Appeal to the participants of the Second World Congress PRO SILVA, 1996

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As a result of the anthropogenic factor during the agricultural era, the forest area of the Ukrainian Carpathians has become half or even one third as large as before. In the plain and piedmont territories the proportion of woodland areas has decreased to 20.2 %, in the mountain territories to 53.5 %, the average being 37 %. Negative transformations have taken place in the highlands, where the boundaries of the upper forest zone has descended by 100-200 m.

In Uzhgorod (Ukraine) an international seminar of experts in the problem field of upper forest boundary recovery was held in April 1996.

At the seminar in which experts from Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania took part, a conception and an ecological-economic strategy were developed for the intensification of the protective, primarily water-regulating functions of the Transcarpathian forests.

Based on the European and world practice in forecasting and preventing destructive floods, mud flows, avalanches and other natural disasters, as well as on the experience in eliminating their negative outcomes, seminar participants stressed the peculiarity of the Transcarpathian region as a zone of constant risk of excessive flood formation on River Tisa and its tributaries. The economic and ecological detriment from the outcomes of the floods can be strongly felt along the whole basin of River Tisa, and further along River Danube.

In order to protect the nature of the Transcarpathian mountain system and the adjacent plain territories of Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and other countries River Danube touches, as well as the river basin itself, from the results of ecological misbalance, the experts suggested that the water-protecting and water-regulating functions of the forest ecosystems in the Carpathian highlands should be restored.

Restoring the forests and shrubs that have been degraded as a result of natural catastrophes and anthropogenic effects in the Transcarpathian highlands (Ukraine) in an area of about 4,500 ha has been recognised to be the most important among the whole series of preventive measures. The water-protecting function of these forest ecosystems intended to be created on the upper forest boundary would be equal in their mature age to the ecological function of 100,000 ha of forests located in the lower altitude zones. To fulfil this plan a sum of 4.5 million USD is needed. This is a huge

amount, but it is only one tenth as large as the sum that has been spent annually and can be spent further on the elimination of the destructive outcomes of flood disasters. We are appealing to all the Seminar participants with the hope that they will support our initiative to restore the upper forest boundary, first in the Transcarpathian Region, and then in the whole Carpathian mountain system. We hope for the assistance of world forestland ecological sciences, ecological and environmental foundations, for earmarking the finances for designing and surveying work as well as for material and technical support of the project on the upper forest boundary recovery.

We hope that the problem of upper forest boundary recovery in the Carpathians will be recognised among the universal problems of balanced approach to global environment, and that it will find scientific and financial support.

On behalf of the Seminar participants:

Head of the working group of the International Seminar of experts on the expedience of upper forest boundary recovery in the Carpathians.

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