

Amsterdam, January 18, 2021

**Subject: Opinion article** (690 words)

*This opinion piece is adapted from a letter that, translated into Swedish, was sent on Monday 180121 to the CEO of Vattenfall, Headquarters Sweden.*

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## How sustainable are Vattenfall's intentions?

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*Energy company "Vattenfall", which has 2 million private and many business customers in the Netherlands, has been running an international "sustainability campaign" for some time now, claiming to be "fossil-free within a generation". According to **Fenna Swart, Maarten Visschers and Johan Vollenbroek**, this campaign is at odds with the company's plan to build in Diemen what will become the largest biomass combustion plant in the Netherlands. According to the authors, Vattenfall should therefore, in word and deed, turn against biomass combustion by requesting the province of Noord-Holland to immediately withdraw the permits already granted - which are not yet irrevocable - so that the court hearings on 1 February 2021 can be cancelled.*

To be profitable, Vattenfall wants to burn large amounts of wood for heat. For this purpose, more than 200,000 tons of forests are cut down annually in the Baltic States and the US, crushed - with everything that still lives in it - and shipped by bulk carriers to the Netherlands. We, along with many other nature organizations, residents' groups, action committees, as well as forest experts and scientists from the Netherlands and abroad, have been campaigning against this for more than two years, and with success. Last year hundreds of children walked a protest march to Vattenfall Diemen. At the end of this month the 5-day 'Tour de Biomassa; StopVattenfall.nl' will start, " a moving billboard bus" through the country, culminating in the court hearing against Vattenfall, brought by MOB, Clean Air Committee and Natuurmonumenten, combined with the national demonstration against biomass power plants in Haarlem. and a large number of citizens!

### **Tree-free within a year**

Vattenfall, which has 2 million private and many business customers in the Netherlands, has been running an international "sustainability campaign" for some time now, claiming to be "fossil-free within a generation". The common joke that is now widely shared via social media is that Vattenfall is committed to "being free of trees within a year". The Swedish spokesman "sustainability" recently, when asked, indicated that Vattenfall will not continue to build if there is "no local support". But it remains to be seen what these words are worth. Not the residents of the Netherlands, nor the municipalities involved, science (KNAW and EASAC), government advisory institutions (SER) and not even the politicians that still believe in it. Two years ago, the House of Representatives indicated to a large majority that they did not want to continue with the subsidy of woody biomass. Still, last week Vattenfall ordered the court to pursue the lawsuit. After all, postponement could mean that the reserved subsidies (400 million euros) could be endangered. These actions do not indicate that Vattenfall is reflecting, as it announced last summer. That is why we believe that, as a large energy

company, Vattenfall should turn its back on biomass combustion in word and deed. Due to its size, Vattenfall has the strength and the economic and commercial ability to do this. In the meantime, we will do everything possible to inform Vattenfall's customers and induce them to cancel their energy contract. We have already started this and will continue to do so until Vattenfall changes its business policy, with the first step ending the construction plans of the biomass plant in Diemen. That this is not an empty threat is evident from, among other things, successful legal proceedings regarding nitrogen emissions in the Netherlands, which have so far led to an economic and political crisis<sup>1</sup>.

### **Fake news about certification**

Numerous scientific reports show how much wood pellets and so-called residual wood do not meet the requirements as specified in the current certification. Devastating clear cutting in Estonia<sup>2</sup> and other Scandinavian countries (including Sweden) and North America. Certification has the opposite effect<sup>3</sup>. The loss of biodiversity is catastrophic and serious air pollution around the power stations adds to the illusion of biomass combustion as a sustainable resource. Last week, for example, it turned out the municipality of Amsterdam kept measurement data from the AEB biomass power station hidden<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, both the municipality of Amsterdam and Vattenfall Netherlands openly admit that the government subsidy (SDE +) on wood combustion is the main reason for building these and similar biomass plants<sup>5</sup>. These (SDE +) subsidies, therefore run contrary to sustainability, as hundreds of scientists have previously indicated, and present only an economic opportunity for Vattenfall and those involved on the political side of this fraudulent sustainability scheme<sup>6</sup>.

### **Declaration of war**

Vattenfall, if it still wants to remain credible, must therefore be the first energy company to turn against the combustion of biomass by requesting the province of Noord-Holland to immediately withdraw the permits already granted, but not yet irrevocable, so that the court hearings on 1 February 2021 don't have to continue. If Vattenfall does not comply, we will interpret it as a declaration of war on the part of Vattenfall and initiate a boycott to persuade as many of Vattenfall's 2 million customers as possible to switch to one of the five truly sustainable energy suppliers without biomass combustion.

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**Dr. Fenna Swart, chairwomen Comitee Schone Lucht, Drs. Maarten Visschers, Leefmilieu and Drs. Johan Vollenbroek, chairman Mobilisation for the Environment<sup>7</sup>,**

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<sup>1</sup> See also: Nitrogen decision of Raad van State, 31 mei 2019

<sup>2</sup> [https://media.voog.com/0000/0037/1265/files/Biomass\\_report\\_ENG%20\\_2020.pdf](https://media.voog.com/0000/0037/1265/files/Biomass_report_ENG%20_2020.pdf) See chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2020/sustainability-standards-briefing/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mobilisation.nl/index.php?id=5>

<sup>5</sup> The subsidy for Vattenfall's planned biomass power station in Diemen amounts to 396 million euros, raised by the Dutch taxpayer.

<sup>6</sup> EASAC 2018, 2019 en 2020

<sup>7</sup> See also the websites: <https://www.leefmilieu.nl/>, [www.mobilisation.com](http://www.mobilisation.com), <https://mobilisation.nl/nl/>, <http://www.comiteschonelucht.nl/>