Civil Society’s commitment to a sustainable recovery of Ukraine
A Joint Statement of the green CSO community and call for collaboration

Civil society has played a crucial role in defending Ukraine against Russia’s military aggression, a role that is complementary to governmental action. Similarly, civil society engagement could greatly improve the quality and speed of environmental reforms framed by the Ukraine Facility, the Ukraine Plan, the Environmental Compact, and EU Green Deal implementation. In fact, the Ukraine Facility Regulation as well as the Environmental Compact underscore the need for involving civil society in preparing, implementing and monitoring recovery and reform projects and that is for good reasons.

As representatives of green CSOs in Ukraine and other European countries engaged in Ukraine recovery discussions, we gather to underscore the critical importance of prioritizing sustainability not only in the recovery but also the EU accession process of Ukraine. We have to do everything possible to make sustainability the guiding star of our collective efforts, intertwining environmental, social, and economic considerations, while acknowledging that the reality of war sometimes might demand more pragmatism and compromises than in peace times. By working collaboratively and decisively, we can overcome today’s challenges and pave the way for a brighter, greener future for generations to come.

We, the civil society organisations signed below, have a lot to offer when it comes to advancing sustainability. We can translate research results into a language people understand and use it to raise awareness and facilitate engagement on topics related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, the transition to renewable energy and circular economy, improved land-use planning, animal welfare, and more. We can enrich discussions with our environmental know-how and inspire with our motivation to work for the public good. We offer unbiased views, untainted from competing agendas, unconstrained from governmental procedure, and often provide the most accurate feedback from their communities, ensuring to include those with special needs. We thus believe it is of critical importance to engage green CSOs in policy discussions.

Making Ukraine’s recovery green and sustainable is a long term endeavor but there are some short-term tasks that need urgent attention. These are outlined in Annex 1.
Ingredients for fruitful collaboration

As stated above, the green CSO community is ready to invest its time, know-how, energy and motivation in working with governmental and other stakeholders toward the goal of achieving sustainable development within the planetary boundaries. However, engagement will be most fruitful if:

- Governmental players share data and information proactively and consistently;
- Governmental players are ready to give access to CSOs from the beginning to the end of policy and decision making processes and feel accountable for using the input received to the best possible degree;
- Donors consider investment in capacity building measures to enable green CSOs to engage effectively and efficiently;
- Donors consider the provision of resources to CSOs that actively engage in the recovery process.

Attached: Annex 1 - Short-term actions that need urgent attention and for which green NGOs offer their support and engagement:
Annex 1
Short-term actions that need urgent attention and for which green NGOs offer their support and engagement:

1. **Build meaningful CSO engagement mechanisms.** The Ukraine Facility Regulation requires the Ukraine government to explain the mechanisms to involve civil society organisations in decision-making on the use of the support in the reconstruction process. The Regulation also states that the preparation and implementation of the Ukraine Plan shall be done in consultation with civil society organisations. We would very much like to provide our suggestions for how such mechanisms for CSO involvement could look like and engage in its implementation. This would also be in compliance with The Environmental Compact for Ukraine’s Recommendation 43.

2. **“Do No Significant Harm” guidelines.** The principle of "Do no Significant Harm" is a guiding principle increasingly applied in the EU policy context, including environmental management, development projects, and humanitarian aid. The Ukraine Facility Regulation refers to the Do No Significant Harm principle but it is clear that guidelines are needed to spell out what it actually means in the Ukrainian context so that state authorities can use it efficiently and effectively as a guiding framework for decision-making and policy development across various sectors to minimize negative impacts, and promote the well-being of communities and ecosystems. NGOs would like to engage in this process of drafting guidelines and suggest making this a priority for planning and implementation of reconstruction projects.

3. **EU accession process.** The government and society are committed to fast EU accession and we are all aware that the EU environmental acquis is a major hurdle to take. It requires “all hands on deck”. The green NGO community offers specialized knowledge and expertise in environmental issues, including conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, pollution, renewable energy development, and sustainable development. Our research, data analysis, and policy assessments can inform the state's accession negotiations and policy development processes. Also, we would gladly share our knowhow with policymakers on the “how and why” of environmental sustainability and learn ourselves in the process. We can collectively foster partnerships and collaboration between the state, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector to tackle complex environmental challenges to accelerate progress towards EU accession goals in the environmental field. We suggest making e.g the following aspect a focus for the near future: achieve compliance with the EU’s environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment directives in accordance with Recommendation 42 of the Environmental Compact for Ukraine.

4. **Renewable energy transition.** As a response to the urgent need of developing decentralised energy solutions and as a contribution to the governmental goal of full decarbonisation of the energy sector by 2050, the green CSO community offers its experience and networks for finding best strategies, policies and financial
mechanisms required to scale up deployment of renewable energy projects around the country. CSOs and charity foundations have implemented numerous green reconstruction projects in cooperation with municipalities, aimed at improving resilience of communities. Now, all stakeholders need to come together to find systemic approaches and policy tools to promote a healthy development of a decentralised energy system in Ukraine.

5. **Nature-positive infrastructure.** EU legislation, the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Environmental Compact for Ukraine require conservation and extension of protected areas and staying within the planetary boundaries. At the same time, the country needs to rebuild and modernise its physical infrastructure as a precondition for economic development. These objectives can go together provided the knowledge base on biodiversity and ecosystem service exists and infrastructure developers are enabled and willing to consider these data in the planning process to minimise impact on the natural environment. The green CSO community has knowledge and ideas to share how to make this happen.

6. **Countering corruption.** Both the Ukraine Facility Regulation and the Environmental Compact for Ukraine are clear about their expectation that Ukraine’s government is firmly committed to transparency and countering corruption. Green CSOs are ready to play their watchdog role and uncover signs of misconduct in the field of natural resource use.

**Signatories (list below)**
1. Austausch e.V.
2. CEE Bankwatch Network
3. Centre for Environmental Initiatives 'Ecoaction'
4. CO Nature Fund of Ukraine
5. Conflict and Environment Observatory
6. Danube-Carpathian Programme
7. Ecological News (Kherson)
8. Energy Act for Ukraine Foundation

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10. Energy Transition coalition
11. Eurogroup for Animals
12. EuroNatur
13. Germanwatch
14. GREENPEACE-Germany
15. GREENPEACE-Ukraine
16. ICO “Environment- People - Law”
17. Mariupol Zero Waste
18. NABU - The Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union
19. NESEHNUTÍ
20. NGO Ecoclab
21. NGO Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group
22. NGO Vision Zero
23. NGO SaveDnipro
24. UAnimals
25. Ukrainian National Bar Association
26. Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds (USPB)
27. WWF Central and Eastern Europe
28. WWF Germany
29. WWF Ukraine
30. Zaporizhzhya Zero Waste
31. Zero Waste Kharkiv
32. Zero Waste Lutsk
33. Zero Waste Lviv
34. Zero Waste Society