



June 9th, 2002, Venice, Italy—Ensayos, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Chile, and the Michael Succow Foundation, partner in the Greifswald Mire Centre, are pleased to announce the signing of *The Venice Agreement* during a historic assembly on June 2, 2022, World Peatlands Day. *The Venice Agreement* represents a commitment by peatland custodians from around the world to change the trajectory of the ecological and cultural management of these wetland ecosystems towards effective conservation. By taking a bottom-up approach that recognizes local initiatives as key collaborators in the international process of peatland conservation, *The Venice Agreement* sets a new standard for the valuation and practice of protecting and restoring our planet’s peatlands at the local level.

Developed during a two-day meeting at TBA 21’s Ocean Space, *The Venice Agreement* was born from the transdisciplinary work of Ensayos and WCS-Chile, supported by the Greifswald Mire Centre. Camila Marambio of Ensayos curated the project and was supported in design and organization by Bárbara Saavedra, Nicole Püschel, and Antonieta Eguren of WCS-Chile, with Susanne Abel and Jan Peters participating from the Succow Foundation / Greifswald Mire Centre. The first sparks for the Agreement appeared one year ago, during the second [Bi-national Peatland Seminar](#) between Chile and Argentina, which gave rise to the Patagonian Peatland Initiative and to the curatorial project [Turba Tol](#). The latter represents Chile at the 59th Venice Art Biennale, highlighting the collaboration between artists, scientists, and the Selk’nam community from Tierra del Fuego to promote the conservation of the peatlands of Patagonia. The transdisciplinary nature of Ensayos, the Patagonia Peatland Initiative, and Turba Tol forged the vision for a convening of specialists from the fields of ecological science, conservation practice, and climate change policy, with representatives from First Nations and environmental artists to create a novel declaration. After the creation process, overseen by an editorial committee that included the Chilean graphic designer Rosario Ureta, it was signed by 38 participants.

“We meet today and tomorrow to practice technologies of agreement, with a vision to create a unified global call for the **Care for Peatlands** from a local perspective.” These were Camila Marambio’s opening words in the morning of June 1st, giving rise to two full days of dialogue, collaborative envisioning and writing, choreographic play, and editorial work. “The global peatland policy agenda is based on high-level conventions, but action for conservation and restoration only happens and persists if dedicated local initiatives, driven by various motivations, act as loving custodians of their peatlands,” added Jan Peters, director of the Succow Foundation / Greifswald Mire Centre. During the last session of the second day, Professor Hans Joosten of the Greifswald Mire Centre, who participated in the editorial committee, described how, despite his initial skepticism, he was “once again amazed at how it is possible for humans to make accords despite our language and cultural differences. We have managed to come up with a strong, poetic, political, and practical claim to protect global peatlands locally.”

This achievement is equally the result of those who generously shared knowledge in person, giving embodied force to the agreement process, and of the participants of eleven on-the-ground workshops who submitted their input days prior to meeting in Venice. These remote “nodes” worked with an agreement tool kit that captured the diversity of local approaches to valuation and protection of peatlands around the world, in Karukinka Park and Ushuaia (Tierra del Fuego), Elk Island (Canada), Everglades (Florida), Alston Moor (UK), Aysén, Puerto Varas and Chiloé (Chile), Brandenburg and Greifswald (Germany), and Minjerribah (Australia). *The Venice Agreement* effort aims to keep adding localities and signatories in the coming years. This aim is aligned with the work of the Global Peatland Initiative, whose coordinator at UN Environment, Dianna Kopansky, was present in Venice. In her words: “Strengthening the relations between local expertise and global decision makers is vital for the future.”

Peatland expertise comes in many shapes and sizes. Thus, *The Venice Agreement* is built on transdisciplinary crossovers between conservation biology, indigenous science, youth-led activism, land management, lawmaking, education, and art. Namely, discussions arose between scientists Jurate Sendzikaite from Lithuania, Catherine Farrel from Ireland, and Nancy Fernández from Argentina; artists Pantea Armanfar from Iran and Randi Nygard from Norway; lawmakers Maria Teresa Vicente from Spain and Michele Lobo from India; and indigenous poets, musicians, and conservationists Matti Aiko from Sámi country in Finland, Fernanda Olivares Molina from the Selk'nam community Hach Saye in Tierra del Fuego, and Reverend Houston Cypress from the Miccosukee Otter clan in the Everglades. This layering of knowledges and experiences was enriched by the perspectives from Kenya and Uganda, and voiced by natural resource manager Leonard Akwany, plus substrate entrepreneur Gunnar Koch from Germany. Other peatland policy makers and activists included Stuart Brooks from Scotland, Jane Da Mosto from We Are Here Venice, and Swantje Furtak and Frankie Turk of Re-peat, a youth-led collective based in the Netherlands. All these experts were guided by facilitators Charo Lanao and Manuela Zechner, and workgroup leaders, including Uruguayan writer and sociologist Denise Milstein and Chilean art historian Carla Macchiavello, who followed a carefully designed program to channel the participants' experiences towards the co-creation of an agreement based on experiential and research knowledge essential to activating the protection of peatlands on a local scale.

*The Venice Agreement* values the fact that the well-being of people and peatlands are deeply connected, and that thoughtful, responsible, and accountable actions can protect and restore this unique relation for generations to come. At the same time, the Agreement recognizes specific needs to achieve effective peatland protection. Therefore, it is essential to create: an active local-to-global coordination, multi-layered collaboration, immediate and effective protection of healthy peatlands, and a new framework for recognition of the cultural, spiritual, and ancestral value of peatlands. Meaningful resources are necessary to protect and restore peatlands through innovative solutions. As Dr. Bárbara Saavedra emphasizes, "*The Venice Agreement* invites us to dissolve the cultural, financial, and social barriers, and to assume the evident ecological fact that we all depend on nature, and the ethical and practical need to care for peatlands," because, as Reverend Houston Cypress (who calls the peatlands of the greater Everglades home) cited during the closing ceremony, "...peatlands are ancestors."

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For a full gallery of photos please follow this link:

<https://nicolmianaphotography.pixieset.com/theveniceagreement/> and credit The Venice Agreement: Protecting Global Peatlands Locally, signed at TBA21–Academy's Ocean Space, Venice, 2 June 2022. Photo: Nicolò Miana