

Berlin, 25. March 2019

Open letter to Members of the Barcelona Municipal Council from the Verband der Zoologischen Gaerten (VdZ, Association of Zoological Gardens)

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), and the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) have noted with concern, that the Barcelona City Council on 14 February 2019 gave initial approval to an amendment that aims to severely regulate the Barcelona Zoo, reducing the institution down to 11 species and calling for the transfer or relocation of the nearly 2,000 animals that remain to sanctuaries or rescue centres. The amendment also requires Barcelona Zoo to resign from all national and international membership associations, including WAZA, and EAZA.

The Verband der Zoologischen Gaerten (VdZ) based in Berlin represents 71 member-zoos in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Loro Parque in Spain. We would like to associate ourselves to the open letters of WAZA (dating 26 February 2019) and EAZA (dating 22 February 2019).

The recent events that threaten the future of Barcelona Zoo fill us with deep sadness and concern, as we are convinced, that the plans will be a disaster for most of the animals, the visitors, the beautiful City of Barcelona and all employees of the Zoo of Barcelona, if it will be decided and implemented.

The Barcelona Zoo is a long-standing member of WAZA, in addition to the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the Iberian Association of Zoos and Aquaria (AIZA), and as recently as 2017 drew more than 1 million visitors to Ciutadella Park.

WAZA and VdZ understand that a small minority of society have concerns and believe all animals should exist outside of zoos. But we know that zoological gardens are becoming more and more important for education, research and conservation. Zoos are constantly improving and the WAZA Animal Welfare Strategy and the WAZA Conservation Strategy of 2015 set high targets. In our region VdZ has strong and positive contacts with most of the leading animal welfare organisations keeping animals. The 71 VdZ Zoos alone have more than 40 Million visitors annually. More than 1.1 Million children and adults use specific educational programs offered e.g. by VdZ-Zoo-schools.

We would like to echo WAZA's concern, that criticism on Barcelona Zoo and the proposal to close it down for welfare concerns ignores major arguments on the role of Zoos in modern societies, that includes its role for conservation. Already, zoos and aquariums are the third-largest funders of conservation in the world, and the role they play in battling extinction is

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considerable. Hundreds of critically endangered species have been saved through the captive breeding and reintroduction programmes of zoos and aquariums, and many more are in progress.

WAZAs letter summarises the important contribution of Barcelona Zoo to global conservation, including on West African captive breeding programmes stabilising the populations of critically endangered Rowloway monkeys and White-crowned mangabeys. And on monitoring of endangered fin whales in Catalan-Balearic seas. As well as Barcelona Zoo's role to keep, breed and release endangered species for conservation reasons.

Barcelona Zoo's education programmes also provide a valuable resource to local students from primary grades up through high school, and students of university conducting research projects at Barcelona Zoo.

VdZ believes that some opportunity exists to modernize some facilities and working practices at the Barcelona Zoo. Nonetheless, the ability to do so depends on adequate resourcing by the funding authority of the city.

Together, we must work at addressing major global crises such as species extinction, illegal wildlife trade, climate change, marine litter, deforestation, and other threats to our shared survival. This needs a union of governmental and non-governmental bodies addressing these global issues. And in a time where most people are surrounded by a virtual world, modern Zoos, including the Zoo of Barcelona are part of the solution. VdZ's Vision is, that the real world interaction of living animals and visitors cannot be replaced by any other means.

We therefore call on the Municipal Council to reconsider its position. VdZ is ready to support you by contributing more than 130 years of Zoo expertise.



Dr. Olivier Pagan
President



Volker Homes
Executive Director

Verband der Zoologischen Gaerten (VdZ) based in Berlin is the leading association of scientifically managed zoos in German speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). VdZ was founded in 1887, thus it is the oldest Zoo-association in the world. VdZ currently has 71 member zoos in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Spain. According to the EU Zoodirective (Council Directive 1999/22/EC) and related national laws all VdZ member zoos support species conservation, education of our visitors and science including on nature conservation and on species.