



## **Message from Gudauri - From Commitments to Action**

**International Conference in Gudauri/Georgia, 15-17 May, 2006**

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### Preamble

The Caucasus countries contain a unique richness of biological diversity, both wild and domestic. This natural and cultural heritage, if managed sustainably, can ensure a high quality of life for present and future generations.

Participants from the Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia) met at an international conference in Gudauri, Georgia (15 – 17 May 2006) to identify urgent actions to safeguard Caucasian biodiversity as the basis for sustainable development. In doing so, the representatives from NGOs, government institutions and international organisations took note of the “Message from Malahide” (2004), which serves as the basis for the EU Communication on Biodiversity.

The aim of this document is to summarise the priority recommendations to reach the 2010 biodiversity target in the Caucasus. This 2010 target was set by European governments at the Environment for Europe Conference in Kiev in 2003, namely to stop the loss of biodiversity in all European countries by the year 2010.

The recommendations are designed to provide assistance to regional, national, provincial and local authorities as well as relevant stakeholders (including the private sector), international organisations and the donor community in taking the required action to reach the 2010 biodiversity target.

The following priority areas for immediate action until 2010 were identified:

### Regional/National Policy Frameworks

- In developing regional, national and sectoral policies, the environment needs to be seen as the basis for sustainable development. Biodiversity conservation must be an integral part of all policies, including donor policies and strategies.
- Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use principles should be reflected in all nature and natural resource related legislation.

### Natural Resource Legislation

- Coherent packages of natural resource legislation (forestry, hunting, fisheries, agriculture, etc.) should be formulated on the basis of best practice examples from

other European countries. Nature conservation legislation should be revised and formulated with a view to approximating the EU *acquis communautaire* (e.g. Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive).

### Natural Resource Use

- Agriculture

A long-term vision for sustainable and multi-functional agriculture needs to be elaborated, but the severe and immediate problem of over-grazing and related problems of erosion and land degradation needs to be addressed urgently in the interest of rural populations.

- Forestry

The problem of illegal logging and related trade needs to be addressed through a variety of measures that lead to improved forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG). Degraded areas are in need of close-to-nature restoration. A vision of sustainable energy management on various levels needs to be elaborated. At the same time the demand for wood as fuel from natural or semi-natural forests needs to be reduced and substituted by energy from other sources, preferably renewable.

- Fisheries

Illegal fishing needs to be addressed at various levels and the income-generating potential of recreational fishing (as well as hunting) in a regulated framework of sustainable use could be explored. Regional frameworks such as the Black Sea Convention could provide a potential forum to improve and harmonise the fisheries legislation.

- Mining and Extractive Industries

The mining industry should be pressured to use the cleanest technology available to avoid pollution. The industry should proactively engage with civil society from the earliest point possible and local population should be involved in Environmental Impact Assessments.

### Protected Areas

Based on the Ecoregional Conservation Plan (ECP), 10 potential transboundary Protected Areas (PAs) with a view to improving regional cooperation and ecological connectivity were identified by Conference participants. Furthermore, the urgent need to strengthen the regional system of PAs in the Caucasus was stressed. This could be achieved through:

- Establishment of new innovative funding mechanisms, development of new sources of income and more effective use of traditional funding sources for financing PA's, including promotion of partnership with the corporate sector.
- Developing national legislation on PAs and their harmonisation using IUCN criteria.
- Capacity-building of PAs management including training of PA managers and staff, and development of management plans.
- Better utilisation of the economic value of PAs, for example traditional use of natural resources by local population.

### Biodiversity Monitoring

Monitoring of biodiversity is essential for good environmental governance and public awareness. Monitoring is the responsibility of governments, which should make use of the expertise and human resources that NGOs can mobilise. In the long run the monitoring should be supported by national resources. During the Conference, 12 priority indicators were selected for immediate monitoring among the 38 identified by the EEA SEBI2010 initiative, and a further 5 indicators were identified for medium-term development.

A regionally coherent Geographic Information System, compatible with the Corine Land Cover, should be developed as a matter of priority, alongside national Red Lists. These should be drawn up according to IUCN guidelines and should serve as the basis for national and regional species conservation measures.

### Public Participation and Awareness

All endeavours to reach the 2010 biodiversity target must be underpinned by extensive public awareness raising efforts. These should include activities in the field of primary, secondary and higher education, as well as public awareness campaigns. Support should be provided to the ongoing efforts of civil society organisations. Countdown 2010, a pan-European initiative to mobilise stakeholder and government action towards this target, can serve as a platform for these efforts.

*The full list of recommendations, a list of participating organisations and individuals, and further information are available in the Annexes to this document, and are also available at [www.countdown2010.net](http://www.countdown2010.net).*

*The message is not exclusive and is a working document open to contributions and comments from all stakeholders ([info@countdown2010.net](mailto:info@countdown2010.net)).*