



“Message from Ghent for Biodiversity post-2010”

Belgian Presidency of the European Union
Conference on
“Biodiversity in a changing world”

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The overall theme of the 10th COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity is “biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life” and underlines the importance of biodiversity for every human being. This year, 2010, is being celebrated as the International year of Biodiversity. However, this is also the year which has marked the failure to meet the 2010 target at the EU and the global level. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides (the world’s natural capital) are not only essential for the global food security and sustainable development, but also play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Loss of biodiversity has already led to serious ecological, economic and social impacts. The cost of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation is building up to 7% of GDP in 2050 if we continue “business as usual”. Global change of environmental conditions as well as socio-economic relations bring along additional challenges for biodiversity. Nonetheless these changes also provide an opportunity for structural changes.

2010 is also the year in which both the EU and the global community must adopt a new biodiversity target and strategy for the next decade. The Conference in Ghent looked at the challenges and discussed possible opportunities to contribute to this process.

Halting the loss of biodiversity will only be possible if the most critical drivers are effectively addressed. If we want to realize a sustainable economy we have to preserve our natural capital in the long-term and reduce our resource consumption to a sustainable level.

A biodiversity strategy must take into account the conservation and maintenance of ecosystem services and related socio-economic aspects and address the impact of European production and consumption patterns on biodiversity, within and outside Europe.

Climate change puts additional stress on biodiversity and ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems are vital for both mitigation of climate change and adaptation to climate change. It is increasingly clear that biodiversity and climate change challenges have to be addressed together.



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The Conference identified six crucial opportunities:

1. Improve integration and mainstreaming of biodiversity at all levels

- It is crucial to strengthen the **integration and mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into relevant sectoral policies and programmes** at local, national, EU and global level. All sectors should be involved to share **ownership** of biodiversity targets. Appropriate implementation and complementing existing legal frameworks must also address new concerns.
- Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are also crucial for **climate change adaptation and mitigation**. We must apply ecosystem-based approaches to support policy integration, enhance synergies and maximize co-benefits.
- We must ensure that the new approach provided by the **TEEB study, i.e. to focus on economic valuation of ecosystem services**, and its recommendations are fully understood and operationalised by taking into account the real value of ecosystem services.

2. Build strong and sustainable partnerships

- The whole society must be involved in implementing the post-2010 targets. This implies full involvement of all stakeholders and **especially the private sector** to develop and implement policies and actions.
- **Partnerships for biodiversity conservation should go beyond the usual nature conservation constituency**. Therefore sharing of knowledge and experience, networking and cooperation must be strengthened.

3. Increase financial resources and optimise the use of current resources for biodiversity

- **Investment in nature makes economic sense** (e.g. high return on investment when it comes to soil restoration, water purification or carbon sequestration). We must make biodiversity and ecosystem services economically visible. It is also essential to provide information on the **costs of policy inaction**. Appraising and valuing ecosystem services will support awareness raising, changes in land use practices and spatial planning, fundraising, policy decisions, etc.
- We must commit to further develop **alternative financial mechanisms** for supporting biodiversity-related investments and for internalizing external costs. Examples are innovative systems for payment of ecosystem services (PES) and mobilising private financing. Opportunities exist within current EU financial instruments. However we must ensure that biodiversity objectives are taken into account when developing future internal and external EU policies as well as the new financial perspectives 2014-2020.
- Integrating the **valuation of ecosystem services into conventional national accounting** procedures and the “Beyond GDP” process should be facilitated.

4. Provide strong science for strong policy



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- The **science-policy interface** needs to be improved at all levels within the EU and at global level. We emphasize the importance to establish and operationalise **an IPBES** as quickly as possible.
- Filling the **knowledge gaps** for **better understanding of the complex natural processes**, the impact of drivers, ecological tipping points and threshold effects is crucial to provide adequate policy/management responses. Given existing gaps, the precautionary principle and methods for biodiversity proofing are particularly important.
- Enhance research for innovative technologies and methods ensuring sustainable use of natural resources. Develop scientifically **robust observation frameworks and long term monitoring** for detecting changes in a timely and innovative manner with attached swift policy responses is therefore essential.

5. Communicate, raising awareness and citizen-involvement

- It is necessary to develop and communicate a **better understanding of why biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are crucial** and why their degradation matters for our economic, social and cultural well-being in order to stimulate **change in behaviour** and **enhance sense of responsibility**.
- Enhance the application of new/modern **communication tools** to reach out to all citizens and to profile best practices in order to effectively engage the public at all levels and to initiate a societal change.

6. EU responsibility for global biodiversity

- The European Union has a large and still growing impact on biodiversity within and outside of the EU borders. There is a need within the EU for an **integrated solution addressing the full cycle of production, consumption and disposal**.
- The EU should take a leading role in integrating **biodiversity concerns in bilateral and global agreements** on trade and development cooperation. The development of sustainability criteria and promoting certification of sustainably harvested products provide useful tools for this.
- **Increased mobilisation of resources** for developing countries is crucial to improve biodiversity conservation and sustainable use so as to contribute to poverty reduction.
- To enhance **synergies between biodiversity and climate** policies the establishment of REDD+ is an absolute priority. The measures adopted should combine climate mitigation with biodiversity conservation and the interests of indigenous people and local communities.



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