



- UNESCO Chair on Karst Education
- University of Nova Gorica in cooperation with
- ZRC SAZU Karst Research Institute

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Dear Leaders of Brazil's Natural and Environmental Resources,

Karst is an important part of the world's natural heritage and caves are its most characteristic feature. Good knowledge about caves is the only way to understand the formation and development of karst. Karst caves contain large quantities of water which is used for our water supply; they are also treasures of exceptional biodiversity. Owing to their huge variety, they attract millions of tourists. However, karst is also a very fragile landscape, sensitive to many human impacts and as such often requires special protection rules.

In Slovenia, the Classical Karst region (Appendix: Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU) became protected by the Underground Cave Protection Act 17 years ago. The act is based on the national Cadaster of Caves, and is very thorough and strict; nevertheless, it offers the broader community the chance to understand the issue of caves and how to protect them.

Brazil has considerable biodiversity, geodiversity and a famous cultural heritage associated with karst and caves. Besides that, it is currently recognized as the country with the best spelean environment protection

legislation and policies. Because of that, changes to the current legislation may result in an irreversible loss of relevant natural and cultural components of the underground environment, which would be unprecedented in the country's history.

The approval of changes to the legislation could lead to the extinction of hundreds of endemic species; the vast majority of which have not yet been described or even discovered. In the case of chiropter fauna, an eventual imbalance caused by the suppression of the so-called bat caves could permanently cease vital ecosystem services. Hydrogeological systems in vast regions of the country could be compromised. Speleogenetic processes and unique speleothems developed by microbial activity may become degraded. The paleoclimatic archives recorded in the speleothems of Brazilian caves would also be at great risk. Archeological and paleontological remains could be lost.

Please accept our polite recommendation to protect the caves and preserve the development of our life in wonderful natural heritage sites. Maintaining the current legislation will ensure the preservation of the relevant speleological heritage in Brazilian territory.

Best regards on behalf of Slovenian karstologists and speleologists,

Prof. dr. Tadej Slabe

Head of Karst Research Institute of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

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