

Dr. Ivo Sanader,
Prime Minister
The Government of the Republic of Croatia
Trg Sv. Marka 2
10000 Zagreb
Croatia



Somewhere on the
African West Coast, March 2005

Sir,

You may not know me yet, but I am one of your citizens and desperately deserve the help of my government. Your help!

My name is Little Tern. I'm a small, pretty bird - the smallest Tern worldwide. In the good old days, we Little Terns used to be typical breeding river birds in Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. Hundreds of us flew over the extraordinarily beautiful landscape.

I am not only a pretty, but also a sensitive little bird. I cannot breed on destroyed rivers without gravel and sand banks, or live without appropriate feeding grounds. Throughout Europe there are only three rivers remaining of this kind not destroyed and still offer a suitable habitat for me. The Drava within the border area between Croatia and Hungary is one of them. All the rest has been destroyed by hydropower dams, river regulation and sediment extraction along the river.

This river is my home: I find breeding places on its extensive gravel and sand banks and its shallow water zones, bays and oxbows offer plenty of fish for me and my hungry little ones. I and my friends share the rare breeding places left. New islands formed by the dynamic Drava River mostly on four sites as a string of pearls along the Drava. And now, as I have heard, even these last homes of ours are in danger.

Currently I'm enjoying the warm weather in Africa, my home during winter. My real home however, where I give birth to my children, is the 50 km long Drava river stretch between Legrad and Ferdinandovac and some places downstream to Osijek. But each year I am scared that on returning from my winter home in May my friends and I may find no place to live anymore!

Please help! We are dramatically endangered.

I beg you to do your utmost to save me and my little ones and protect our last breeding places on the Drava: Please stop any further sediment extraction and river channelling!

I trust that you will help me.

Best wishes, your citizen Little Tern
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This letter goes to the members of the Croatian government and parliament, Drava county heads and majors

CC: NGOs in Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria and Germany