



To: Heads of Government of the EU-27

Brussels, 16 November 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Environment in the Political Declaration on EU-UK future relations

We write to express our urgent concerns regarding the protection of the EU's environmental standards in the future relationship negotiations with the UK.

As European environmental organisations representing more than 30 million environmentally concerned citizens from throughout the EU and beyond, we welcome the commitments in the recently published draft Withdrawal Agreement designed to prevent any immediate roll-back of environmental standards in the UK after the end of the post-Brexit 'transition period'.

However, we are strongly of the view that this 'non-regression' clause on its own provides insufficient guarantees for the protection of the environment in the long-term future relationship.

We fear that any failure by the UK to keep pace with EU environmental standards in this future relationship, apart from potentially giving the UK an unfair competitive advantage, would risk creating deregulatory pressure across the EU market, damaging the environment and posing a threat to the ambition of current and future EU environmental policies.

Therefore, it is vital that insofar as the UK wishes to enjoy access to the EU market with minimal constraints, the future relationship agreement builds substantially on the provisions in the draft Withdrawal Agreement and guarantees a long-term level playing field between the EU and the UK based on a dynamic alignment with EU environmental rules (as referenced in the Withdrawal Agreement, Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Annex 4, Art. 2).

A continuing commitment by the UK to meeting at least the standards of protection set out in EU environmental law, now and in future, will be essential to maintaining a positive political space for progressive environmental policies across Europe – an area where there is strong citizen support for greater EU action.

We call on you to address this issue in the forthcoming Political Declaration on future EU-UK relations, due to be concluded in the coming days, in a more explicit way than in the current draft.

In addition, to ensure a positive cooperative framework for continuing to address shared challenges and meet shared goals in relation to issues such as biodiversity loss and climate change, we call for further elaboration of the outline declaration to make reference to a set of clear arrangements for future EU-UK cooperation on issues such as biodiversity, environmental conservation and the goal of a non-toxic environment, as well as a restatement of the UK and the EU's shared interest and values in ensuring a high level of protection for biodiversity and the wider environment.

We also believe that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Treaty on European Union's commitment to 'a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment' should be identified in the Declaration as fundamental aspects of the basis for cooperation, rather than such elements only being referred to in the context of global cooperation or fair competition as in the current draft.

The UK's continued participation in the Natura 2000 network and the vital work of the European Environment Agency and the European Chemicals Agency would serve as a positive early demonstration of these values and commitments.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Wates
Secretary General
European Environmental Bureau



Ariel Brunner
Senior Head of Policy
BirdLife Europe

Cc: EU-27 Environment Ministers
EU-27 Permanent Representations to the EU