

MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS ALLIANCE



To:

Mr Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania
Bulevardi Dëshmorët e Kombit 1
Tiranë, Shqipëri / Albania
info@kryeministria.al

Mr Lefter Koka, Minister of Environment
Bulevardi Zhan D'Ark, Nr. 23, ish ATSH
Tiranë, Shqipëri / Albania
kabineti@mjedisi.gov.al

April, 26th, 2017

Object: Future of Divjaka-Karavasta National Park

Dear Mr Rama, Dear Mr Koka,

The Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance is a consortium of research organizations, international and national NGOs, with the aim “to raise collectively the profile of wetlands in the Mediterranean society at large and in particular in national, regional and international policy through the promotion of innovation and the use of evidence-based best practices as catalyst for change.” To date the members of the Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance are 20 organizations from 12 countries, whose logos are at the top of this letter.

The “Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance” members have recently been informed of the Master Plan “Resort Divjakë Albania” and would like to express their deep concerns regarding these developments and their potential negative impacts on the Karavasta National Park and its natural heritage.

Several of the Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance members know quite well this site and can witness of the outstanding heritage value of this area. This uniqueness is to be considered in the light of the fact that more than 70% of the Albanian wetlands have been destroyed during

the second half of the 20th century. Divjaka-Karavasta, which is one of the two most important wetlands in the Adriatic basin, represents a key site for wildlife, visited every year by millions of waterbirds on their migration route, but is also a key asset for the local economy.

In the recent decades, the Albanian government undertook important steps for a better conservation of Albania's natural heritage, in particular through the contribution of the Administration for Protected Areas, in preserving and enhancing the values of Divjaka- Karavasta National Park. Among the positive results we can highlight the increase of the number of Dalmatian Pelicans, a symbolic species of the Park and Albania in general, but also the development of nature tourism in the park as a positive contribution to local economy and a powerful educational vector.

Drawing lessons from the entire Mediterranean basin but also worldwide, it clearly appears that such a wetland represents a real strength for Albania in terms of biodiversity value, of the numerous ecological services provided to the Albanian people, of the image of Albania. It shouldn't be considered as an obstacle to development, but as a key advantage for the future of the Nation and its People.

In this context, the Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance clearly considers that initiatives for developing the "Resort Divjakë Albania" would be extremely negative and unacceptable. It would be in total breach with the international commitments of Albania in the framework of the Ramsar convention, the Bern convention, the Bonn Convention and the Emerald Network.

The Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance therefore urges the Albanian government to cancel this project and to give full consideration to the asset represented by the natural heritage of Albania and the Divjaka-Karavasta National Park in particular.

In this respect, the Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance is ready to contribute to a dialogue on the future of the Divjaka-Karavasta National Park and its neighbouring territory.

Sincerely yours,

The member organizations of the Mediterranean Wetlands Alliance

Cc:
European Delegation in Albania
EU Commissioner on Environment
Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention
Secretariat of the Bern Convention
Secretariat of the Bonn Convention
Mabetex Group