

Brussels – 8 June 2016

## Dutch Presidency cancels high profile nature conference due to delays from Commission on Nature Directives “fitness check”

**The European Commission was supposed to present the results of its “fitness check” of the Birds and Habitats Directives (Nature Directives) at the Dutch Presidency conference “Future-proof Nature Policy” on 28-30 June. The document was supposed to serve as a basis for discussions, about the implementation of the Nature Directives in the Member States, at the conference which many governments and NGOs were planning to attend. However the European Commission, 20 days ahead of the conference, has still not published the results of its “fitness check” of these vital laws.**

Already in October 2013, the European Commission announced that it would be carrying out a “fitness check” of the Birds and Habitats Directives, in order to assess whether these important laws were still “fit for purpose”. In 2015, in response to concern that this may result in a weakening of the legislation, stakeholders from across the EU submitted evidence that the laws were fit for purpose. Additionally, over 520,000 EU citizens responded to the Commission’s related public consultation.

This was echoed by EU environment ministers meeting in Council in December 2015, and by a European Parliament vote in February this year. Both bodies identified full implementation of the Nature Directives as key to achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

Despite calls from NGOs, SMEs and citizens as well as from the European Parliament and EU Member States to fully implement the Nature Directives as soon as possible, the Commission is still dragging its feet and creating uncertainty for the future of nature conservation in Europe.

**Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy at BirdLife Europe stated:** *“This is shocking news and frankly an embarrassment for the European Commission. The conclusions of the Fitness Check should be crystal clear, and it is incomprehensible that the Commission refuses to publish them and move on to much needed action for biodiversity in Europe.”*

**ENDS**

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**Notes:**

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. <http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia>

520,000 citizens and 120 environmental NGOs participated in the public consultation on the “fitness check”:

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/bl\\_eeb\\_foe\\_wwf\\_media\\_release\\_nature\\_alert\\_consultation\\_final\\_240715.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/bl_eeb_foe_wwf_media_release_nature_alert_consultation_final_240715.pdf)

BirdLife Europe review of 'Fitness Check' - From Nature Alert to Action

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/from\\_nature\\_alert\\_to\\_action.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/from_nature_alert_to_action.pdf)

Declaration of SMEs on Nature in the European Union

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/sme\\_declaration\\_updated\\_07\\_06\\_2016.pdf#overlay-context=europe-and-central-asia/media/birdlife-europe-publications](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/sme_declaration_updated_07_06_2016.pdf#overlay-context=europe-and-central-asia/media/birdlife-europe-publications)

For more information about the European Commission’s “fitness check” click here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness\\_check/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm)