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Our Reference: 202000113427
Your Reference: FAO Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham

23 December 2020

Dear Juliet Caldwell,

Thank you for your email and letter of 5 November 2020 on behalf of the Species Champion network, calling on the Scottish Government to champion nature. I apologise for the delay in replying.

The Scottish Government recognises the central importance of biodiversity, both for the planet and for its people. Nature provides us with water, clean air and food; our crops rely on insect pollination and the biological processes that create soil; and conserving wildlife, parks and landscapes can improve our health and wellbeing. Protecting our natural environment is a priority and one that requires all of us to look carefully at how we carry out many of our activities.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment set out a number of important drivers of biodiversity loss. These included changes in land and sea use, exploitation, climate change, invasive non-native species and pollution. Scotland's own State of Nature report, which you refer to in your letter, found broadly the same drivers of biodiversity loss locally. The science is also clear that the causes of climate change and biodiversity loss are inter-connected - climate change increases the impact of pressures which cause biodiversity loss, and improving the state of nature can help us to respond to climate change.

The primary purpose of this Global Assessment was to support the development of a new international framework for biodiversity - the 'post-2020 global biodiversity framework' - which will be agreed at a Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), due to take place in 2021 in China.

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The Scottish Government is adopting a clear international leadership role on the natural environment, as we have done on climate change, where we have ambitious targets to achieve net zero greenhouse emissions by 2045. We have taken an active role in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the targets that will be set for the next decade.

We are working with the UK Government and other Devolved administrations to develop an agreed UK negotiating position on the targets currently being developed within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In addition, this year we hosted a series of online international consultations to address biodiversity loss through the 'Edinburgh Process', which mobilised a global network of partners working on biodiversity in Sub-National Governments, Cities and Local Authorities.

The process involves three strands of work:

- producing the 'Edinburgh Declaration', a statement which sets out the commitments of the Scottish Government and international partners to work for nature over the coming decade;
- reporting on the global consultation that we have been leading on the new post-2020 framework and a renewed Plan of Action for sub-national bodies to ensure implementation of the actions that will deliver the framework; and
- building a coalition of supportive State Parties to the UN CBD, calling for the CBD to directly include sub-national governments such as ours within the post-2020 framework

The [Edinburgh Declaration](#) highlights our deep concern about the loss of biodiversity and a changing climate and our shared ambition to take urgent action across society to help biodiversity to recover, for the benefit of the planet and of people. It is open for signature and endorsement by supportive sub-national bodies until COP15. I am pleased to note that SE Link have endorsed this declaration.

In addition to working internationally, we also recognise that it is vitally important that we take action here in Scotland to protect our biodiversity. We want to ensure that we are able to move quickly to adopt the new global biodiversity framework and deliver further biodiversity improvements in Scotland.

Work in Scotland to date has been in the context of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, which consists of our 2004 Strategy, '*Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands*' and our '*2020 Challenge for Scotland's Nature*', published in 2013. The development of the next 10-year strategy to 2030 will reflect the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and targets. We have committed to publishing a high-level statement of intent on biodiversity before the end of the year to address the transition between our current strategy and the post-2020 framework.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are actively working to deliver a green recovery, recognising that we have the opportunity to address the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, and to build a greener, fairer and more equal society.

In February 2020 we published the vision and outcomes for our new Environment Strategy for Scotland. It sets out our vision for 2045 that by restoring nature and ending Scotland's contribution to climate change, Scotland is transformed for the better – helping to secure the wellbeing of our people and our planet for generations to come. Our goal is for a strong, healthy natural environment and the

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strategy sets out six outcomes to focus efforts to achieve this, including creating a sustainable economy that values and conserves nature. The vision and supporting outcomes can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/>

Work to address biodiversity loss in Scotland is funded by a range of public, private and third sector sources. Projects which address biodiversity loss and climate change will be key to our success in achieving our vision for the environment, and our response recognises the potential for joined-up approaches, including nature-based solutions, which can tackle both environmental and social challenges and provide benefits for nature and for people.

Within Scotland we are carrying out a number of nature-based solutions, including restoring our peatlands and creating new woodlands. Restoring peatlands is one of the most effective ways of locking in carbon and peatlands also provide a special and unique habitat for wildlife in Scotland. In February 2020 the Scottish Government announced an investment in peatland restoration of more than £250 million over the next 10 years. Our Programme for Government 2020-2021 also announced an increased woodland creation target of 18,000 ha/yr by 2024-2025 together with £150 million of funding support through forest grants (£100m), increased state nursery production (£20m) and expansion of Scotland's national forests (£30m). Through these projects we are able to help address both biodiversity loss and the climate emergency.

In addition, since 2015, £177.7 million has been committed through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, which will in part allow for around 200 designated sites to be maintained which is critical for vulnerable priority species. Our Programme for Government 2020-2021 announced that we would extend targeted investment to help combat the drivers of biodiversity loss highlighted by IPBES, with a further £3 million of funding provided for biodiversity including the Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF). Funding decisions for the second round of the BCF were announced in July and included projects to address invasive non-native species at Loch Lomond and the Inner Forth.

The Scottish Government also works very closely with NatureScot, Scotland's Nature Agency, to address biodiversity loss. NatureScot's new 'Species on the Edge' project is a partnership with a range of Scotland's environmental Non-Governmental Organisations and over the next five years will develop a programme of work to protect around 40 of Scotland's nationally and internationally vulnerable species. Further details on the project can be found here: <https://www.nature.scot/nature-fund-tackle-most-risk-and-vulnerable-species>

We are also committed to protecting and enhancing Scotland's marine ecosystems. Scottish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are used to ensure protection of some of the most vulnerable species and habitats. The MPA network is key to the health of our marine environment, and will help Scotland to meet our obligations to protect biodiversity, improve our environment and to ensure that our seas are able to store carbon. On 25 September 2020 the Scottish Government announced that a new deep sea MPA, Europe's largest, is to be established. The new MPA will give additional protections to some of the deepest parts of Scotland's seas and will mean that more than 30% of Scotland's seas are covered by MPAs, taking Scotland past the proposed new target for 2030 currently being negotiated by the CBD. Further details are available here: <https://www.gov.scot/news/protecting-scotlands-marine-environment/>

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Finally, we also continue to support the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN), Europe's largest greenspace project, and have committed to a CSGN 'blueprint' which will be a targeted map that identifies where greenspace projects could bring the biggest climate change and biodiversity benefits. We also intend to take forward additional urban biodiversity and health projects, including commissioning pilot 'Miyawaki' mini forests to trial this innovative approach to restoring biodiversity and fighting the climate crisis. These have the potential to improve urban biodiversity and green space for local communities and to involve people as part of citizen science.

I hope that this letter has been helpful in setting out the actions that Scotland is taking, both internationally and nationally, to protect nature.

Yours sincerely,



Roseanna Cunningham

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