



THE VENICE AGREEMENT PRESS RELEASE

THE BIENNIAL GATHERING OF THE LOCAL-TO-GLOBAL PEATLAND
ACCORD WILL TAKE PLACE IN TORRES VEDRAS, PORTUGAL
FROM JUNE 1- 3, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 23, 2024 - Torres Vedras, Portugal: Peatland custodians from around the world will meet for three days in Torres Vedras to develop and share creative, transdisciplinary, and locally-led methods for conserving, restoring, and honoring our planet's peatlands. This is the second historic meeting of the Venice Agreement, an international commitment by peatland custodians to change the trajectory of the ecological and cultural management of these wetland ecosystems towards effective conservation. In 2022, the Venice Agreement set a new standard for the valuation and practice of protecting and restoring our planet's peatlands at the local level. This June 2nd, World Peatlands Day, the assembly will present an updated version of the Venice Agreement in a public event to be held at the Municipality of Torres Vedras, Portugal.

Artists, peatland scientists, public officials, Indigenous community members, land managers, climate change specialists, and leaders of environmental not-for-profits from as far as Kenya, Norway, Chile, Argentina, Germany, the UK, Netherlands, Estonia, Romania, and the USA will join a local Portuguese contingent to work on renewing, assessing, nurturing, and growing the commitments and strategies



originally agreed to in the city of Venice, Italy, in 2022 by over 100 peatland custodians during the foundational drafting of the Venice Agreement. The Torres Vedras gathering will use an in-person and on-the-ground model to harvest the Venice Agreement's impacts and potentials, extend its body to include new needs, and connect the growing global peatland community with local initiatives. In addition to the in-person meeting, more than twenty groups from around the world will conduct local workshops prior to Torres Vedras meeting, which will inform the proceedings in Torres Vedras. The meeting is organized by the [Wildlife Conservation Society \(WCS\) Chile](#), [Ensayos](#), and the [Sensing Peat Art & Research Network](#) of the [Michael Succow Foundation](#), Partner of the [Greifswald Mire Center](#), in collaboration with the Municipality of Torres Vedras, the association for environmental memory [W-Replay](#) and the [Centre for Geographical Studies of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning](#) of the University of Lisbon. The meeting takes place on the coast of the Torres Vedras region with its three small vestigial active peatlands (Vigias da Arriba, Mexilhoeira, and Seixo). These coastal peatlands are remnants of a larger wetland system and play a crucial role both in the ecology and the cultural memory of the region.

As official hosts of the meeting, the Torres Vedras Municipality is proudly committed to caring for its local coastal peatlands in a real show of support for the local-to-global transdisciplinary strategy of the Venice Agreement model. Promoted by the local organization Double-u Replay (WR) and the Centre for Geographical Studies of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning of the University of Lisbon, active in the intersections of arts and culture, environmental protection, science, and heritage, these ecosystems will become important inspirations for discussing the current situation, the histories, and futures of peatlands globally in relation to conservation practices and policies as well as cultural and artistic strategies for their protection.

Some of the critical questions that this year's signatories will be working with are: **How to assess the Venice Agreement's impacts and potentials? What creative indicators allow for non-quantitative, more organic accountability and measurements of our important work? How to bring more diverse areas of activism and more Global South voices and ecosystems into the Venice Agreement? What sort of rotating, inclusive leadership model is in**






tune with the Venice Agreement’s vision and mission? How to sustainably continue to distribute responsibilities related to decision making, organizing of the community and meetings, looking towards finding adequate funding and development opportunities? How can the Venice Agreement help to put peatlands in the spotlight in regions where they are less known to locals?

Brief History of the Venice Agreement

Signed in 2022, the [Venice Agreement](#) is a declaration to protect peatlands around the world at a local scale and represents a commitment by local and regional-level organizations to establish concrete custodial programs for the ecological and cultural recognition of peatlands. As a bottom-up approach that responds to the need for smaller local initiatives to be recognized as indispensable contributors to the international peatland conservation process, the Venice Agreement aims to inspire the art of conserving and restoring peatlands.

Originally devised through eleven on-the-ground workshops around the world and a two-day meeting at TBA21–Academy’s Ocean Space in June 2022, The Venice Agreement stems from the ecocultural work of Ensayos and the Wildlife Conservation Society-Chile, supported by the Greifswald Mire Centre. The first sparks for the Agreement appeared in 2021, 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 Hol-Hol Tol. The latter represented Chile at the 59th Venice Art Biennale, highlighting a unique collaboration between artists, scientists, and the Selk’nam community from Tierra del Fuego, Chile, 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 indigenous communities and environmental artists to create the novel declaration that took the name of the wetland city of Venice. To date, the Venice Agreement has been signed by 118 peatland custodians. As a growing community, The Venice Agreement signatories acknowledge that caring for global peatlands at a local level requires continued assessment, nurturing, and just governance of the collective effort.



Working Towards the Future

Just as each local peatland has had a global impact on the Earth's climate through the mitigation or emission of greenhouse gasses, locally-scaled conservation efforts are critical for peatland conservation on a global scale. For this reason, peatland custodians from indigenous communities and from the disciplines of ecological science, nature conservation, climate change policy, and contemporary art meet to review their diverse approaches to conservation, and shed light on the critical role that peatlands play in biodiversity, climate mitigation, water quality, culture and economics. By creating and sustaining the opportunity for the sharing of similarities and differences of local peatland conservation initiatives from different continents, the Venice Agreement's aim is to continue to transform the fate of peatlands: combating degradation and loss by identify global opportunities in collaboration, consciousness raising, funding, policy, and commitment.

The Venice Agreement Biannual Gathering of the Local-to-global Peatland Accord is made possible with the support of the Torres Vedras Municipality, the Andrea von Braun Foundation, and the [Wildlife Conservation Society \(WCS\)](#).



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