



INTERNATIONAL  
RIGHTS OF NATURE  
TRIBUNAL

## VERDICT FOR THE TRIBUNAL OF THE RIGHTS OF LAKE VÄTTERN

### **Judges:**

Margaret Stewart

Tom Goldtooth

Stefan Mikaelsson (and President of the Tribunal)

### **Secretariat:**

Hana Begovic

We, the judges of the Tribunal of the Rights of Lake Vättern, find that the destructive impacts of increased military shooting exercises, mining operations, and increased aerial activity in and around Lake Vättern violate the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

The Tribunal for the Rights of Lake Vättern has been created to provide systemic Rights of Nature based alternatives to the false solutions and failed negotiations of the private industries and governmental entities responsible for these destructive acts. It provides a vehicle for reframing and adjudicating prominent environmental and social justice cases within the context of a Rights of Nature based Earth jurisprudence. The adjudication process provides a platform for informed legal analysis of diverse cases based on Rights of Nature. In our final, written judgment, the Tribunal will recommend actions for reparation, mitigation, restoration and prevention of further damages and harm.

In the case before this Tribunal, testimony was given regarding the ecological integrity and inherent rights of Lake Vättern in Sweden and whether three specific actions constitute violations of those rights. Analyzing the evidence presented in light of the governing law of the Declaration, we find that the proposed increase in military shooting exercises, the proposed mining operations in and around Lake Vättern, and the expansion of the military airport violate the rights and obligations set out in Articles 2 and 3 of the Declaration.

According to Article 2 of the Declaration, Mother Earth and all beings of which she is composed have certain rights including:

1. The right to life and to exist,
2. the right to be respected,
3. the right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions,
4. the right to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interested being
5. the rights to water as a source of life
6. the right to clean air
7. the right to integral health
8. the right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste
9. the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and health functioning
10. the right to full and prompt restoration for violation of its right by human activity
11. and each being's right to a place and to play its role in Mother Earth for her harmonious functioning and to live free from torture or cruel treatment by human beings.

Our verdict was based on the evidence presented, including:

1. the increased risk of biodiversity depletion due to the activities discussed,
2. the presence of some 5,500 tons of ammunition at the bottom of the lake, due to military activity, with some unexploded evidence,
3. the potential for toxic and radioactive substances seeping into the groundwater and polluting Lake Vättern as a result of mining operations,
4. degradation to the flora and fauna in and on the shores of the Lake,
5. and serious disturbances of protected animals, birds, and wildfowl in and around the Lake due to noise pollution and contamination.

Lake Vättern is a very special body of water which serves as a source of life to not only the nature and wildlife in and around the Lake, but also to a significant population around Sweden. Based on the evidence presented, the current and proposed treatment of the Lake constitute a clear violation of the rights of Mother Earth.

Along with rights comes obligations. Based on the evidence presented to this Tribunal, we find that the entities responsible for the three proposed activities discussed have violated the obligations of human beings to Mother Earth set forth in Article 3 of the Declaration.

By failing to act in accordance with the rights recognized in the Declaration, failing to recognize and promote the full implementation and enforcement of the right and obligations of the Declaration, failing to rectify the violations already committed, failing to establish precautionary measures to prevent such harm, and failing to promote economic systems that are in harmony with Mother Earth and in accordance with the Declaration,

we find that the actions of the named parties clearly violated the rights of Mother Earth as recognized in the Declaration.

Following this verdict, this Tribunal will prepare and make available to all parties a full judgment consisting of our final verdict and our recommendations for potential reparation, mitigation, restoration, and prevention of further damages and harm to the Lake. We thank all those who presented before this Tribunal and conclude our findings here.