

EUROPEAN UNION ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL MEETING
BRUSSELS, 15 MARCH 2010

MEETING OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES
APPROVAL OF THE COMMON POSITION
BARCELONA, 5 MARCH 2010

COMMON POSITION

1. Biodiversity: post 2010
Adoption of Conclusions

Having assessed the fourth draft of Council Conclusions, dated 23 February, and bearing in mind the Communication of the European Commission, of 19 January, the Autonomous Communities:

1. **JUDGE** the global aspect of the draft Conclusions regarding the objectives of EU policy on biodiversity to be **positive**, and we are convinced that the International Year of Biodiversity will provide a unique political opportunity to adopt measures of great import and effect in favour of the natural capital of Europe and of the planet.

• Introduction

2. AGREE to state the importance of biodiversity **owing to its intrinsic value and also to the significance of ecosystem services** and their essential contribution to the wellbeing of human societies, to the prevention of natural disasters and to poverty reduction; we REITERATE particularly the importance of biodiversity conservation (of the planet's natural capital) in the achieving of the Millennium Development Goals.

3. EXPRESS our pleasure at the use of the conclusions of **The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study**, in showing the links between economy and biodiversity and in highlighting the tremendous economic loss if we do not halt the loss of biodiversity and degradation of the environmental services derived therefrom.

4. AGREE that the Conclusions should acknowledge that **the EU will not reach** the goal of halting loss of biodiversity in **2010**, and include as the **principal causes**:

- Deficiencies on a political and strategic level
- Lack of information and knowledge
- Poor integration of biodiversity in sector and territorial policies
- Insufficient funding for biodiversity policies
- Incomplete implementation of certain legal instruments

We also recognise as causes:

- Lack of communication and education for awareness raising and in research
- Late commencement of EU global action for biodiversity conservation

5. AGREE also that the **main pressures** on biodiversity should be pointed out: habitat destruction, fragmentation and degradation caused by land-use changes, overexploitation, unsustainable practices and uses of natural resources, invasive alien species, wildlife trafficking, ocean acidification, pollution and climate change.

6. **PROPOSE** that recognition of loss of biodiversity be included as **the most serious environmental problem along with climate change**, as mentioned in the EC Communication.

7. **PROPOSE** stating more clearly that biodiversity conservation is an **intrinsic part of sustainable development in the EU** and in the world, providing assets and services that support people's economic activity and wellbeing, and for this reason should be a priority on the EU political agenda.

- **Biodiversity in the EU**

8. JUDGE to be very positive the efforts to set new goals, new objectives and new measures to be reached through **a new European policy** on biodiversity, in accordance with the Conclusions adopted by the Environment Council in March 2009, in the sense that the EU's new internal target to be defined will be established by the European Spring Council in the first semester of 2010.

9. SHARE the long-term view—**horizon 2050**—considered in point 1 of the draft Conclusions, and in the “Cibeles” Priorities adopted in Madrid in January 2010, at the conference organised by the Spanish Presidency.

10. EXPRESS OUR PLEASURE at the adoption of the horizon 2020 objective corresponding to **option 4** of the Commission Communication, the most ambitious of all those considered so far (point 2 of the draft Conclusions). The decision is based on the following reasons:

- a) Halting the loss of biodiversity in the EU **is not an unattainable goal**. In any case, meeting this objective depends mainly on the public policies developed and on the contribution made by the social actors, citizens, companies and society as a whole. For this reason, we do not think that the target for the next ten years should be lowered; on the contrary, the conditions for it to be met should be reinforced, which rules out option 1 of the Commission Communication. If the objective were less ambitious than it is currently, the resources and commitments for its attainment would be difficult to reinforce.
- b) The capital importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for the economic and social prosperity of European societies, and bearing in mind all that has been lost already, means that it is necessary to introduce **the objective of ecological restoration, biodiversity recovery and improvement of degraded environmental services**. This dimension means we should rule out option number

2, which does not contemplate this. As the Commission Communication itself states “...restoring their status [of natural resources] and enhancing their use may raise productivity or develop new sources of growth, through ecoinnovation process.”

- c) **The EU is possibly the only global actor that can lead an ambitious world strategy** on biodiversity, and to do so it must reinforce the biodiversity aspect in its foreign policy. Option 4 is the only one that considers this objective, stepping up the EU's contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

11. **CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL** that the vision and objectives for 2050 and 2020 be included in the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, and in all the EU's crosscutting strategies and policies (point 3 of the draft Conclusions).

12. AGREE with proposing for 2020 ambitious, realistic and measurable sub-objectives accompanied by suitable **indicators** and assessment instruments, both for trends in biodiversity and the pressures it bears, and for the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation policies and its integration in sector policies (point 4 of the draft Conclusions). **URGE** that efforts to adopt **a new EU biodiversity strategy before the end of 2010, with intermediate objectives for 2015** be multiplied. Even so, we wish to point out that these objectives must materialise in the form of specific actions as the only way to advance towards the goal of halting biodiversity loss. The instruments to be used should be designed without delay so that this objective may not be a mere pipe dream, as has happened in 2010. It is particularly necessary that we develop the financial instruments that enable us to continue to work along these lines until 2020.

13. Even so, we STATE that an ambitious EU objective and can only be attained if the difficulties and hurdles that have been identified and prevented the 2010 objectives from being met are overcome. **A firmer political will** implies adopting the measures necessary to overcome these obstacles and providing a new strategic and governance framework.

We wish, therefore, to HIGHLIGHT certain aspects that we consider essential to direct the new EU biodiversity policy. We do so referring to five of the topics mentioned in the draft Conclusions, which should be improved and reinforced.

14. Regarding the reinforcement of strategic and political matters

PROPOSALS

- a) **To complete** the strategies and appropriate EU legislation in areas with no established European framework: land protection, the fight against invasive alien species, etc., and deploy defined policies, such as the Marine Strategy Directive.
- b) To urge the approval of **state and regional strategies before 2012**, within the framework of deployment of the new EU strategy.
- c) To highlight the importance of governance in biodiversity conservation policies (particularly in providing greater capacity for action), and emphasise especially **the**

decisive contribution that local and regional levels of government must make in a new phase of political commitment to halt biodiversity loss, both in the EU and at global level.

- d) To recognise the role of all **regional and local authorities and landowners** in managing natural areas and resources and implementing biodiversity conservation policies effectively.
- e) To increase the EU **budget** allocated to biodiversity conservation (currently 0.1%) to 2% of the total, following assessment of the impact of the measure on the Community budget as a whole and on the various Community policies.
- f) To urge the reinforcement of **state and regional legislation** in applying the European strategy and state and regional strategies. Legislation at state and regional level is particularly important for the integration of biodiversity conservation in sector policies, which should be reduced to the level of government closest to the territory.
- g) To develop the idea of **green infrastructure for Europe** with a European strategy by 2011 that emphasises a functional and change-resilient ecosystem. The Natura 2000 Network and the Emerald Network would form the core.
- h) To include the assessment and guarantee of **ecosystem services** in decision making at all levels and in all instruments that may affect.
- i) To promote **other mechanisms** and strategies for biodiversity conservation, such as land stewardship, or the so-called compensation or environmental mitigation banks, and, in general, to support **sustainable rural development** to halt the deterioration of the physical environment and biodiversity.

15. Regarding the reinforcement of knowledge and information

PROPOSALS

- a) To incorporate more decisively into European research policy, increased **knowledge** of biodiversity, natural processes and handling practices that favour its conservation, and of ecosystem services.
- b) To favour the **practical application** of scientific and cultural knowledge of biodiversity, especially in terms of managing natural heritage and natural resources.
- c) To foster the application of environmental accounting in decision making, by the Administration, and in the assessment of its policies.
To define **a baseline** as a benchmark for measuring progress in biodiversity conservation (as in climate change progress is measured against emissions in the base year 1990). Since we lack quality information with which to define this baseline, it is essential that this year, 2010, a scientific benchmark be defined for the state of biodiversity that helps to fill in current gaps in our knowledge and to measure the progress made.
- d) To establish European reference **indicators**, obligatory for all Member States. One of these could be the cover of natural and semi-natural ecosystems in each country, linked to a quantitative maintenance objective.

- e) To establish **accountability** in European biodiversity policies as an instrument for measuring progress in reaching the proposed objectives.
- f) To multiply initiatives so that European **citizens** may be aware of and become involved in the problems of biodiversity conservation, bearing in mind that only a third of citizens understand the term “biodiversity”.
- g) To develop and promote the transfer of **best practices and best available technologies** for an efficient use of natural resources, and, specifically, to increase awareness-raising measures and training in regard to sustainable practices in rural development.

16. Regarding incorporating biodiversity conservation into sector policies

PROPOSALS

- a) To adopt, as part of the new EU biodiversity strategy, specific measurable progress objectives for this integration in the **most critical sectors** for biodiversity conservation (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, land-use planning, energy, water policy, tourism, development cooperation, climate change, trade, infrastructure...).
- b) Member States should submit measures in this regard to the European Commission **by 2011**.
- c) The planned review of the common agricultural, fisheries and regional policies must include **compulsory objectives** for the prevention of biodiversity loss.
- d) The **environmental assessment** of plans and programmes, and of projects, is an effective instrument for incorporating specific biodiversity loss prevention objectives into sector planning.
- e) To promote an EU **environmental services payment** scheme using appropriate mechanisms that favour the equal distribution of benefits and costs of biodiversity conservation, supported by the principles “full cost recovery” (including external costs or externalities), “polluter pays” and “conservation gains”.
- f) To promote **green public procurement** as a mechanism for applying criteria of responsibility and biodiversity conservation in all public purchasing and contracting, and to promote the production and consumption of goods and services produced in or coming from areas managed in accordance with biodiversity conservation.

17. On the reinforcement of financing

PROPOSALS

- a) In addition to the aforementioned increase in the EU budget, the EU must amend the integration option in the financing of the Natura 2000 Network, which has proved insufficient, inefficient and a considerable hurdle in implementing the network. On the other hand, a **Biodiversity Fund** should be set up to finance Natura 2000 and other biodiversity actions in which the subsidiarity principle applies, whilst also proposing financing through other EU financial instruments.
- b) **In the other financial instruments, the criterion of biodiversity conservation and recovery must be given priority in the selection of projects for financing.**
- c) To identify **innovative financial mechanisms** for biodiversity policy, and foster their application (for example supporting the training of technical staff, dissemination of good housekeeping practices, etc.).

- d) Biodiversity must be part of the new indicator that should complement **GDP** as a measure of progress.
- e) The conclusions of the **TEEB study** must be known at all levels, particularly amongst political and economic decision makers, to emphasise the link between biodiversity loss and ecosystem services degradation, and degradation of the European economic base.
- f) To introduce an **environmental tax reform** on a European and national scale, to tax activities that contribute to biodiversity degradation and provide incentives for those that contribute to its conservation, respecting the principles of neutrality and no increase of the tax burden.
- g) To assess at EU and state level the **incentives** that contribute to biodiversity destruction and degradation and adopt gradual measures to remove them.
- h) To increase synergic opportunities between **financing** for climate change mitigation and adaptation and financing for biodiversity conservation.
- i) To promote financing from the **private sector** for biodiversity conservation.
- j) To support the introduction of biodiversity conservation criteria in the **common agricultural, fisheries and regional policies and other policies**, with financing from their respective funds.

18. On the reinforcement of the Natura 2000 Network

PROPOSALS

- a) To complete the Network, particularly in **marine areas**.
- b) To adopt appropriate conservation and management measures to reach the Community objectives established in **legislation** (Habitats Directive and Bird Directive) and update it to adapt to technical progress.
- c) Management and operation of the Natura 2000 Network will only be possible they are based on the **subsidiarity principle**. We must not bureaucratise the Network's development, and must involve all stakeholders as far as possible at all levels of decision making.

- **Global biodiversity**

19. STATE our conviction that the ambitious objectives the EU proposes can also be **extended to the global stage**, with the EU leading the way, and particularly in the new **Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biodiversity** to be adopted in 2010.

20. AGREE that the creation of the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** (IPBES) may be a positive factor in reinforcing the new biodiversity policies issued all over the world using scientific and technical knowledge.

21. PROPOSE that the EU coordinate positions to adopt a coherent discourse from all countries at the **special session on biodiversity of the UN General Assembly** in September 2010.

22. PROPOSE that the biodiversity dimension be reinforced in **EU foreign policy, particularly development cooperation policy**, given the link between biodiversity conservation, ecosystem service maintenance and poverty reduction.

23. SUPPORT the position expressed by the EU for the adoption in 2010 of international agreements to establish a system of **access to genetic resources and fair and equitable benefit sharing** (ABS regime), and, within the framework of climate change agreements, the programme for reducing deforestation emissions and forest degradation. REITERATE the need for transparency, legal security and foreseeability of access to such genetic resources.

24. CALL ATTENTION to the severe impact that **the action of European society has on the biodiversity of third countries**, a reality that the EU has made little effort to mitigate. Indeed, European society, with its the imports of products and services, investment in third countries, bioprospecting by pharmaceutical and food companies, tourism, wildlife trading, etc., causes considerable pressure the natural capital of other countries, and frequently on countries with no resources and an institutional framework that is solid enough to bear such pressure while guaranteeing biodiversity conservation. **PROPOSE**, therefore, the adoption of an EU action plan to reduce the impact of European society on the biodiversity of third countries, based on a comprehensive assessment of the impact factors and their causes.

25. **STATE** the need to **reform environmental governance systems on a global scale**, to incorporate biodiversity conservation and environmental service maintenance in all policies, and thus turn the current weaknesses of economic systems into opportunities and promote sustainable development and employment creation, with high added environmental value, particularly in developing countries.

.....