

# Ushgorod Declaration

Working document of the international conference “Cooperation between civil society and interreligious organizations for the nature preservation in Eastern Europe – common protection of Creation”

07-09 October 2016  
Ushgorod/ Ukraine

12.10.2016

## **Ushgorod Declaration**

**We**, the participants of the international conference on the topic “Cooperation between civil society and interreligious organizations for the nature preservation in Eastern Europe – common protection of Creation” (Ushgorod 07.10 -09.10.2016)

**Recognize** the importance of joining forces between interreligious organizations and civil society for the sake of stabilizing and protecting the world in the face of ever growing challenges;

**Use** our common comprehension, that the preservation of nature, as part of the Creation, could become the unifying framework for people to work together for the cause of peace in Eastern Europe;

**Realize** that the solution of ecological and environmental-related challenges, against the background of complex transformative processes in Eastern Europe, remains an important sociological factor for regions and nations and constitutes the pursuit for peace;

**Acknowledge** that religious organizations of different faiths are natural allies of civil society and that combined efforts will help in seeking solutions for global and local ecological problems;

**Support** the need for urgent collective action in regards to the conservation of the ecosystem;

**Understand** that people have the responsibility to protect and act in good governance with natural resources, which are in great danger;

**Emphasize** the importance of inter-religious community work for the conservation of nature;

**Remember** our responsibility for the current and future generations;

**We accept the decision to create an “Interreligious Environmental Forum of Eastern Europe”:**

The Interreligious Environmental Forum of Eastern Europe (IREF) aims to exchange information, experience and common action about environmental issues in religious and nature conservation organizations for the good of the support and care of God’s creation. IREF seeks to promote environmental programs and projects of churches, interreligious organizations and civil society based on biblical, theological and other spiritual elements for the application of sustainable principles in our lives and in relation to our fellows. Given our responsibility for future generations and for all God’s creation, including nature.

**IREF important directions of activities are:**

- Informing the society in Eastern Europe about urgent ecological and other social problems.
- The development of academic fields. A crossover between nature conservation and religion.
- Investigation of the relevance and influence of religion addressing global environmental challenges in the 21th century.

- The search for new principles, approaches, ideals and tools for the conservation and replication of the natural environment.
- Investigation, systematization, dissemination and the utilization in the training and education of eco-theological ideas from Christian and other spiritual intellectuals.
- The study of the differences of interreligious dialogues concerning the conservation of nature.
- The promotion of interreligious cooperation in regards to nature conservation. In this context, there will be ecumenical and nature protection forums (conferences, seminars and round tables) with respect to current environmental topics.
- Cooperation between academic institutions and interreligious organizations with regards to sensitizing children and youth for the integrity of creation.
- In the process of interreligious dialogue, the formation of appeals from members of social movement for the nature and environment preservation (public and environment non-governmental organizations) with regards to public education and ecological awareness.
- Advertisement in religious environmental organizations for the transition to renewable energy, which has a lesser impact on the environment and nature.
- Translation of foreign literature with new knowledge on the responsibility for the Creation and the publication of info material in academia and popular science periodicals. The collection of materials from conferences, seminars, the media and internet.
- The publication of scientific, religious, cultural and educational literature on the topic “Responsibility for the Creation and Preservation of the Natural Environment”.
- Identify ways and opportunities for environmental education and training in different social institutions (pre-schools, schools, universities, churches, religious organizations, public associations).
- Formation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the conservation of the environment and nature among religious environmental organizations. The same applies for the collaboration with scientific, educational institutions and experts on environment protection.
- Implement joint developments and achievements in the environmental movement in Eastern Europe.
- The major focus of IREF is the organization of public dialogue between interreligious organizations and public institutions in Eastern Europe concerning the global environmental challenges of our time.

### **Tasks of IREF:**

The immediate task of IREF is to create a high quality information network for the dissemination of news and the exchange of information between Churches, interested religious environmental organizations, primarily like the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) and all people of good will. This includes the distribution of information concerning nature conservation in interreligious organizations in the East European Society and finding an overall consensus in how to address urgent environmental problems. Furthermore it is important to clarify how the development of cooperation and exchange of information with Churches, institutions and organizations, dealing with long-term protection of the environment and nature, will look like.

### **Organizational Structure of IREF:**

All organizations, whose representatives participated in this conference, are members of the initiated forum. The memberships of the forum are open, this means that all interested organizations can become a member of the forum or withdraw from it. The forum’s Secretariat is suggested to be located in the Institute of Ecological and Religious Studies in Ukraine. The

Secretariat is working on a voluntary basis. Member organizations of the forum have to make efforts to find funding for its work.

In particular, the initiator of the establishment of the forum – Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) - with the assistance of other members of the forum and its secretariat is preparing a project proposal to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the purpose to receive support for the work of the forum until 2020.

**Members of the Forum (as constituted on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016):**

1. Institute of Ecological and Religious Studies, Ukraine
2. Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), Germany
3. Prof. Markus Vogt, Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Germany
4. Benjamin Schwarz, University of Regensburg , Germany
5. NGO Salem International, Germany
6. Peter Pavlovic, Secretary of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), Brussels
7. Wilhelm Kulke, Special Representative Eastern Europe ret., German Federal Foundation for the Environment, Germany
8. NGO «Georgian Academy of Education», Georgia
9. NGO «Association of Civil Society Development in Georgia» (ACSDG), Georgia
10. Institute for Democracy, Georgia
11. REC Study, Georgia
12. NGO Meskhetian Democracy Union, Georgia
13. Center for public education, Georgia
14. Stanislav Sitnik, Caritas, Moldova
15. Charitable Foundation «Optima Fide», Moldova
16. Krzysztof Wojciechowski, Society of Lublin landscape parks, Poland
17. Jozef Terek, University of Prešov, Slovakia
18. Martin Celuch, Environmental Subcommittee of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia
19. Dymytriy Sydor, Mukachevo-Ushgorod Orthodox Eparchy, Ukraine
20. Transcarpathian Orthodox society, St. Cyril and Methodius, Ukraine
21. Institute of History and Philology in Ushgorod, Ukraine
22. Oleksandr Bokotey, Commission of ecology and migrants, Roman- Catholic Bishops Conference in Ukraine
23. Mychail Bilanich, Commission of ecology of the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo, Ukraine
24. Roman Romanovich, Officer of the Environment Office of the Greek-Catholic Church in Kiev´s Archeparchy, Ukraine
25. Rustam Gafuri, Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Ukraine
26. Charitable Foundation «Church and Environment», Ukraine
27. Charitable Foundation «Ecosafety», Ukraine
28. Ushgorod National University, Ukraine
29. Mochan Vasyly, National Park «Zacharovaniy kraj», Ukraine
30. Maria Bayanovska, Head of the Chair of social and humanitarian education ZIPPO
31. Oleg Lukscha, Director of the Institute «Noosfera»,Ushgorod
32. Vladislav Mirutenko, Carpathian Ecological Club «Ruthenia», Ukraine
33. Ecological Club «Eco-Ekc», Ukraine
34. Ukrainian society of environmental protection, Ukraine

35. Socio-ecological Association «Chisty Bereg», Ukraine
36. Transcarpathian Regional Ecological Center of student`s youth, Ukraine
37. Agriculture organisaton «Forest», Ukraine