



**COMMITTEE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY
OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**

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OPEN LETTER

Dr. Jarosław Gowin
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland

Dear Prime Minister,

The Committee on Environmental and Evolutionary Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences expresses extreme concern about the lack of substantive, scientific discussion to solve the problem of effective protection of the Białowieża Forest. In media coverage, the Ministry of the Environment and the State Forests present this issue only in the context of a dispute between the voice of pro-ecological activists, who are motivated ideologically, and the opinion of the scientists, who support actions recommended by the Minister of the Environment. Because the Minister of the Environment justifies his decisions solely by the recommendations of the experts he had chosen himself, their opinions cannot be treated as independent. At the same time, we are very concerned that the activities of the Minister of the Environment relating to the Białowieża Primeval Forest are not objectively supported by the results of the latest scientific research and that they threaten the irreversible loss of its natural values.

We are deeply convinced that the solution to the crisis growing around the Białowieża Forest will not be possible without referring to the opinions of independent experts from Poland and abroad. Such experts should be appointed exclusively on the basis of substantive criteria. We therefore ask you, both as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science and Higher Education, to support the formation of a platform where a substantive discussion with independent experts - internationally-renowned scholars, could take place. The debate should involve foreign researchers not only to ensure the independence of the opinion, but also because the Białowieża Forest is an international treasure, as evidenced by its inclusion in the World Heritage List. The Committee declares its readiness to take part in such debate and to mediate dialogue with scholars who can help reaching balanced decisions on methods of protecting the Białowieża Forest.

Until a reliable scientific expertise is prepared, we call for a complete suppression of tree felling in the Białowieża Forest, as its effects on the ecosystem can be felt for several hundred years.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Krzysztof Spalik
Chairman

Professor Jan R.E. Taylor
Deputy Chairman

Warsaw, 28th of June, 2017.