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Milorad Dodik, President of Republic of Srpska

Subject – hydropower expansion and protection of endangered Huchen

Dear President Dodik,

The undersigned scientists are writing in concern to the extensive hydropower expansion in rivers containing endangered Danube Salmon or Huchen, and specifically projects targeting the Sana River in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH). We have recently reported on the Huchen's status and concluded that **the Balkan region harbors the majority of this species' remaining populations¹. We specifically highlighted the Sana River as one of the largest and best preserved of these habitats.** However, 93 dams are planned directly in river reaches supporting this iconic and IUCN red-listed salmonid fish² – thus threatening ca. 40% of the Huchen's global distribution. Healthy populations of Huchen, as a top predator, are excellent indicators of intact freshwater ecosystems, which not only harbor numerous other aquatic species of conservation interest, but also provide economically sustainable and globally unique sport fisheries as well as additional activities of viable interest to the local economy, such as rafting, kayaking, and camping.

Hydropower development on the Sana such as the “Medna Sana” project, which is under construction, are particularly alarming, as the river is one of the last 6 rivers globally with a healthy Huchen population stretching over 100 km in length. The Sana is additionally among the premier sport fisheries in BH, yielding healthy populations of brown trout and European grayling, the latter of which is also in serious decline throughout southern and central Europe.

We are deeply concerned about these developments, and reiterate that the ongoing activity on the Sana reflects a lack of large-scale planning and concern for the precious flora and fauna of the region. **Hydropower development at this scale is wholly incompatible with the protection of endangered Hucho**, as well as many associated aquatic species as their habitat is invariably degraded or wholly eliminated leading to synergistic negative impacts throughout the ecosystem. **We thus urge authorities to stop the damming of Huchen rivers in the Balkans, and re-consider alternative energy development plans that would allow for the sustainable use and adequate protection of these unique and beneficial ecosystems.**

Sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Steven Weiss – Karl Franzens University Graz, Austria,
IUCN Salmonid Specialist Group, IUCN Focal Point Authority for Eurasian Salmonids;
Dr. Jörg Freyhof, European Chair of the IUCN/SSC Freshwater Fish Specialist Group,
German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv);
Dr. Avdul Adrović, Faculty of Sciences, University of Tuzla
Dr. Belma Kalamujić, Institute for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Sarajevo;
Dr. Aljoša Duplić, Karlovac University of Applied Sciences, Zagreb;
Prof. Dr. Boris Hrašovec, Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb;
Dr. Zoran Marčić, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb;
Prof. Dr. Dragana Milošević, Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics, Univ. of Montenegro;
Prof. Dr. Marina Piria, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb;
Prof. Dr. Predrag Simonović, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Biology;
Senad Šljuka, Faculty of Science, University of Sarajevo;
Dr. Tea Tomljanović, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb;
Dr. Daša Zabrc, Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia.

Cc: Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner of Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Željka Cvijanović, Prime Minister of Rep. of Srpska
Petar Đokić, Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining, Rep. of Srpska
Srebrenka Golić, Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology, Rep. of Srpska
Edita Đapo, Federal ministry of Environment and Tourism, Bosnia-Herzegovina
Mirko Šarović, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia-Herzegovina

References

¹ Freyhof, J., S. Weiss, A. Adrović, M. Čaleta, A. Duplić, B. Hrašovec, B. Kalamujić, Z. Marčić, D. Milošević, M. Mrakovčić, D. Mrdak, M. Piria, P. Simonović, S. Šljuka, T. Tomljanović, & D. Zabric. 2015. The Huchen *Hucho hucho* in the Balkan region: Distribution and future impacts by hydropower development. RiverWatch & EuroNatur, 30 pp.

² Freyhof, J. & Kottelat, M. 2008. *Hucho hucho*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2008: e.T10264A3186143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T10264A3186143.en> . Downloaded

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