

29 April 2025

Subject: Joint NGO letter on climate and environment for the 2025 EU-UK Summit

Dear Prime Minister Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP,
Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP,
Dear Executive Vice President Šefčovič,

The undersigned environmental and climate civil society organisations, who are based in the EU and/or the UK, welcome the initiative of the EU and the UK Government to hold their first Summit on the 19th of May 2025. This will be the first time that the two blocs will have an official opportunity to exchange at a high level on matters of strategic and political shared interests since the UK left the EU. We would like to express our appreciation for this effort to reset the relations between the EU and the UK and would like to highlight key environmental matters which we hope both parties will consider in their preparations for the Summit and in their strategic priorities going forward.

This Summit provides an opportunity to reduce friction and drive economic prosperity in both UK and the EU by reducing trade barriers and increasing cooperation on a range of issues making the relationship work better for UK and EU citizens. This is especially important in the context of current geopolitical challenges.

Despite the UK no longer being part of the Union, they have remained allies and close trading partners, and continue to share values and history, which inevitably inform their policies. Both Parties face the common challenge of tackling the impacts of climate change, nature loss and pollution, which can be resolved better together and to their mutual benefit. They also have shared environmental concerns regarding migratory species, shared seas, the potential for cross-border pollution such as air pollution, to name a few. The international legal order is fragile, and its success relies on nations following the international rule of law and on their willingness to cooperate. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and the conflicts on the African continent have been testing multilateralism, further weakened by some countries' disregard for the authority of UN bodies and even withdrawal from international agreements and organisations. This is an opportune moment for the EU and the UK to stand strong together, to show leadership internationally, and to champion more ambitious cooperation between nations. As environmental and climate organisations, we particularly want to highlight the importance of the EU and the UK showing joint leadership on international environment and climate ambitions, adherence to the Paris Agreement, and drive towards a net-zero world economy.

We urge that deeper cooperation on our shared environment and climate is part of the reset and is included on the agenda of the May summit. Alignment on protections, to the benefit of people and nature, must be achieved by aiming for the highest standards of protection. Some examples where we urge deeper UK-EU cooperation are:

- **Chemicals & product standards:** The UK has been sharply falling behind EU chemical safety laws and other areas of environmental regulation post-Brexit, threatening to undermine a fair level playing field and higher EU environmental ambitions, such as the EU's proposed ban on the manufacture and use of all toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The UK should align with higher EU product standards, which cover environmentally driven

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standards, from ecodesign to limits and restrictions on the use of the most harmful chemicals in products. This would also help with securing closer trade ties – which would be beneficial to both sides, economically and environmentally. As part of this, the EU and UK should cooperate via UK associate membership of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).

- **Fisheries:** Since its departure from the EU, the UK has taken some more decisive and ambitious steps to protect its coastal and marine environment than the EU (albeit that they should go further). Foremost among these was the decision to close key areas to destructive sandeel fishing. Some of the UK's initiatives to reform its fishing practices benefit the shared marine environment and the long-term sustainability and viability of the UK's fishing industry. The EU should take inspiration from such efforts, to secure the future livelihoods of its own fishers, which depend on a healthy, resilient and productive ocean, particularly in the face of mounting pressures like climate change.
- **Regulatory cooperation:** Increasing regulatory convergence in a variety of additional areas of environmental policy would improve environmental outcomes and reduce trade friction, for instance by joining forces to tackle commodity-driven deforestation and aligning circular economy rules, particularly around batteries and packaging waste, and ensuring that the extraction and use of critical raw materials is governed by the principle of sufficiency.
- **Carbon markets:** Formally linking the UK and EU Emissions Trading Schemes, would reinforce joint climate ambition and help both achieve net-zero targets, as well as increasing regulatory certainty for businesses working across Europe and avoiding regulatory border complexities in Northern Ireland.

Lastly, we hope that as part of resetting relations, the UK will explore options for closer engagement with the European Environment Agency. Such closer engagement between the UK and the EEA would be of huge scientific benefit for both Parties in order to take informed policy decisions about the state of the environment and climate, and would foster more research and scientific cooperation on environmental pressures across the European continent, enriching the data and outputs of the agency.

We hope the EU and the UK will have fruitful and constructive discussions at the Summit in May, and we look forward to future positive developments in the relations between the two blocs. We remain at your disposal and trust both Parties will involve civil society organisations in the discussions and process of resetting our relations.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Owen, Head of Fisheries, **Angling Trust**

Thalie Martini, CEO, **Breast Cancer UK**

Craig Macadam, Conservation Director, **Buglife**

Dr Michael Warhurst, Executive Director, **CHEM Trust**

Kyle Lischak, Head of UK, **ClientEarth**

Dr Ciara Brennan, Director, **Environmental Justice Network Ireland**

Debbie Tripley, Global Director Campaigns and Advocacy, **Compassion in World Farming**

Julian Newman, Campaigns Director, **Environmental Investigation Agency**

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