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Shell North Sea Oil Spill – Update to Council Private Sector Task Force

Dear Task Force Members,

As many of you are aware, Royal Dutch Shell has recently been involved in an oil spill, the so-called Gannet oil leak, in the North Sea off the Scottish coast.

As with all significant environmental incidents, we are monitoring the situation closely. In this particular case, Shell has been proactive and open in sending me updates since last week. I have sent a letter to Malcolm Brinded, Shell's Executive Director, Upstream International, and a member of the company's board, expressing our concern about such incidents and also suggesting that IUCN stands ready to help if needed.

Although the specific causes of the incident are still not fully understood, I understand from both the information that Shell has given us, as well as information in the public domain, that the oil leak is substantially under control. UK media have also reported in recent days that the government considers it unlikely the leak will damage sea birds, fish or other marine life, and that it will disperse naturally.

The UK Department of Energy and Climate Change is [monitoring the situation](#) along with the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The Scottish Government is also playing a key role, particularly through Marine Scotland which is [assessing the spill's impacts](#).

In the coming days and weeks, IUCN will stay vigilant in monitoring the impacts of the spill on marine biodiversity. In addition, IUCN will help scrutinize Shell's and the UK government's investigations into the causes of this accident and the subsequent implementation of any operational or technological recommendations to reduce the risk of this type of accident happening again.

Although this accident occurred in relatively shallow seas, and with an oil drilling platform that has been operational for more than 30 years, the messages on risk, technology and knowledge outlined in Council's [Statement on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill](#) in June last year, which called for a global moratorium on oil and gas exploitation in ecologically sensitive areas such as deepwater ocean and polar areas, are still relevant.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

With best wishes,

Julia Marton-Lefèvre
Director General