

# Environmental Audit Committee

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Rt Hon David Cameron MP

Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

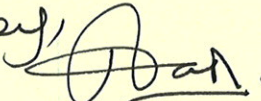
15 December 2014

I am writing to you ahead of the European Council later this week to urge that the Government work with other leaders in developing a European common position favouring a comprehensive coverage of sustainability issues in the Sustainable Development Goals. As we have noted in our report on the SDGs,<sup>1</sup> published today, you have favoured a smaller number of Goals than the 17 put forward by the UN Open Working Group earlier this year. In our report we have emphasised the importance of maintaining the wide consensus around the Working Group's proposals, including by the UN Secretary General whose Synthesis report was published earlier this month.

I do of course acknowledge your personal commitment to the international sustainable development agenda, through your co-chairmanship of the UN High-Level Panel in 2013, and your focus on communicating the goals. Joining other European states later this week in their support for a comprehensive coverage by the Goals would demonstrate also the Government's commitment to environmental sustainability alongside poverty reduction.

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs and their targets will apply to the UK and other developed countries as well as to developing countries. It is doubly important therefore that the process of negotiating an EU line on the SDGs sets off on the right foot in terms of environmental sustainability, particularly at a time when the Commission appears to be considering abandoning the existing proposals for a 'Zero Waste Programme for Europe' and the 'Clean Air Policy Package'. The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee has highlighted the importance of these initiatives in its reports on *Growing a Circular Economy*<sup>2</sup> in July 2014 and *Action on Air Quality*<sup>3</sup> last week. Currently air pollution continues to be an invisible killer in the UK, costing the lives of 29,000 people per year in our towns and cities, and new research due to be published soon looks set to double that figure.

Rising global incomes and population growth means that transitioning to a more resource efficient and circular economy offers real economic and environmental benefits to UK citizens. I have written separately today to Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, urging him not to terminate or delay the two vital environmental initiatives, not just because of the clear benefits which they would bring but also because abandoning them would send Europe in the wrong direction as it addresses the need for relevant and ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

Sincerely,  


Joan Walley MP

Chair, Environmental Audit Committee

<sup>1</sup> ['Connected world: Agreeing ambitious Sustainable development Goals'](#), HC 452

<sup>2</sup> ['Growing a circular economy: Ending the throwaway society'](#), HC 214

<sup>3</sup> ['Action on Air Quality'](#), HC 212