

PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT GUGGENHEIM URDAIBAI STOP

From the Guggenheim Urdaibai Stop platform, we announce the conclusion of the campaign launched on 19th May together with the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands, valuing very positively the support received from the scientific community for the necessary protection of Urdaibai, and expressing serious concern over the inaction or delay of Ramsar, UNESCO, and MITECO in replying to our letters.

The citizens' platform Guggenheim Urdaibai Stop wishes to announce the closure of its campaign which sounded the international Red Alert for Urdaibai. This initiative aimed to warn international and national institutions about the serious threat that the Guggenheim Urdaibai project poses to the Biosphere Reserve—a goal we consider to have been fulfilled.

As part of the campaign, **the Mediterranean Alliances for Wetlands** sent official letters which had the support of 77 conservationist or ecological groups to three key institutions responsible for protecting natural heritage: **Ramsar**, the international body dedicated to wetland conservation; **UNESCO**, the guarantor of biosphere reserves; and the **Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO)**, ultimately responsible for environmental policy in the Spanish state. It also made public a **Scientists' Manifesto**, seeking support from the academic and research communities.

Despite the importance of the ecological, cultural, and social values at risk, none of the three institutions have yet responded to our requests for intervention. We are aware that the letter to **MITECO** has been forwarded to the office of the Third Vice President of the Government and Minister for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge. Regarding **UNESCO**, we have been informed that our petition is being processed under the procedures established by the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme, and we hope to receive a response after the meeting that will be held today. As for **Ramsar**, we haven't received an answer yet.

After more than three months, this institutional silence, in the platform's opinion, represents a **neglect of the mandate for environmental protection** and of the request made by 77 organizations that have supported this campaign..

In contrast, the response to the **Scientists' Manifesto** has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting an uncomfortable contradiction: while the scientific community raises its voice and warns of the risks posed by a project that could compromise the balance of a **UNESCO-recognized Biosphere Reserve**, the institutions that should be the first to defend its protection remain silent—or at least far less assertive than expected. This institutional void not only generates social mistrust, but also sends the message that **economic or political interests may take precedence over international commitments and environmental responsibilities**.

“From our platform, we have done our part: raising the alarm, documenting the risks, and calling for help from those responsible for safeguarding Urdaibai. The lack of response from Ramsar,

UNESCO, and MITECO reveals the fragility of environmental protection mechanisms when faced with economic and political interests”

With the closure of this campaign, **Guggenheim Urdaibai Stop** reaffirms its commitment to continue defending the territory and calls on civil society not to let down its guard. We must continue to actively participate in the listening process promoted by the institutions and show our rejection of this project in every forum available. We will do so at the upcoming **UNESCO Congress**, to be held in China from September 22 to 27. The platform has sent a letter outlining the threat this project poses to a region like **Busturialdea** and an area like **Urdaibai**.

“If international and national bodies choose to remain silent, we will continue to raise our voices. Urdaibai is not for sale.”

We would like to thank the **Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands** and we would also like to give thanks to the work carried out by the **Task Force of organisations** that have accompanied us on this journey. Finally, we now give the floor to the authors of the Scientists` Manifesto, so that they themselves—undoubtedly authoritative voices—can explain the value and significance of this document.

We want to thank the **Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands (MAW)** and the **Task Force of organisations** that has accompanied us on this journey. We now give the floor to Aitor Galarza, one of the driving forces behind the Scientists’ Manifesto, so that he himself—an unquestionably authoritative voice—can present the value of this manifesto.

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