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## **Press remarks by Commissioner Sinkevičius following the meeting of environment ministers**

Brussels, 23 June 2020

Dear colleagues,

The coronavirus crisis has affected our society and our economy hard. What is important now that we go for the recovery, is to make sure that we come up with the most effective and most sustainable solutions.

During the video conference with Environment ministers and representatives from the Member States we have discussed a green path proposed by the Commission and leading towards sustainability and resilience, with the interests of the EU citizens at its centre.

This path is an answer to the call from the European Council for a green recovery. I have taken particular note of the letter signed by many of the Ministers in this regard.

Our aim is an economic recovery that directs investments to the green and digital transitions. This is the way to ensure that we keep to the green oath "do no harm", and that we build back better.

We discussed with the ministers the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 that are drafted in the same spirit.

The new Circular Economy Action Plan, presented just a few days before lockdown, becomes a vaccination to our economies against sudden shocks and uncertainties that follow them.

It will safeguard our environment, contribute to fighting climate change, and increase the competitive sustainability of EU business. By making sustainable products a norm, it will build resilience for industry, provide customers with cost-saving opportunities, a true right to repair, and help society to reduce waste and pollution.

By the way, applying circular economy principles across the EU economy has the potential to create around 700 000 new jobs that are so needed to recover from the crisis.

The Biodiversity Strategy aims to build our societies' resilience to future threats: climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks. Over half of global GDP – some €40 trillion – is linked to nature and we can not ignore it. Thus the Biodiversity Strategy can play a major role in a green recovery as well.

At the same time, nature protection and restoration can create many new jobs. Full implementation of the existing Natura 2000 network would support over 175 000 direct and indirect jobs in protected areas management and conservation activities alone. In addition to that, we also talk about extensive agriculture, restoration of forests, peatlands, greening urban spaces and so much more.

So these are the plans that we discussed today. I am glad with all the support I received from the

colleagues from the Member States. I'm sure we can deliver on these priorities together.

Using this opportunity, I would like to thank Croatian Presidency for work during these extraordinary times. It was not a traditional Presidency and certainly it was not the easy one.

Now I am ready to answer your questions.

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