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Subject

Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition: Collaborate towards achieving the SDGs

Dear Mr Tjeenk Willink,

The Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition (*DSGC*) aims to accelerate 'sustainable growth business models' through a share, shape and scale strategy. The eight coalition members share the belief that economic development must go hand in hand with environmental and social progress. They do so by developing their own sustainable business models, sharing knowledge and insights about them with others (*share*) and inspiring policy makers to develop supportive policies (*shape*). The aim is to scale up sustainable business models (*scale*).

The past year has been an unprecedented one for the entire world. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of pain and greatly transformed lives worldwide. Simultaneously, we as a business community – from multinationals to SMEs – have collaborated with scientific institutes and the government in an extraordinary, intensive way over the past year. Through this intensive collaboration, we obtained results that would have taken years to accomplish in normal times and had more impact. This collaboration was characterized by high levels of trust; each with their own responsibilities, but in benefit for the society. We would like to continue our cooperation with the government and scientific institutes in this way, in the interest of our common goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (*SDGs*) of the United Nations.

The SDGs of the United Nations, adopted in 2015, provide us with a future perspective to achieve a more socially just, equal and sustainable world by 2030. This can only be achieved by finding combined solutions that are long term oriented and connect all domains (*social, environmental, and economic*). Partnerships with all stakeholders are crucial to reach these goals. Dialogue is essential for mutual understanding and trust. Governments play a crucial role in this, as do civil society organizations, knowledge institutions, the financial sector, and businesses. The time for action is now more urgent than ever.

We as DSGC would like to propose to the new cabinet to work together to realize the SDGs. In this case we believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that by working together we can achieve a great deal more. In this regard, the DSGC therefore urgently appeals to the parties involved in the formation process to include the following measures in the coalition agreement:

1. Place SDGs at the core of the coalition agreement

- The SDGs set the global agenda until 2030 and should therefore be at the heart of the policy of all members of the United Nations;
- The Netherlands played a key role in the establishment of the SDGs. This provides a solid foundation for the period ahead, including the realization of the sustainability goals and the creation of broad prosperity for all;
- In order to effectively achieve all SDG goals, effective SDG governance is essential;
- As the SDGs encompass both national and international policies, they should be embedded in the policies of all ministries. It is recommended that the coordination of SDG policies be vested in an integrally operating ministry;
- Ensure concrete numerical embedding of the SDG, including broad welfare indicators, in the Budget Memorandum and individual budgets as well as in the reporting on the progress of implementation on Accountability day (3rd Wednesday in May);
- We are actively involved with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (*Topsectorenbeleid*) and are keen to link the global challenges as embodied in the SDGs to that policy;
- We invite the new cabinet to join us in exploring how we can also encourage other companies to integrate SDGs into their business strategy;
- Also, embed SDGs in curricula of education both for leadership development as well as concrete competencies of the new generation;

2. The Netherlands for a flourishing living environment (SDG 2, 3, 15)

- We must directly connect the climate and the circular economy agenda's, as well as their contributions to a healthy living environment (*soil quality, air quality, water quality, waste reduction*);
- A future-proof healthcare and welfare system has proven to be crucial. Where we can, we as companies and as employers will contribute to the shift from curative to preventive through a focus on healthy lifestyles (*including nutrition*), prevention and digital care/care at a distance. We ask the government to invest in this together with us;
- The Netherlands is one of the most innovative and advanced food producers in the world. To maintain this position sustainably, we must continue to invest in healthy soil, biodiversity restoration and regenerative food systems in collaboration with the agricultural sector and other stakeholders in the supply chain;

3. The Netherlands in transition to climate neutrality (SDG 7 & 13)

- We are committed to the Dutch Climate Agreement and the EU Green Deal. Ensure that these plans are implemented - through public-private partnerships - and supported by unambiguous and stable (inter)national policy, and by financing mechanisms that enable the scaling up of promising technologies. This gives companies certainty to continue to invest in sustainable solutions;
- A level playing field is essential to the success of the EU Green Deal. This requires a properly functioning European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and an ETS whose revenues are reinvested in innovation in participating sectors;
- The Netherlands has an excellent starting position as a key European supplier of more sustainable and cleaner fuels, energy solutions and the circular economy. We propose to jointly exploit this position and further expand it through targeted incentive policies;
- To realize our climate ambitions, we must do our utmost to make the building sector more sustainable. To this end, the Netherlands should seek alignment with the Renovation Wave and Green building plans within the EU Green Deal;
- The Netherlands ought to generously support leading international initiatives such as the Global Center on Adaptation;

4. The Netherlands as a driver of circular economy (SDG 12)

- Circular business models, products and raw materials lead to substantial CO₂ reductions, even if these reductions are sometimes made internationally. Without circularity, the climate goals cannot be achieved. We would like to accelerate this together;

- Ensure a good alignment between the Netherlands Circular 2050 implementation program and the EU New Circular Economy Action Plan by using existing platforms such as the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE);
- Within the Netherlands Circular 2050 implementation program, we call for more attention to coordinated steering of the transition agendas, and also explicitly for the 'cross-sectoral themes such as 'procurement policy', 'circular design', 'transparent measuring instruments' and 'regulation';
- A clear, stimulating legal structure aimed at eliminating existing obstacles (e.g. the optimal processing of residual flows) contributes to sustainable progress. This can be accomplished by continuously testing and updating policies against the latest developments and through a strong synergy between Dutch and European regulations;
- The focus in the circular strategy, policy and monitoring should be on all three core objectives of the circular economy: 1. value retention and value creation, 2. reduction of environmental impact and 3. security of supply. Avoid a one-sided focus on only raw materials and recycling;
- The Netherlands needs to make the best use of its circular economy starting position by ensuring that existing instruments and investment funds are available and prioritized for all investments that contribute to the aforementioned goals. Examples are Stimuleringsregeling Duurzame Energieproductie en Klimaats transitie (SDE++ / SDE-K), Demonstratie Energie- en Klimaatinnovatie (DEI+), Richtlijn Hernieuwbare Energie (REDII), InvestNL, and the Nationaal Groeifonds. Many of these instruments will need to be broadened and refined to explicitly financially reward the transition to circular products, services, and materials (such as circular plastics);
- We request the government to invest with businesses in sustainable innovative technologies, such as circular plastics, repair and 'refurbishment', chemical recycling and green hydrogen;

5. 'Holland branding': The Netherlands the country of sustainable innovation (SDG 9)

- The Netherlands possesses the expertise and the companies to play a role in global sustainability. How can we fulfil that role together?;
- We want to structurally promote the Netherlands internationally as 'Dutch Sustainable Growth Valley'. The DSGC members will contribute to this by working together with the government and intelligently sharing their best practices and sustainable solutions;
- A competitive Dutch business and investment climate is needed to be able to continue fulfilling this role. This includes key elements such as innovation policy, including social innovation, infrastructure, digitization and taxation;

6. The Netherlands on the march for sustainability within Europe

- Embed the EU Green Deal, including the New Circular Economy Action Plan, into proposed policies and national recovery plans;
- Governments play a critical role both industry players and as launching customers. The Netherlands should make efforts to include sustainability criteria in European procurement rules. To create a European level playing field national procurement criteria (e.g. circularity) must be aligned with international standards. Sustainable procurement criteria at the national and decentralized government levels help by providing an opportunity for sustainable frontrunners who continuously invest in product, process and supply chain sustainability;
- To further stimulate international Corporate Social Responsibility (IMVO), the DSGC supports an EU-wide due diligence obligation that is practical for business and aligned with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles;
- In the European context, there is a role for the Netherlands to work on the SDGs, climate policy and the circular economy as part of a repositioning of Europe and to make this part of EU policy efforts such as diplomacy, trade and investment.

The members of the DSGC are pleased to discuss the content of this letter with you in further detail.

Given the importance of the subject, we have sent a copy of this letter to the party chairpersons.

Finally, we wish you every success in completing the information work assigned to you.

Yours sincerely,
On behalf of the members of the DSGC,



Jan Peter Balkenende, Chairman DSGC

Thierry Vanlancker, CEO AkzoNobel
Dimitri de Vreeze, Co-CEO DSM
Hein Schumacher, CEO FrieslandCampina
Dolf van den Brink, CEO HEINEKEN
Pieter Elbers, CEO KLM
Hans de Jong, President Philips Nederland

Marjan van Loon, President-directeur Shell Nederland
Annemarieke de Haan, CEO Unilever Benelux
Ingrid Thijssen, Voorzitter VNO-NCW



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