



TO: College of Commissioners of the European Commission

Brussels, 20 May 2016

RE: Outcome of the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives

Dear President Juncker, Vice Presidents, Commissioners,

We are writing to you to raise your attention to important upcoming discussions on the outcome of the **EU Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives** and urge you to express your **support for maintaining these laws intact**. A decision on the future of the EU Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives will be a major test for the EU demonstrating how seriously it takes the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, an “ambitious plan for people, planet and prosperity”.

The EU played a leading role in the adoption of this 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the historic Paris Agreement. This now provides Europe with a unique opportunity as well as responsibility to set itself on a course to effectively address some of the most defining challenges of our time. In 2016 the EU will need to take the first steps and decisions that will allow Europe to seize this opportunity.

A decision on the outcome of the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives will be in particular a crucial test on whether the EU can deliver in the protection of its biodiversity and ecosystems – the very foundation of life and livelihoods, as well as essential for citizens’ health and well-being.

Last year, more than half a million EU citizens participated in the public consultation on the EU Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives. Not only was this the biggest participation in the history of EC consultations, but also more than 94 % of respondents asked you to maintain and enforce these vital nature laws.

In addition, many Member States, from different parts of the EU, have already written to the European Commission to retain the current form of the legal framework and to focus on better implementation. The European Parliament, having acknowledged that the key challenge facing nature conservation is not the EU legislation in itself, has also voted to oppose a possible revision of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives¹.

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0034&language=EN&ring=A8-2016-0003>



The European Commission needs to now urgently provide clarity that the fitness check of the EU Nature Directives has found the legislation to be fit for purpose– that the option of revising the Directives, which could undermine Europe’s world class conservation standards without providing any added value, has been ruled out.

However, since the effective implementation and enforcement of this world class conservation policy is not a given, significant more efforts and resources will need to be made available at the EU and national levels to make that happen. Effectively protecting and restoring biodiversity requires also a targeted approach towards the key drivers behind biodiversity loss, most notably unsustainable agriculture and infrastructure development.

This would confirm to EU citizens that this Commission does engage and listen when called upon and that **the EU is strongly committed to sustainable development** through respect for our natural heritage.

We urge you to take these considerations and suggestions into account in your forthcoming deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe

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Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Wates".

Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe

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Genevieve Pons- Deladrière, Director, WWF European Policy Office

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