



ST/21-22/051

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP President
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The Rt Hon Lord Patel KT
Chair of the House of Lords Science and
Technology Committee
House of Lords
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Dear Lord Patel,

Thank you for your letter of 15 October, regarding nature-based solutions at COP26. My sincere apologies for the time it has taken to respond.

We have made nature and land use a focus of our COP26 Presidency because we agree that it is essential we tackle the global interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems is critical to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Healthy ecosystems will be more resilient to climate change and so more able to maintain the supply of ecosystem services on which our prosperity and wellbeing depend.

As noted in the Integrated Review “climate change and biodiversity loss present the most severe tests to global resilience and will require particularly urgent action” and the number one priority for the UK Government beyond COP26.

1. Sectoral Emissions

I agree that emissions reductions are essential across every sector. We can, and must, urgently decarbonise - by phasing out coal power, by transitioning to zero emission vehicles and by addressing the circa 23% of global emissions which arise from agriculture, forestry and other land use. Action in all of these areas is a priority for our Presidency and the UK Government.

The UK has shown leadership on driving the global transition from coal to clean power, continuing to co-lead the great work of the Powering Past Coal Alliance and creating the Energy Transition Council. We have also created the Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council, to strengthen international collaboration to accelerate progress on zero emission vehicles, bringing together governments representing over half the global car market. The UK also developed the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which 141 countries endorsed at COP26, committing to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030.

2. The role of nature-based solutions in protecting biodiversity, ecosystems on land and in sea

The UK Government is committed to taking bold action to tackle biodiversity loss and put nature on a path to recovery. However, we are clear that countries cannot tackle environmental and climate crises alone; we need a concerted global effort. This is why, in addition to launching the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, the UK Government co-led the negotiation of the Leaders' Pledge for Nature in 2019, together with the European Commission and Costa Rica. The Pledge commits leaders to take ten urgent actions to put nature on the path to recovery by 2030. The UK is committed to working with our fellow signatories to garner further support and to ensure that both the Declaration and the Pledge commitments translate into sustained, transformative action on the ground.

The UK will lead by example and is the co-chair of the High Ambition Coalition for nature and people which supports a global target to protect at least 30% of land and sea, globally and home by 2030. Over 100 countries now support this target.

Recognising the importance of advancing ocean science, we also announced the intention to work together to establish a new cross-administration UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership. This will address key research questions and progress evidence needs including working to fill the evidence gaps that currently hinder inclusion of saltmarsh and seagrass habitats into the UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory.

3. Working with local communities and stakeholders.

The UK recognises that the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, their knowledge and leadership is essential to the acceleration of climate action. As vital guardians of our forests and critical ecosystems, and as stewards of 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples are leaders in developing nature-based, resilient and effective solutions to climate change.

COP26 recognised the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in relation to the stewardship of and living in harmony with nature - in both decision text and non-negotiated outcomes. The inclusion of Indigenous Peoples can be seen across the conference. The UK COP Presidency funded an Indigenous Peoples Pavilion in the Blue Zone, helped mobilise a \$1.7bn pledge to advance Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' forest tenure rights, and welcomed the new Local Communities and Indigenous Platform (LCIPP) three year work programme. This unprecedented platform was reflected in the Glasgow Climate Pact, which contains strengthened language on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

4. Carbon Accounting

Calculating carbon accounting is challenging, and this is true across every sector - there are many different estimates. We are committed to using the very best science available, and to working with partners to pool knowledge and resources, to improve our collective understanding of the challenges facing us all. That is why we welcomed the Energy Transitions Commission (ETC) on their recent report 'Keeping 1.5 alive - closing the gap in the 2020s.' The report sets out that there are clear opportunities across the land use sector to both reduce the sources of emissions (for example by ending deforestation) and to increase the sinks (for example through reforestation). It estimates the total feasible potential to reduce net emissions by as much as 7.6 GtCO₂ by 2030, through rapidly ending deforestation, through reforestation and restoring coastal wetlands and peatlands, and through improvements in forest management and improved sequestration of carbon in soils.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has also co-commissioned the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) to conduct further research to more deeply understand the synergies between biodiversity targets and mitigation potential, which concludes soon.

5. Financial Support to poorer nations

During the World Leaders Summit at COP26, donor countries pledged to provide \$12 billion of public climate finance from 2021 to 2025 in a new Global Forest Finance Pledge, which will support action in developing countries, including restoring degraded land, tackling wildfires and advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. In addition, twelve country and philanthropic donors pledged at least \$1.5 billion to protect the forests of the Congo Basin, an area of critical importance to global efforts to address climate change as well as to sustainable development in the region.

As noted earlier in this letter, country and philanthropic donors also pledged at least \$1.7 billion from 2021 to 2025 to advance Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' forest tenure rights and support their role as guardians of forests and nature. This includes the UK's new £105m Land Facility Programme. Thirty financial institutions also came forward with over \$8.7 trillion of global assets committed to eliminate investment in activities linked to agricultural commodity driven deforestation, alongside the billions of private finance mobilised to support the forest economy. In addition at least \$7.2 billion of private sector finance has been mobilised - including through the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition, which exceeded its target of mobilising an initial \$1 billion of public and private finance for forests by COP26.

All of these critical issues were highlighted at the World Leaders Summit Forests and Land Use event, through the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, on Nature Day, and in many other events throughout COP26, which discussed practical actions that countries could take individually and together.

In addition, throughout the remainder of our Presidency year, the UK is in a unique position to work with CBD COP15 hosts China, to reinforce and amplify the linkages between climate change and biodiversity and to help deliver the step-change needed to tackle these global issues. The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global framework for biodiversity targets to be adopted at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) next year. This Framework should spur global action and the transformative change needed for halting and reversing global biodiversity loss.

I thank you once again for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Alok Sharma', followed by a period.

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP President