



Ms. Jutta Urpilainen,
EU Commissioner for International Partnerships
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

6th May 2021

Dear Commissioner Urpilainen,

Subject: Prioritising Climate and Biodiversity under the new Global Challenges thematic programme and Urgent Need to open a Transparent Multi-Stakeholder Consultation

We are writing to you as leading global environmental NGOs, to contribute to ongoing discussions within DG International Partnerships on the new Global Challenges thematic programme.

We believe the Global Challenges programme of the new Global Europe instrument should play a critical role in stepping up the EU's global leadership in addressing the interlinked challenges the world is facing, such as water scarcity, biodiversity loss, deforestation and climate change, which contribute to growing inequalities and instability around the globe. These challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated ongoing economic crisis. The emergence of diseases of animal origin like the COVID-19, that spill over from wildlife to humans, provides a stark demonstration of the dramatic societal and economic costs that can result from the destruction of nature.

Environmental degradation and climate change are undermining hard-won development gains by causing staggering economic costs and losses and millions of premature deaths annually. It is impeding progress towards ending poverty and hunger, reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable economic growth and inclusive societies. This burden is felt by everyone, but disproportionately by the poor and vulnerable. Not tackling such challenges holistically undermines the benefits of EU international cooperation.

We welcome the compromise on the long-term EU budget for the period 2021-2027, adopted on the 10th November 2020, which includes an increased 30% climate action target for the Global Europe instrument, and a target of 7.5% of overall annual Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) spending to be dedicated to biodiversity objectives from 2024, and 10% from 2026.

Since the vast majority of global biodiversity lies in the tropics and the ocean, the new Global Europe instrument needs to play a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the overall MFF biodiversity target and funding allocations should reflect these increased ambitions.

Considering the significant drop in the funding to thematic programmes compared with the previous 2014-2020 period, the increased climate and biodiversity spending targets for the Global Europe Instrument imply that the bulk of funding contributing to these targets would come from the geographic programmes. While acknowledging the efforts to prioritise and mainstream Green Deal objectives across the programming of country Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) and Team Europe Initiatives, there is a risk that climate, biodiversity and environmental action which requires regional, inter-regional or global approaches is insufficiently supported. For example, the successful EU flagship initiatives piloting an integrated approach on the economic benefits of biodiversity protection, in the interest of sustaining livelihoods and poverty eradication in the poorest countries may not receive adequate funding from the thematic and regional programmes. There is also a risk that targeted climate adaptation programmes will receive less attention at country-level, while adaptation is under-addressed and related needs are increasing.

The Global Challenges programme is therefore crucial to connect the different levels of action on these issues and to leverage the integration of the Green Deal in the programming of the Global Europe Instrument. It must provide adequate funding to ongoing and future global biodiversity, environment, and climate action. EU global leadership on biodiversity and climate finance is all the more important at this moment as political momentum is building ahead of the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), both scheduled later this year.

As discussions are currently underway regarding the EU thematic and regional programmes, we request that a transparent multi-stakeholder consultation be urgently opened on the MIP for the Global Challenges programme, on all priorities. We stand ready to contribute to this consultation and provide specific recommendations on global environmental, biodiversity and climate programmes.

We would like to request a meeting with you to discuss this important issue and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Arnaud Goessens
Senior Manager, EU Policy
Wildlife Conservation Society - WCS EU

Fanny Gauttier
Senior Manager, European policy
Conservation International (CI)

Ariel Brunner
Senior Head of Policy
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

Marie-Ange Kalenga
Policy Advisor
Fern

Rachel Simon
Climate & Development Policy Coordinator
Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

Wes Sechrest, Ph.D.
CEO and Chief Scientist
Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC)

Staci McLennan
EU Office Director
IFAW

Marianne Kleiberg
Managing Director, Europe
The Nature Conservancy

Katalin Kesce-Nagy
Programme Office Director – Europe
TRAFFIC

Sophie Aujean
EU Representative
WaterAid

Yurena Lorenzo
Head of European Office
Wetlands International Europe

Katarina Macejakova
Head - EU Development Funding and Policy
WWF European Policy Office

Cc. Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, European Commission

Mr Koen Doens, Director-General, DG INTPA

Ms Carla Montesi, Director, DG INTPA.F

Ms Lotte Knudsen, Director, EEAS (GLOBAL)