

# Loss of biodiversity comes at a cost

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Today, 8 September, Flemish Minister for the Environment, Nature And Culture, Joke Schauvliege inaugurated the European conference on biodiversity in a changing world. As chair of the European Environment Council, jointly with the EU Trio Presidency Spain-Belgium-Hungary, Joke Schauvliege has put 'biodiversity' at the top of the agenda.

Intervention is urgently needed. Leaders around the entire world are being called upon to increase their efforts, starting now, for the development and preservation of biodiversity in order to raise the level of the goal to be set at the upcoming COP in Nagoya.

As President of the European Environment Council, Joke Schauvliege 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.

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.

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