



RESOLUTION #25



TITLE:

***Support the initiative for an Alliance
between the Sami Community, Ecotourism and Rewilding Europe
as an Economic Alternative to Extractive Industry and Industry Development
Threats in Greater Laponia, Sweden***

WHEREAS

Greater Laponia stretches over some of the largest, wildest and most intact landscapes remaining in Europe. It covers an area of around three million hectares (ha) and is the permanent home to a few hundred people, most of whom are associated with at least twenty Sami communities living there since time immemorial. The Sami community, people, culture, lands, and way of life in Greater Laponia are inextricably linked. This relationship between the people and the place has protected the Greater Laponia from unsustainable development until now.

Greater Laponia hosts the largest areas of untouched taiga, or boreal forest, outside Russia and serves as the origin of three of the largest, unregulated rivers remaining in Europe: Pite, Råne and Kalix. In recognition of the high conservation values of this area, almost 70% has been set aside for conservation (national parks, nature reserves and Natura 2000 sites) with some of the largest national parks and nature reserves in Europe. In addition, the 940,000 ha Laponia World Heritage Site was designated by UNESCO in 1996 for its outstanding natural and cultural values, serving as home for eight Sami communities.

Whereas, due to a very proactive and liberal economic development policy at both the county and national level, a number of serious threats to the existing natural and cultural values of Greater Laponia have emerged, especially from mineral exploitation, wind farms and forestry. In one case - the controversial Kallak/Gallok mining area - has already led to direct confrontations between the Sami community and Swedish authorities.

In 2012, a process began - led by the Swedish Ecotourism Society (SES) - to better recognise, promote and even enhance the unique cultural and natural values in Greater Laponia by creating a global "Greater Laponia Brand" linked to improved protection of the existing values, landscape, wildlife, and to the development of local conservation-based enterprises benefitting the local community as well as the natural values. The basis for this process has been the active involvement and support from the local community in Greater Laponia – both Sami and non-Sami.

The Sami are the only indigenous people of Europe recognized under the international conventions of Indigenous peoples, by the European Union, and by the Swedish Government.

THEREFORE

- We recognise the global importance of Greater Laponia for its cultural and natural values and their significance for the Sami community, Swedish society, Europe and the international community at large.
- We warmly welcome local initiatives and engagement in developing a Greater Laponia, and we are grateful to the Rewilding Europe Foundation for seeking active cooperation to help developing 'Greater Laponia'.
- We feel very concerned about existing and future threats to the cultural and natural values of Greater Laponia and how these may reduce the attractiveness of the area and prevent a more long-term, sustainable development perspective based on those values.
- We recognise the opportunities for developing an alternative economic pathway building on the extraordinary natural and cultural values of Greater Laponia, which can generate local prosperity without threatening those values.

RESOLVED

- Call upon local, regional, national and European Union decision-makers to further recognize the extensive cultural and natural values of Greater Laponia and avoid jeopardizing those through industrial development and other damaging activities.
- Call upon the global, European and Swedish society to better recognize the rights of the Sami community to maintain its cultural identity, territorial land rights, way of life, customary use and subsistence as well as creating opportunities for the development of a new, sustainable economy based on the responsible use of natural and cultural values.
- Encourage the continued development of the Greater Laponia initiative with the creation of nature-based tourism as a viable alternative economic perspective for the region, without jeopardizing the existing natural and cultural values.
- Launch a new global "Greater Laponia" brand and invite the public and private sectors to jointly make the necessary investments on the ground to demonstrate the viability and the socio-economic potential.
- Invite the participants of the 10th World Wilderness Congress - WILD10 - to express their support for finding an alternative path to the current economic developments, more attuned to the existing values in Greater Laponia, based on their global importance. They don't need this last point because posting this resolution means its supported.

PROPOSERS

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