

Press Release – Global Nature Fund / Mountain River Lake Sustainable Development / Jangxi Acedamy of Science

14th Living Lakes Conference in Nanchang/China closes with strong commitment for protection of lakes worldwide

350 delegates from 33 countries out of five continents followed the Nanchang Academy of Science and Mountain River Lake Sustainable Developments invitation to Nanchang, Southern China, at the edge of Poyang Hu, Chinas larges freshwater lake. Here they exchanged on protection of lakes worldwide and on new approaches for successful management of lake regions. The delegates approved a common understanding on the urgency to foster the protection of lakes worldwide.

Nanchang/China, November 27, 2014

Challenges for lakes in densely populated areas were the main topic of the conference held in the seven million megacity Nanchang. Lakes in developing countries as well as many lakes in Germany and Europe face issues from growing populations and growing - often unofficial - settlements at lakes. This is an increasing problem in many Asian countries such as China and India. “*China, as an example, has 20 % of the world’s population but only 7 % of its fresh water*”, as GNF president Marion Hammerl stressed in her opening speech. Dai Xinghao from the Chinese Living Lakes partner Mountain River Lakes Sustainable Development in contrast pointed to the enormous efforts to face the known challenges in China. Prof. Xiaohong Wang, President of the Jangxi Acedamy of Sciences, emphasized that cooperation between policy, administration, science and an emerging Chinese civil society can lead to effective lake protection, as promoted by the Chinese government. Dr. Christopher Briggs, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands who co-hosted the event, noted the importance of those cooperation and also international networks, such as Living Lakes, of those responsible for managing lakes, sharing knowledge and building a community with a common vision.

“*Often viewed as wasteland, 64 % of our wetlands have disappeared since 1900*”, stated Chris Percival from RAMSAR. Pollution from sewage waters and industrial influxes are an ongoing threat today. Illegal settlements disturb the potential of many lakes for cleaning themselves. This was underlined with contributions from Living Lakes Partners in the Philippines, New Zealand, Mongolia and finally in an excursion to Pohang Hu itself. Partners presented practical and budget solutions for the cleaning of water, safeguarding of drinking water and protection of watershed.

Hence, the current status of lakes becomes more and more severe. This is promoted by climate change, as indicated in many talks of lake management experts. An awakening call came from México’s Lago Chapala, where the 13th Living Lakes conference took place. Mexico’s current situation, which is in general characterized by corruption and mismanagement, brings dramatic consequences for nature and people at Lago Chapala.

Background information

The Living Lakes Network was founded 1998 to foster exchange between organizations for the protection of lakes and to form a worldwide movement towards the protection of lakes. Sierra Leone, Turkey and Pakistan were welcomed as new members of the network, which now represents

104 members. Among those are well known lakes such as Lago Titicaca, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Victoria, Lake Baikal and Lake Constance. National networks support spreading this idea. Partners are large as well as small environmental organizations and foundations from out of 80 countries. Regular Living lakes conferences follow the invitation of partners at one of the networks lakes.

The Convention on Wetlands, also known as the “Ramsar Convention” from the name of the city in Iran where it was signed in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetland biodiversity and services. It was the first of the modern global multilateral environmental agreements and remains the only one devoted to a specific and critical ecosystem.

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