

**Kingdom of the Netherlands - written submission for HLPF General Debate**

COVID-19 poses one of the largest challenges the global community has ever faced.

The crisis magnifies existing inequalities in access to healthcare and economic conditions.

The pandemic disproportionately affects people in vulnerable positions and highlights the importance of vital jobs in our societies.

Our response must be strong and undivided.

Not only in finding an effective vaccine for the COVID 19 virus. But also in getting back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The current COVID-crisis is also a wake-up call: we simply cannot return to business as usual.

Building back better is key to deliver the transformational change needed to achieve the SDGs.

This means:

*building greener* by investing in green and circular industries that firmly put our economy on the path of realizing the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

*Building fairer societies* by creating a safety net for the most vulnerable, investing in public health and education in order to leave no one behind.

And *building together*: coming to terms with existing patterns of discrimination and racism and providing strong roles for women in our recovery efforts .

The Netherlands fully align with the recent EU Green Deal combined with a strong strategy for investments, global trade and diplomacy. It has the potential to accelerate sustainability transitions in global value chains.

Also on a national scale we're making a transition, step by step.

Our ambition is to achieve a 49% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030.

In 2050 our economy will be fully circular. We're putting this in practice right now:

- We're building circular bridges and roads. In 2030 all our concrete is circular. That's good for 30% CO2-reduction.
- We're setting new standards for packaging: within five years 75% of all our packaging is recyclable and reusable.

We are not only innovating our own industry. But also investing in international cooperation.

That's why we're hosting the PACE Hub in The Hague.

This platform for global leaders and their organizations will accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

At present the PACE community consists of 75 public, private and civic executive leaders and over 200 members championing 18 tangible projects across the globe.

In addition to that, we will be hosting a high-level meeting of the World Circular Economy Forum on 15 April 2021. It will be dedicated to the contribution that a circular economy can offer in combatting climate change.

If we simply focus on energy-use in our mitigation efforts, we will only be able to solve half of the puzzle. We should also look at how we produce and use *products*.

The circular economy is the missing piece in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. It's an great opportunity we have to seize.

Back to this year.

We're celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN.

The actual COVID19-pandemic shows us that multilateral and international cooperation is more needed than ever, with the United Nations at its core. The SDG agenda is key as a mainspring of our economies.

And the Netherlands endorses the Decade of Action, presented by the UN Secretary General: that is exactly what we need.

The real solution is in working together for a less vulnerable and more resilient and inclusive economy.

In other words: that's the real vaccine for risks of climate change and growing social-economic indifferences.

Together, we can make this happen.