



Warsaw, 23 May 2016

Alexander Italianer

Secretary-General of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200 / Wetstraat 200
1040 Bruxelles / Brussel
Belgium

RE: Complaint CHAP(2016)01371

Dear Mr Secretary-General,

I am writing to you on behalf of the seven Polish environmental NGOs that on 19th April 2016 submitted a complaint to the European Commission, asking for an infringement procedure to be started in relation to the plans to increase timber harvesting levels in Białowieża Forest, Poland. The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to the recent developments in this matter.

In our complaint we outlined that the 31 March 2016 approval of the Polish Minister of the Environment for increased logging in Białowieża Forest constitutes a breach of Art. 6(2) and (3) of the Habitats Directive and Article 4(4) of the Birds Directive. We asked for interim measures to be pursued in order to prevent an irreversible loss of habitats and species. To our knowledge, this breach of the Nature Directives has not been reversed by the Polish authorities.

On 17th May, during a report on the six months since coming into government, the Minister of the Environment announced¹ that logging in Białowieża would start within ten days, i.e. as early as 27th May. This statement means that irreversible damage to the forest is imminent. We therefore reiterate the need for prompt action by the Commission.

¹

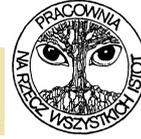
<http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,409731,szyszko-za-10-dni-rozpozynamy-walke-z-kornikiem-w-puszczy-bialowieskiej.html>



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With the potential imminent harvesting and placing on the market of timber logged under the illegally authorised revised Forest Management Plan, a question of compliance with the European Timber Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 995/2010) will also arise.

Since the submission of our complaint, a growing number of Polish citizens have signed in support of the complaint. As you will see from the webpage <http://kochampuszcze.pl/skarga>, there are to date more than 30 000 signatories urging the Commission to take all necessary steps to put a halt to the logging. We trust that the Commission will take into consideration and acknowledge the high level of public concern in Polish society regarding a possible loss of the natural treasure of Bia ńowieża Forest.

Yours sincerely,

Marcin Stoczkiewicz

Member of the Management Board of ClientEarth Poland

On behalf of:

Greenpeace Poland
Greenmind Foundation
Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP)
Wild Poland Foundation
Workshop for All Beings
WWF Poland

Copied to: Daniel Calleja, Director-General for Environment