

The Government of the Netherlands
Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union
Prime Minister, Minister of General Affairs
Mr Mark Rutte
Ministerie van Algemene Zaken
Binnenhof 19
2513 AA Den Haag

And to the attention of: **Mr Maroš Šefčovič, European Commission Vice-President**
Mr Dominique Rostori, Director General for Energy, European Commission
Mr Miguel Arias Cañete, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy

Berlin, 24 May 2016

Open Letter: RGI requests that civil society becomes an important and active stakeholder in the soon to be launched North Seas Forum to guarantee success and speed up offshore development while respecting nature and the rights of interested stakeholders

Dear Mr Rutte,

The "Political Declaration on energy co-operation between the North Seas Countries" that is to be signed by the North Seas' neighbouring EU Member States on 6 June 2016 should foresee the clear involvement of civil society. This needs to be fully reflected in the governance structure of the forum, ideally with a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities.

Offshore development can only be successful if all stakeholders are properly and sufficiently involved. Environmental protection as well as the needs and wants of often competing interest groups demand a strong base of interaction strictly linked to firstly, the permitting process and later to the implementation of projects. We have seen industrial initiatives struggling over and over again due to a lack of public support. The offshore environment is not different, on the contrary: our knowledge about cumulative environmental impacts as well as citizens' concerns is limited.

Composed of a unique network of transmission system operators and influential environmental NGOs from across Europe, the Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) has been extensively working on improving approaches towards stakeholder engagement and public participation, which are key to delivering timely and publicly acceptable projects.

In view of the current development of offshore generation and transmission in the North Seas, there is a clear new momentum to further foster the exploitation of the North Seas' offshore potential while ensuring a transparent and close consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This could be enabled and realised by the creation of a civil society shadow (informal) advisory committee tasked with providing input to all work activities foreseen in the declaration. This body should be enshrined in the declaration launching the North Seas Forum, thus supporting the aims for a "pragmatic, step-by-step, bottom-up approach" building on and pursuing the important work, which has already been undertaken in the context of several existing regional initiatives, such as the North Seas Countries' Offshore Grid Initiative.

RGI is ready to support the process and explore how offshore development can become an opportunity for local communities, local stakeholders as well as for protecting the environment.

Yours faithfully,



Antonella Battaglini
Chief Executive Officer of the Renewables Grid Initiative

About the Renewables Grid Initiative

The Renewables Grid Initiative is a unique collaboration of transmission system operators (TSOs) and environmental NGOs from across Europe. We promote transparent, environmentally sensitive grid development to enable the further steady growth of renewable energy and the energy transition. RGI members originate from a variety of European countries, consisting of TSOs from Belgium (Elia), France (RTE), Germany (50Hertz, TenneT and Amprion), Italy (Terna), the Netherlands (TenneT), Switzerland (Swissgrid) and Norway (Statnett), Spain (REE); and NGOs such as WWF International, BirdLife Europe, Fundación Renovables, Germanwatch, Legambiente, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe and Natuur&Milieu. RGI was launched in 2009.