

The Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation in the European Union



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environment

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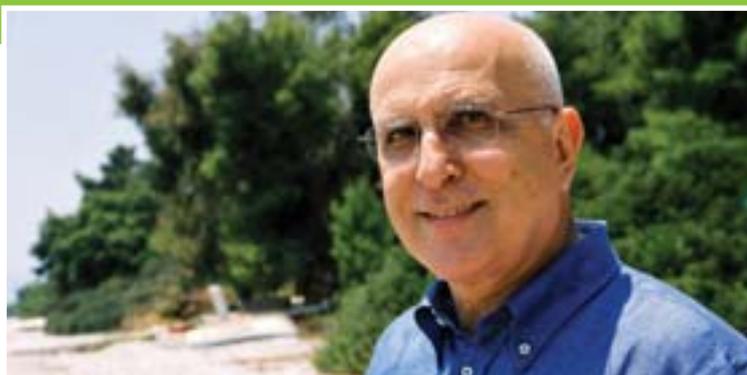
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More efforts required to meet the 2010 deadline

Stavros Dimas

*European Commissioner
for the Environment*



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The year 2007 was when environmental issues rose to the top of the political agenda. Climate change grabbed the headlines as well as popular imagination. But the loss of biodiversity is a global threat that is just as serious and needs to be faced with the same urgency. In one crucial way it is more worrying than climate change since there is no way to reverse extinction.

Political targets have been set at the global level for slowing the loss of biodiversity. In the European Union, political leaders have committed themselves to *halt* the loss of biodiversity by 2010. But despite current efforts, scientific assessments tell us that biodiversity is continuing to be lost and that we will probably not meet the targets we have set ourselves. Against this sobering background the priority must be to turn public commitments into tangible actions.

One pressing challenge is to ensure that protecting biodiversity is viewed as a top environmental priority. A recent opinion poll confirmed that people care passionately about

protecting nature with 88 % of Europeans recognising that the loss of biodiversity is a serious problem. Given the strength of public support — and the scientific reality — it is surprising that protecting biodiversity does not have a higher political profile.

Climate change also presents specific threats for biodiversity. Rising temperatures will lead to changes in the distribution of our wildlife with the loss of many habitats. To minimise the disruption of nature we need to build on existing initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also need to factor in adaptation measures to the centre of our thinking on biodiversity. And it should go without saying that our climate mitigation policies should not come at the expense of biodiversity. We need to make sure that when promoting new policy approaches — such as bio-fuels — we are not encouraging the destruction of habitats. Being strategic in our planning and getting this balance right will be key challenges in the coming years.

This brochure highlights a few examples of how the EU has implemented the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Perhaps the most important message is Europe's example that international cooperation to protect biodiversity can be highly effective. The 27 European Union Member States have established the world's most comprehensive network of protected areas. The Natura 2000 network covers almost 20 % of the EU territory and is the cornerstone of our policy to protect Europe's biodiversity. It sets a model for nature protection — science-driven, legally enforceable and taking ecosystems as the basic unit. Independent scientific reports have confirmed that these protected areas make a significant and measurable difference in reversing the decline of our most threatened species.

We have also funded numerous projects in partner countries to help them conserve and sustainably use their biodiversity. And taking inspiration from the Stern Review on the costs of climate change, the Commission is working with the German government on a study of the economics of biodiversity.

Protecting biodiversity is central to the health of our planet and ultimately our own wellbeing. Protecting biodiversity needs effective international cooperation. At the European level the EU has been able to develop this cooperation and we are committed to working through the CBD to protect global biodiversity.



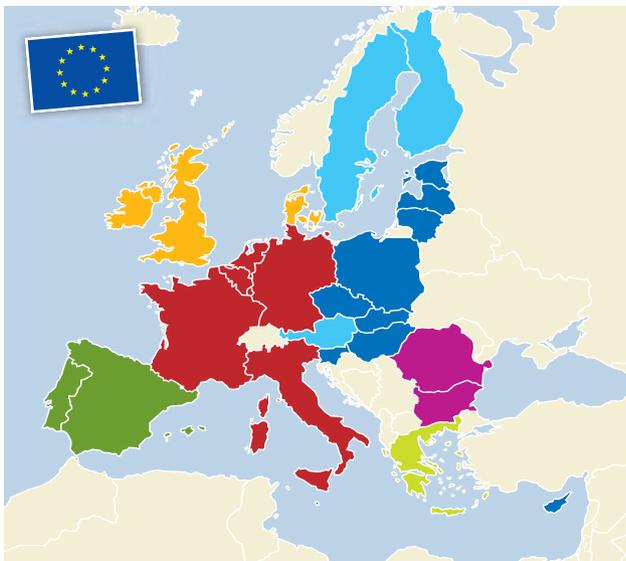
Stavros Dimas
European Commissioner for the Environment

[1] Introduction

[1.1] The European Union: diverse nations, diverse ecosystems

Ecosystems and biological diversity do not abide by the rule of human law, nor do they respect man-made borders. Tackling these problems is clearly a global and regional matter, as well as a national one.

Recognising that many policies can be better achieved by acting collectively rather than as individual nations, Member States of the European Union have shared part of their sovereignty and laid out a number of specific activities that can be treated at the European Community level. For some policy areas, such as agriculture and trade, the Community has exclusive competence, while for many others, such as environment policy, Member States and the Community share competence.



What are the European Union and the European Community?

International environmental agreements, such as the CBD, are ratified by both the European Community (EC), which is a regional economic integration organisation with legal personality, and by its Member States. Acting jointly, the EC and its Member States form the political entity called the European Union (EU). Most EU laws have to be adopted both by the Council of Ministers, representing the governments of the 27 Member States, and the European Parliament, whose 785 members are directly elected by EU citizens.

Who's in and when did they join?

Belgium (1957), France (1957), Germany (1957), Italy (1957), Luxembourg (1957), the Netherlands (1957), Denmark (1973), Ireland (1973), the United Kingdom (1973), Greece (1981), Portugal (1986), Spain (1986), Austria (1995), Finland (1995), Sweden (1995), Cyprus (2004), the Czech Republic (2004), Estonia (2004), Hungary (2004), Latvia (2004), Lithuania (2004), Malta (2004), Poland (2004), Slovakia (2004), Slovenia (2004), Bulgaria (2007) and Romania (2007).



The European Commission is the executive body of the EU and it initiates legislation governing all areas of Community activity. This legislation is binding on the European Community and all EU Member States, and can take the form of regulations (directly applicable to Member States), directives (agreed outcomes to be attained and to be transposed into the national laws of the Member States) or communications (policy guidelines or suggested actions). The Commission operates through a number of sectoral directorates-general (DGs) or departments.

The legislative body of the EU issued its first directive aimed at conserving biological diversity in 1979 (the 'birds directive') and has since launched a series of initiatives on the sustainable use of biological resources. As part of this commitment, the European Community became a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1993.

This brochure provides some examples of how the European Community is implementing specific articles of the CBD. To simplify matters, the term 'European Union' (EU) is used in the remaining parts of this brochure, even if the legally correct term would often be 'European Community'.

The Convention on Biological Diversity

The CBD stems from the Conference on Environment and Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 — the Rio Earth Summit. It seeks to protect genetic diversity, slow the rate of species extinction and conserve habitats and ecosystems. The Earth's biological resources form the basis of our food, fibres and many industrial materials. They are essential for our survival and our economic development. Food security and the discovery of new medicines are put at risk by the loss of biodiversity. Vital goods and services that are often taken for granted, such as clean air and fresh water, are threatened by the deterioration of ecosystems. Forests alone supply timber and food, oxygenate air, purify water and help moderate the climate.

The CBD is made up of 42 articles which set out a programme to reconcile economic development with the need to preserve all aspects of biological diversity. Article 1 states the following objectives:

- the conservation of biological diversity;
- the sustainable use of its components; and
- the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.



Definition of 'biological diversity'

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems (Article 2 of the CBD).

While Member States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other Member States, it has to be stressed that issues linked to the protection of biodiversity transcend national boundaries.

The CBD contains few directly enforceable provisions. The convention's decision-making body — the Conference of the Parties (COP) — has adopted a wide range of programmes of work, guidelines and other measures to create a global framework for national and regional action.

The CBD addresses the biodiversity of the world's main habitat types (forests, agricultural land, dry- and sub-humid

lands, oceans and coastal areas, inland waters, mountains and islands), and also 'cross-cutting' issues, such as protected areas, access and benefit sharing, incentives and invasive species.

Ten years after the Rio Earth Summit, the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP6) met in The Hague, in 2002, and adopted the convention's strategic plan. This plan aims to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, a target which was endorsed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

Article 19 of the CBD relates to the handling of biotechnology and the distribution of its benefits. The **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety** was adopted by the parties to the CBD in 2002. It regulates the transboundary movements of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in order to protect biodiversity and human health.

The Biosafety Protocol is based on the precautionary principle, and seeks to reconcile trade with environmental protection. It was ratified by the EU on 27 August 2002, and it came into force on 11 September 2003.

The first Conference of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety took place alongside CBD COP7 in 2004. It clarified the way the protocol should operate. GMO export-



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ers are now required to provide detailed information on the organism, while a **Biosafety Clearing House** has been established to allow parties obtaining the data needed to decide whether or not to import GMOs.

European biodiversity under threat

The enlarged European Union covers a large and diverse geographical area encompassing a wide range of ecosystem types and species. However, biological diversity is under threat throughout the EU. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA) and other organisations, habitats are continuing to decrease in size and are becoming more fragmented. As a result, ecosystem services are deteriorating and many indigenous, rare, endemic and specialist species are under threat. For example, Europe has lost approximately 60 % of its wetlands and much of its extensive grassland. Around 24 % of European mammals are endangered, including the arctic fox, native squirrels, dolphins and seals; some, like the Iberian lynx, are threatened with extinction. Also, 43 % of European birds and around 45 % of European butterflies are highly threatened, along with many species of freshwater fish, reptile and amphibian. Some indigenous plant species are also rare and threatened.

Agricultural intensification, overfishing, land abandonment, mono-specific forestry, urban and transport infrastructure development, the spread of non-native and generalist species, among other causes, are responsible for the negative impacts on biodiversity in the EU. Climate change will accelerate the rate of loss of biological diversity.

[2] Putting the convention into action

[2.1] The EU biodiversity strategy and action plan

EU Heads of State or Government agreed in 2001 'to halt the decline of biodiversity [in the EU] by 2010' and to 'restore habitats and natural systems'. In 2002, they joined the 190 parties to the CBD and some 130 world leaders in agreeing 'to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss [globally] by 2010'. At EU level, the policy framework to halt biodiversity loss in the EU is now largely in place. Biodiversity objectives are, for example, integrated in the sustainable development strategy (SDS) and the Lisbon partnership for growth and jobs and in a wide range of environmental and sector policies. An EC biodiversity strategy was adopted in 1998 and related action plans in 2001. Most Member States have also developed, or are developing, such strategies and/or action plans. On World Biodiversity Day 2006, the European Commission adopted a **new communication on halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond**; it sets out an ambitious policy approach to achieving the 2010 biodiversity targets, supported by a new **EU action plan**. It contains general measures to promote conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity, in line with Article 6 of the CBD.



Article 6. General measures for conservation and sustainable use

Each party to the CBD shall [...] develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this convention relevant to the contracting party concerned;

integrate [...] the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.



This communication was welcomed by all major EU institutions such as the European Parliament and the Council. It provides concrete measures and outlines the responsibilities of EU institutions and Member States, respectively. It also specifies indicators to monitor progress, and a timetable for evaluations. It spells out what needs to be done to halt biodiversity loss in the EU and to meet the international commitments to reduce biodiversity loss worldwide. It envisages an advisory mechanism to help decision-makers make better use of existing knowledge. Its action plan contains four key policy areas: biodiversity in the EU; the EU and global biodiversity; biodiversity and climate change; and the knowledge base. It proposes: 10 priority objectives in relation to these, addressing the most important habitats and species; actions in the wider countryside and marine environment; making regional development more compatible with nature; reducing impacts of invasive alien species; effective international governance; support to biodiversity in international development; reducing negative impacts of international trade; adaptation to climate change; and strengthening the knowledge base.

A **set of biodiversity headline indicators**, based on those used in the CBD, has been developed to help assess progress towards achieving the 2010 biodiversity target.

The Environment Directorate-General (DG) of the European Commission has integrated biodiversity considerations into environmental policy — for example, in strategies concerning air quality, pesticide use, soils and the marine environment, as well as in directives on nitrates and the EU wa-

ter framework. However, biological diversity is affected by many EU activities. Many more DGs are therefore involved in implementing the CBD to some degree.

The ongoing **Cardiff process**, initiated in 1998, provides a mechanism for integrating environment considerations into key sectors of EU policy. Each DG has an ‘integration correspondent’, while a number have specialist environmental units. The Agriculture and Rural Development DG and the Fisheries and Maritime Affairs DG, for instance, have promoted integration of biodiversity concerns into revisions of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the common fisheries policy (CFP), respectively.

In 2001, heads of Member States adopted a **sustainable development strategy** (SDS) in Gothenburg, Sweden. The SDS strengthened the biodiversity strategy by adopting the target to ‘halt’ the decline in biodiversity by 2010 inside the EU. In July 2002, the EU adopted its **sixth environment action programme** (‘Environment 2010: our future, our choice’), which established a 10-year framework for priorities under the SDS. The programme addresses nature and biodiversity protection as a matter of priority.

[2.2] Protecting species and habitats

One of the EU biodiversity action plan’s main objectives is to protect Europe’s unique wildlife, in keeping with Articles 8 and 9 of the CBD. It aims at improving or maintaining the

status of wild flora and fauna and their ecosystems and habitats. Actions are dealing for example with: protected areas; *ex-situ* conservation and genetic resources; agriculture and fisheries; the management of water, soil, forests and wetlands; and the threat from invasive alien species.

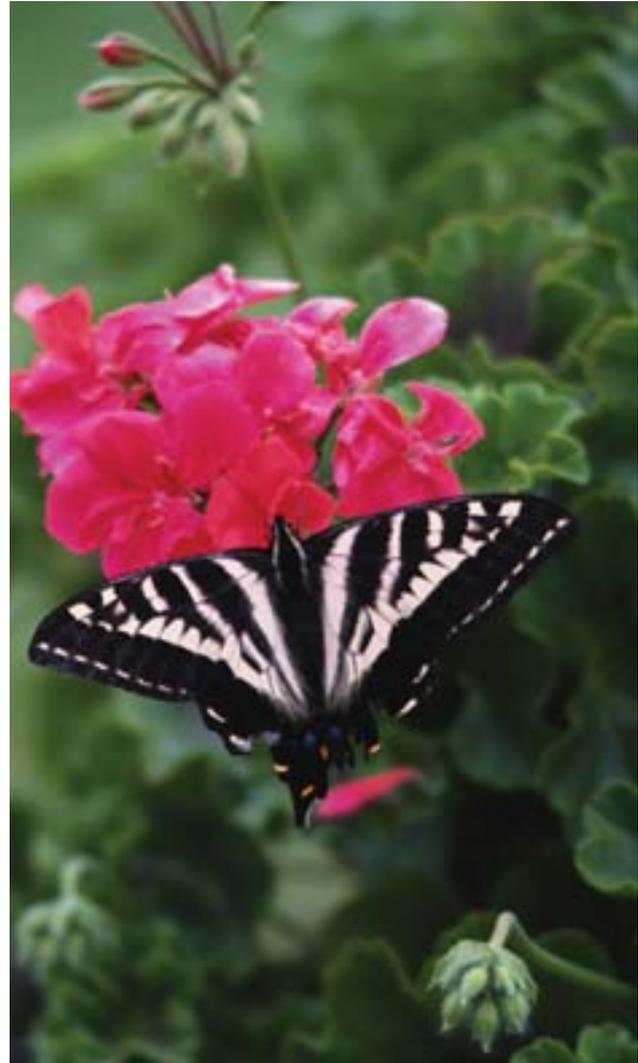


Definition of '*in-situ* conservation'

The conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties (Article 2 of the CBD).

Article 8. *In-situ* conservation

Each party shall [...] establish a system of protected areas to conserve biological diversity; develop [...] guidelines for the selection, establishment and management of these areas [...]; rehabilitate and restore degraded ecosystems and promote the recovery of threatened species [...]; prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats and species [...].





The birds and habitats directives

The **birds directive** (1979) was the first EU legislation designed to preserve biological diversity *in-situ*. A pan-European approach was necessary to coordinate and support national initiatives, especially when dealing with trans-border bird migration. The directive called for the establishment of **special protection areas** (SPAs) for endangered bird species. Wetlands are recognised in the directive as being of particular importance for migratory birds.

The **habitats directive** (1992) established a common framework for the conservation of endangered species and habitats in the EU. It obliges Member States to designate and manage **special areas of conservation** (SACs)

for habitat conservation. A set of management principles helps to balance conservation with social and economic needs, while specific conservation measures are applied to particularly vulnerable species.

The Natura 2000 network

CBD COP7 (2004) adopted a programme of work to establish a system of national and regional protected areas which are representative, comprehensive, effectively managed and integrated into a global network, by 2010 for land areas and by 2012 for marine ones. The EU component of this global network is called **Natura 2000**. It builds upon the birds and habitats directives and provides a coherent ecological framework for protected areas, to secure the long-term conservation of Europe's most threatened species and habitats.

Natura 2000's ambition is to ensure the restoration or maintenance of natural habitats and species of Community interest at a favourable conservation status. It complements other protected wildlife areas designated at national, regional and local levels. Member States are obliged to safeguard Europe's most threatened habitats and species (e.g. Mediterranean coastal dunes, dry heaths and raised bogs). When the EU was enlarged in 2004, its land area increased by around 58 %, bringing into the EU many new areas of distinctive and rich biological diversity. Around 20 % of the EU's territory is covered by the Natura 2000 network, and

Natura 2000 is now also being extended to vulnerable marine habitats (e.g. coldwater coral sites). Criteria for selecting marine sites are being developed and management plans formulated, for example to reconcile conservation and fishing interests.

Establishing the Natura 2000 network has not been an easy endeavour, however, and delays have occurred in the submission of national lists. One of the key obstacles has been local opposition, frequently due to misunderstandings about the aim of the network. Key challenges remain, such as finalising management plans with wider stakeholder involvement, providing adequate financial resources at Member State and EU levels, and designing an improved monitoring and evaluation system.

CITES

The EU fully supports other international legislation concerning endangered species and habitats, including the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** to which all Member States are parties. A **regulation on the implementation of CITES** (1997) has improved its application within the EU. In line with CITES, the regulation controls imports, exports and movement within the EU of wild plant and animal species, and products derived from them. It also bans the import of a number of species identified as a threat to European ecosystems.



Invasive species

Next to habitat destruction, the introduction of invasive alien species is the greatest threat to biodiversity in Europe. Species can be driven towards extinction and ecosystem functions threatened. This can lead to serious socio-economic damage. In serious cases, invasive species can out-compete native species. For example, the algae *Caulerpa taxifolia* has established monocultures in the Mediterranean, eliminating native seaweed species and the diverse communities of life that they support.

Problems relating to non-native species are dealt with, for example, through the management of protected areas. Around 14 % of projects funded by the LIFE-Nature fund since 1992 incorporate action against alien species. For instance, a conservation strategy for birds in the Hebrides Islands includes the removal of non-native animal species, such as American mink, while acacias are eradicated from protected sites in Portugal. Furthermore, legal and administrative measures at the EU level, which deal with import and border controls, inspection and monitoring regimes and quarantine procedures for living organisms, indirectly address the issue of invasive species. A Council regulation dealing specifically with alien species in aquaculture was agreed on 11 June 2007 and a new permit system will enter into force for this sector no later than 1 January 2009.

The European Commission is currently developing an **EU framework on invasive alien species policy** with the aim

to reduce the negative impacts on biodiversity. Policy options will be presented in 2008 with a view to adopting a strategy in 2009/10.

EU support for *in-situ* conservation concerned also agricultural biodiversity, through initiatives such as the projects carried out under the **Community programme on the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture** established under a specific regulation in 1994. Twenty-one projects were co-financed under the EU programme. Almost 200 partners in 19 Member States and 7 non-EU countries participated in the projects.



Definition of 'ex-situ conservation'

The conservation of components of biological diversity outside their natural habitats (Article 2 of the CBD).

Article 9. Ex-situ conservation

Each party shall [...] adopt measures for the *ex-situ* conservation of components of biological diversity [...], establish and maintain facilities for *ex-situ* conservation of plants, animals and micro-organisms, preferably in their country of origin [...].



Ex-situ conservation

EU Member States maintain extensive *ex-situ* collections of species, subspecies and cultivated varieties in seed banks, gene banks, botanic gardens and zoos. There are around 350 botanic gardens in Europe, holding more than 80 000 living species, along with important collections of type specimens essential for plant identification. A **European botanic gardens action plan** (1994) coordinates *ex-situ* conservation activities in the EU. The **zoos directive** (1999) created a licensing system for European zoos. Actions to be implemented cover participation in research, training, information exchange, captive breeding and species reintroductions.

EU support for *ex-situ* conservation has mainly concerned agricultural biodiversity, through initiatives such as the **new Community programme on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture, established by a new regulation** adopted in 2004. It has given rise to 17 actions, involving 178 partners located in 25 Member States and 12 non-EU countries, and a total EU co-funding of EUR 8.9 million. The actions started in 2007 and have a maximum duration of four years.

EU funding is also helping to enhance the research being carried out in support of biodiversity policy. The PGR Forum project, for example, is building an online information database for wild relatives of crops, while the European 'Forest genetic resources programme' (EUFORGEN) is compiling data on forest tree species.

[2.3] The sustainable use of biodiversity

Both the CBD and the EU biodiversity strategy recognise that people are part of nature, and that biological resources should be used in a sustainable manner. However, there is an urgent need for policy and legislation to ensure that the exploitation of biological resources does not threaten their long-term viability or the survival of non-target species. Major progress has been made, for instance, in bringing agriculture, fisheries and forestry activities in the EU into line with Article 10 of the CBD.



Article 10. Sustainable use of components of biological diversity

Each contracting party shall [...] integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources into national decision-making; [...] adopt measures [...] to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity; [...] protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and the sustainable use requirements; support local populations to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced; and encourage cooperation between governmental authorities and the private sector in developing methods for the sustainable use of biological resources.



Agriculture

Many of the biodiversity-rich habitats in need of conservation are situated in, or close to, land devoted to agriculture. Appropriate management is needed to maintain these habitats. The **recent reforms of the common agriculture policy (CAP)** have enabled further integration of biodiversity concerns into agricultural policy. With that reform, national statutory requirements derived from EU directives concerning birds, habitats, nitrates and pesticides were included in the reference level for usual good farming practice. The new 2005 rural development regulation also refers to the objectives of the sixth environment action programme, stating that 'key issues to be addressed include biodiversity, Natura 2000 site management, the protection of water and soil, climate change mitigation including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the reduction of ammonia emissions, and the sustainable use of pesticides.'

The **rural development policy** provides Member States with several possibilities to support environmental integration, lessen the adverse environmental impacts of farming, and reconcile agriculture with the objectives of the CBD. EU **rural development strategy guidelines**, adopted in 2006, offer advice on how biodiversity enhancement can be made compatible with changes in land management. They aim inter alia to protect and enhance the EU's natural resources and landscapes in rural areas. The resources devoted to a specific axis should contribute to three EU-level priority areas: biodiversity and the preservation and development of high nature value farming and forestry systems and traditional agricultural landscapes; water; and climate change.



One possibility for the Member States is the use of a series of **agri-environmental measures**, designed to encourage farmers to protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity, in ways that go beyond usual good farming practice. Around a fourth of all utilised agriculture land in the EU receives funding through the agri-environment programme, including sites that are in the Natura 2000 network. These measures include:

- appropriate management of set-aside areas for conservation purposes;
- upkeeping abandoned farmland and woodland to benefit farm-dependent species;
- maintaining landscape features, such as hedgerows, stone walls and ponds;
- reducing pesticide and fertiliser use; and
- facilitating public access to agricultural land of environmental interest.

Other possibilities include measures to help farmers comply with demanding, newly introduced EU standards, measures for the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture, for training, for the use of and for setting up farm advisory services, for non-productive investments, and for payments in areas with geographical and structural handicaps.

The **single farm payment scheme** (SFP), introduced in 2003, is expected to help in conserving biodiversity, by decoupling direct payments from agricultural production ('cross-compliance'). This removes a key incentive for intensive production. Full payments will only be granted under this scheme if specific environmental requirements are met,

including provisions of the birds and habitats directives, as well as legislation on pesticides.

The **biodiversity action plan for agriculture** calls for measures to maintain local livestock breeds and cultivated plant varieties, and to prevent the spread of non-native species that may harm biodiversity. A number of initiatives are being used to implement these measures. For instance, a 1998 directive, amending previous seed legislation, introduced a provision for marketing varieties and landraces of agricultural crop species adapted to local conditions, thereby helping to maintain genetic diversity of cultivated species *in situ*.

Indicators have been specially developed to assess farmland biodiversity. For example, in 2004, a set of indicators for farmland birds was added to the EU biodiversity headline indicators database. In September 2006, the Commission issued a communication entitled 'Development of agri-environmental indicators for monitoring the integration of environmental concerns into the CAP'. The communication reviewed the progress made with the development of agri-environmental indicators through the IRENA project, and identified key challenges and actions for future work on the assessment of the effects of agriculture on the environment, including biodiversity (e.g. farmland with high 'nature' value or nature protected, impacts on habitats and biodiversity).

Over the last few years, organic farming in Europe has developed, to the benefit of biodiversity. Organic farming has been encouraged by EU funding for farmers willing to convert to organic methods of production. A **European ac-**

tion plan for organic food and farming was adopted in June 2004, making more funds available for research into organic and low-input production methods.

Marine, coastal and inland water biodiversity: fisheries

Human activities have exerted pressure on marine, coastal and inland water ecosystems. Biodiversity concerns have therefore to be integrated into the management of marine resources, water and fisheries.

The EU biodiversity strategy put forward broad objectives for the fisheries sector, while the **biodiversity action plan for fisheries**, adopted in 2001, made specific recommendations to protect biodiversity from the impact of marine fisheries and aquaculture. The **action plan for environmental integration**, adopted in 2002, contained guiding principles, management measures and a work programme to move towards an ecosystem-based approach to fisher-





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ies, and to limit the environmental impact of the **common fisheries policy** (CFP).

These objectives, integrated into the reformed CFP, include:

- reducing fishing pressure to sustainable levels;
- improving fishing methods to reduce discard, by-catch and impact on habitats;
- protecting non-target species and habitats; and
- decreasing the environmental impacts of aquaculture.

A shift in focus, from supply-side productivity towards an ecosystem-based approach, is a major step to safeguard the EU's marine resources and their sustainable management. This is in line with the objectives of the CBD. However, much remains to be done. Many fish stocks in EU waters have been overexploited as a result of a complex interplay of driving forces. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) set 2015 as a deadline to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield. The EU has recently developed a number of policies and actions aimed at implementing

the EU commitment to this objective. A new proposed integrated maritime policy is designed to achieve the full economic potential of oceans and seas in harmony with the marine environment. Its environmental pillar is determined by new legislation adopted in 2007 on a **thematic strategy on the marine environment** which adopts an ecosystem-based approach, with a view to ensuring that human activities are carried out in a sustainable manner and that Europe's marine waters meet the highest environmental standards by 2021. The marine strategy directive will establish European marine regions on the basis of geographical and environmental criteria. Each Member State will be required to develop marine strategies for its marine waters, which will contain a detailed assessment of the state of the environment, a definition of 'good environmental status' at regional level and the establishment of clear environmental targets and monitoring programmes. Each Member State will draw up a programme of cost-effective measures. Impact assessments, including detailed cost-benefit analysis of the measures proposed, will be required prior to the introduction of any new measure.

Increased emphasis on sustainability is also influencing EU policy regarding **fishing beyond EU waters**. In accordance with its duties under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the CBD, the EU cooperates with other parties to manage marine living resources effectively. The EU also actively promotes global progress in the development of effective international fisheries governance within multilateral institutions, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the

United Nations General Assembly and the CBD. In October 2007, two important proposals were adopted by the Commission: a proposal to protect fragile deep-water ecosystems from bottom trawling in the high seas, in line with the recommendations issued by the UN General Assembly in December 2006, and a proposal aimed at improving the fight against 'illegal, unreported and unregulated' (IUU) fishing. Proposed measures would allow access to EU markets only to fisheries products that have been certified as legal by the flag state or the exporting state concerned. A European blacklist of vessels and states would be set up as would deterrent sanctions against IUU fishing in EU waters and against EU operators engaged in IUU fishing anywhere in the world. Finally, the EU has adopted a policy regarding the fisheries partnership agreements with third countries, including measures to ensure sustainable fisheries management through improved scientific advice, reinforced fisheries controls and capacity building.

The EU **water framework directive** (2000) modified the way fresh and coastal waters are managed, to improve water quality and the way aquatic ecosystems in Europe work. The directive contains a number of qualitative and quantitative targets, such as the requirement that all surface water shall not deteriorate in quality and that it should achieve good ecological and chemical status by 2015. Key actions include integrated management, international cooperation, environmental assessment and public participation. The implementation of the directive will ensure the maintenance of biodiversity in aquatic ecosystems and contribute to wider biodiversity objectives.



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Forestry

Forests cover nearly one third of the world's land surface and harbour the vast majority of terrestrial biodiversity. Deforestation and forest degradation dramatically reduce biological diversity. International and regional action is required to coordinate national efforts in favour of sustainable forest management and to promote biodiversity conservation. On top of supporting the implementation of the CBD expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity, the EU supports global initiatives promoting biodiversity conservation, such as the United Nations Forum on Forests, and is a party to the International Tropical Timber Agreement.

A great diversity of forest types and forest ownership structures exist in the EU. Forests are one of Europe's most important renewable resources and provide multiple benefits to society and the economy. They are also important for the conservation of European nature. Some 1.6 million square kilometres of the EU-27 are covered by forests and other

wooded land. As a result of afforestation programmes and natural regeneration of marginal lands, this area has expanded by nearly 0.3 % annually in recent decades. Yearly increments in growing stock exceed yearly felling by approximately one third.

The main forum for pan-European coordination on forest policy is the **Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe** (MCPFE) process, to which the EC, EU Member States and other European countries are a signatory. Building on previous conferences' resolutions and inter-

national commitments, the Fourth Ministerial Conference (Vienna, 2003) adopted a specific resolution to conserve and enhance forest biodiversity in Europe. Funding from the EU has supported international and MCPFE research projects concerning biodiversity.

The EU biodiversity strategy and action plan has a significant forestry component. On 15 June 2006, the new **EU forest action plan** was adopted. It builds on the report on implementation of the EU forestry strategy and consequent conclusions by the Council. The action plan focuses on four main objectives: (1) to improve long-term competitiveness; (2) to improve and protect the environment; (3) to contribute to the quality of life; and (4) to foster coordination and communication. It includes 18 key actions to be implemented jointly with the Member States during the period of five years (2007–11).

A specific regulation provides a Community scheme for a harmonised, comprehensive and long-term monitoring of European forest ecosystems ('Forest focus'). It concentrates in particular on protecting forests against air pollution and fire but also relates to biodiversity, climate change, carbon sequestration, soils and protective functions of forests.

Responding to public concerns on the negative effects of illegal logging on the environment and livelihoods, the **EU adopted in 2003 an EU action plan for 'Forest law enforcement, governance and trade' (FLEGT)**. Though the ultimate goal of the action plan is to encourage sustainable management of forests, ensuring legality of forest opera-

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tions is considered a vital first step. The plan focuses on governance reforms and capacity building and includes ideas for action in areas such as public procurement and the private sector. A key element of the action plan is a voluntary scheme to ensure that only legally harvested timber is imported into the EU from countries agreeing to take part in this scheme. The Council adopted a regulation in December 2005, allowing for the control of the entry of timber to the EU from countries entering into bilateral FLEGT voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) with the EU. Once agreed, the VPAs will include commitments and action from both parties to halt trade in illegal timber, notably with a licence scheme to verify the legality of timber. The agreements will also promote better enforcement of forest law and promote an inclusive approach involving civil society and the private sector. Negotiations are currently under way with Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia and Malaysia. A number of other countries have also expressed interest in VPAs.

Sustainable production and consumption

The EU has developed a range of instruments to promote sustainable consumption and production. These include integrated pollution prevention and control (**IPPC**); the EU eco-management and audit scheme (**EMAS**); the promotion of environmental, social and fair-trade labels; the new framework for taxation of energy products and electricity; the integrated product policy (**IPP**); and a comprehensive set of new legislation on the 'registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals' (**REACH**).

[2.4] Biodiversity research and training

EU multi-year framework programmes for research and technological development (RTD) allocate considerable funds for research into a wide range of areas, including biological diversity conservation, in line with Article 12 of the CBD.



Article 12. Research and training

The contracting parties [...] shall establish and maintain programmes for scientific and technical education and training in measures for the identification, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and its components, and provide support for such education and training for the specific needs of developing countries, [...] cooperate in the use of scientific advances in biological diversity research in developing methods for conservation and sustainable use of biological resources.



The EU research framework programmes

Global change and ecosystems are among the research priority areas for 2002–06. Framework funds are also used to improve scientific support to policy. From 1998 to 2006, the EU allocated about EUR 100 million to biodiversity-related projects.

These projects include ALARM (assessing large-scale environmental risks with tested methods) and Daisie (delivering alien invasive species inventories for Europe). Optimising the infrastructure for sharing taxonomic information is a priority, in support of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). Research supporting integration of biodiversity concerns into the CAP and the CFP is also funded. The seventh framework programme (2007–13) provides further opportunities to carry out research aimed at supporting the implementation of the CBD.

Many EU-funded biodiversity research projects have also allowed **developing and other third countries** to participate. Many involve training in identifying, conserving and using biological diversity in a sustainable way.

The **European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy** (EPBRS) aims to identify and promote strategically important biodiversity research that will contribute to policies and management relating to biodiversity loss. The EPBRS developed and adopted a **biodiversity research action plan**, in 2005, which identifies the most urgent research needs in the field of biodiversity in Europe.



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[2.5] Public education

Biodiversity issues gained a high political profile after the EU summit in Gothenburg and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which set the 2010 targets. However, the general public is still not sufficiently aware of them. Promoting awareness, education and training in the context of the CBD is important because the perceptions and behaviour of people contribute to the pressures on biological diversity.

The European Commission supports global initiatives, such as **International Biodiversity Day** (22 May), and continues to support environment-related courses and projects within its own education and training programmes. Most EU-funded biodiversity projects have an education and awareness component, while a range of literature has been produced, for example, on the Natura 2000 network. A full week of high-level policy discussions on biodiversity was organised by the Commission in Brussels under the title

'Bio-diversity is life' in the context of its annual so-called **Green Weeks**. A major EU biodiversity public awareness and **communications campaign** will be set up by the Commission in 2008–10.



Article 13. Public education and awareness

The contracting parties shall promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity [...], cooperate [...] in developing educational and public awareness programmes, with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

COUNTDOWN



SAVE BIODIVERSITY

The **Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism** (CHM) at <http://biodiversity-chm.eea.eu.int> is one of the main online sources of information covering EU responses to the CBD.

Countdown 2010

Several initiatives have been launched at the EU level, by Member States and other organisations, to publicise efforts carried out to halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe. One example is the **Countdown 2010 initiative**, coordinated by the IUCN (World Conservation Union) and supported by the European Commission and many Member States. It is working to:

- create public awareness across Europe of initiatives to save biodiversity by 2010;
- encourage and support the full implementation of all the international commitments and necessary actions to save biodiversity; and
- demonstrate the progress Europe is making to meet the 2010 biodiversity commitments.

[2.6] Impact assessment

An effective system of environmental impact assessment is necessary to prevent or modify developments that will have adverse impacts on biological diversity. The EU has put into place assessment procedures to identify projects of high risk to biodiversity, in line with Article 14 of the CBD.



Article 14. Impact assessment and minimising adverse impacts

[...] Parties shall introduce appropriate procedures requiring environmental impact assessment of proposed projects likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity, with a view to avoiding or minimising such effects, and [to] allow for public participation [...], promote national arrangements for emergency responses to activities [...] which present a grave and imminent danger to biological [...]; the Conference of the Parties shall examine [...] the issue of liability and redress, including restoration and compensation, for damage to biological diversity, [...].

Biodiversity is an essential assessment criteria

The EU **directive on environmental impact assessments** was introduced in 1985 and amended in 1997. It has contributed to protecting nature and biodiversity in Europe. More recently, in July 2004, the EU **directive on strategic environmental assessments** came into force. It requires Member States to integrate biodiversity into their environmental assessment procedures. These directives are useful for cross-sectoral integration of biodiversity considerations,

and help ensure that environmental impact assessment is conducted in a coherent way across the EU.

Where the impacts of EU projects are felt outside the EU, the **communication towards a global partnership for sustainable development** lays out guidelines for impact assessments to analyse environmental, economic and social factors. It stresses the importance of involving all stakeholders.

An EU liability regime

Legislation based on the 'polluter pays' principle penalises those who inflict damage on biodiversity.

The **directive on environmental liability**, adopted in 2005, provides a deterrent against damage to areas of high biodiversity. It imposes preventive or remedial measures, including habitat restoration at the original or at an equivalent site. The directive covers areas and species protected at EU and national levels (e.g. Natura 2000 sites), waters prioritised within the water framework directive and land contamination.

As with all EU legislation, the Commission has the power to bring Member States before the Court of Justice of the European Communities for non-compliance. This has occurred under the birds and habitats directives. An EU network for the 'Implementation and enforcement of environmental law' (IMPEL) was established in 1993.

[2.7] Access and benefit sharing — Traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities

The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from genetic resources is one of the key objectives of the CBD (Article 1). Benefit sharing is inextricably linked to appropriate access to genetic resources, the transfer of relevant technologies, information exchange, and scientific cooperation.



Article 15. Access to — and benefit sharing of — genetic resources

[...] Each contracting party shall endeavour to create conditions to facilitate access to these genetic resources for environmentally sound uses by other parties [...]. Access, where granted, shall be on mutually agreed terms [...] and [...] shall be subject to the prior informed consent of the party providing such resources, [...]. Each party shall endeavour to develop and carry out scientific research based on genetic resources provided by other parties with the full participation of, and where possible in, such parties. Each party shall take legislative, administrative or policy measures [...] with the aim of sharing in a fair and equitable way the results of research and development, and the benefits arising from the commercial and other



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utilisation of genetic resources with the party providing such resources [...] upon mutually agreed terms.

Article 16. Access to and transfer of technology

Each contracting party, recognising that technology includes biotechnology, and that both access to and transfer of technology among parties are essential elements for the attainment of the objectives of the convention, [...]. Access to and transfer of technology [...] to developing countries shall be provided under fair and most favourable terms [...].



The Bonn guidelines

The **Bonn guidelines** on 'access to genetic resources and benefit sharing' (ABS) were agreed at COP6. The guidelines:

- establish 'prior informed consent' as a condition for access to genetic resources;
- provide outlines for 'mutually agreed terms', which simplify procedures for scientific researchers and other users of genetic resources;
- establish mechanisms to ensure fair benefit sharing at national and regional levels;
- clarify the relationship between traditional knowledge and genetic resources;
- take into account the role of intellectual property in access and benefit sharing;
- establish practical mechanisms for monitoring; and

- provide proposals for enforcement, including legal remedies.

Implementation of the guidelines is one of the EU priorities to achieve the 2010 targets and a European Commission **communication on the implementation of the Bonn guidelines** was adopted on 23 December 2003. In practice, users of genetic resources in the EU should respect the law of the non-EU country providing genetic resources to them, and share the benefits (e.g. profits and research findings) with that country. The European Community and EU Member States have continued their efforts to raise awareness of ABS issues, particularly amongst users of genetic resources in the EU. The EU has established an Internet-based portal for ABS to raise awareness of users' obligations under the CBD. Member States have established national web portals dedicated to access and benefit sharing, particularly with a view to enhancing the ability of users of genetic resources to obtain pertinent information on ABS quickly and at low cost. Public research fund providers in several Member States have requested acceptance of guidance on access and benefit sharing formulated within the CBD and some Member States have undertaken extensive consultations with users of genetic resources to enhance awareness of access and benefit-sharing issues. Users of genetic resources, like the pharmaceutical industry, the biotechnology sector, the botanical gardens and *ex-situ* collections have already developed or are in the process of developing and implementing codes of conduct that establish best practices on access and benefit sharing for their respective areas of activity.

The EU is committed to completing the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on ABS before CBD COP10 and is actively contributing to the ongoing negotiations under the CBD.



Article 8j. Traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities

Each party shall [...], subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices.

The EU Member States, through **Council resolutions issued in 1998 and 2002 on indigenous peoples' issues**, have set the framework for EU support to indigenous peoples. More recently, the European consensus on development cooperation has stated that 'the key principle for safeguarding indigenous peoples' rights in development cooperation is to ensure their full participation and the free and prior informed consent of the communities concerned'.

The European Commission is in the process of **mainstreaming** indigenous peoples' issues into its own practices and working methods. It does this by inviting indigenous peoples to participate at the programming, designing, implementing and evaluating stages of development projects.

In 2005, a **call for proposals** was launched specifically to help indigenous peoples and their representatives participate in, and follow up the work of, UN and other organisations, such as the CBD.

[2.8] The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

In line with CBD Article 19, the EU ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in 2002. It provides rules governing the transboundary movement of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Exporters are required to provide detailed information on living GMOs that cross borders. An online **Biosafety Clearing House**, containing regulatory procedures, has been established to provide a mechanism which



registers approved GMOs by country and other data relevant to risk assessment. It has been established with a view to allowing parties to the protocol to be kept informed. It also assists developing countries that may not have the necessary regulatory or scientific resources to perform their own risk assessments.

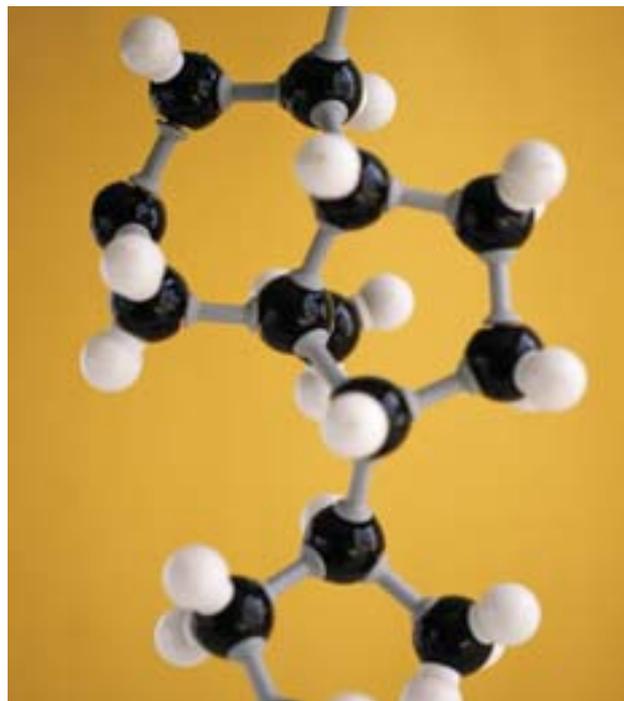
Putting Cartagena into practice

The implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the EU relies on a comprehensive legal framework addressing the use of GMOs, including imports. The main legal instrument is the **directive on the deliberate release of GMOs into the environment** (revised 2001), which is



Article 19. Handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits

[...] The parties shall consider the need for and modalities of a protocol setting out appropriate procedures, including, in particular, [an] advance informed agreement, in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of any living modified organism resulting from biotechnology that may have [an] adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Each contracting party shall [...] provide any available information about the use and safety regulations required by that contracting party in handling such organisms, as well as any available information on the potential adverse impact of the specific organisms concerned to the contracting party into which those organisms are to be introduced.



supplemented by: a **regulation on the transboundary movements of GMOs**; a regulation on genetically modified food and feed; a directive on the contained use of genetically modified micro-organisms; regulations concerning the traceability and labelling of GMOs and food and feed products produced from GMOs.

The EU supports efforts to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, both within the EU and in third countries, including through its Joint Research Centre (JRC). In its capacity-building role, the JRC supports collaborative projects that facilitate information sharing through the Biosafety Clearing House.

A June 2005 Commission decision established a network for the exchange and coordination of information concerning the coexistence of genetically modified, conventional and organic crops within the EU.

[2.9] Financial resources and development cooperation

The EU has made considerable financial resources available for activities aimed at conserving biological diversity, in line with Article 20 of the CBD.



Article 20. Financial resources

Each contracting party undertakes to provide [...] financial support and incentives [...] for activities intended to achieve the objectives of the CBD, [...]. Developed country parties shall provide new and additional financial resources to enable developing country parties [to] meet the agreed full incremental costs to them of implementing measures which fulfil their obligations under the convention [...].



Development and economic cooperation

EU policy pays attention to the relationship between biological diversity and poverty eradication within EU policy.

The EU (Member States and European Commission) is the world's largest donor in the field of environment and natural resources. The EU Councils of both Environment and Development Cooperation Ministers have welcomed the 'Message from Paris' adopted at the Conference on Integrating Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation (19–21 September 2006 in Paris).

The new EU biodiversity strategy and action plan recognises the vital importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to livelihoods and the achievement of the millennium development goals in developing countries. One specific objective is 'to substantially strengthen support for biodiversity and ecosystem services in EU external assistance'. Specific actions are grouped under the two targets: to substantially increase in real terms the financial resources flowing to programmes and projects which directly benefit biodiversity for the period 2006–10 compared with the period 2000–05, and to ensure that biodiversity is 'mainstreamed' into EU development assistance and that negative impacts on biodiversity are prevented or minimised.

As regards the **earmarking** of funds, over EUR 30 million for biodiversity over a four-year period from 2007–10 has been allocated to biodiversity under the **EC thematic programme for environment and natural resources**

(**ENRTP**) and preparations are now under way to prepare projects using these funds. Furthermore, some other ENRTP headings are strongly linked with biodiversity: EUR 72 million are earmarked for the promotion of sustainable forest management, EUR 34 million for implementation of the initiative on forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT), EUR 6.4 million for fisheries and marine/coastal resources, approximately EUR 6.5 million under the European neighbourhood policy instrument (ENPI) and EUR 13 million for climate change and biodiversity. As a whole, approximately EUR 120 million will be related to biodiversity under 2007–10 ENRTP — i.e. EUR 37.5 million annually, which is more or less equivalent to the funds earmarked in the period 2000–06.

On top of this specific budget line, the EU funds a large amount of biodiversity-related, sometimes multi-million euro projects through its so-called geographical budget lines, such as the **European Development Fund** covering African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, a budget line dealing with Asia and Latin American countries and a budget line dealing with neighbourhood countries. One example is the **EU–China biodiversity programme**, a major partnership programme to support biodiversity conservation in China (EC contribution: EUR 30 million, partner contributions: EUR 21.5 million). This programme aims to strengthen the policy and institutional framework in order to integrate biodiversity considerations into development policies, strategic environment assessments and environmental impact assessments as well as climate change policies.



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As regards the **mainstreaming** of biodiversity in development cooperation, country environmental profiles have been identified for most partner countries which stress the important role of biodiversity. As the new development cooperation policy will be guided by the principles of part-

nership and ownership, substantial additional funding for biodiversity will only materialise if biodiversity is effectively integrated as a priority objective in partner countries' national development strategies or poverty reduction strategies. Some projects — notably in rural development — do include some components related to the conservation of biodiversity. Almost all draft country strategy papers include a commitment to undertake **strategic environmental assessments (SEAs)**, which will be essential in avoiding negative impacts on the environment and biodiversity. However, very few countries have identified biodiversity as a priority sector for cooperation in their country strategy papers. This is a major impediment in enhancing EU funding for biodiversity in development cooperation.

For the first time, the EU biodiversity action plan also includes specific objectives and targets related to the **EU overseas countries and territories**, whose biodiversity is higher than in the whole of continental Europe.

The EU is also supporting **neighbouring countries**. At the Fifth Ministerial Conference on 'Environment for Europe' (Kiev, 2003), European environment ministers passed a resolution calling for substantially increased public and private investment for integrating biodiversity activities across Europe by 2008.

Financial support within the EU

The **financial instrument for the environment (LIFE)** was established in 1992, and is the funding ‘backbone’ for the implementation of EU environmental policy. LIFE has three thematic components: nature, environment and third countries. Funding for the conservation of European fauna and flora (e.g. through the implementation of Natura 2000) comes through LIFE-Nature. Many projects funded by LIFE-Nature have to do with restoring wetlands and other vulnerable habitats. Numerous programmes involve endangered species (e.g. monk seals in the Mediterranean, brown bear and Iberian lynx in Spain). Around EUR 300 million were allocated to LIFE-Nature projects in the 2000–04 period.



A revised financial instrument for the environment (LIFE+) was adopted in 2007. The overall budget foreseen for LIFE+ is just under EUR 1.9 billion for the period 2007–13; 78 % of the budget is dedicated to project action grants and at least 50 % of this has been reserved for spending on the ‘nature and biodiversity’ part of the programme. LIFE+ will bring simplification by regrouping a broad range of existing environmental programmes and instruments in a single framework. LIFE+ will address all four priority areas of the sixth environment action programme (6EAP, running from 2002 to 2012) — climate change; nature and biodiversity; health and quality of life; natural resources and waste — as well as the programme’s seven thematic strategies.

The new programme is divided into three strands:

- LIFE+ ‘Nature and biodiversity’ focusing on the implementation of the EU directives on the conservation of habitats and of wild birds, as well as further strengthening the knowledge needed for developing, assessing, monitoring and evaluating EU nature and biodiversity policy and legislation;
- LIFE+ ‘Environment policy and governance’ covering the other 6EAP priorities besides nature and biodiversity, as well as strategic approaches to policy development, implementation and enforcement;
- LIFE+ ‘Information and communication’ on environmental issues.

The EU also encourages initiatives that link **biodiversity and the business communities**.



[2.10] Further information

Introduction

Introduction to the Convention on Biological Diversity:
<http://www.cbd.int/>

The full text of the Convention on Biological Diversity:
<http://www.cbd.int/convention/convention.shtml>

Introduction to the European Union:
<http://europa.eu.int/>

The EU biodiversity strategy

The EU and biodiversity:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/>

Third report on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity by the European Community (2005):

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/world/eur/eur-nr-03-en.pdf>

State of biodiversity in the EU (European Environment Agency):

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity>

Protecting species and habitats

Nature conservation in the EU:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/nature_conservation/index_en.htm

Natura 2000 network:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm_en.htm

Conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/biodiv/genres/index_en.htm

Alien species and nature conservation in the EU:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

The sustainable use of biodiversity

Agriculture and biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/index_en.htm#biodiv

Fisheries and biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/management_resources_en.htm

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/integration/fisheries_en.htm

Marine and coastal biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/marine/index_en.htm

Inland water biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

Forestry:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/index_en.htm

FLEGT (forest law enforcement, governance and trade):

http://ec.europa.eu/development/Policies/9Interventionareas/Environment/forest/flegt_en.cfm

Biodiversity research and training

Research and biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/themes/article_1348_en.htm

CORDIS (European Community Research and Development Information Service):

<http://www.cordis.lu/en/home.html>

Public education

European Community Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism:

<http://biodiversity-chm.eea.europa.eu/>

Countdown 2010: Halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe:

<http://www.countdown2010.net/>

Impact assessment

Environmental assessment in the EU:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm>

Access to genetic resources

European access and benefit-sharing portal:

<http://abs.eea.europa.eu/>

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety:

<http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/>

Biosafety Clearing House:

<http://bch.cbd.int/>

EU regulatory framework for GMOs:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biotechnology/index_en.htm

Financial resources

Development cooperation policy and biodiversity:

http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/9interventionareas/environment/biodiversity/biodiversity_en.cfm

LIFE programme: the financial instrument for the environment:

<http://ec.europa.eu/life/>

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Biodiversity

The EU is committed to halting biodiversity loss in Europe and significantly reducing the rate of loss worldwide

What's new

- Biodiversity in the EU
- News
- Publications
- Press
- EU Strategy on Biodiversity
- EU Biodiversity Action Plan

News on the Economy of Biodiversity Loss - March 2008
Biodiversity: facts for an EU with administrative, cultural and...

Biodiversity

The EU is committed to halting biodiversity loss in Europe and significantly reducing the rate of loss worldwide

A contraction of biological diversity, biodiversity reflects the number, variety and variability of living organisms, including mankind. The world is faced with an unprecedented loss of biodiversity which threatens to undermine environmental, economic and social goals. The framework for worldwide action is the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992. At the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, in September 2002, governments committed themselves to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The European Union has been implementing and taking action since the 1970s to safeguard biodiversity, and has also taken an active role on the international scene. The EU has also set itself the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity on its own territory by 2010.

The United Nations defines biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It includes diversity within species (genetic diversity), between species (species diversity), and between ecosystems (ecosystem diversity). It provides mankind with a wide range of benefits, such as important goods (the timber and medicinal products) and essential services (the carbon cycling and storage, clean water, climate and natural hazards mitigation).

Human activity has caused between 50 and 1000 times more extinctions in the last 100 years than would have happened due to natural processes.

The rate of loss is projected to accelerate, as foreseen by 2010. The 10th Millennium European Assessment Report released in January 2006, confirms that many animal and plant populations have declined in numbers, geographical spread or both. For instance, a quarter of mammal species are currently threatened by extinction. Increasingly, the same species are found at different locations on the planet and the overall biodiversity is declining, because fewer new species are lost and common ones appear in new areas. Overall, the range of genetic differences within species has declined, particularly for crops and livestock.

The main causes of biodiversity loss are changes in natural habitats due to intensive agricultural production systems, construction and extractive industries, over exploitation of forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and soils, invasion of alien species, pollution and global climate change.

The global scale of the biodiversity loss demands concerted international action. The framework for this action is the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which was signed in 1992 and which the European Union ratified in 1993. Its objectives are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of genetic resources.

The EU has been implementing its biodiversity since the 1970s. It is a strong force on the world scene and it is committed to implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. In 1998, it adopted a **Biodiversity Action Plan** (biodiversity action plans were adopted under this priority in 2002, on conservation of natural resources, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and development cooperation). Today, nature and biodiversity are one of the priorities of the EU's sixth development action programme (2002-10).

Further information

- More about The EU action plan to halt biodiversity loss on its own territory
- More about EU action plan to halt biodiversity loss
- Environment for Young Europeans - Factsheet
- Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Report 2001 (pdf) - (1 Mb)
- Biodiversity Publications

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity>

European Commission

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