

**International Living Lakes Conference  
Nanchang, November 2014  
Marion Hammerl, President of Global Nature Fund**

Dear Governor Lu, Dear friends,

Lakes and wetlands belong to the most valuable and most endangered ecosystems on our planet. They continue to be lost as a consequence of human actions, despite the fact that they provide a wide range of ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being.

Our host country China belongs to those countries suffering a dramatic water crisis. China has 20% of the world's population but only 7% of its fresh water. Overuse has caused thousands of rivers to disappear. More than 50 % of the 50,000 rivers with catchment areas of 100 square kilometres or more have been lost in the last 50 years. The amount of water available is diminishing fast and the little water left is often too polluted even for industrial use. The World Bank has said that China's water crisis costs the country more than 2% of their GDP, mostly because of damage to health.

I come from a country which believes in technology as the solution for most of the problems. But Germany, as well as other European countries, had to learn, that the biggest environmental problems cannot be solved with technology alone, because a substantial change of behaviour is needed. Today the evaluation of all the big and very costly hydrological infrastructures in Europe shows, that none of them solved the water problems.

In order to achieve sustainable water management, it is necessary to better implement existing legislation, to invest in technology and to stop pollution. Degraded rivers and lakes need to be restored and a sound water saving policy needs to be implemented. One key aspect is the right water pricing. In Spain and other Southern European countries we learned: Low price policy gives wrong incentives! Industry recycles too little water; agriculture wastes too much water, golf courses are competing with water for households. Therefore the European Water Framework Directive requests from all European countries to include the maintenance of the hydrological ecosystems into the price for water.

The IPCC Report 2014 on Climate Change underlines the dramatic consequences of global warming for our freshwater resources: For each degree of global warming, approximately 7% of the global population will be exposed to a decrease of renewable water resources of at least 20%. Climate change is projected to reduce renewable surface water and groundwater resources significantly in most dry subtropical regions. This will even stronger intensify competition for water among agriculture, ecosystems, settlements, industry, and energy production and will affect drinking water resources, energy, and food security.

Climate change is not a negative development happening in the future – it is affecting our rivers and lakes today! Apart from dramatic impacts on the freshwater availability for humans, also the lakes as ecosystems are seriously affected. Only healthy lakes can deliver ecosystem services which we need for

sustainable livelihood as well as for economic development!

Today we meet at Poyang Hu, China's biggest lake and represented in the Living Lakes Network for 12 years. Although Poyang Hu is still strong and shows a more or less intact ecosystem, it is suffering from water abstraction and pollution like many other lakes because of increasing urbanization and industry in the surroundings. This is the biggest challenge for the sustainable development of Poyang Hu. More than 10 million people are living around Poyang Hu. How to achieve sustainable development in so densely populated areas? This is a real challenge and no easy solutions can be provided.

Our Chinese Living Lakes members, the Mountain-River-Lake Sustainable Association (MRLSD) and the Jiangxi Academy of Science, are working on these challenges. MRLSD has a long experience in the implementation of pilot projects on key aspects of sustainable development. Since the beginning of our partnership, MRLSD is keen to exchange know-how and experiences and to learn from other members in the Living Lakes Network. MRLSD contributes to the protection of Poyang Lake with best practice projects, awareness raising campaigns and capacity building for the local population. But as an NGO they need the support of science and of the political decision makers and related administrations.

The Jiangxi Academy of Sciences recognizes that scientific knowledge is only useful if it is disseminated and applied in practice. Therefore the Academy supports

the work of NGOs such as MRLSD and contributes with scientific assessment to plans and projects.

The Jiangxi Provincial Government adopted sound lake protection legislation, established about 20 nature reserves around the lake and carried out monitoring of water quality and other ecosystem functions. Furthermore, the Government declared Poyang region as an eco-economic region and supports initiatives such as scaling up of ecological agriculture.

There is still a long way to go! The international Living Lakes Community is ready to support the efforts to develop Poyang region as a positive example for lake protection and green economy.

The 14<sup>th</sup> International Living Lakes Conference is an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience - so let us make the best use of it.

In the name of all Living Lakes delegates I thank all organizations which contributed to make the conference happen: the Jiangxi Provincial Government, Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology, Mountain-River-Lake Development Office MRLDO, MRLSD, Jiangxi Academy of Science, Poyang County Government and Ramsar Convention Secretariat.  
A very fruitful conference for all of us!

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Marion Hammerl is an Economist and worked more than 15 years in marketing and promotion in the industry sector. From 1985 to 1997 she was living and working in Spain and co-founder of various Spanish environmental organizations – one of them the Fundación Global Nature España, a national wide active NGO. Since 1997 she is President of Fundación Global Nature (honorary position).

Since 1998 she is the Managing Director of Lake Constance Foundation and coordinator of numerous EU-supported projects. Within other items, Marion Hammerl is specialized in sustainable tourism development, land use planning, sustainability management for local authorities, environmental management systems, management of water resources and biodiversity.

She is one of the co-founders of the Global Nature Fund (GNF) and the international Living Lakes Network. Since summer 2002 she is the President of GNF (honorary position).