

- protection of natural and biological diversity and the involved processes, also by means of large wilderness areas
- development of models for climate protection and adaption to climate change
- education for sustainable development
- research and monitoring
- establishing and enhancing sustainable land use models, which integrate conservation standards and are economically viable
- establishing and enhancing sustainable working practices within every aspect of life and the economy (tourism, energy production, waste management, trade, industry, etc.)
- building regional business cycles and value-added networks.

To this end, the following conditions must be met:

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- protected areas are to be safeguarded within the European framework and by means of national legislation
- the governmental institutions responsible for the designation and management of protected areas are to have immediate jurisdiction over them
- protected areas are to be administered according to modern management principles and regularly evaluated
- protected areas must have a clearer presence as catalysts for sustainable regional development than in the past
- protected areas must implement their respective core missions and legal tasks via multifaceted cooperation and networks
- protected areas must protect and preserve Europe's natural heritage within sustainably used cultural landscapes as well as in newly emerging wilderness areas.

Call to Action

We, the members of the EUROPARC Federation, therefore call upon our national and regional governments, as well as the European Commission, to:

- develop the legal framework necessary to enable Europe's protected areas to efficiently fulfil their obligations and realise their functions
- raise awareness of the economic value of protected areas and the ecosystem services provided, in particular, their contribution to sustainable development and job creation,
- even during difficult economic circumstances, ensure protected areas are provided with the authority required to complete these tasks and strengthen the parks' administrations by means of correspondingly high-quality human, financial and technical resources.
- regularly review the achievement of conservation objectives and the effectiveness of protected area management, and establish the appropriate monitoring programmes and evaluation procedures required for this purpose.
- resolve the conflict between the undisturbed development of wilderness and the preservation of valuable cultural landscapes and Natura 2000 habitats necessary for the conservation of biodiversity, .
- foster exchange and cooperation between European protected areas.
- raise awareness of the significance and value of protected areas and the preservation of biodiversity amongst decision makers, relevant stakeholders and the public,
- Include a comprehensive protection of natural caves and karst phenomena under the protected area regime.