



## ***Press Release of Global Nature Fund***

# **15th Living Lakes Conference: Working together to prevent the destruction of lakes and wetlands**

*From 7 to 9 May 2019 the 15th International Living Lakes Conference took place in Valencia, Spain. 200 delegates from over 40 countries discussed current challenges and solutions for the protection of lakes and wetlands. In view of the IPBES biodiversity report and the dramatic loss of lakes and wetlands, the participants of the conference called for a rapid and stronger commitment by politics, business and society to the protection of aquatic ecosystems.*

Radolfzell, 14 May 2019: From 7 to 9 May 2019, around 200 lake conservationists, political decision-makers and company representatives from over 40 countries met in Valencia to discuss current problems and solutions for the protection of lakes and wetlands. The 15th conference of the Living Lakes Network, a network with 140 members worldwide, regularly brings together important actors from the field of lake and wetland conservation.

In his opening speech, Hugo Morán Hernández, Spanish Secretary of State for the Environment, referred to the summary of the Biodiversity Report of the World Biodiversity Council (IPBES) published on 6 May. It warns of the dramatic and life-threatening decline in biodiversity and ecosystems. According to the report, inland waters and freshwater ecosystems are most affected. Only 13 percent of the existing wetlands in the year 1700 were preserved in the year 2000 and the situation continues to deteriorate. Biodiversity in aquatic ecosystems is particularly threatened. Their loss in rivers, lakes and wetlands is two to three times faster than in forest ecosystems. *"The summary of the IPBES report now published makes it clear that the situation is even more dramatic than previously assumed. We have all the information and know the solutions. We can no longer afford a 'business as usual' or a policy of small steps – we must make progress quickly! The Living Lakes network partners have been working to protect lakes for 20 years, but we need the support of business, agriculture, communities and politics,"* says Marion Hammerl, President of the Global Nature Fund.

In his speech, Hernández called for effective measures to stabilise degraded wetlands and their water cycles as well as their sustainable use. He pointed out the importance of



cooperation especially in the field of risk assessment and the fight against climate change. The continuing global destruction of lakes and wetlands can only be stopped by the joint efforts of politics, science, business and society. *"All companies use water as a resource and thus have a direct or indirect connection to lakes, wetlands and rivers. Serious, ambitious partnerships between NGOs and companies promote the protection of lakes and wetlands and put pressure on authorities and national policies to implement laws and management plans. Nestlé, Sika, Kärcher, Sekisui and Global Omnium presented their activities at the conference, responding to critical questions and underlining their interest in dialogue and partnerships with NGOs. Many Living Lakes partners already cooperate with committed companies and I am sure that the conference has initiated new partnerships,"* Hammerl continued.

The Living Lakes partner organisations also used the Living Lakes Conference to discuss their strategy 2019–2025. Members from the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Cambodia founded the new Living Lakes Sub-Network South East Asia to intensify the exchange, support each other and implement joint projects.

The members of the Living Lakes network also expressed their grave concern about the deterioration of wetland conditions in the host country, Spain. In a manifesto, they call on the competent authorities to take concrete measures to restore and protect these wetlands. *"Living Lakes, with its 140 dedicated organisations, is helping to ensure that the international public is aware of the dramatic situation of water bodies. The threat to lakes and wetlands, their essential role in the fight against climate change and the loss of species must finally become a top priority on the international agenda,"* concludes Hammerl.

The conference was hosted by the Spanish organisation Fundación Global Nature and the Global Nature Fund (GNF). The Living Lakes network was established in 1998 by the GNF, an environmental foundation based on Lake Constance. Living Lakes is now a global network for the protection of lakes, wetlands and freshwater reserves. In the last 20 years the network has grown to 111 lakes and 140 members.

**Programme and further information:** [www.livinglakes2019.org](http://www.livinglakes2019.org)



### **Global Nature Fund and the Living Lakes Network**

The Global Nature Fund (GNF) was established in 1998 as an independent foundation for environmental protection and nature conservation and works at the international level in the fields of water management, biodiversity conservation and business and biodiversity. One of GNF's central initiatives is the Living Lakes Network – a global network of organisations working to protect lakes and wetlands. The network currently comprises 111 lakes around the world.

### **Fundación Global Nature**

The Spanish NGO Fundación Global Nature was founded in 1993 and is committed to sustainable agriculture, the promotion of agrobiodiversity, the protection of dehesas (grazed oak groves) and other cultural landscapes, as well as businesses and biodiversity. The renaturation and sustainable management of wetlands is a central field of action for the Foundation, which was awarded the international Ramsar Convention Prize for its commitment in 2018.

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