

# **Joining in Strength for a Green and Sustainable Netherlands**

## **10 Recommendations for the Dutch Cabinet**

National Committee of  
The Netherlands

**IUCN**

The World Conservation Union

## Joining in Strength for a Green and Sustainable Netherlands

At An IUCN meeting with representatives of the IUCN member organisations on 20 December 2006 in The Hague, a proposal was made to draw up ten concrete recommendations for a sustainable Netherlands, focusing on ecosystems and biodiversity. IUCN NL is pleased to follow up on this proposal. The result is the following list of recommendations for the new government. The recommendations are supported by the non-governmental IUCN member organizations in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>.

A week before the abovementioned meeting, an open letter was published on the initiative of IUCN NL pleading with the new government to develop a global vision and decisive policies regarding the conservation of worldwide ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity. The letter was signed by over 80 leading members of the Dutch business community in their private capacity. A number of these, including participants of the Leaders for Nature Initiative<sup>2</sup>, made important contributions to the content of the following recommendations. These recommendations could form the basis of a national debate, in which the signatories of the open letter declared that they were willing to participate.

A healthy natural environment is the basis of a sustainable economy and balanced social development. Ecosystems worldwide are deteriorating, ecological functions are being disturbed, and plant and animal species are disappearing at an ever increasing pace, with considerable negative results for human welfare. This is shown clearly by the UN *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005)*<sup>3</sup>, the IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species (2006)*<sup>4</sup> and other documents. Considering the urgency and scope of these global problems, it is necessary that the Netherlands develop a long-term vision to counteract climate change and the deterioration of ecosystems. The impact of the Netherlands on ecosystems elsewhere requires particular scrutiny. Dutch core-competencies such as trade, water management, agrofoods, biochemical and chemical industries, technical innovations, spatial planning and 'polder' diplomacy are essential starting points.

Combating the degradation of ecosystems calls for immediate action, for if we do not act now and start managing vulnerable ecosystems such as rainforests and coral reefs in a sustainable manner, they will be lost forever. A fundamental shift to a more sustainable economy is paramount to remove the causes of the degradation of ecosystems as well. These recommendations also focus on climate change, since its influence on ecosystems and biodiversity is expected to be serious.

The objective of these recommendations is to hand the government concrete and specific points of intervention, essential for making a shift towards a more sustainable economy and for combating the degradation of ecosystems. They are interventions to which the government, civic organizations and the business community could jointly contribute.

IUCN NL has also prepared a document that expands on these 10 recommendations in order to encourage further discussions and dialogues between the government, civic organizations and the business community, and to achieve concrete results within the government's coming term of office.

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<sup>1</sup> Avalon Foundation, ANWB, Both ENDS, Carmabi Foundation, Centrum voor Milieuwetenschappen Leiden, De Landschappen, 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, Stichting FACE (Forests Absorbing Carbon Dioxide Emissions), Staatsbosbeheer, Stichting Natuur en Milieu, Stichting Reservaten Przewalski-paard Nederland, Stichting Tigris, Stichting Trésor, Stichting NatuurCollege, Tropenbos International, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Van Tienhoven Stichting, Vereniging voor Zoogdierkunde en Zoogdierbescherming, Vlinderstichting, Vogelbescherming Nederland, Waddenvereniging, Wereld Natuur Fonds, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, European Centre for Nature Conservation, European Union for Coastal Conservation, Eurosite, Friends of the Earth International, Wetlands International.

<sup>2</sup> A network of individuals from the business community who meet under the auspices of IUCN NL to discuss and act on global issues of nature and environment.

<sup>3</sup> [www.maweb.org](http://www.maweb.org)

<sup>4</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)

# TOWARDS A GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE NETHERLANDS

*These ten recommendations have been drawn up by IUCN NL, in close cooperation with IUCN member organizations, and with contributions from scientists and members of the business community, including participants of the Leaders for Nature initiative.*

## **1. Place the responsibility for a coherent government-wide sustainability policy in the hands of the Prime Minister**

This will give sustainability the priority it deserves and guarantee true coherent policies in all areas relevant for sustainability. The government should produce a long-term vision and a policy plan for sustainability which are also targeted at the protection and sustainable use of ecosystems worldwide. A high-level Task Force for Ecosystems and Biodiversity could help develop this long-term vision and give advice on specific policies.

## **2. Implement further 'greening' of the system of taxes and subsidies**

A further greening of the tax- and subsidy system in a budget neutral manner is vital for tackling the causes of degradation of ecosystems. Levying pollution charges is an effective instrument for enhancing environmentally friendly behaviour and for helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The revenues from these taxes should benefit: a) green innovation, and b) the direct protection of ecosystems that play an important role in the global CO<sub>2</sub> cycle, such as tropical and subtropical forests, peat areas, mangroves, alpine systems and coral reefs.

## **3. Develop policies to reduce the Dutch ecological footprint**

A framework of legislation and policies is needed to reduce our ecological footprint. These regulations and policies should be fair and, if possible, internationally enforceable. As soon as possible, the government should develop an action plan in cooperation with all economic sectors and non-governmental organizations. This plan should encompass concrete objectives to make the production and consumption of wood, bio fuels, palm oil, soy and fish more sustainable in order to stop any further destruction of valuable ecosystems.

## **4. Make protection and sustainable use of ecosystems the cornerstone of international cooperation**

Protection and sustainable use of ecosystems should get a prominent place in development aid, in trade policies, and in the Dutch diplomatic service. Furthermore, it is important to undertake action to help preserve the remaining natural areas in the world. New instruments for enhancing preservation efforts, such as trust funds in which the government and the business community cooperate, could be deployed to secure long-term, successful management of the world's remaining natural areas.

## **5. Take the lead by introducing sustainability at a European level and show leadership in matters concerning European ecological networks, for instance by promoting the construction of corridors along the Rhine, the Scheldt and the Meuse**

Together with like-minded countries, the business community and civic organizations, the Dutch government should make an effort to achieve results regarding the 'greening' of EU regulations and expenditure in areas including climate policy, agriculture and fishery, trade, industrial production and traffic and transport, by making use of the essential Dutch core-competences. One very tangible contribution to stopping the loss of biodiversity and counteracting the effects of climate change would be negotiating agreements with our surrounding countries on constructing ecological corridors along the large rivers.

## **6. Aim for better control over spatial planning to keep the Dutch landscape beautiful, enhance the National Ecological Network (EHS) and nature in and around cities**

Stronger and more focused management is needed to stop further cluttering of the Dutch landscape. This should be based on a uniform vision for all government levels, provide a clear-cut framework, and offer certainty to citizens and companies alike. Make sure that the Dutch water system is ready for climate change, create a coherent green-blue network and reserve extra funds for the National Ecological Network and a substantial renovation of the natural areas in and around cities and the Dutch landscape in general.

## **7. Make Dutch fisheries sustainable and establish five marine protected areas**

These measures have the highest priority to make the North Sea healthy once again and to give fish stocks time to recover. The choice is simple: sustainable fisheries or none at all. A reorganization of the Dutch fishing fleet, especially of the cutter fleet, is necessary to attune fishery to the capacity of the marine ecosystem. Before 2009, five completely closed-off marine protected areas, including the Dogger Bank and the coastal area, should be established.

## **8. Develop a "Green Valley" in the Netherlands for the purpose of innovations**

Technical and 'green' innovations are indispensable for tackling the causes of ecosystem degradation including climate change, and to counteract the consequences. Subsidies alone are not enough to achieve innovation. An enabling environment is also required for fostering the complete process of knowledge development and application in close cooperation with research institutes, multinational and national businesses, and investors. The Green Valley concept is perfectly suitable to this, because it makes use of the capacities of the Dutch business community and the research institutes for finding solutions themselves.

## **9. Stimulate awareness among citizens**

Develop an awareness-raising and educational campaign in cooperation with civic organizations and the business community, and make sure that knowledge and the perception of nature and sustainability have a place in the Dutch national school-curriculum.

## **10. Lead by example**

Make sure that before 1 January 2010, all products and services purchased by the government itself are sustainable, based on truly sustainable criteria in order to promote a market breakthrough.

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