

JANEZ POTOČNIK

Member of the European Commission

Brussels, 26 FEB. 2008

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Mrs Belen Balanya
Corporate Europe Observatory
De Wittenstraat 25
1052 AK Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Dear Mrs Balanya,

Thank you very much for your letter e-mailed to me on 15 January 2008 in which you express your concerns that the overall effects on the environment of a wider adoption of biofuels have not been adequately addressed in the Strategic Research Agenda and Strategy Deployment Document written by the European Biofuels Technology Platform.

Firstly, I would like to refer to my letter of June 27 2007 in reply to your letter of June 1, in which I have clearly explained that in the design and implementation of RTD Framework Programmes, we take into consideration a variety of sources, of which the Biofuels Technology Platform is one.

It would therefore be more appropriate to address comments on the Strategic Research Agenda and Strategy Deployment Document to the Biofuels Technology Platform, rather than to the European Commission. We do, however, take note of your concerns.

Secondly, I understand that you support research objectives that would focus on production of alternative fuels that can effectively reduce greenhouse emissions and also on how to avoid potential negative effects of their production pathways. This indeed corresponds also to my understanding of research priorities and I have underlined that in my previous reply to you. The planned and ongoing work under themes *Energy; Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology*; and *Environment (including Climate Change)* clearly demonstrate that. In addition, DG JRC's institutes are doing important work in this regard.

Thirdly, you complain that the process leading to the adoption of the Biofuels Technology Platform's strategic documents was in your opinion undemocratic. I encouraged you in my previous reply to consider applying for membership of a stakeholder group. I understand that you decided against such participation.

I met with Mr Luís Cabra and other members of the Biofuels Technology Platform in advance of the public European Biofuels Technology Platform Stakeholders Conference, which took place in Brussels, 31 January 2008.

I was extremely encouraged by the clear priority given by the Technology Platform leaders to environmental concerns throughout the biofuels chain. They emphasized that they attach great importance to ensuring sustainable production and gaining social acceptance for biofuels. I was supportive of the work being done by the platform in bringing together a variety of stakeholders and I encouraged them to continue their work to address transparently the question of environmental impact through a widened public debate. They also reassured me about the openness and inclusiveness of the process.

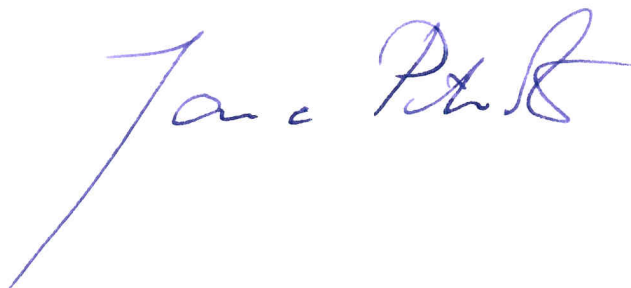
After hearing the reports from the stakeholder conference, I have little reason to believe that anybody who wanted to engage in discussion was excluded. I understand that a whole session of the European Biofuels Technology Platform Stakeholders Conference was devoted to the question of the sustainability of biofuels as addressed by the SRA and SDD. A well-balanced set of speakers were able to present a wide range of opinions and included Mrs Imke Lübbecke of the WWF Europe who spoke on "How to make biofuels sustainable – an NGO perspective" and Mr Loek Boonekamp of the OECD who tackled the subject of "Biofuels for Transport – Opportunity or Threat for Agricultural Commodity Markets?". It is evident that the titles of the presentations are themselves questions, which further emphasises that the debate is very much at an early stage, and I welcome this openness on the part of the platform and those who attended the conference.

I hope it is clear from my reply that I consider discussion on the environmental impact of biofuels as very important. I am also aware that there are some uncertainties to which we need to continue to pay close attention.

I encourage you to make further contacts with all the interested parties including the platform to make sure that your voice is heard. I will also send a copy of this correspondence to the platform secretariat, so that they are aware of your concerns.

Finally, I have noticed that you published your letters on your website. For reasons of transparency I would appreciate it if you could also publish both of my replies, so our entire correspondence is available to the interested general public.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane P. B.", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.