

5 August 2010

*Improving lives
through
biodiversity
research*

The Honourable Dmitry Medvedev
President of the Russian Federation
23, Ilyinka Street,
Moscow, 103132, Russia.

Dear Mr. President,

As Director General of Bioversity International - which has a long-standing research partnership with Russian scientists - I feel it is my duty to alert you to the imminent loss of a very precious resource in your country, which only you can now protect for both the benefit of the Russian people and the entire world.

Officials in your government have decided to hand over to property developers the world-famous Pavlovsk Research Station, near St. Petersburg, which will result in the destruction of a unique collection of fruits and berries. This may seem a very trivial and unimportant matter to those who took the decision, but I believe you will understand the unfortunate consequences of this action for Russia's standing in the international community.

The Pavlovsk Station houses a huge collection of unique and diverse apples, strawberries, cherries, raspberries and currants - more than 5,000 varieties in all. First assembled in 1926 by Nikolai Vavilov, this collection is vital for scientists who today are racing to breed new varieties better adapted to climate change and more resistant to growing threats from pests and diseases.

The Pavlovsk Station may also hold clues to addressing the world's growing public health crisis due to chronic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, especially in Russia. We already have scientific evidence that the important genetic resources at the Pavlovsk station could contribute to healthier diets thanks to varieties with superior nutritional qualities, ninety percent of which can be found nowhere else.

I call on you as President of the Russian Federation – which is a member country of Bioversity International with a historical contribution to plant genetic resources - to save the Pavlovsk Station, and to ensure that Russia's excellent stewardship of these genetic resources in the past will be maintained for the benefit of future generations.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Emile Frison