

Letter of Intent for the Biodiversity and Business Platform

VNO-NCW, MKB Nederland, LTO and IUCN NL¹ hereinafter referred to as 'initiators', express their intention to join forces with relevant partners to promote a constructive dialogue, partnership and joint activities aimed at preserving and restoring biodiversity. While respecting legitimate economic interests, the aim is to contribute to a result-oriented, effective and efficient approach aimed at stopping the decline of biodiversity and promoting the recovery of ecosystems at home and abroad and reducing our ecological footprint. A platform is being set up for this purpose. A national action programme and an international agenda are part of this approach.

Whereas:

1. The initiators recognise the necessity to create a more sustainable society, in which economic, ecological and social values are in balance.
2. Nature – the natural systems of the planet (the ecosystems) and the variety of organisms which constitute living nature (the biodiversity) – forms the basis and the conditions for human existence. Ecosystems and biodiversity are essential to wellbeing and welfare; the economy needs nature. Its preservation is thus vitally important for a sustainable society and a booming economy. The presence and accessibility of 'nature' are also highly valued quality features of the living environment. The initiators also recognise that many people assign an independent value to nature.
3. Our planet's ecosystems are essential for maintaining the natural conditions necessary for a good quality of life (the quality of air, water, soil, climate and biodiversity; this function of nature is known as 'ecosystem services').
4. Biodiversity is increasingly recognised as important for sustainability and has therefore become an issue in society. The European nature policy – Natura 2000 – was developed following the global Convention on Biological Diversity signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The UN declared 2010 as the year of biodiversity. However, the international and European agreed objective of not allowing the further decline of biodiversity was not achieved. At the beginning of this year, the European Commission was therefore instructed by the European Council to produce far-reaching policy proposals for biodiversity in 2010. Governments and the business community are more involved than ever before.
5. The business community recognises that the economy, given the exploitation and depletion of fossil and other natural resources and material, will increasingly have to become a 'bio-based' economy, reliant on the sustainable use of nature as a source of materials for food, energy, commodities and services, through the sustainable use of

¹ IUCN NL is the National Committee of the Netherlands of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, a worldwide union of non-governmental nature organisations, states and scientists. Besides the State, IUCN in the Netherlands has 33 NGO members supporting this Letter of Intent: Alertis, Avalon Foundation, ANWB, Artis, Both ENDS, Carmabi Foundation, Centrum voor Milieuwetenschappen Leiden, De 12Landschappen, Diergaarde Blijdorp, IVN Vereniging voor natuur- en milieueducatie, Koninklijke Nederlandse Natuurhistorische Vereniging, Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, Nederlands Centrum voor Inheemse Volken, Nederlandse Vereniging van Dierentuinen, Prins Bernhard Leerstoel voor Internationale Natuurbescherming, Staatsbosbeheer, Ravon, Stichting Natuur en Milieu, Stichting Reservaten Przewalski-paard Nederland, Stichting Trésor, Stichting NatuurCollege, Tropenbos International, IBED/Universiteit van Amsterdam, Van Tienhoven Stichting, Zoogdiervereniging, Vlinderstichting, Vogelbescherming Nederland, Waddenvereniging, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, European Centre for Nature Conservation, European Union for Coastal Conservation and Wetlands International. Landschapsbeheer Nederland and Stichting Veldwerk Nederland and candidate IUCN member Vereniging Milieudefensie have indicated their willingness to support this Letter of Intent.

biomass, genetic material and ecosystem services. The transition to this new economy requires a constructive partnership between relevant parties from civil society and knowledge institutions in the field of biodiversity and ecosystems.

6. The business community – big and small – is increasingly aware of its role and wants to bear responsibility for preserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems, not just in the Netherlands but also internationally. Numerous initiatives related to (international) corporate social responsibility and sustainability are evidence of this. The business community wishes to take this responsibility but can only properly fulfil its primary role, i.e. the creation of added value, in a context of legal certainty and rules which support the independent and vital survival of companies.
7. As a global knowledge and umbrella organisation, IUCN and members like Natuurmonumenten, De 12Landschappen and other organisations realise that an effective approach to tackle problems and to preserve and restore nature and healthy ecological systems is not possible without a constructive partnership with a dynamic and innovative business community.
8. Initiators recognise the importance of Natura 2000 and the National Ecological Network (EHS) for the preservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, and recognise the necessity for clear and consistent legislation with a coherent and long term vision for nature and environmental conservation. The natural and ecological dynamics must also be taken into account and effectiveness and efficiency must be sought in the implementation of the national Natura 2000 targets. A dialogue must be possible about potentially more successful approaches, whereby earlier and perhaps more radical improvement of the natural habitat could go hand in hand with the limitation of negative consequences for businesses. Bearing this in mind, there is a need for a rational analysis to plan the most effective measures per scale level. This is more effective than a rather forced conservation approach per location. Moreover, the preservation of a sufficiently level playing field with fair competitive relationships for the relevant industry is an important element.
9. The initiators find that the impact of Dutch companies and institutions on biodiversity and ecosystems abroad (the ecological footprint) is often unknown. They want to reduce their footprint through dialogue, policy proposals, innovation, concrete activities and projects, by improving processes and/or compensation. For this reason, knowledge about the footprint of each company and sector is important and about the way in which the reduction of this footprint can be reduced in the countries concerned. This also requires consultation with governments.
10. Initiators see added value in dialogue and exchange of knowledge between nature organisations and business about these challenges. Governments and knowledge institutions also play a role in this. The parties see potential in a forum where goals and efficient instrumentation to achieve these goals can be freely discussed and joint conclusions can be directed to the government. This forum could be instrumental in boosting awareness, creating and sharing insights about these themes and an efficient approach, establishing support for effective policy in business and nature organisations and creating awareness of potential innovative commercial opportunities.

Initiators therefore agree:

1. To set up a 'Biodiversity and Business Platform' in the short term and invite participants to join in.

2. In the coming months to elaborate their intention in a document in which the partnership is defined (goal of the approach) and a joint strategic vision regarding importance and approach is formulated.
3. At the same time to develop a policy agenda and action programme that can be implemented in the Netherlands in the foreseeable future.
4. To continue searching together for more effective and efficient methods of achieving Natura 2000 targets.
5. To formulate a joint input for the Dutch contribution at European level and in other relevant international forums.
6. To create alignment with the work of the Biodiversity Taskforce set up by the government in 2009 led by Mr Alders which is tasked with making proposals for policy to preserve biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.
7. To identify and communicate joint examples of a successful approach at business (sector) or project level (local/national).
8. To communicate this partnership between the business community and nature organisations – with the involvement of the government at home and abroad if possible, as a success formula.

Amsterdam, 23 November 2010

VNO-NCW
Bernard Wientjes, chairman

IUCN NL
Roger van Boxtel, chairman

MKB – Nederland
Loek Hermans, chairman

On behalf of the nature organisations
Jan Jaap de Graeff, director Natuurmonumenten

LTO -Nederland
Albert Jan Maat, chairman

On behalf of the environmental organisations
Wibo Koole, director Nature & Environment

On behalf of the national knowledge organisations
Theo Verstrael, director Butterfly Foundation

On behalf of the international organisations
Jane Madgwick, director Wetlands Int.