

Twin Sisters – Nature and Freedom

The Russian volunteer movement *Save Utrish* (www.save-utrish.ru) fighting for granting Utrish, a biodiversity-rich territory on the Black Sea, the status of Federal Reserve, organised a meeting in Moscow on 24 October 2011 to protest against the destruction of Russia's wildlife.

The event was entitled “For the Khimki Forest, for Utrish, for Baikal! For the nature of our homeland!” It brought together nature and human rights protection organisations, movements and activists who have been holding a series of public actions to protect emblematic nature sites.



Greenpeace, Bellona, the Environmental Watch on the North Caucasus, the Save Utrish Movement, the Expert Centre ECOM, Green Wave and many others supported the event. Participants were informed to bring home made posters on nature protection topics and political parties were expressly warned not to display any of their symbolism or convey political messages. The public interest groups focused on nature protection stressing that the noble cause brings together people from various political and religious beliefs and walks of life. The meeting - about one hundred and fifty people braving the rain - expressed solidarity with the nature protection organisations and people's movements demanding from the authorities to solve environmental problems, both national and regional. A very substantial number of policemen were present in the Pionerskaya Square throughout the event. Speakers gave an account of the efforts of pickets in Utrish to stop illegal construction on the coast. Some media covered the event and traditionally Moscow artists performed and provided background and colour to the meeting. Children with assistance from professional artists prepared a big poster “What our world should look like”. The press-release of the event is significantly entitled ‘Nature and Freedom are twin sisters!’

As the authorities on all levels persist with their plans to carry on large-scale construction in various protected territories, public interest groups are focusing on mass campaigns in various cities of the country. They make a persistent effort to express the will of the people and to make the authorities hear their voice.

Khimki. Although there can be other ways, the Moscow-St Petersburg toll motorway is still to cut across the suburban Moscow woodland. The construction of the motorway destroying the integrity of the woodland provides an excuse for its further development, which will drastically deteriorate the living conditions of the Khimki district.

Utrish. According to the Government Executive Order No.1436 of September 2nd, 2010, on the establishment of the Utrish nature reserve, the most valuable coastal areas of the relict forest are to be set aside and got stripped of the status of regional nature reserve. This will allow for the implementation of the plans to construct therein an elite sports and recreational complex with a network of roads necessary for such construction. The unique landscapes get thereby doomed.



Lake Baikal. Pursuant to the Resolution No.1 issued by the Government of the Russian Federation on the 13th January 2010, the Baikal Pulp-and-Paper-Plant, the principal pollutant of Lake Baikal, was re-launched. The inspection testified that the plant dumps into the lake most harmful substances (including chlororganic compounds), which are not stipulated under the granted authorization. The worn-out equipment accounts for accidents and loss of life. Yet, the plant keeps functioning.