



CALL FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

A Shared Commitment for Community-Led Conservation and Sustainable Development, Inspired by the Hima Revival Movement in Lebanon

Diman, North Lebanon — 6 August 2026

We, the municipalities, local communities, civil society organizations, religious authorities, educational institutions, landowners, youth, women, government agencies, and conservation partners gathered at Diman, united by our shared commitment to nature and people, hereby confirm our commitment to support community-led protection of natural resources and the promotion of sustainable development in Lebanon.

Inspired by the Hima, a system of community-governed protected land practised across the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant for more than fourteen centuries and revived in its modern form by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), this commitment reaffirms our shared responsibility to protect biodiversity, safeguard cultural heritage, and strengthen resilient communities.

Recognizing that healthy ecosystems are the foundation of sustainable societies, and that the Hima represents one of the world's oldest and most enduring systems of community-based governance, we unite in a common vision to restore and strengthen this living heritage.

Recalling the commitments undertaken by our respective States under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and noting that the Hima offers an established and locally legitimate means of delivering those commitments through community governance, including as a recognized management approach within Lebanon's protected areas framework,

Therefore, we declare our commitment to:

Protect Nature

Conserve and restore the ecosystems on which our communities depend — forests, wetlands, rangelands, rivers, and coastal and marine environments — and protect native wildlife, endangered species, and the migratory flyways that connect the Levant with Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Strengthen Community Stewardship

Empower local communities and their customary custodians, including women, youth, farmers, pastoralists, and fishers, to govern their Himas through transparent, inclusive, and participatory decision-making, and ensure that the rights, responsibilities, and boundaries attaching to each Hima are set out in writing and agreed with the competent municipality and public authority.

Promote Sustainable Livelihoods

Support local green economies through responsible ecotourism, the Hima Trails (Droub Al Hima), sustainable agriculture, grazing and fisheries, traditional food production, and handicrafts, and ensure that a defined share of the revenue generated within each Hima is retained by the community that manages it.

Preserve Our Shared Heritage

Safeguard the Hima as living cultural heritage by documenting the knowledge, customs, and governance rules that have sustained people and nature across the region, and by supporting their recognition within national and international heritage frameworks.

Empower Future Generations

Expand environmental education through Schools with No Walls (SNOW), Homat Al Hima (Hima Guardians), citizen science, outdoor learning, and youth volunteering, and work with national education authorities to embed Hima stewardship within school curricula.

Build Climate Resilience

Protect water resources, combat desertification, and apply nature-based solutions that help communities adapt to climate change, consistent with the national adaptation priorities of participating States.

Integrate Knowledge and Innovation

Combine traditional ecological knowledge with scientific research, biodiversity monitoring, and spatial analysis, and make the resulting data openly available so that Hima management can be adapted on the basis of evidence.

Strengthen Ecological Connectivity

Develop an interconnected network of Himas and ecological corridors that safeguards migratory species, restores ecosystem connectivity, and contributes to national, regional, and global conservation targets.

Foster Regional Cooperation

Work together through partnerships among communities, municipalities, governments, academic institutions, and international organizations to establish the Hima as a recognized regional model for biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

Our Common Vision

We envision a Levant where communities and nature flourish together through the Hima tradition; where biodiversity is conserved, cultural heritage is celebrated, livelihoods are sustainable, and cooperation transcends borders.

Together, we affirm that community stewardship is essential for achieving environmental sustainability, social well-being, and climate resilience.

Operational Structure

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), having pioneered the modern revival of the Hima system, shall serve as the initial Secretariat for a term of three years, renewable by decision of the signatories. The Secretariat shall facilitate cooperation among signatories, promote the principles contained herein, encourage new endorsements, convene a meeting of the signatories at least once every two years, and report to that meeting on the implementation of this commitment. The signatories may at any such meeting review the arrangements for the Secretariat and decide upon its continuation or transfer. The Secretariat shall carry out its functions in partnership with municipalities, civil society, governments, academic institutions, and regional and international organizations such as UNESCO, IUCN, and BirdLife International.

This Declaration belongs collectively to all its signatories and remains an open platform for voluntary cooperation throughout the Levant and beyond.

This Declaration serves as a living commitment to revive the Hima as a shared heritage and a practical framework for conserving nature and empowering communities across the region.

Nothing in this letter creates legally binding obligations, alters the mandate or competences of any public authority, or affects the position of any State on questions of sovereignty, borders, or relations with other States. Endorsement by a public institution expresses support for the objectives set out above and does not imply recognition of, or any undertaking towards, any other endorsing party.

(Adopted at the Levant Hima Meeting, The Garden of Patriarchs, Diman, Lebanon, 6 August 2026)

Endorsement

This Declaration is open for endorsement by:

- Municipalities and Local Authorities
- Ministries and Public Institutions
- Educational and Research Institutions
- Religious Institutions
- Civil Society Organizations
- National and Regional Conservation Organizations
- UNESCO, IUCN, BirdLife International, and other regional and international partners
- Private sector partners committed to sustainable development