

30 August 2012

Julia Marton-Lefèvre

Director General
International Union for Conservation of Nature
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland

cc. Mr. Ashok Khosla, President, IUCN Council
Mr. Enrique Lahmann, Congress Director
Ms. Pamela Grasemann, Congress Manager
Ms. Fleurange Bieri, Deputy Congress Manager
Mr. Dong-in Shin, Seconded from the Korean Ministry of Environment
Mr. Kyung-Ok Hyun, Seconded from the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province

RE: Request a meeting on the exhibition booth applied by the Gangjeong Village Association for the World Conservation Congress

Dear Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre,

We are writing you today to raise our concerns on the rejection of exhibition booth applied by Gangjeong Village Association for the World Conservation Congress (WCC) and urge you to reconsider your decision. Gangjeong Village Association, Korean environmental organizations and peace organizations denounce the decision on disapproving the exhibition booth applied by the Gangjeong Village Association without any reasonable grounds. We strongly urge you to reconsider this unjustifiable decision.

On 22 August 2012, Gangjeong Village Association received a letter from you. After applying for the #014 exhibition booth for the upcoming WCC on 15 June 2012, Gangjeong Village Association received a simple notice written as "This is to inform you that unfortunately we are not able to accommodate your request for an exhibition booth at the WCC". Gangjeong Village Association requested a specific reason of rejection but you did not send any official reply on this.

Local people's right to environment is one of your focus issues. Moreover, Gangjeong village, where the Jeju naval base is now constructed, is a buffer zone of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and major habitats of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins which is on the IUCN Red List. In this regards, we are appalled by the fact that the exhibition booth application by Gangjeong Village Association was rejected while we have serious concerns on the environmental destruction by the Jeju naval base construction. Among your members, who can even imagine that the Secretariat will not grant an exhibition booth applied by local people who wish to address serious environmental destructions happening only 7km away from the WCC conference site?

We are aware of the fact that the South Korean government is behind this senseless decision. From various channels, we could confirm that the South Korean government delivered a very negative opinion and made a reservation to you to prevent Gangjeong Village Association from being granted an exhibition booth.

In fact, a staff of the Ministry of Environment admitted this during the meeting with a member of the National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island (the National

Network). In the meeting, the staff agreed that the South Korean government has delivered a negative opinion to the IUCN on granting an exhibition booth to Gangjeong Village Association. At the same time, he raised doubts whether the application is made to bring diplomatic dispute by raising political and military issues rather than environmental preservation issues. Regarding this doubt, the National Network delivered Gangjeong Village Association's position that the exhibition will only focus on marine environmental destruction caused by Jeju naval base construction and we believe that this conforms to the WCC's agenda. Also, like other participants, Gangjeong villagers will fully cooperate for the success of the WCC and if the IUCN requires a written agreement on this, we were happy to provide it. The National Network and Gangjeong Village Association made it clear that a written agreement will be signed only under the condition that it will be submitted to the IUCN not to the South Korean government and only when this written agreement is required to other applicants of the exhibition booths.

We do not know whether the Ministry of Environment has delivered our additional explanation and suggestions on the written agreement to you. However afterwards, we did not receive any request from either the IUCN or the Ministry of Environment on the official written agreement. What we have confirmed is that the Ministry of Environment conveyed its firm position on not allocating exhibition booth to Gangjeong Village Association and you accepted the request from host country without any reasonable explanations.

Afterwards, we could hear a poor explanation from the staff of the Ministry of Environment on the reason why they have delivered negative opinions to you regarding Gangjeong Village Association's exhibition booth application. According to him, Gangjeong Village Association is not an environmental organization and it would have been difficult to reject the application from an environmental organization. We do not know whether this is a sincere explanation or just an excuse. However, a fatal flaw lies in this poor explanation. It implies that local people cannot speak up on their own local environmental issues unless an expert group from outside advocate on behalf of them. This seriously violates spirits and theme of the WCC. In addition, this position contradicts the Lee Myung-bak administration's position which insists outsiders should not intervene in the issues of Gangjeong village related to the Jeju naval base construction.

For a long time, the South Korean government has endeavored to host the WCC and it has set the ambitious goal of the conference as 'Addressing environmental policies related to green growth and becoming the world's model for green growth'. We cannot help but ask the South Korean government whether the world's model for green growth can be established by destroying world class environmental heritage, enforcing construction of a military base under the impossible pledge to establish "The Beautiful Civilian-Military Complex Port", and even silencing local people who are severely impacted by the construction. We cannot help but ask you whether nature can be conserved by accepting host country's unjustifiable request and rejecting an exhibition booth application by the local people.

We would like to remind you that local people's right to environment and right to peace have been sacrificed and violated in the name of economic growth and national security. Today, we are highly disappointed by witnessing this anti-environmental and political insist from the South Korea government is accepted by the authoritative organization that has represented environmental organizations worldwide. As a result, the upcoming WCC is disgraced by officially agreeing on that local people cannot speak up on their own environmental issues.

We desperately urge you and the South Korean government to reconsider the decision on rejecting the exhibition booth applied by Gangjeong Association Village. Right to freedom of expression and

right to information are fundamental human rights. If local people's right to environment is not recognized by the IUCN, then who can recognize their rights? If local people cannot represent their own environment issues, then the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins and soft coral reefs should shout out by themselves? Should Beom Island, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, speak up by itself?

If you and the South Korean government insist your position on not granting an exhibition booth to Gangjeong village, we will continue to address this issue to many environmental rights defenders who will attend the WCC, in a peaceful and non-violent way as we have done so far. This is the best we can do for now, but we are confident that eventually, many people will be on our side to reveal the truth and stand in solidarity with us.

In this vein, we sincerely request you to have a meeting with us on Gangjeong Village Association's exhibition booth application before the WCC begins. Please kindly let us know your available time and venue for the meeting by next Monday(3 September 2012). If you have any questions or need a clarification, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Jungmin Choi (World Without War, jungmin.duck@gmail.com) or Ms. Huisun Kim (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, peace@pspd.org).

We look forward to hearing your positive reply.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. Dong-kyun Gang
Village Mayor
Gangjeong Village Association



Mr. Gi-ryong Hong
Jeju Pan-Island Committee for Stop of Military Base and for Realization of Peace Island
(26 organizations)



Ms. Hee-young Kang
Korea Environment NGO Network
(36 Korean environmental NGOs)



Mr. Taeho Lee
Co-convenor
National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island (125 Korean civil society organizations)