



Harz Declaration 2000

By the participants of the
World National Park Convention
at Goslar at the Harz National Park

Goslar, October 25, 2000

Preamble

With the earth's population now at six billion, four times as many people are living on earth than 100 years ago. As three babies are being born somewhere in the world every second 1.75 million people are added each week. Inevitably, many million square kilometres of land are needed, and more and more species wildlife and plants are either forced into remaining island-like biotopes or become directly extinct. The speed and dimension of the global destruction of nature exceed any comparable event in nature's history – without even reaching public awareness. The threat to wide biological variety contains existential dangers for humankind. Along with the magic year 2000, we started the "Biological Century", in which democratic majorities around the world have to learn to understand and respect the value of biological resources. There are no alternatives. In line with EXPO 2000 and its national park related themes "Humankind-Nature-Technology", representatives and friends of national parks from all over the world held a convention at the National Park Harz in Goslar from 23–27 October 2000 and passed this Harz Declaration 2000.

The participants ask the communities of states, but also every single country, the government as well as non-governmental organisations, private initiatives and individuals, to increase measures to rescue the world's natural heritage. Following the agreements made at the largest conference of all times, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – especially the Agenda 21 and the agreement to sustain biological diversity – the protection of nature is not only crucial for the sake of conservation, but also in the interest of humankind's future:

1. National parks: Keeping nature's heritage – a biological system even for human beings

For the first time in history, more people are living in cities than in the country. Hosts of city dwellers feel they have to experience nature in their spare time. The reasons are rooted in human evolution; a rich landscape improves psychological-physical well-being – and that means rest. Nowadays, especially in the rich industrial countries, many people are becoming aware of being outside nature, leaving more and more the elements of the human "original environment" behind. The large demand for wilderness – strikingly often in forest-like systems – is a sign of human longing for an appropriate "psychotope". People are turning to unrestricted nature to seek new, vital energy. National park conservation enjoys increasing popularity worldwide. The UNCED recognized this in 1992.

National parks protect large parts of nature's heritage. They serve the conservation of uncultivated nature and its inherent

dynamism as well as providing rest and education in the wilderness. Although the number of national parks has increased – in Europe from 200 to more than 300 between 1989 and 1999 – the non-profit protection of nature's heritage worldwide has to be intensified significantly, both in quantity and quality. Furthermore, especially carefully landcultivated nature areas of prime importance in associated systems also in industrial states have to get a considerably higher share of space.

The convention's participants recommend more nature conservation in the original meaning of an anthropologically uninfluenced nature dynamic, concentrating on parks and larger reservations – in particular national parks should be linked by green corridors into ecologically associated systems. Therefore a "mental interlink" of these responsible for large protected areas is required.

2. National parks also serve the local restoration of natural landscapes

Due to the history of settlement and industry in such densely populated countries as in Central Europe, and especially in Germany, natural landscapes, which are untouched by human mankind, no longer exist in a sufficient number and density, in order to develop an ecologically sufficient network of biotopes using national parks as "intersections". No more national parks can be established at least in Central Europe and Germany, even though the primary demand for an extensive unspoiled state and original wilderness is particularly strong among people in densely populated areas.

Following these international developments, the participants of the World National Park Convention recommend the passing of a law to commit resources to the renaturalisation and development work already being undertaken to some extent in national parks. The government has to put national parks into the position to decide freely what to do with the appropriate areas and to make sure, by using a management plan, that all international criteria for national parks will be fulfilled in a reasonable short period, and that the required share of land will be left to unrestricted self dynamic.

3. The educational works of national parks: Think global – act local

Usually, upbringing and education "ennoble" people's ability to devote themselves to society. But particularly for the conservation of nature, ethical values and intellectual principles are necessary to raise the required consciousness, the longing for changes and the will to do something about it. The solving of social, economical as well as ecological problems concerning nature depends on realizing the laws of nature and being guided by them. Therefore, the aim of educational work in national parks is to promote behavioural patterns that facilitate ecological, lasting development. In line with the recommendations of the IUCN (Parks for Life, 1994) imparting the goals of the UNCED at Rio 92 count as well. National parks have to be provided appropriately for this purpose.

Human evolution shows that reason and sacrifice of individuals for the benefit of a common nature's human natural heritage is not to be expected as long as it is not obvious to everyone that the general public's interests are demanded and respected by the majority of people. The public's lack of information concerning the dimensions of nature destruction is wide-ranging and dangerous. Human nature is designed for increase. Global environmental problems will increase inevitably as long as lack of information and missing international regulations for the environment encourages globalisation. Growing international trade leads to the displacement of ever more natural ecosystems, plant and animal species across the globe.

Professional educational work in the environmental and conservation sector can initiate a process of rethinking. National parks are outstandingly suitable in imparting knowledge about nature and its inherent connections. That is why various educational establishments and courses have to be created. These should not only instil knowledge in park visitors, but through emotional nature encounters. With nature awake the love for nature and therefore the willingness to protect nature's heritage. Within the bounds of UNCED-conventions, wilderness in national parks has a widely spread economic reference meaning which extends as far as ecologically stable forms of landcultivation. Only if one knows and is able to convince oneself how nature functions without human beings, one can prepare oneself to behave in such a manner that no species and ecosystems have to die because of human intervention. Only the informed people of the world can work towards a situation where the restrictions of nature and environment are no longer passed on to the anonymous – national as well as international – society.

Our survival depends on laws of nature. For the sake of global nature conservation, the rights of the human species have to be placed before the interests of individuals. Human egoism, corruption and insufficient laws must no longer get out of hand being misused at the expense of the common good and be allowed to endanger the biodiversity as the base of all future life. The long-term preservation of species can only be achieved if large populations in ecological connected biotopes are protected, because only connected systems can guarantee the preservation of genetic variety. That is why we have to think in ecologically connected areas and learn to act as a border crossing community.

4. National parks: Regional promotion and connecting people

National parks should in a special way awaken peoples' interest in nature through the natural beauty of its biotopes and allow encounters with original communities of life. That is why they should be tapped very carefully in order to allow both a nature experience in the best possible way and an attractive nature event. This should lead to an increase in the number of visitors to national parks across the world.

National park tourism makes an important contribution to the economical development for the regions around the national parks.

For this purpose, the managements of national parks have to integrate their territories into the tourism concepts of their particular regions in such a way that both nature conservation and the local economies flourish by letting the local people profit from the income obtained from national park visitors. Initiatives of tourism should therefore be supported following the goals of the national parks within the bounds of a balanced win-win-strategy. This is the most possible way to establish suitable areas as national parks and therefore to tie the world-

wide network more closely. This way nature conservation finally has to profit from nature tourism.


Winning widespread support for the conservation of culture and nature and educating the people of the world about the environment and nature is a standing task for everybody. Nevertheless, the participants of the Convention regard it as a primary educational task for the state to inform all sections of society about the connections between ecological principles, environmental pollution, the effects of destructive behaviour towards the environment and the danger for human existence as well as to develop global, regional and local solutions together with the population. This can only be effectively realised if everyone recognises his or her own responsibility and consistently acts in an ecological way. Having the concept of interpretation (the national park specific form of informational and educational work) the national parks make – also because of their popularity world-wide – an especially valuable contribution in the relationship between man and nature. To build on their efforts, we need to harmonise the relationship between economy and ecology and respect the value of nature reserves which are either untouched by humans or which are restored to their inherent dynamism as world's nature heritage. In this way, the people responsible for environmental pollution and the destruction of nature across the globe should be forced to carry the costs of their actions. Following Agenda 21, the "structure of an international network for realizing global educational goals" has to be promoted: Think global – act local!


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The Convention's participants regard national parks as a fundamental part of a global development of the protection of nature and the preservation of both species diversity and genetic variety. The dramatic decrease of species and ecosystems can only be stopped by applying a win-win-strategy oriented towards the regions on a global as well as a local level. In this context, they also recommend an increased and world-wide improvement of public awareness in order to win democratic majorities for the lasting protection of nature. Regional changes to benefit nature can only be successful if they include and engage the people. Improving the exchange of information and experience between all national parks' collaborators and patrons works towards the linking the protectors of nature world-wide, and therefore towards the effective implementation of the UNCED's resolutions – to which there are no alternatives.

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