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for the South East of England**

Commissioner Stavros Dimas  
Commissioner for the Environment  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi, 200  
Bruxelles 1049

8 January 2007

Dear Commissioner Dimas,

**1. Latin American statement on biofuels  
2. Classification of peat as a non-renewable energy source**

As you will be aware from my letter of 8 December, I have a number of concerns about the direction of the European Union's policy on biofuels. In view of the Commission's discussions on this subject this week, I am writing again in order to draw to your attention an important statement that has been signed by NGOs in Latin American countries. In addition, I would like to flag up one particular point of issue in the European Parliament's Resolution 2006/2082(INI) of 14 December 2006.

1. Letter from Latin American NGOs

You should have recently received a letter from several NGOs in Latin American countries, which was also addressed to the European Parliament. I would like to signal my support for both the concept and the content of this initiative, the text of which is reproduced at the end of this letter.

There is a real risk that countries in Latin America, as well as others in Asia and Africa, will face massive exploitation of their peoples and natural resources if large-scale, monoculture biofuels plantations are developed. The rapid market expansion foreseen by the EU's biofuels and biomass plans will fundamentally drive such a threat; and as currently constituted, these plans do not provide the necessary safeguards to prevent such exploitation. The types of damage to the environment and local communities to which I referred in my letter of 8 December, which are also now acknowledged in the European Parliament Resolution of 14 December, are very likely to be the result.

The significance of the Commissioners' discussions this week for many Southern nations should not be underestimated. I urge you to read, take note of and raise the matters set out in their representatives' letter.

## 2. Classification of peat as a non-renewable energy resource

I would also like to take this opportunity to flag up concerns over one specific paragraph in the European Parliament's Resolution.

Paragraph 78 of the Resolution reads as follows:

*"Calls on the Commission to include peat, with regard to life-cycle aspect, as a longterm renewable energy source for biomass and bioenergy production;"*

As you will know, however, the greenhouse gas emissions from draining, cutting and burning peat are enormous; and it takes a significant amount of time for peat to re-accumulate after harvest. For these reasons, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has clearly stated in the past that peat is not a renewable energy resource. According to their present definitions, peat is not a biofuel; should not be classed as biomass for energy purposes; and is treated as a fossil fuel by the guidelines on biogenic carbon.

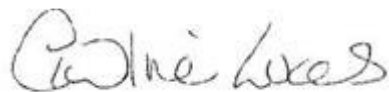
The EU's classification of peat as non-renewable is therefore consistent with IPCC guidance. However, it is worrying that Directive 2003/96/EC excludes peat from the hydrocarbons that have to be taxed for energy production; and I am very concerned that the suggestion in the European Parliament Resolution should not be followed through.

Reclassifying peat in this way would legitimise its burning on European soil, and countries such as Finland, Sweden and Russia would be likely to respond by practising this on a large scale. Finland and Sweden have already classified peat as a "slowly renewable biomass fuel" with associated tax reductions and "green certificates", and the Russian Federation includes peat in its definitions of biomass and renewable energy, both of which are being actively promoted.

Consequently the climatic and biodiversity impacts of such a move by the EU would be extremely serious and, as I am sure you will agree, must be avoided. Please therefore use your good offices during the Commission's discussions of the Biofuels Directive this week to ensure that the EU's classification of peat as non-renewable be maintained. It is also important that the classification of peat as a non-taxable hydrocarbon under Directive 2003/96 to be revoked.

I very much hope that you will raise these matters this week, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP

*Also sent by email, 8 January 2007*

**Joint declaration by the following Latin American civil society groups:**

Alert Against the Green Desert Network

Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations

Network for a GM free Latin America

Oilwatch South America

World Rainforest Movement

*WE WANT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, NOT BIOFUELS*

*We, the undersigned organizations express before the European Parliament, the European Commission, the governments and citizens of the European Union, our deep concern over the policies that are probably to be adopted to favour the use and import of biofuel as an alternative to fossil fuels, whose disproportionate use is one of the main causes of global warming.*

*The increasing use of individual automobiles and their associated oil consumption as one of the main causes of global warming, makes fossil fuels use grow day by day. In this context, the use of biofuels would appear to be a positive alternative. However, everything seems to indicate that this will generate serious negative impacts, especially on the people of the South.*

*In fact, it is most unlikely that Europe will ever achieve self-sufficiency in the production of biofuel from national production of energy crops and therefore it is very possible that this will be done at the expense of lands on which the food sovereignty of our countries depend.*

*While Europeans maintain their lifestyle based on automobile culture, the population of Southern countries will have less and less land for food crops and will lose its food sovereignty. We will have to base our diet on imported food, possibly from Europe.*

*In other cases, energy crops will be grown in Latin America, as well as in Asian and African countries, at the expense of our natural ecosystems. Soybeans are forecasted to be one of the principal sources of biodiesel production, but it is a fact that monoculture soybean plantations are one of the main causes of the destruction of the rainforest in Argentina, of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and Bolivia and of the Mata Atlântica in Brazil and Paraguay.*

*Indigenous territories have also been affected. The Enwene Nawe indigenous people in the Matto Grosso declared, "Soybeans are killing us." At this time, some scant 429 Enawene Nawe people still survive. Their territory has been reduced to half its size and they are surrounded by soybean plantations. Their health is declining and the children suffer from malnutrition.*

*In order to serve the soybean business, the governments of the Southern countries are building dams, waterways, bridges and highways with the consequent negative impacts on the environment. At the same time, the expansion of soybean crops is affecting the health of surrounding populations, where the levels of cancer and other diseases associated with agro toxic chemicals used on these monoculture plantations are increasing day by day.*

*Sugar cane plantations and the production of ethanol in Brazil are the business of an agricultural monopoly using slave labour, and oil palm plantations are expanding at the expense of forests and the territories of the indigenous and other traditional communities of Colombia, Ecuador and other countries, increasingly geared to biodiesel production.*

*The situation is even more serious if we consider that soybean crops in the Southern countries genetically modified and that private companies in Brazil are planning to launch genetically*

*modified varieties of sugar cane on the market in the year 2010. Rejection of genetically modified crops in Latin America is widespread, and the expansion of crops to produce and export biofuels to Europe only exacerbates these conflicts.*

*The problem of climate change generated by the countries of the North cannot be solved by creating new problems in our region. We are therefore appealing to the governments and people of the European Union countries to seek solutions that do not worsen the already dramatic social and environmental situation of the peoples of Latin America, Asia and Africa.*

***IT IS TIME FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY***

***LAND MUST BE USED TO FEED PEOPLE, NOT CARS***