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TO WHOM IT MIGHT CONCERN

The future of the cave Vjetrenica (the Wind Cave) in Popovo polje (Bosnia & Herzegovina) is heavily threatened, and the world is likely to lose one of the most precious and world renowned gems of its natural heritage. Vjetrenica is globally one of the two richest caves in the endemic subterranean fauna. Biologically, it is a remarkable cave and a remarkable subterranean hydrogeological system, worthy of all of the superlatives one can muster. With close to 6 km of cave corridors surveyed, the number of cave-limited species (more than 80) greatly surpasses other diverse caves such as Mammoth Cave in Kentucky (USA), a cave on the World Heritage list.

On 22/11/2004 the National Commission for UNESCO of Bosnia & Herzegovina recommended that the government should nominate Vjetrenica for registration in the UNESCO World Heritage list. Popovo polje/Vjetrenica is listed in the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest. On 1950 and 1952, by the Resolution of the Institute for Cultural Heritage FBiH, Vjetrenica has been proclaimed monument of nature.

Although Bosnia & Herzegovina has assigned some regarded international conventions, the dominant political groups promote only industrial developing plans; and now Vjetrenica is endangered by several threats

- Pumping of water from the cave or from the spring Lukavac which change hydrological and ecological conditions in the cave, is deleterious for its famous fauna.
- Unappropriate works, but particularly application of chemicals on the surface above the cave could cause extirpation of this endemic fauna.
- Quarrying activity within the monument area is changing the characteristic karst landscape.
- Planned arrangements inside the cave (e.g. the installation of illumination) without prior consultation of qualified institutions or persons could be deleterious for geological peculiarities and particularly for the endemic fauna in the cave.

The B&H authorities were urged several times to immediately stop all activities which are in accord with the above mentioned threats, or the help in preparing the plans for a sustainable development of this sensitive area.

The International Society for Subterranean Biology (Soci t  Internationale de Biologie Souterraine, SiBioS) strongly supports the idea of journalist Ivo Lu i  (www.vjetrenica.com) for appropriate protection of the Popovo polje in Bosnia & Herzegovina for its immense natural and cultural values of world interest.

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