



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

The 2010 Biodiversity Challenge: Will the EU reach it? What future after 2010?

Brussels, February 16, 2009: The newly renamed European Parliament Intergroup on Climate Change and Biodiversity hosted a high-level international conference on the EU Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) at the European Parliament in Brussels on February 11th. With more than 160 attendants, the speakers and roundtable participants discussed the biodiversity 2010 target and the BAP review, focussing on defining future targets and the post 2010 vision.

The conference was chaired by Mr. STEVENSON, (MEP and Chair of the Intergroup) who launched the renamed Intergroup. Commissioner DIMAS, the first speaker, said “we have made some progress, e.g. on Natura 2000 designations and the Birds Directive, but fish stocks and invasive species are still on the down side”. The role of Belgium will be crucial in the second half of 2010 when they will hold the EU Presidency, Paul MAGNETTE, the Belgian Federal Environment Minister reiterated Belgium’s commitment to the 2010 target.

Mr. ONESTA (Vice President of the Parliament) noted that Member States are lagging behind in relation to implementing actions to reach the 2010 target. Mr. WIJKMAN (MEP, Sweden) called for a radical rethink of both production and consumption patterns to replace the current economic model which does not take into account biodiversity and ecosystems.

Mrs. McGLADE (Executive Director, European Environment Agency) presented some trends and statistics on biodiversity indicators. She supports an integrated sectoral approach which would among other things reduce land fragmentation. Mr. HONTELEZ (Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau), and Mr. LONG (Director, European Policy Office, WWF) also welcomed sectoral integration but asked the European Commission for higher, ringfenced budgets for the protection and conservation of nature supporting the idea of “public money for public goods”.

Mr. SUKHDEV (study Leader of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity –TEEB-, Managing Director and Head of Deutsche Bank’s Global Markets business in India) focused his intervention on the initial findings of the TEEB study. The report, now in its second stage, puts real economic value on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and highlights that in a “business as usual” scenario the cost of inaction would amount to 6% of the world GDP by 2050. The conference concluded with a roundtable chaired by Mr. WINKLER (Head of the Countdown 2010 Initiative) with short presentations from Mr. MIKO (Director, Protecting the Natural Environment, DG Environment, European Commission), Mr. LIPIETZ (MEP, Green, France), Mr. BALDOCK (Director, Institute of European Environmental Policy), Mr. WALICZKY (RSPB, European Habitats Forum Chair), Mr. MERTENS (President, European Aggregates Association), and Mr. QUINTART (Director for EU Policies, Syngenta).

Mr MIKO highlighted that not reaching the 2010 target does not mean that we should give up, instead we should refocus our attention on post 2010 targets. He pointed out that the conference in Athens being convened by Environment Commissioner DIMAS, 27-28 April 2009, will be an opportunity to discuss the post 2010 regime.

Mr. BALDOCK stressed changes in farming, eg dairy methods, and the importance of farm level decisions, while calling for an agricultural payments system entirely focussed on public goods. Integrating and influencing the sectors that impact on biodiversity will be an essential element for any post 2010 target. Mr. WALICZKY highlighted some elements for a post-2010 regime, while Mr. MERTENS and Mr. QUINTART described how projects supported by their respective businesses have contributed to the 2010 biodiversity target at the local level

Mr MARGESCU (IUCN Regional Director for Europe) summed up the afternoon by quoting Mr DIMAS who compared the EU BAP review to a school report card, suggesting that the comments would read "...good efforts, but must try considerably harder".

The international conference was organized by the Intergroup Secretariat composed jointly of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and its Countdown 2010 initiative. Participants included Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and representatives from various European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers.

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