

Mr József Szájer MEP,
Vice-Chairman of European Peoples' Party (EPP) Group,
European Parliament,
Rue Wiertz,
ASP 12E130,
B-1047 Brussels

Via email: jozsef.szajer@europarl.europa.eu

28th March 2011

Dear Mr Szájer

Re: EPP Hearing on "*A constitution for the 21st century. HUNGARY - in the process of making a new constitution after 62 years*", European Parliament, 29th March 2011

We write as members of the UK Alliance for Future Generations to express our concern that the global environmental community may soon suffer the loss of the inspirational example offered by the existence of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations in Hungary.

We take the liberty of addressing our letter to you because we understand that you are Leader of the National Consultation in the Preparatory Process of the New Constitution of the Republic of Hungary. We have also received a copy notification of an EPP Hearing on Hungary's new constitution to be held in the European Parliament on 29th March 2011.

First, we wish to stress that we understand fully that the detail of the Constitution is very much a matter for the Hungarian people. However, we would like to alert you to the wider inspiration that Hungary's current constitutional arrangements have offered to civil society and governments elsewhere, and express our concern that those arrangements might be weakened.

Hungary is the only country in the world to have a Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations – linked to the constitutionally protected right to a healthy environment. We see parallels in the former Israeli Commissioner for Future Generations and Parliamentary Commissioners for environment or environment and development elsewhere – but the Hungarian institutional model is both broader and stronger.

The existence of Hungary's Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations currently offers a benchmark against which other countries may consider their institutional frameworks for sustainable development. It is an institutional arrangement which marks Hungary as a global innovator in the field of sustainable development, access to environmental justice and inter-generational justice.

In all these respects, Hungary's Constitutional provisions and the powers and duties enjoyed by the Parliamentary Commissioner provide an exemplar and an inspiration to other Member States across the territory of the EU.

The UK Alliance for Future Generations, which includes individuals and large and small non-governmental organisations, was established this year as a direct consequence of a visit to London by Dr Sándor Fülöp in February 2010 and a speech which he delivered at the UK's Ministry of Justice. Inspired by his talk, a wide range of individuals and civil society groups met to discuss how the safeguards

provided by the Hungarian Constitution and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations might inform efforts to strengthen environment and sustainable development governance in the UK.

These discussions led, amongst other initiatives, the publication of a report outlining various governance options in the UK (including establishment of a Parliamentary Commissioner in England¹), submission of evidence to Parliament on the benefits of establishing new mechanisms independent of the executive, and research into the extent to which a new Act of the Welsh Assembly could further sustainable development.

We have now learned with concern that the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations –and its associated constitutional guarantee of environmental rights –are currently under review as part of Hungary’s ongoing constitutional reform process.

We urge you sir, to reflect on the loss of genuine global leadership that would result from any decision to weaken Hungary’s Constitutional provisions in relation to the right to a healthy environment and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Day, Solicitor, WWF-UK (email: cday@wwf.org.uk)

Dr Maja Göpel, Director, Future Justice Department, World Future Council

Carine Nadal, Legal Researcher, The Gaia Foundation

Gita Parihar, Solicitor, Friends of the Earth England and Wales

Jonathon Porritt, Founder Director, Forum for the Future

Peter Roderick, Barrister

Halina Ward, Director, Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development

David R. Woollcomb, President, Peace Child International

Other organisations not currently members of the Alliance:

Steve Bass, Head, Sustainable Markets Group, and Camilla Toulmin, Director, International institute for Environment and Development

¹ See http://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unewsid=4545