To:
Ms Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
Mr Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden

CC:
Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for Environment
César Luena, File Rapporteur for the European Parliament
Caroline Roose, Shadow Rapporteur for the PECH Committee of the European Parliament
Anne Sander, Shadow Rapporteur for the AGRI Committee of the European Parliament

Monday 12 June 2023

Object: Open letter for ambition on peatlands in the EU Nature Restoration Law

Dear President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, Dear Prime Minister of Sweden Ulf Kristersson,

The undersigned broad **coalition of conservationists, scientists and farmers** caring for wetlands across the EU is writing to you to raise our concern regarding the developments to decrease the level of ambition in the proposed EU Nature Restoration Law with particular attention to peatlands.

We welcomed the European Commission's proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, published in June 2022, notably due to the inclusion of targets for the restoration of peatlands. Recent developments in the European Parliament AGRI and PECH Committees and a draft compromise position by the Swedish Presidency, however, substantially threaten the initial ambition of the Commission's proposal, by either rejecting the Nature Restoration Law completely or diluting its peatland restoration targets. We are **deeply concerned** about the implications of either scenario on both the biodiversity and the climate crisis for which European peatlands are critically important.

We urge the Members of the European Parliament and the Council to a) **adopt the Nature Restoration Law as swiftly as possible**, before 2024 and b) as a minimum, **adopt the level of ambition included in the European Commission's proposal** and not dilute peatland restoration targets.

A swift adoption of an ambitious regulation is of utmost importance as the interconnected climate and biodiversity crises are increasingly being felt throughout Europe. The IPCC's Synthesis for the Sixth Assessment Report of March 2023 stressed clearly that the restoration of ecosystems, together with targeted management to adapt to unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduces the vulnerability of biodiversity and ecosystem services to climate change. Peatlands are widely recognised as being one of the critical ecosystems in this regard, storing more carbon per square metre than any other ecosystem type. **Each day matters for the EU to achieve its obligatory 2030 and 2050 climate and biodiversity targets** as outlined in the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

It is crucial to have ambitious peatland targets to trigger effective ecosystem restoration. Peatlands are an integral component of the Nature Restoration Law and their restoration, primarily rewetting, is a cost-effective measure to the climate and biodiversity crises:

1. **Rewetting drained peatlands leads to substantial greenhouse gas emission reductions, while benefiting biodiversity, ecosystem services and the hydrological system.** Wet

peatlands are the most space-efficient long-term carbon store and sink in our planet's biosphere. Peatland restoration is key for climate change mitigation, but it also comes with climate change adaptation benefits (water regulation, evapotranspiration cooling, flood control, groundwater retention). To guarantee a just transition for rural livelihoods, paludiculture, i.e. agriculture on wet peatlands, can maintain production and income, minimise GHG emissions and peat degradation.

2. **Restoring peatlands will enable the EU to meet its climate and biodiversity commitments.** The EU has committed to achieve a set of climate and biodiversity targets by 2030 and 2050, namely the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. With the European Green Deal, the EU aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 and become climate-neutral by 2050. The restoration of ecosystems such as peatlands is a key feature of this long-term roadmap. There is no climate-neutrality and no substantial biodiversity recovery without wet peatlands.
3. **Rewetting drained peatlands is investing in avoided costs and in long-term environmental and economic benefits for society**. The economic contribution of peatland ecosystem services are often undervalued and result in underinvestments.[1] Further delaying action and accumulating a mitigation debt may bring substantial costs for inaction.[2] Supportive EU policies must require, economically incentivise and reward peatlands restoration and rewetting to invest in long-term benefits for the environment and society. The Nature Restoration Law creates a unique opportunity with a solid framework for sustainable investments in our ecosystems, to the benefit of rural communities, including farmers.

We urge you to uphold the success of the European Green Deal in the EU Restoration Law and support an ambitious policy for the rewetting of peatlands in Europe. To achieve the climate action ambitions of the Paris Agreement and EU Climate Law, a transformation pathway for all EU peatlands[3] should lead to net zero CO_2 emissions by 2050. This notably implies fully rewetting of peatlands in all land-uses (except settlements).

We can assure you of all our support in the adoption of the Nature Restoration Law and its subsequent implementation so as to ensure the Nature Restoration Law is a success and pioneering achievement of EU policy.

For more information on peatlands in the Nature Restoration Law, please consult our Joint Policy Briefing stemming from the EU-funded WaterLANDS project, published in September 2022. This publication is summarised in a joint factsheet on peatland restoration, published in October 2022. A joint policy brief, Questions & Answers: Bringing Clarity on Peatland Rewetting and Restoration, published on 23 May 2023, provides clarifications regarding common assumptions about peatland rewetting.

Yours sincerely,

[1] United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Economics of Peatlands Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Management policy report, 2021

[2] Glenk, K., Faccioli, M., Martin-Ortega, J., Schulze, C., & Potts, J. (2021). The opportunity cost of delaying climate action: peatland restoration and resilience to climate change. Global Environmental Change, 70, [102323]. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102323

[3] GMC & Wetlands International (2021) Protecting and Restoring Peatlands – Targets and Recommendations for Peatlands in the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Signatories (in alphabetic order):

		Organisation's name	Logo
1	Shubiao Wu	Aarhus University	
2	Malte Schneider	aeco	
3	Petko Tzvetkov	BALKANI Wildlife Society, Chairperson of Managing Committee	
4	Ariel Brunner	BirdLife Europe and Central Asia	
5	Volker Kromrey	Bodensee Stiftung, CEO	
6	Heinz-Werner Persiel	Bundesverband Beruflicher Naturschutz	
7	Csaba Mezei	CEEweb for Biodiversity, General Secretary	
8	Tony Herrera Grao	CIREF - Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial (Iberian Centre for River Restoration)	
9	Andrea Goltara	CIRF - Italian Centre for River Restoration (Centro Italiano per la Riqualificazione Fluviale), Managing Director	
10	Anais Berthier	ClientEarth, Head of Brussels Office	
11	Cristiana De Lia	Climate Catalyst, Head of Campaign	
12	Sascha Mueller-Kraenner	Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Executive Director	
13	Florian Schöne	Deutscher Naturschutzring, Managing Director	

14	Gabriel Schwaderer	EuroNatur, CEO	
15	Carol Ritchie	EUROPARC Federation, Executive Director	
16	Patrick ten Brink	European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	
17	Nerijus Zableckis	Foundation for Peatland Restoration and Conservation (Lithuania)	
18	Eduardo de Miguel	Fundación Global Nature	
19	Franziska Tanneberger	Greifswald Mire Centre, Director	
20	Ulrich Stöcker	Helverse´sche Stiftung für Arten- und Biotopschutz	
21	Hans Joosten	International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG), Secretary-General	
22	Coenraad Krijger	International Union for Conservation of Nature National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL)	
23	Dr. Gerhard Bronner	Landesnaturschutzverband Baden-Württemberg e. V., Vorsitzender	
24	Ulrich Irmler	Landesnaturschutzverband Schleswig-Holstein e.V. (LNV SH), Chairman of LNV SH	
25	Jan Peters	Michael Succow Foundation, Managing Director	
26	Leif Miller	NABU/BirdLife Germany, CEO	
27	Maritta Strasser	NaturFreunde Deutschlands e.V.	
28	Florian Humpenöder	Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)	

29	Frans Schepers	Rewilding Europe, Executive Director	
30	Peter Torkler	Rewilding Oder Delta	
31	Klement Tockner	Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturschutz, Director General	
32	Andreas Maletzky	Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEH - European Herpetological Society)	
33	Gert-Jan van Duinen	Stichting Bargerveen	
34	Jean Jalbert	Tour du Valat Foundation, France, General Director	
35	Claudia Claudia Bühler	Umweltstiftung Michael Otto	
36	Florence Renou-Wilson	University College Dublin, Ireland	
37	Rudy van Diggelen	University of Antwerp	
38	Daniel Hering	University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany	
39	Niall Ó Brolcháin	University of Galway	
40	Gerald Jurasinski	University of Greifswald, Germany, Professor of Peatland Science	
41	Klaus-Holger Knorr, Norbert Hölzel	University of Münster, Germany	
42	Florian Jansen	University of Rostock, Germany, Professor in Landscape Ecology	

43	Edgar Karofeld	University of Tartu	
44	Carola Hoppen	Verein für naturnahe Garten- und Landschaftsgestaltung - NaturGarten e.V.	
45	Jane da Mosto	We are here Venice ETS, Italy, Executive Director	
46	Aldert van Weeren	WetlandProducts, the Netherlands/ Germany	
47	Łukasz Kozub	Wetlands Conservation Centre (Centrum Ochrony Mokradeł), Poland, Board Member	
49	Chris Baker	Wetlands International European Association, Director	
50	Lucas Gerrits	ZukunftMoor	

Signatories from organisations outside the EU (in alphabetic order):

51	Richard Lindsay	University of East London, UK, and IUCN UK Peatland Programme	
52	Joseph Holden	Director of water@leeds, Chair of Physical Geography, University of Leeds, UK	

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