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Deze week vertegenwoordigde minister van Milieu, Sharon Dijksma, ons land op de United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) die om de twee jaar plaatsvindt in Nairobi, Kenia. Vertegenwoordigers van meer dan 170 landen waren aanwezig. In Nairobi bevindt zich het hoofdkwartier van het United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) dat onder leiding staat van Mr. Achim Steiner. Tijdens de verschillende sessies werd onder andere gesproken over de internationale klimaatagenda 2030, hoe verder na 'Parijs' en de relatie klimaat en de Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) van de VN. Ook minister Dijksma heeft op een aantal sessies het woord genomen, zoals over klimaat en gezondheid, het VN voorstel voor het opstarten van een 'centre of excellence on adaptation' in ons land en de circulaire economie/fosfaat.

Short speech by the Dutch Minister for the Environment

Thank you, Mr Chair. I am pleased we are having this dialogue, because the importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be emphasised enough. The Netherlands is very keen to involve other civil society actors in addressing the enormous challenges we face, and seizing the opportunities that go with them.

Our country has a tradition of cooperation – we called it 'poldering', or the 'Dutch approach'. It makes for creative, innovative solutions and builds public support for policy and measures. More support means greater chances of success.

Let me give you an example. The Netherlands now has a Post-2015 Charter, initiated by a group of 'World Connectors'. The charter has been signed by 60 companies and civil society organisations. They are setting to work implementing the SDGs, each in their own field and using their own expertise. This coalition is a strong partner for government. A government that cannot find and apply solutions and actions alone, and has no intention of doing so.

Over the past few days I have called for us to promote this type of coalition. I would like to set a good example, to practise what we preach. So I am proud to announce that, together with a number of other parties – including UNEP – I will be signing a Letter of Intent immediately after this dialogue. The goal is sustainable land use, under the motto: 'saving the planet, hectare by hectare'. And how do we mean to do this? With Verified Conservation Areas.

Let me briefly explain. Preservation of our natural capital must be our guiding light. Sustainable production and consumption are a prerequisite for a sustainable and prosperous future, for all the world's people.

Verified Conservation Areas are an instrument, a means to an end. They are a voluntary instrument, calling upon civil society actors to set a goal for biodiversity and restoration of ecosystems and to report publicly on progress towards it. No more, and certainly no less. It is rather like the approach to climate change: a register of voluntary pledges, whose implementation can be publicly monitored.

The register's transparency and accountability are attractive, and not only for investors. They are also a great way of informing and involving stakeholders in a region. This is a rich source of experience to learn from.

The Netherlands has supported the development of this instrument over the past few years. I am pleased that we can now take the next step: forming an international coalition of public and private parties to take practical steps towards implementation.

We aim to expedite matters and put this on a solid foundation. Our goal is to go from 300,000 to a million registered hectares by the end of 2017.

To achieve this, the focus of the coalition is on practical and effective cooperation.

I will report on the interim result in December at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity in Cancún.

I should like to invite every one of you to join this coalition, share your ideas with us and take part in the effort. This is a practical tool that could take us a big step closer to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.