



WWF Adria – Serbia
Svetska organizacija za prirodu
Đure Jakšića 4a/8
11000 Beograd, Srbija
Тел: +381 11 30 33 753
E-mail: serbia@wwfadria.org
wwfadria.org/sr

President
Mr Aleksandar Vučić
Generalni Sekretarijat predsednika Republike
Andrićev venac 1, 11000 Beograd, Srbija

Prime Minister
Ms Ana Brnabić
Kabinet predsednice Vlade
Nemanjina 11, 11000 Beograd, Srbija

President of the National Assembly of Serbia
Ms Maja Gojković
Dom Narodne Skupštine Republike Srbije
Trg Nikole Pašića 13, 11000 Beograd, Srbija

5th May 2020

Dear Mr. Vučić, Ms. Brnabić and Ms. Gojković,

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is a crisis of unprecedented scale and still uncertain consequences. We recognize the challenging situation faced by the Government of having to, on one side develop and ensure implementation of measures to keep its people safe and healthy, while on the other, start preparing for the economic and social fallout brought about by those same measures.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives caused by the virus, and as members of the public, extend our appreciation for the hard work in containing the spread of this disease in our country.

As members of civil society, however, we are urging you to uphold the principles of transparency and good governance as foundations of a democratic society based on the rule of law, and respecting human rights of each individual, despite the uncertain and difficult times. Our country subscribes to the principles of transparency and good governance by accepting the EU *acquis* through the EU integration process, as well as by having endorsed various international conventions, such as the Aarhus Convention.

Transparency requires the disclosure of information on policy-making and spending while ensuring citizens' access to such information. It is, therefore, a key element to build accountability and trust in decision-makers.

Good governance principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence serve to build trust in the policy-making process, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and credibility of public institutions. Especially important are the principles of timely information and participation, which serve to ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making processes by engaging all interested stakeholders. In addition to increasing the credibility of the process, they allow for wider ownership of decisions made, providing an opportunity to co-develop and improve on original ideas. Inclusive participation is also one way to ensure institutions are held accountable for their actions or inactions.

Meaningful, consistent and continued application of transparency and good governance is paramount in these challenging times, in order not to erode human rights, the fragile rule of law and democratic decision making present in our society. The current extreme working conditions, including limited movement and no gatherings, are not conducive to properly ensuring participatory decision making and transparency. **Thus, we urge the Government to postpone any decision making that is not immediately relevant to the health and safety of the people, for which meaningful transparency and participation cannot be secured.**

In the interim, we understand that relevant institutions need to start devising relief measures and plans to curb possible economic downturn following the pandemic. With this in mind, we bring forth several recommendations that will help us to bounce forward and accelerate the shift towards an economy which is climate neutral, protects and restores our natural world, health and wellbeing, and lets nothing go to waste - in a way that is fair and leaves no-one behind:

- **Uphold and strengthen the implementation and funding of existing environmental standards and policies to address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution.** If we fail to make progress here, we will only make the current climate and biodiversity crises more severe and expensive. This price will be paid by every member of our society, but it will leave a stronger mark on the already poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable.
- **Make a major investment in awareness raising and education about human rights, sustainable development and nature conservation, strengthening our society to face future challenges.** Through long-term dedicated investment in education and awareness raising, including also by supporting civil society organisations, we build a just, more tolerant, and informed society capable of meaningfully addressing the most pressing threats to our wellbeing, namely the climate crisis, the loss of biodiversity and overall deterioration of our planet's capacity to sustain our way of life.
- **Make distribution of stimulus funds and bail-outs conditional on consistency with the European Green Deal and the Paris Accord, in order to drive the transformation of our economy towards sustainability.** These investments should deliver long-term benefits for our society, and help make our economy more resilient to increasing shocks. This was already supported by 17 European climate and environment ministers, who asked that recovery plans integrate the green transition and digital transformation.
- **Launch large scale sustainable initiatives in line with public interest.** In addition to providing direct employment for those affected by the economic downturn and helping relaunch the economy, these initiatives need to deliver tangible and unequivocal environmental benefits, such as ecosystem restoration, direct emissions reductions, energy efficiency, and decarbonization.
- **Provide support to (local) civil society organizations** that have wide reach in community-based service delivery, working directly with the most vulnerable groups. In addition to developing new programs to make use of, the funds already allocated for the CSO support should continue to be fully available to sustain their work. Disbursing these funds will be instrumental in continuing to support the development of civic space, as well as functioning of civil society organisations that can be a powerful partner in co-creating solutions to alleviate the impacts of crises.

Our organizations stand ready to work with you to ensure that despite these challenges, we continue down the path of a just and fair transition towards a genuinely sustainable society, where no one is left behind.

Beside WWF Adria – Serbia, this letter is supported by following organizations:

Safer Chemicals Alternative – Alhem

Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia

One Degree Serbia
Environment Engineering Group
Belgrade Open School
Climate Action Network Europe
Environment Improvement Centre
Young Researches of Serbia

Sincerely,

Deni Porej

CEO WWF Adria

