



15 March 2019

Dear CETAF members representatives and colleagues,

My name is Gila Kahila Bar-Gal and I am a molecular evolution researcher at the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). In addition, I am the curator of the wildlife *CryoBank* and the current director of the National Natural History Collections of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel (NNHC-HUJI). My research fields bridge between evolutionary biology and molecular genetics/genomics, with a strong foundation in ecology and zoology. Applying multidisciplinary approach, integrating ancient and modern genetic/genomic studies, along with data obtained in other scientific fields, including ecological, archaeological, historical, epidemiological, and behavioral studies I elucidated the mechanism(s) that have shaped Israel wildlife biodiversity, wildlife population and early domesticated animals in the southern Levant. The research scope considers also host-pathogen interaction and has implications for measures required to protect the natural environment and to manage anthropogenic activities that affect the animals in order to conserve future biodiversity.

Taken on the responsibility of the directorship of the NNHC-HUJI my vision is to restore the natural collections importance in science to its original splendour and flourish the hidden treasure. My goals are to expand the scientific research based on the unique collections of the southern Levant by exposing them, both physically and virtually, to the national and international academic community and to the general public. In addition to the taxonomic and systematic studies, I believe that conducting multidisciplinary research based on unique collections that are representing a biodiversity hotspot region can shed light on the impact of anthropogenic effects and environmental changes (including climate change) on ecosystems. Furthermore, the various research projects carried out in the NNHC should be used as a platform to educate the next generation of taxonomists experts through MSc, Ph.D and post-doctoral studies.

I was honored by the request to consider my nomination for the next CETAF Executive Committee (EC). I believe that my vision for the NNHC-HUJI coincide with CETAF missions and goals. Hence, if I will be nominated to the EC I would like to:

- Increase collaborative scientific research, especially in taxonomy, by exchanging innovations and establishing partnerships. Enhancing networking and exploiting more efficiently funding opportunities.
- Promote digitalization of collections to be used in collaborative studies and as an open access platform for sharing information.
- Position natural collections as key players in the study of biodiversity, increasing the awareness of policy makers and the public to the crisis of biodiversity loss.

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- Promote scientific education associated with natural collections and develop programs for public outreach.
- Expand the collaboration and networking with organizations, from natural collections, museums and stakeholders from countries outside Europe.

Finally, I believe that my scientific background that I bring to this task, my role as a researcher and curator and my strong believe in collaboration using multidisciplinary approaches, will be manifested in pursuing CETAF goals.

Sincerely,

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