Media Release

EU environmental principles sit at the heart of Scottish policy-making, says Secretary for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham

6 November 2017 - Speaking to over 200 delegates attending the European Environmental Bureau's annual conference, co-organised with Scottish Environment LINK, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Roseanna Cunningham said that:

"The creation of a European Union has been about recognising shared values that bring us together across national boundaries. A robust and effective approach to protecting our environment has proved, for many of us, to be one of those key shared values. So, my ambition is to carry through not just the letter of EU environmental law but also the underlying principles of precaution, prevention and rectifying pollution at source, as well as the 'polluter pays' principle. Not doing so means we risk lagging behind and diverging from the ambitions of our European allies as well as missing key tools that can help us to meet international ambitions such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals".

Later today, at a meeting between the UK Government and devolved administrations, Mrs Cunningham will urge UK Ministers to support those principles and seek to clarify their approach to preserving them.

Mrs Cunningham's commitment was warmly welcomed by the environmental community in both Scotland and across Europe who expressed support for the Scottish Government position.

Jeremy Wates, Secretary General of European Environmental Bureau said:

"We strongly welcome the commitment of the Cabinet Secretary today to preserving not only EU environmental law but also the principles which underpin them. Our commitment has always been to securing the highest standards of environmental protection in Scotland and across Europe. We know that Brexit challenges this and we are heartened that leaders in Scotland are working to preserve these hard-fought protections and stop a race to the bottom".

Helen Todd, Chair of Scottish Environment LINK said:

"Today's statement by the Cabinet Secretary is warmly welcomed by Scottish Environment LINK members. It is testament to the Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to sustainability and helps address one of the risks of Brexit – namely, that internationally recognised principles of environmental law enshrined in EU treaties will no longer apply once the UK exits the EU. Of course, actions speak louder than words and so we look forward to the Scottish Government providing further certainty regarding the future of these important international principles in Scotland. Our members stand ready to support the Scottish Government in securing the future of our environment and with it that of Scotland as a whole."

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Editors' Notes

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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www.scotlink.org
www.savescottishseas.org

(2) For more information about the European Environmental Bureau's annual conference, please visit: www.eebconference.eu

(3) Environmental NGOs across the UK have been calling on the UK government to convert EU environmental law principles into domestic law. This view is captured in the Greener UK briefing here and in Scottish Environment LINK member contributions here.

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