



## CONFERENCE REPORT

### The European Biodiversity Action Plan Counting down to 2010: state of play and the post 2010 vision for Europe

High-Level Roundtable  
February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 2:00 pm - 7:00 pm  
Room P7C050, European Parliament, Brussels

**Gerard Onesta, Vice President of the European Parliament**, gave the welcome speech to the Biodiversity Action Plan Conference. He outlined that the 2010 target will be difficult to reach and that Member States have not reached their targets. His speech highlighted that if humanity becomes extinct, this will be caused by its own actions. It is difficult to explain to citizens how the disappearance of one single species can affect other species and ecosystems. Onesta also pointed out that some Member States have not fully understood the importance of biodiversity in Europe and that some less developed countries in Africa and Asia have taken much stronger measures to protect against biodiversity loss. He emphasized that this meeting would help remind Member States about their commitments to halting biodiversity loss by 2010. In closing, he explained that at least one molecule had been lost in the world while he was delivering his speech and that nobody will ever know whether that molecule could have been useful in saving lives.

**Struan Stevenson, MEP and Chair of the renamed Intergroup on Climate Change and Biodiversity**, welcomed the Climate and Energy package recently approved by the EU, which sets the target of 20% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. Stevenson stressed the importance of not rushing into biofuel development without thinking of consequences it could have on sustainability and equity, especially in Asia and the developing world. He mentioned that the current food crisis could exacerbate as a result of current rates of population growth: 6 million people are currently born every month. In this situation, food production will have to increase 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2080. Stevenson warned that greed should not take the place of science in the CO<sub>2</sub> strategy. Referring to the recent conference held on Réunion, Stevenson reiterated how climate change is affecting our oceans: the increase in sea temperature is causing fish to spawn early and to migrate at the wrong time. The temperature limits of many fish species have already been reached. Also, the increased levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in our oceans is turning them acidic and so ruining coral reefs and marine ecosystems. Stevenson urged everyone to work in partnership to halt biodiversity loss and climate change. He told the audience that there is now a greater need to have a new approach to these problems. This is why the "Intergroup on Sustainable Development" has been renamed as the "Intergroup on Climate Change and Biodiversity".

## **Session 1: The BAP review – where do we stand with the 2010 goal?**

Chaired by Struan Stevenson, MEP and Chair of the Intergroup

**Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment**, gave a talk on biodiversity being a political priority. Climate change has already garnered worldwide awareness and now we have to attract attention to this other global problem. Dimas stated that this will be a difficult but not impossible task. As regards the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen later this year, he stressed that reaching an agreement is possible and imperative. Dimas reported that the EU is the first to bring in tough emissions targets and is the only part of the world which possesses all the means to reach the current Kyoto target. He stressed that the US is key to agreeing targets worldwide and therefore needs to get on board before countries in the developing world will follow suit. Sufficient funding will be crucial for any future success in climate change and biodiversity. The Natura 2000 network is almost complete and is the greatest achievement of the EU on the matter of biodiversity. Yet, the 2010 biodiversity target will clearly not be reached on time. Using the example of a child's school report card, he suggested that the BAP as a report card would read "...good effort so far, but must do considerably better". Dimas noted that it is important to "get the science right, get the economics right, and get the communications right". He underlined that the conference on the post-2010 regime which will take place in Athens on 27-28 April will be a crucial step for the future of biodiversity.

**Anders Wijkman (MEP)** started his speech reminding that already in the 1980s we learned that not using a cross-sectoral approach but only focusing on conservation policies leads to dodging the real issue. Consumption, production, and birth rates also need to be considered. A long-term solution is possible only if all aspects are taken into account. The current economic model – "only if it can be traded, does it have a price" – does not account for biodiversity and ecosystem services. The EU has made good progress by developing important tools to safeguard natural resources. Yet, this is not sufficient. Rethinking this model is fundamental to ensuring a future for our planet. The Gross Domestic Product approach used for cost analysis needs to be reviewed by integrating climate change and biodiversity criteria. Resource use and energy efficiency measures are also necessary. Only in this way, business models will change. Taxation also needs to be revised, even though this could be a difficult task. Wijkman concluded by reiterating that a real integrative approach is vital and that we need to act now. Scientific consensus reports, such as those on climate change by the IPCC which are generally produced every 5 years, need to be replaced by annual reports. This is true in particular for climate change, biodiversity, and ecosystem issues, as the world is changing at unprecedented rates. He stated that we need to be daring and rethink the policy framework, as well as our economic system, as markets are not driven by ethics but by money making processes.

**Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the European Environmental Agency**, presented "Key elements of the BAP review – is sectoral integration working? Trends and figures". McGlade gave a flavour of the issues that need to be considered:

- Biodiversity sets living conditions.
- Logic is still left at the door in planning meetings.
- To ensure good policy assessments, we have to be careful (e.g., in the case of biofuels).
- There is a need for all sectors to account for biology and ecology.
- We need to know the positive and negative trends.

McGlade highlighted the need for indicators, such as SEBI 2010 (Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators), which help everyone understand the current state of biodiversity and thus effectively conserve natural resources. She added that climate change standards have yet to be set. An increased number of indicators is necessary, as is streamlining national and global efforts to ensure accurate information on current trends and effects of policies. She stressed that despite the progress made, species extinction rates have still increased. One of the tools to solve the problem could be to designate areas for assessment, as done in Natura 2000. Pressures on the environment are coming from all sectors: forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and so on. For instance, many farmers are passionate about nature and engage in organic agriculture. However, agriculture still exerts pressure on the

environment.. In fisheries the state of marine fauna is worrying. There have been enormous efforts made in scientific research, but stocks are still declining and this will be aggravated further by climate change. We have governance means and tools (recovery plans, etc.) but they are not sufficient. There is a need for specific targets to be able to measure progress more easily and to diversify the goals for all the sectors involved. As for forestry indicators, the dead wood indicators for biodiversity are diminishing. An ecosystem-integrated approach needs to be adopted and fragmentation of habitats must be stopped. The green economy model is now being studied to analyse the benefits of restoration and conservation. This model could represent a valuable alternative to the existing one. Giving a price to ecosystem services may lead to difficulty in establishing the value of resources located in different areas. Seeking a pure market price may be complex and unhelpful. In any case, action is urgently called for. McGlade concluded through an anecdote about how if the situation remains unchanged and we – human beings – do not act to preserve nature, we risk not be able to appreciate it in the future.

**John Hontelez, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, pointed out that the Habitats and Birds Directives have so far been useful tools in the Natura 2000 framework, but that the EU will still not reach its biodiversity target. Questioning the current funding process, Hontelez called for earmarking of money for Natura 2000 and urged Member States to do better in financing such projects. Pointing at the ambitious target set for the Water Framework Directive in 2015, he suggested that this directive and Natura 2000 could put a halt to fragmentation by reconnecting areas. Hontelez highlighted the lack of a European soil policy, the development of which is held up by five countries. All countries should endorse it to ensure coordination at EU level, since individual initiatives are good but not sufficient. Policy measures are there, but they need to work better. Most significantly, implementation of existing measures needs to be reinforced, and this would ensure EU's credibility.

**Tony Long, Director, European Policy Office, WWF**

#### Issues

1. The integration of nature conservation policies has not been successful. There are many reasons why we have failed. For instance: there is no common framework to judge coherence of policies, the Habitats and Birds Directives are too narrow, and the language of biodiversity is too obscure and not communicative enough – we should go back to using the word “nature”.
2. Urgency – The mid term assessment has shown us just how bad things are, and conflicts in policies, such as those regarding biofuels, are adding to this urgency.
3. The economics of nature loss – This has been an ongoing debate for the last 10 years but nothing has been done, and now we also need to take into account the economic costs of adapting to climate change.
4. Public money for public goods – A dedicated budget line for nature and ecosystem services is needed.
5. Sustainability matrix – If we measure the wrong things we don't know what is happening. The WWF Living Planet Index is a valuable tool.

#### Conclusions

1. Sectoral integration will cease to be needed once we get to grips with the concept of public money for public goods.
2. We need to become more conversant with the languages of stimulus packages so that the support for rural areas in these programmes will be used to help nature.
3. Europe's leadership in nature protection – The Swedish presidency of the EU will hopefully give a boost to this work with appropriate agreements being concluded on biodiversity in Nagoya and on climate change in Copenhagen.

## Summary of Q&A

### McGlade

- Land usage changes through time and we know that agriculture, energy, transport, and other activities affect this. However, we can't stop land usage, so what we need to focus on is the spatial aspect of it and analyse this.
- At least five relevant conventions exist (such as CBD, RAMSAR,). There is hope that UNEP will create a body overseeing all these conventions and bringing them all together, but this is not within UNEP's current mandate.
- Overseas territories and regions are experiencing rapid deterioration and neglect – if we can't show in these regions the benefits of European regulations, what hope do we have?
- It is not possible to apply the green economy model if we still continue with "business as usual".

### Wijkman

- We need to start thinking about production in terms of "cradle to cradle" rather than the current approach of "cradle to grave". A good website to look at is [www.biomimicry.net](http://www.biomimicry.net), the makers of which study nature's best ideas and then imitate these designs and processes to solve human problems.
- We need to be more functional in our thinking when it comes to business models, for example, switching from products to services – what if all mobile phones were rented rather than sold? That would surely have an impact on the resource use in producing mobile phones. Sustainability criteria need to be integrated into business models.

### Hontelez

- The environment is an issue for all of society and we need to reduce our footprint on earth. To solve biodiversity and climate change problems we will need to integrate sustainable development principles.

### Long

- Last September changes were made to the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) regarding the hierarchy of objectives. Now a right based management system for common resources is proposed. The vote is scheduled for 2012, but public discussion is starting in April 2009.
- The Spring Alliance (a group of NGOs) calls for societal change.

### Miko

- The importance of biodiversity in the overseas territories compared to the EU highlights issues of local capacities and budgets.

## **ession 2: The Way Forward- Critical Elements to 2010 and the Post-2010 Vision**

Chaired by Tamas Marghescu, IUCN Regional Director for Pan-Europe

**Pavan Sukhdev, Managing Director and Head of Deutsche Bank's Global Markets Business in India** stated that "the economics of nature – life on earth – could replace the economics of biodiversity". Halting biodiversity loss could potentially solve climate change; deforestation is responsible for 34% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 should not neglect REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). Sukhdev believes that conservation could also contribute to alleviating the situation of the poor, who are most affected by environmental changes. Currently, ecological processes are calculated to account for 7% of the GDP in India. Yet, a more accurate figure, taking into account such ecosystem services as flood and drought control or soil protection, would be 57%,. Today, the world faces two crises - an economic and an environmental one. The reality is that we cannot continue the way we are, as we are building an ecological deficit which can result in a geopolitical problem. Current economic models do not assign a value to things that have no

price. The GDP was designed to measure human well-being, but it fails to measure all aspects of it. If governments are to manage human well-being, they also need to be able to measure it. The current model was created as a war time mechanism during World War II. However, even its inventor, Richard Stone emphasized as early as 1984 in his Nobel speech that his model failed to measure environmental issues. Sukhdev pointed out that he is not a pessimist and that we can still move forward. There is plenty of scope for new accounting. We just need to change our metrics. Sukhdev highlighted that 2.5 trillion is used to support economies. The focus of this support must be placed on the green economy, green infrastructure, and green energy.

**Paul Magnette, Belgian Federal Minister of the Environment**, said that biodiversity is one of the main priorities of Belgium which will hold the European Presidency in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2010. Magnette stated that up until 18 months ago, when he took office, he was unaware of the scale of the problem of biodiversity loss and that he is therefore not surprised that many people still do not know about it. In contrast to biodiversity, climate change has been extremely well communicated during the last few years and is now well understood by the general public. The same has to be done for biodiversity. The European Commission noted that we haven't met our objectives. Now we have to sound the alarm and ensure that 2010 – the International Year of Biodiversity – raises awareness in the same way as climate change issues have been highlighted. Invasive alien species account for 25% of the loss of biodiversity. "Alien" is a difficult term to communicate to the general public, and perhaps we need a new term. These species are a genuine threat not only to biodiversity but also to human health and economic and ecosystem management, particularly in small and densely populated countries such as Belgium. Prevention of alien species is easier than dealing with the problem retrospectively. We need stronger policies in place such as tighter controls of imports and exports. The EU Climate Change and Energy Package has been a great tool to enforce credible action plans, in particular towards international discussions and conventions. This example needs to be followed for biodiversity. There is a great need for regulation and plans of actions. Four pillars have to be considered:

- Scientific expertise: a biodiversity expert panel such as what IPCC does for climate change;
- Economic and social considerations, such as those raised in the TEEB report;
- Political: strong European policy to enable influence on international agreements;
- Legal: EU strong position based upon strong legislation.

### **Roundtable**

Moderated by **Sebastian Winkler, Head of the Countdown 2010 Secretariat and Senior Advisor European Policy of IUCN**

**Ladislav Miko, Director, Protecting the Natural Environment, DG Environment, European Commission**, said that even if we are not going to reach the 2010 target, we should not give up. It will take some time to see the effects of all the currently implemented instruments. The designation of Natura 2000 areas is not perfect, but the process is already a great achievement. Miko stressed that if we want to succeed we should also focus on ecosystems. The 2010 biodiversity target has been successful in that it managed to mobilize action. In early 2010 we will need to set a new target if we are to catalyze attention on biodiversity. Miko questioned the need to develop a new vision, as many of the present elements are right and should not be changed. However, invasive species and economics are areas to be further considered. In the setting up of new targets, we have to start from where we are. We can bring a very different program, but 2010 was already ambitious and this is the right way forward.

**Alain Lipietz, MEP**, believes that the year 2010 is the beginning and not the end of the process: it should be a "countup", not a "countdown". Lipietz stated that Europe has done well but that not all Member States have applied the legislation. Binding directives have to be accepted and implemented. He pointed out that our natural heritage is free to use but costly to destroy. Fragmentation is an important cause of biodiversity loss, and needs to be tackled. He finished his speech by emphasizing that we have to continue to raise awareness among the general public about the value of biodiversity.

**David Baldock, Institute of European Environmental Policy**, explained that we should start from the bottom and involve more local organizations. The drivers of biodiversity loss include economics, technology, and growth. In 50 years, British dairy farms have gone from traditional to intensive farming. In contrast, sheep farms in Romania have a high nature value but a distressing lack of economic future. We are starting to make slow progress; for example, the ecosystem approach in fisheries has existed now for many years, but the EU has started to tackle this issue only in the past three years. Baldock finally underlined the importance of setting ambitious, but measurable and tangible targets.

**Zoltan Waliczky, European Habitats Forum Chair, RSPB**. The post-2010 target should go beyond halting the loss of biodiversity and should include restoration. Climate change will also have to be integrated. Ecosystem resilience and improvement should also be included and not just ecosystem services. Clear sub-targets should be set on improving the situation of species and the protection of biodiversity hotspots through protected areas. For the future EU framework, he welcomed the idea of having a new framework, but keeping the heart of biodiversity policy (Birds and Habitats Directives, Natura 2000). He added that sectoral policies should be put in the frame of ecosystem management, and kept in harmony with biodiversity protection. Spatial planning is also a key issue and conflicts usually occur at regional or local levels.

**Denis Mertens, President of European Aggregates Association, UEPG** emphasized that the EU aggregates industry cares about biodiversity and they are aware of the impacts they have on the environment. The European Aggregates Association collaborates with IUCN to promote their sectors actions in halting biodiversity loss. They are now recognised as a trusted partner as they have proved that they stand behind their beliefs. He pointed out that there was a general lack of awareness in the industry and that a roadmap is needed to help move in the right direction. He asked NGOs to work in partnership with them to achieve win-win solutions for biodiversity problems.

**Alain-Dominique Quintart, Director for EU Policies, Syngenta** underlined that Syngenta is integrating sustainability into its policies. There is a question over how intensive agriculture can be sustainable, while preserving and enhancing biodiversity if properly managed. A project that Syngenta has been working on is Operation Bumble Bee. In the UK bumble bees have seen a 70% decline in 20 years. Providing new vegetation has led to more pollen sources for the bees. In one area bee numbers have increased 800% even though this particular species of bee was considered extinct. This project is now being implemented all over Europe. Integrated policies are needed for biodiversity. The policies in place could be simplified, but if they are implemented well they could bring richer biodiversity. Quintart firmly believes that a strong commitment by the industrial sector is needed to preserve biodiversity. Syngenta is ready to contribute and cooperate.

#### **Main points raised during the debate:**

- There is a need to formulate indicators and measurement tools for post-2010, integrating the three dimensions of biodiversity: species diversity (species abundance), bio-density, and rarity.
- Farmers are a fundamental element at local level.
- In post-2010 clear commitments should be given by industry.
- The roles of the different EU environment policies over the last number of years have to be assessed.
- There is a need to involve the public in restoring biodiversity.

- Restoration is capital, but what is important is what you leave behind. There is a need to assess sites correctly beforehand, in term of biodiversity, and with the right expertise. The industry welcomes closer working relationships with NGOs.

#### Miko

- Existing indicators are a good tool. More data need to be gathered, especially for those countries where they are missing. The European Commission is doing its best with existing data. The challenge for the Commission is in reporting and delivering this information.
- The EU has tools in place but the challenge comes from their implementation, as Art.6 of the Habitats Directive shows.
- Regarding the post-2010 target, ownership is held by everyone, every stakeholder. The target must come from the bottom, from society. The European Commission has its views, but will consider contributions by everyone.

#### Baldock

- There is a need to continue well-grounded, scientifically based integration and to invest in restoration. Personal responsibility is important, as all human activities have an impact on biodiversity.

### **Conclusion**

by **Tamas Marghescu, IUCN Regional Director for Pan-Europe**

Marghescu emphasized that the conference and roundtable were of high interest, but would have been very difficult to understand for an outsider. There is a need for a clear and unified message. He underlined that the European Commission has done its job, but that more should be done. He questioned the work done by Members States, referring to the outcomes of the Mid-term Assessment of the BAP. Also, he noted the low attendance levels of MEPs at the conference. He stressed that we know what needs to be done, and it is the right time to do it. Later he extracted some of the main ideas that were raised during the event:

- McGlade: integration works locally; we need economic drivers.
- Sukhdev: we have a choice: let us not be haunted by the fear of the unknown.
- Marnette: steps on invasive alien species are a good basis for post-2010.
- Long: a specific budget line is needed for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Hontelez: hopefully the current economic crisis will give an extra push for change.

Finally, Marghescu stressed the need for the private sector to be integrated in the discussions in order to meet targets – even if some of them do not have the best footprint. He clearly encouraged the private sector to not only cooperate with NGOs, but to get organized and gather more often to discuss these issues. He concluded by thanking EBCD, as the Secretariat of the Intergroup, and Countdown 2010 for organizing the event, as well as other IUCN staff members for their support.