



Sihlwald and Gattikon, May 16th 2024

To the members of the
ITG - International Takhi Group

Minutes of the General Assembly of the ITG

Tuesday, May 7th 2024, 6-7 pm at Hotel Olten, 4600 Olten and by zoom

Present: Reinhard Schnidrig, Rebekka Blumer, Sven Hoffmann, Karin Hindenlang

Present by Zoom: Lena Michler, Jörg Beckmann (Nuremberg Zoo) Franziska Peter (Guest), Ruth Baumgartner

Excused: Christian Stauffer, Anita Fahrni, Honorary President Thomas Pfisterer, Thomas Rothlin (Wildpark Winterthur);

Prague Zoo and Berlin Zoo did not respond to the invitation.

President Reinhard Schnidrig welcomes the members of the International Takhi Group and especially welcomes Jörg Beckmann and the participants via zoom. Reinhard Schnidrig is pleased about the presence of Franziska Peter as a guest. Franziska Peter actually is working in Val Müstair in the Swiss Nationalpark and is willing to reflect on a closer engagement for ITG.

The agenda of the General Assembly (GA) of the ITG is accepted.

1. Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the General Assembly of the ITG of May 9th, 2023 are accepted.

2. Annual report 2023 of the president

The president goes through his annual report 2023 (see www.savethewildhorse.org), which is divided into the foreword and 5 chapters. Selected topics are briefly listed as follows:

– Foreword with important topic from the last year:

The reporting year was marked by positive developments such as the continued planning for the new park center in Altai of Hovd and the submitted application for the establishment of a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. The positive development of socio-economic projects was particularly pleasing.



– **The horse and its habitat:**

At the end of 2022 more than 400 Takhi were living in the GGB-reserve. The harsh weather conditions in the winter of 2022/2023 posed a major challenge, as a very dry summer was followed by an extreme winter with temperatures as low as minus 40° Celsius and snowstorms lasting several weeks. This weather phenomenon is called *dzud* in Mongolia and means a struggle for survival for people and animals in Mongolia. Despite feeding additional hay as an emergency measure, we lost around 1/3 of the takhi stock. The loss of domestic animals in the region amounts to several thousand. The remaining takhi population includes many mares capable of reproducing and the first foals of 2024 have already been born.

– **Cooperation with political authorities and research:**

- A milestone in 2023 was progress towards submitting the application for recognition of the “Mongolian Gobi” as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The area in question comprises the Great Gobi A and Great Gobi B protected areas as well as the Small Gobi A and Small Gobi B protected areas. As a result, the originally planned area has been enlarged and funding for the application has been secured.
- However, the planned opening of the border from the Great Gobi A to China through a nature reserve is a cause for concern.
- The **birdlife survey** in the Great Gobi B protected area has been a success. Diversity is high and some exciting species have been found.
- The **socio-economic projects** have also developed successfully. Cashmere as an important source of income for the nomads and ecotourism are the two main topics here.
 - **Cashmere:** A cooperative has been established in which 61 herder families are currently registered. Cooperation with partner organizations was strengthened and the first steps towards certification of the value chain (pasture management, animal welfare, socially responsible working methods within the cooperative) were achieved and potential partners/labels were contacted.
 - **Tourism:** Several trips were organized in 2023 and were highly praised by the guests. Following the 30th anniversary, the President sponsored a local naadam and was able to attend the festivities together with his son and ITG Board member Karin Hindenlang.
- As far as the **new park center** is concerned, things are progressing somewhat slowly because a few adjustments to the plans are still necessary. The tender is due to be issued still in 2024 so that construction can hopefully begin in 2025.

– **Informing the public:**

- Our website www.savethewildhorse.org, information brochures and the Takhi-Post in German, English and Mongolian provide information about the activities of the ITG association. A big thank-you for this immense work goes to Mirjam Würsch and Lena



Michler for maintaining the website and to Peter Kistler for the production of the Takhi Post with fascinating articles on a variety of topics throughout the year. A great job - heartfelt thanks!

– **The association ITG**

- At the end of 2023, the ITG association consisted of five organizations (Wildnispark Zürich Langenberg; Wildpark Bruderhaus Winterthur; Prague Zoo; Nuremberg Zoo and Berlin Zoo) and ten individuals who also form the board (Reinhard Schnidrig, President; Christian Stauffer, Vice president; Rebekka Blumer, Treasurer; Ruth Baumgartner, Actuary; Sven Hoffmann, Legal Advisor; Anita Fahrni, Associate; Karin Hindenlang, representative of the Wildnispark Zürich Langenberg; Miroslav Bobek, Representative of Prague Zoo and Jaroslav Simek Representative of Prague Zoo. The ITG Honorary President, Thomas Pfisterer, is invited to all board meetings as a guest.
- A big thank-you for financial support of ITG goes especially to Zoo Nuremberg, Zoo Berlin and Wildnispark Langenberg.
- Donations by Zoo Prague directly to GGB are also noted with thanks.
- The ITG office in Ulanbaatar is led by Batsukh Jamiyandorj as dedicated Executive Director. Batsukh provides a special service to ITG through her engagement.

– **Finances:**

- In 2023, income of CHF 244'955.- was generated through foundations. Considerable contributions were received from the Jean-Pierre and Sonja Siegfried Foundation, the Boguth-Jonak Foundation and a foundation in Zurich. The Friends of the Takhi were able to make a substantial contribution in favor of the ITG. In addition, various European zoos and animal parks made a considerable contribution to the purchase of new vehicles through the "Horsepower for Wild Horses" initiative.
- The funds were invested in the management of the protected area, the monitoring of the Takhi, research into socio-economic projects and the further development of the infrastructure. The ITG association closed the year with a plus of CHF 30'664. The association's assets amounted to CHF 163'206 as at 31.12.2023, of which cash and cash equivalents amounted to CHF 103'105. (see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/)

The ITG board accepts the annual report of the president by acclamation.

3. Annual financial report 2023 (Details see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/)

Accounts 2023:

- The comparison of 2023 and 2022 is presented. At the end of 2023 the association's fund amounted to CHF 163'206.29. ITG received contributions from members, from donors and from Friends of the Takhi as a total income of CHF 244'955.48.



Expenditure amounted to CHF 206'986.68. At the end of the fiscal year there was a profit of CHF 30'664.87.

Rebekka Blumer presents the details of the 2023 financial report:

Regarding the detailed costs of the account, Rebekka Blumer especially pointed out that around CHF 50,000 more income was generated, with two foundations making substantial contributions. With one of these two foundations, a 5-year contract for support with a large amount could be concluded.

- Unfortunately, the donations from the Friends of the Wild Horse only amounted to half as much as before. Thanks to the reserve from a dissolved foundation, the Friends were able to transfer a total of around CHF 30,000 to the ITG.
- The depreciation for the new vehicle is relatively high (for socio-economics).
- Research is always a large amount, but this also includes socio-economic work and the workshop in January.
- The report of the auditor Peter Haller is available and published on the website (see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/). Rebekka Blumer reads out the report of Peter Haller Treuhand AG, which prepares the bookings based on the submitted vouchers as well as the report. The ITG is responsible for the annual financial statements.
- The president explicitly thanks and honors Rebekka Blumer and Peter Haller Treuhand AG for their immense and reliable work.

The 2023 accounts and the report are proposed to the General Assembly for acceptance and discharge of the Board. Acceptance and discharge are unanimous.

Budget 2024

This budget was prepared by Rebekka Blumer and discussed by the Board of ITG. Details are presented to the General Assembly:

Expected income: CHF 173'000.00.

Projected expenses, depending on the availability of funding: CHF 348'520.

The budgeted result is negative. Rebekka Blumer explains that the available money is used according to priorities as follows: staff in Europe and Mongolia, infrastructure in the GGB SPA, supply of hay for supplementary winter-feeding of the takhi, socio-economic projects, research-projects.

In CHF and euros, this currently amounts to just over CHF 200,000, meaning that liquidity is currently good. Nevertheless, fundraising should be supported by everyone as much as possible.

The budget for 2024 is noted as presented and the enormous work of Rebekka Blumer is honored with acclamation.

4. Granting discharge to the ITG Board

The ITG board unanimously is granted discharge.



5. Approval of the activities 2024

- January 2024 Workshop: *Participants: ITG-Board and Thomas Pfisterer (honorary president); ITG MN; GG «B» SPA Administration; MET; Prof. J.-M. Hatt (Veterinary Departement University of Zürich); Lena Michler (Socio-Economic Project); Steffen Zuther (Frankfurt Zoological Society); Dr. med. vet. Angela Becsek (University of Vienna); Research Prague Zoo (Numrug Project MN); Franziska Peter (Swiss National Park); Mirjam Würsch, Fay Godblood (Intern).* This event is valuable because of the direct exchange on various topics and for mutual understanding.
- ITG Executive Managing Director Europe: Lena Michler is appointed to this position as of June 1.
- ITG Office UB: The office has to move to new premises due to circumstances.
- New Administration and Training Center in Altai of Hovd: Tendering to take place in 2024 and construction to start in 2025.
- Designing of new buffer zone to the GGB SPA: Discussions have been held with almost all the soums concerned and there is now a widely accepted proposal for the implementation of the zoning. Designing a buffer-zone is also a condition for the application for the World Heritage Site.
- Continuing the socio-economic programme on sustainable cashmere use and ecotourism.
- Gazelle research project (Petra Kaczensky): Gazelles are a target species in the GGB-management-plan and there is international interest in this species (CAMI). The use of space and habitat is to be researched. Various zoos are also interested in this study. Study starts in September 2024 and will run for several years. The costs amount to around CHF 5000 per year. Fundraising for parts of the project is being set up by the ITG. There are only a few goitered gazelles in zoos, as they are not easy to keep.
- Veterinary issue: plan future collaboration with other organizations and institutions (such as Universities and others)
- New GGB Management plan: This management plan is an important basis for the application for the World Heritage Site. The basic framework has been discussed with the ITG Board. The Mongolians are working on the elaboration of the plan. The contract with eco consult for the support of the GGB and the Small Gobi has been signed, and the distribution of costs has also been agreed. Meetings and workshops are currently taking place.
- Capacity building: elaborate a concept for English courses for the rangers as part of the rangers' employment (MET)
- UNESCO World Heritage Site: The project is running well. Batsukh is doing a very good job of coordination.

- Reintroduction projects from other partners in Altyn Dala (Kazakhstan) and Numrug (Mongolia): Takhi will be transported from Berlin and Prague to Altyn Dala at the beginning of June.

The activities are unanimously accepted.



6. Agreement on the annual fee 2024 (CHF 1000.00 / Euro 1000.00)

This contribution will be retained.

7. Elections

No personal elections are required this year.

The ITG board recommends re-electing Peter Haller Treuhand, Magden, Switzerland as financial auditor. They do the accounting for the ITG and the Friends of the Wild Horse and do the audit without charging ITG.

The function was confirmed by acclamation.

8. Applications / requests from members

No submissions have been made.

9. Varia

There are no applications for varia.

Latest news from Takhintal:

- According to the latest reports from Takhin Tal, more takhi have apparently survived the last dzud than previously assumed.
- Bugat soum has sent an invitation to their 100th anniversary. Batsukh will represent the ITG at the festivities.
- The President has been invited by the Mongolian Embassy in Switzerland to attend a reception at 23rd of May 2024 to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Mongolia.

The next General Assembly takes place on Tuesday May 6, 2025.

For the minutes of the ITG - International Takhi Group

Reinhard Schnidrig
President of the ITG

Ruth Baumgartner
Actuary of the ITG



Notes:

- Annual Report in German (see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/)
- Annual Report in English (see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/)
- Slides General Assembly May 2024 (see www.savethewildhorse.org/mediathek/)