

4.060 The European Green Belt Initiative

CONSIDERING that the 'European Green Belt', the proposed ecological network through Europe - from the Barents to the Black Sea - consists of valuable, unique and endangered habitats and landscapes, represents a cross-section of Europe's biodiversity, and could become the first transboundary ecological network anywhere in Europe;

RECALLING that in spite of the area's special historical background as the former 'Iron Curtain', which constituted an inhumane death zone and divided East and West Europe for decades, nature was given pause to breathe and flourish, thus enabling the development of this natural "Green Belt" as a common European Nature Heritage;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Green Belt ecological network is approximately 13,000 kilometres long and passes through nearly all natural geographic regions of Europe, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, and links different types of landscape, from pristine areas to nature-related cultural landscapes, and many important and large nature reserves across Europe;

EMPHASIZING that the European Green Belt is a living historical and cultural monument of recent European history, a tool for sustainable regional development, nature tourism and awareness-raising in terms of nature conservation and the conservation of biological diversity at different social and political levels;

BEING AWARE that the European Green Belt is also an important tool for transboundary cooperation at different levels, for promoting understanding among nations and long-term and peaceful cohabitation;

ALSO BEING AWARE that the European Green Belt is an important migration route for several endangered mammals, such as Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*, Common Wolf *Canis lupus*, Wolverine *Gulo gulo*, Eurasian Lynx *Lynx lynx*, Wild Cat *Felis silvestris* and Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*, contains important staging areas for migratory birds, and is a last retreat for highly endangered species such as the Large Saw-tailed Bush Cricket *Polysarcus denticauda*, Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, and Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* especially in the intensively used landscapes of Central Europe;

RECOGNIZING that the European Green Belt contributes substantially to the implementation of international conventions and agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) with the pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN), the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe and the Natura 2000 Network under the European Union and the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' Directives;

NOTING that this pan-European initiative links 23 European States (Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, FYR Macedonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey) and includes non-governmental and governmental organizations working with an interdisciplinary approach;

ALSO NOTING the work already done by the Fennoscandian Green Belt since the beginning of the 1990's and emphasizing its importance as an integral part of the European Green Belt;

FURTHER NOTING that the European Green Belt Initiative established a balanced Programme of Work with seven goals to implement this pan-European ecological network and creating an organizational structure with the IUCN Regional Office for Europe as Coordinator of the Initiative, three Regional Coordinators for the three geographical sections (Fennoscandia and the Baltic States, Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe) and National Focal Points in the participating countries; and

EMPHASIZING that the European Green Belt Initiative is complementary to and builds on existing activities in the regions concerned, and that the three recognized regional sections contribute significantly and equally to the Initiative;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:

1. RECOMMENDS that IUCN's members recognize and support the European Green Belt Initiative, which promotes in a participatory manner the conservation of biodiversity in Europe, transboundary cooperation, and sustainable regional development in former border areas;
2. URGES the governments of the 23 participating European States and the European Union to give highest priority to the implementation of the European Green Belt ecological network and to support the National Focal Points and Regional Coordinators in taking forward the Programme of Work; and
3. ENCOURAGES IUCN's members to support the governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on this task in the 23 countries along the European Green Belt;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:

4. CALLS ON the Director General to actively ensure overall coordination of the European Green Belt Initiative.

State and agency members of the United States refrained from engaging in deliberations on this motion and took no national government position on the motion as adopted for reasons given in the U.S. General Statement on the IUCN Motions Process.