



Press Release  
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## European Conference: loss of biodiversity carries a price for us all

Today, 8 September, Flemish Minister for Environment, Nature and Culture, Joke Schauvliege, kicked off the European Conference on *Biodiversity in a changing world*. As President of the European Environment Council she plays a key role in the elaboration of the EU's post-2010 vision on Biodiversity. Tomorrow, 9 September, the Conference will conclude with a "Message from Ghent", a clear European policy recommendation to the Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in the run-up to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya (Japan) in October.

2010 is a milestone as it is the International Year of Biodiversity. Europe's objective to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 did not produce the anticipated result. Therefore the EU needs to put in an extra effort as soon as possible and policymakers have to urgently provide new impulses.

As President of the European Environment Council Joke Schauvliege has put the topic of 'biodiversity' at the top of the agenda in consultation with the EU trio presidency Spain-Belgium-Hungary. Under the Spanish EU Presidency, the European Council of 15 March 2010 proposed a longer-term vision for biodiversity until 2050. The aim is to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services and to restore these as much as possible by 2020. Belgium and Hungary will now attempt to implement the new objectives.

An intervention is desperately needed. Some of the findings of the third Global Biodiversity Outlook confirm this:

- deforestation is continuing at a rapid pace, i.e. 6 million hectares are lost every year;
- in the last 20 years 35% of all mangroves have disappeared;
- only 13% of the world's land area is protected, only half a percent of its marine area is protected;
- forty percent of all species have disappeared since 1970.

The Global Diversity Outlook is based on reports from more than 110 countries which have been submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity by their

respective governments and is compiled in cooperation with UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).

### **Increased efforts**

An inventory of the successes and shortcomings of the current policy will serve as input for elaborating new objectives beyond 2010. Leaders from all over the world will be asked to make a more concerted effort from here onwards in terms of the development and preservation of biodiversity. The aim is to arrive at a more ambitious objective, which the upcoming COP in Nagoya wishes to elaborate upon.

The Ghent Biodiversity Conference, to which the Council President, together with the European Commission and the other Belgian authorities, invited European leaders, policymakers, members of the European institutions, NGOs, scientists and other stakeholders, is an important contribution to this effort. Ideas, experiences and innovative solutions for Europe's most pressing policy challenges will be discussed and exchanged at this forum.

This will happen in **three thematic working groups**, of which the first part takes place today.

1. The workshop, entitled *Biodiversity in an urbanised environment*, will focus on the development of green infrastructure and consultation, the conclusion of partnerships with the various users of this space and communication tools to mobilise citizens.

Seventy-five percent of European citizens live in an urban area. This figure is set to increase in the next ten years. Biodiversity in the cities is extremely important for cities' viability. But it is equally important in the rural area around these cities. This so-called pantry, which is crucial for the cities as it provides clean drinking water and food, is under tremendous pressure because the cities are encroaching on its space. It is thus in the cities' interest to ensure that their ecological footprint is as small as possible.

2. The second workshop looks into evaluation methods for the valuation of ecosystem services.

Ecosystem services are the benefits that people reap from ecosystems such as food, water, controlling floods. It is recommended that the economic benefits of biodiversity be incorporated in the discussion about the preservation and development of biodiversity. Policymakers need to strike the ideal balance between economic, social and environment objectives. That is why it is important to find a method for the correct evaluation of ecosystem services which can clarify costs/benefits. The study *'The Economic of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)'* – the report on local/regional policy and government management in it will be officially presented at this Conference – also provides evaluation methods for mapping the costs related to the loss of biodiversity.

3. The third workshop focuses on the formulation of policy objectives for biodiversity beyond 2010 based on sectoral policy, financial policy, climate change and science.

The European Council of 15 March developed a long-term vision for 2050 for biodiversity with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems and restoring these as much as possible by 2020. The question that remains is: why were the previous objectives not achieved? This should be examined at every policy level. The Ghent Conference makes suggestions for achieving the objectives in terms of:

- the integration of biodiversity in sectoral policy at various levels;
- the structural increase of financial resources for biodiversity;
- the elaboration of synergies between biodiversity and climate policy;
- the closing of the gap between science and politics;
- increasing EU efforts to preserve biodiversity.

**The European Conference will conclude with a “Message from Ghent”, a policy incentive for the Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties in the margin of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya. This policy message will also be distributed among the press.**

**More information about the Conference can be found at:  
[www.lne.be/en/2010-eu-presidency/events/bio-diversity-post-2010](http://www.lne.be/en/2010-eu-presidency/events/bio-diversity-post-2010)**

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